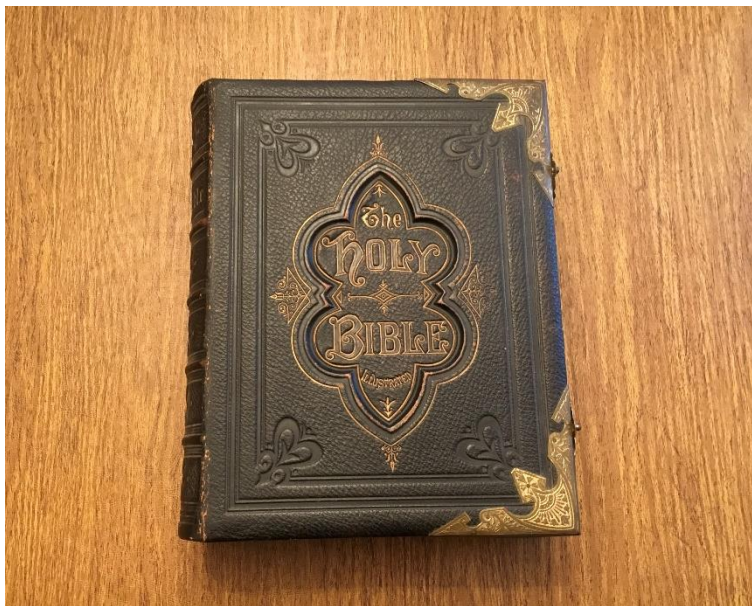


The Friendly Companion



**“So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall
not return unto Me void, but it shall prosper in the thing
whereto I sent it.”
(Isaiah 55.11)**

January 2021

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CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	3
Our Front Cover Picture	5
A New Year Thought ..	7
For the Very Little Ones: A Good Beginning But a Sad End	8
Colouring Text: 2 Chronicles 24.22	9
Bible Lessons: A Terrible Judgment	10
A Short Biography of the Early Days of Samuel Medley	13
A Wonderful Deliverance	15
The Frightened Atheist.....	17
A Sermon to One Hearer	19
Bible Study for the Older Ones: "Who Teacheth Like Him?"	20
Bible Questions: Sickness and Disease	22
Poetry: Prayer for Grace and Teaching.....	24

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Take heed! To take heed suggests the act of being very careful, giving great attention, closely observing, or earnestly attending to a matter. As we commence a new year, it is a good word for us to consider. We do not know what dangers may be near or with what temptations we may soon be confronted.

The Lord told the children of Israel, *"Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land [Canaan] whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee"* (Exodus 34.12). Although Joshua and the elders of the tribes feared God, they failed to take heed and made a league with the inhabitants of Gibeon. They did not take heed to the commandment of the Lord. They were deceived by the dry, mouldy bread, the rent bottles of wine, the worn-out shoes and the tattered garments, and they failed to ask counsel of God.

On another occasion, the Lord added a word, saying, *"Take ye therefore **good** heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude [likeness or image] on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire"* (Deuteronomy 4.15). Sadly, the Israelites made a golden calf, and years later, two more golden calves. *"They changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass"* (Psalm 106.20). What a curse came upon them because they failed to take *"good heed"* unto themselves!

In His ministry, the Lord Jesus often warned the people to *"take heed."* He told His disciples to *"take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them"* (Matthew 6.1). They were told to *"take heed of the leaven [teaching] of the Pharisees"* (Matthew 16.6). Another time, when speaking of those who have ears to hear, He added, *"Take heed what ye hear"* (Mark 4.24). In the well-known parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of three types of hearers who did not receive any benefit from their hearing and only one type who heard with profit. He then said, *"Take heed therefore how ye hear"* (Luke

8.18). If we are enabled to take up His yoke and to learn of Him, we will escape the false teaching that is so prevalent in our day.

When the Lord spoke of those who were converted and became like little children, walking in simplicity and godliness, He knew that many people would not understand the change that had taken place. They would make light of it and mock the new believers. He warned: *“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones”* (Matthew 18.10). I wonder if you despise those who fear God, whose behaviour is a reproof to you.

Another time, Jesus told His disciples to *“take heed that no man deceive you”* (Matthew 24.4). Many would go forth in His name and deceive many. How are we to *“take heed”* against such men? The Bible tells us not to believe everyone, but to *“try the spirits whether they are of God”* (1 John 4.1).

There is one *“take heed”* in the Scriptures which all of us need to consider carefully because of the word the Lord adds: *“Take heed and beware of covetousness”* (Matthew 12.1). How often we are overcome by the sin of covetousness! As you grow older, there will be many newer and costlier things that you will desire or covet. *“Take heed and beware.”* What is the answer to such covetousness? *“Be content with such things as ye have”* (Hebrews 13.5).

In Acts chapter 22, the Apostle Paul related to the Jews how he had lived as a strict Pharisee, and then how the Lord had converted him and called him to preach to the Gentiles. It caused such an uproar among the people that he had to be rescued by the Roman soldiers. Lysias, the chief captain, commanded his soldiers to examine Paul by scourging (beating), to find out why the Jews were so mad against him. As the soldiers bound Paul, he asked if it was lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who had not been condemned of any wrong doing. When the centurion heard that Paul was a Roman, he warned the chief captain, *“Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman”* (Acts 22.26).

It would be very good for us if this warning was remembered throughout the year. When you are tempted to disobey your

parents, *"Take heed what thou doest."* When you are tempted to speak ill of someone or to mock them, *"Take heed what thou doest."* When you are tempted to tell a lie, *"Take heed what thou doest."*

* * * *

You will notice a change in the magazine this year, as our friend, Mr. A. Pickett, begins a series of short pieces on some of the hymnwriters and others of God's dear people. He is focusing on some of their first impressions as the Lord began a work of grace in them. We have been very thankful for his help in writing the "Bible Study for the Older Ones" during the last four years, and we pray that the Lord will be his help in this new series.

Mr. B. Mercer has agreed to write the Bible Studies starting this month. It is our prayer that the Lord will help him by guiding his thoughts, enlarging his heart and granting the light and understanding he needs in taking on such a commitment.

As each of you read these pieces, may the Lord give understanding in the truths which are brought forth.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The picture on our front cover needs no explanation as to what it is. Even the very youngest child will know that it is a Bible. There are also other names given to it. You may have heard it referred to as the Word of God or the Holy Scriptures; perhaps in rare circumstances, the Testimony of the Lord. Moses was said to have received the *"lively [living] oracles"* in the mount (Acts 8.38). These different names all apply to one blessed Book, the Holy Bible.

The Bible is a Book of narratives (stories), experiences, revelations (of sin and salvation), warnings, promises, history (of nations and people), and a Book of judgments and deliverances.

The Bible is “*a light*.” It is a light to the feet and to the path of those who fear God (Psalm 119.105). It is a light to the heart of sinners who are taught of God (Proverbs 6.23).

The Bible is “*a mirror*.” You know what a mirror does; it reflects your image. The mirror in your bathroom or bedroom reflects your outward appearance, the image that your family and friends see. The Bible reflects the image of the inner person that only God can see. When God’s light shines into your heart, then God’s mirror (His Word) shows what is really inside: the terrible evils, the sinful thoughts and the vile deeds. You might think that we are exaggerating, but, dear young friends, to exaggerate such an important truth would be very wrong.

The Bible is “*a laver*.” The same Book that is a mirror to show us our sinful nature, also reveals the remedy. The laver of the tabernacle provided water for cleansing from the defilement that would make the priests unfit to serve in the presence of God. So, Christ cleanses His church (people) “*with the washing of water by the Word*” (Ephesians 5.26). In Psalm 119 verse 9, David tells us that a young man is cleansed from his ways “*by taking heed*” to the Word of God. Jesus told His disciples that they were “*clean through the Word*” that He had spoken unto them (John 15.3).

The Bible is “*food*.” We are told that “*man doth not live by bread [daily food] only, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD*” (Deuteronomy 8.3). It is said to be milk for babes and strong meat for men (Hebrews 5.12-14).

The Bible is “*a fire*.” The effect of fire is to purify the things with which it comes in contact. The Word of God purifies the hearts in which it is found. Like the warmth of fire, the Word of God warms the hearts where it enters.

The Bible is like “*rain and snow*” coming down to water the earth, and like “*seed*” that is scattered about in the earth. It is like “*a hammer*” that breaks the rock in pieces. It is also “*a sword*” – “*piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4.12).

May the Lord grant unto us that His Word will have these effects and bring these blessings unto us in the new year.

A NEW YEAR THOUGHT

The ninetieth Psalm may be one of the oldest pieces of writing in the world. It was probably written after one of the chastisements laid by God upon His people in the wilderness on their way to Canaan. It contains seventeen verses, and there are seventeen references in them to time. Ten periods of time are named: morning, evening, night-watch, yesterday, days, years, generations, seventy years, eighty years and a thousand years. All of these are set in such a vivid light as to show us how rapidly time flies, how frail we are, and how long-suffering God is towards us.

The Psalm very beautifully begins by revealing the true and unchanging refuge of the believer, and it closes with the believer's prayer to God. It is a very sweet and suitable prayer in view of the changing and fading nature of all earthly things.

"Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (verses 13-17).

Friendly Companion 1993

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**A GOOD BEGINNING BUT A SAD END**

Joash was only seven years old when he became king of Judah. Jehoiada, the godly high priest, taught him to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. Joash wanted to repair the house of the Lord, which had been broken down. A chest was placed at the gate of the temple and the people put in their offerings. Then the money was given to workmen, and they faithfully did the work.

Jehoiada died when he was a hundred and thirty years old. He was buried among the kings because of all the good that he had done toward the Lord and His house.

After the death of Jehoiada, Joash went to ungodly princes for advice. He began to serve idols. The Lord sent Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, to warn him, but Joash would not listen. He did not remember the kindness of Jehoiada toward him but slew his son, Zechariah.

The Lord sent enemies against Joash. He had great diseases, and then his own servants conspired against him and slew him. He was not buried among the kings.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was placed at the gate for the offerings?
2. To whom did Joash go for advice after Jehoiada died?
3. Whom did the Lord send to warn him?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Joash.
2. In the house of the Lord.
3. Seven.

Contributed

*“The LORD
look
upon it,
and
require it.”*

2 Chronicles 24.22

BIBLE LESSONS**A TERRIBLE JUDGMENT**

Opposition to God and His choice of leaders for His people is a common occurrence. God's choice of Joseph over his brethren caused them to reject him. Aaron and Miriam rose up against their brother Moses. Pride and envy have worked so much evil amongst the people of God.

One day, a man named Korah began to think evil of Moses and Aaron. Korah's father and Moses' father were brothers, making Korah a cousin to Moses and Aaron. Belonging to the tribe of Levi, Korah was responsible, with other Levites, for performing service for the tabernacle. It was a very honourable position.

The house of Aaron was chosen to be the priests and to offer the sacrifices. Aaron was anointed to be the high priest to present the sacrifice in the most holy place of the tabernacle. When Korah saw Aaron and his sons go into the tabernacle, while he and the other Levites had to remain outside, he became very envious of them.

Korah began to share his thoughts with other eminent men of Israel. Two close friends, Dathan and Abiram, were soon poisoned with the same evil thoughts as Korah. Dathan and Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben. They became very envious of Moses, thinking that he had taken too much authority to himself.

These three men found two hundred and fifty princes who were famous among the tribes of Israel, their names being well-known throughout the camp. Wicked men are emboldened when they have great numbers to support their cause.

Approaching Moses and Aaron, they said, *"Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"* Moses, who had once talked with God face to face, now fell upon his face before them. Moses knew that while these men were speaking against him, they were, in truth, speaking against the Lord.

Moses told Korah and all those with him that, *“Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are His, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him: even him whom He hath chosen will He cause to come near unto Him.”*

Moses told all the company to take censers on the next day with fire and sweet incense. Aaron was to do the same, and the Lord would make known who was holy and whom He had chosen. Moses then spoke to Korah, *“Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? ... and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?”*

Moses also commanded Dathan and Abiram to come up to the tabernacle. They rebelled even more by sending word to Moses, *“We will not come up.”* They murmured against Moses, charging him with deceit and pride. They complained that he had led them out of Egypt to make himself a ruler over them. They added that he had failed to bring them into the land that flowed with milk and honey. See what wicked men will do! They blame others for their own sin and failings. You may remember from the last lesson that it was their unbelief which prevented them from entering the promised land.

The anger of the Lord burned against Korah, Dathan, Abiram and all those that followed them. Moses prayed that the Lord would not destroy all the people for the sin of Korah, who had instigated it all.

Moses was told to warn the people to depart from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. He added, *“Touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.”* The people believed Moses and quickly departed from them on every side. Moses then said, *“If these men die the common death of all men, ... then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up,*

with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD."

Korah, Dathan and Abiram hardened their hearts; even when they saw all the people depart from them. They stood in the door of their tents in a very defiant, haughty manner. Suddenly, the ground moved under their feet, and the earth opened, so that these men, along with their wives and children, were hurled down into the depths of the earth. The Lord indeed made a new thing to happen; the earth opened and swallowed them up. What a terrible sight it must have been! How terrible to hear their screams of terror as they sank down! Suddenly all was quiet, as the earth closed over them.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 16.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who began to think evil of Moses and Aaron?
2. Which two friends joined with him? What tribe were they from?
3. Moses knew these men were really speaking against whom?
4. When Moses warned the people to depart from Korah, Dathan and Abiram, what did he add? (12 words)
5. What new thing did the Lord make to happen?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them.
2. Longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.
3. Forty.
4. They would perish.
5. Joshua and Caleb. Because they gave a good report.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY DAYS OF SAMUEL MEDLEY

Samuel Medley, the well-known hymnwriter, was born in a village called Cheshunt in the county of Hertfordshire, approximately fifteen miles north of London, on June 23rd, 1738. His parents were God-fearing people, members of the local Baptist chapel. The father of Samuel Medley had his own school, and he would have taken care that his son had a good education.

Samuel was apprenticed in the cloth trade which he very much disliked. Eventually, when seventeen years of age, he joined the Royal Navy. This would have caused his parents a lot of sorrow, as it was generally known that the behaviour of those seamen was not good. But God had His purposes to deal with young, adventurous Samuel. While onboard the ship *Buckingham*, he had the position of writing down the events that were taking place. During a ferocious battle against the French fleet, someone called up to him, "You are hurt, Mr. Medley."

He replied, "I think not," until he looked at the lower part of his leg, which had been terribly injured. He was soon taken down and placed in the sick bay. The physician told him that amputation would be the only thing that could save his life, but he would confirm it the next morning. That very night, God taught Samuel Medley how to pray as a guilty sinner. He spent the whole night crying unto God to be merciful to him, to spare his leg and his life, and to save his soul. When the physician arrived in the morning to check on the condition of his leg, he could hardly believe what he saw. He exclaimed that a miracle had been performed, for the leg was greatly healed.

When the ship returned to England, Samuel went to live in London with his godly grandfather, Mr. Tonge, where he continued to convalesce. Sadly, he was already beginning to backslide into the ways of the world, and he found life with his aged grandfather rather tiresome. His grandfather tried to warn him of the evils of the world and the dangers of pursuing a mad

career in sin. One Lord's day evening, much to young Samuel's grief, his grandfather read to him a sermon preached by Isaac Watts from the text of Isaiah 42 verses 6 and 7, "*I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.*" During the reading of this sermon, the Holy Spirit worked powerfully in the heart of Samuel Medley, convicting him of being a guilty sinner before a holy God. There was a great and real change wrought of God that led him to feel his need of the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. He was now very willing to hear men such as George Whitefield preach. He went with his grandfather to the Particular Baptist chapel in Holloway, London, where Andrew Gifford was the pastor. He was enabled to make a public profession of his repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus, being baptized by the pastor in December 1760. He was twenty-two years old.

As his leg was not fully healed, Samuel Medley was limited in what he could do. Eventually, he established a school which proved to be very successful, but the Lord had another purpose for him. Over the next few years, an exercise burdened him concerning the ministry. His pastor spoke to him about this, and eventually he was sent forth by the church to preach the glorious gospel. His first pastorate was in Watford, Hertfordshire, where he laboured for four and a half years. He still continued running a school, but he felt very weary with all his heavy labours, feeling that he could not continue in this way. About that time, he received an invitation to preach at a chapel in Liverpool. His ministry was so greatly blessed of God in that place that the church asked him to become their pastor. Feeling this was of the Lord, he accepted. His pastorate commenced in January 1772 and was only terminated with his death twenty-seven years later. The Lord greatly blessed his ministry at Liverpool. A new chapel had to be built, which was one of the largest in England.

Samuel married Mary Gill, and they were blessed with eight children. His only son, also called Samuel, became one of the founders of University College, London.

Samuel Medley is most remembered now as a hymnwriter. It became his custom to compose hymns where the theme was upon the text he preached from. He often repeated the last line of each verse. There are twenty-seven of his hymns in Gadsby's selection, with, perhaps, hymn number 9 being the most well-known.

A.T. Pickett

A WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE

In a quiet little cottage on the far, distant shores of the Baltic, lived a godly widow named Bertha Schmidt. She lived with her only son, Karl, who supported her by working at the trade of a carpenter. Karl was twenty-eight years of age, and he was indeed a good son with a tender heart. He had been engaged for a long time to a worthy young woman. Through the blessing of the Lord, Karl had prospered. It was now winter, and he had just been united in marriage to his beloved. The happy bridal group returned from the church to their little cottage home, and the evening passed away joyfully.

But the morning brought a fearful change. A hostile army was approaching the city of Stralsund and might be looked for at any hour. In every home there was gloom, in every heart fear and trembling. The day passed in dreadful suspense, and night closed in over the still watching, praying, fasting city. As night deepened, a terrific storm of snow and wind came which made the scene still more desolate and fearful. But how was it within the widow's cottage? For a while, Karl had busied himself with barricading the doors and windows, so as to offer some obstruction to the rude soldiers. He had done the best he could to defend his mother and his bride. Then he sank down into gloomy silence, while his young wife sat by him, pale and trembling. The aged widow sat with her eyes fastened upon her

book, and seemed lost to all around her. At length, she raised her eyes, and a bright smile beamed upon her countenance as she repeated these lines:

Round us a wall our God shall rear,
And our proud foes shall quail with fear.

“What, dear mother,” replied Karl, “Is your faith as strong as that? Do you really expect that God will build a wall round our poor hut, strong and high enough to keep out an army? I wish I could believe it till the hour comes; it is terrible to wait in this state of mind.”

“Has not my son read,” replied the mother, “that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father; that faith has stopped the mouths of lions, and turned aside the edge of the sword?”

Karl made no reply, and the little family sank again into a sad silence. Just before midnight, there was a lull in the storm, and they heard the great clock striking the hour of twelve. At the same moment, they heard the faint sound of martial music from the opposite direction – the fatal time had come. The little family drew closer together, and as the aged mother returned the pressure of her son’s hand, she again repeated:

Round us a wall our God shall rear,
And our proud foes shall quail with fear.

The music drew nearer, mingled with a confused sound of trampling and shooting. Soon shrieks were heard; the crackling of flames and the crash of falling houses told them that the work of plunder and destruction was going on. But no hostile foot invaded the widow’s dwelling; it stood quiet and unharmed amid the uproar, as if angels were encamping around it.

At length the tumult died away, the storm ceased, and a death-like silence fell upon the scene. After waiting several hours, Karl ventured to open a shutter. The light came dimly through the snow, which was heaped to the very top of the

window. He cautiously opened the door, but here again a wall of snow met his view, and he was obliged to cut his way into the open air.

When he had done this, he stood silent with astonishment and awe at the sight before him. Huge drifts of snow had completely encircled the cottage, and made it in appearance a mere mound of snow, with no sign that a human habitation lay beneath it. Not even the steep roof or the chimney had betrayed the secret. They had indeed been hidden by a "wall," and had dwelt safely in the pavilion of the Most High. Karl led his aged mother out to behold her "wall of faith." The godly widow wept as she looked up to heaven, and she gently exclaimed: "*He is faithful that promised*" (Hebrews 10.23). He also hath done it."

Reader, have you such faith when danger is near?

Little Gleaner 1892

THE FRIGHTENED ATHEIST

In the early days of America, a banker from Virginia was travelling on horseback through the state of Kentucky. He carried with him bank notes that had a value of 125,000 dollars. It was a very large sum of money for that time. This man was the chairman of a noted infidel club. Infidels were atheists; they claimed that there is no God and despised His holy Word.

After some time, the banker came to a lonely forest where robberies and murders were said to be frequent. Then, he took a wrong road and became totally lost. The darkness of night quickly overtook him, and he did not know how he could escape from danger. Amidst his great fear, he suddenly saw a dim light in the distance. Urging his horse onward, he came to a miserable-looking cabin. When he knocked, the door was opened by a woman who said that her husband was out hunting, but he would be returning soon. She felt sure that he would be happy to allow the man to stay in their cabin for the night. The gentleman tied up his horse and entered with feelings that can be better imagined than described. He was alone and carrying

a large sum of money; perhaps he was in the house of one of the robbers who had become a terror to the country.

In a short time, the man of the house returned. He looked very rough, with a deer-skin hunting shirt and a bear-skin cap. He appeared to be exhausted and was not in a talkative mood. To the atheist, all this seemed to bode no good. He felt in his pockets for his pistols, and placed them so as to be ready for instant use. The owner of the cabin asked the stranger to retire to bed, but he declined, saying that he would sit by the fire all night. Again, the man urged him to get some sleep. However, the more he urged, the more the atheist became alarmed. He felt sure that this would be his last night on earth, but he was determined to defend himself to the best of his ability. His infidel principles gave him no comfort. His fears grew into a perfect agony. What was to be done?

At length, the backwoodsman rose. Reaching up to a shelf, he took down an old Book. Then he said, "Well, stranger, if you won't go to bed, I will; but it is my custom always to read a chapter of holy Scripture before I go to bed."

What a change those words produced! Alarm was at once removed from the banker's mind. Although he had proclaimed himself to be an atheist who did not believe in God, he now had confidence in the Bible. He felt safe. He felt certain that the man who kept an old Bible in the house and read it, and who bent his knees in prayer, was no robber or murderer! He listened to the simple prayer of the quaint man, and at once all his fears were gone. He lay down in that rude cabin, and he slept as calmly as he did under his father's roof.

From that night, the banker ceased to deny God and to revile the Bible. He often related the story of this eventful journey as the best proof he could give of the folly of infidelity. Atheistic theories may appear believable enough on paper, but they often break down under the strain of actual experience and real life. *"And He led them on safely, so that they feared not"* (Psalm 78:53).

Sunday School Messenger

A SERMON TO ONE HEARER

Lyman Beecher (1775-1863) was a Presbyterian minister in America. On one occasion in the middle of winter, he was asked to exchange pulpits with a country minister. The day was very wet and cold. The snow was thick on the road, which made travel very difficult. Still, the minister urged his horse on, and he eventually arrived at the church.

He placed his horse in a shed for shelter and went into the church, but no one was there. He waited for some time, but still no one came. Then he decided to go and sit in the seat behind the pulpit.

Soon, the church door opened, and a young man walked in. He looked around and then sat down. No one else came. Mr. Beecher now wondered whether he should preach or not. He felt that since he had come to preach, he had no right to refuse because only one man had come to hear the sermon. He then went through the whole service; praying, reading, singing and preaching, with only one hearer.

When he had finished the service, he came down from the pulpit to speak to the man – but he had disappeared and was nowhere to be seen.

Mr. Beecher often thought about that strange service and wondered who the man was. Twenty years later, he went to a small town in another state, and a man asked if he remembered him. “No, I don’t remember you,” replied Mr. Beecher.

“I suppose not,” replied the man, “but we spent some time together in a church during a storm.”

“I do not remember. When was it?” asked Mr. Beecher.

“Do you remember preaching in a place twenty years ago to just one person?”

“Yes, indeed I do, and if you are that person, I have been wanting to see you ever since,” replied Mr. Beecher, grasping the man’s hand.

“I am that man. The Lord used your sermon to save my soul, and I have also become a minister.

If God blesses one person through a sermon, we should thank and praise Him. *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18.20).

From Strange Events in the Lonely Cabin by R. Cameron-Smith

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

"WHO TEACHETH LIKE HIM?"

Whether you call it study or lessons, surely most will agree that it is much better to have a teacher. I realise that more and more learning now comes through online programs, etc., but there is no substitute for an in-person teacher. If that is so for the lessons of this life, how much more must we need a Teacher when it comes to the Word of God!

It is almost fifty years ago when my late dear father took for a text at Eastbourne the words of Job 36 verse 22: *"Behold, God exalteth by His power: who teacheth like Him?"*

"Who teacheth like Him?" is really the subject for my first Bible Lesson. So, how would you answer that question? Have you proved that there is a God who takes pains with poor sinners in teaching them the way of salvation? When Nicodemus visited the Lord Jesus by night, he said, *"Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God."* Now, do we know anything of this divine Teacher? He has gifts and graces above all earthly teachers, but then His subject is above all earthly subjects: *"Ye must be born again."*

It is surprising how much there is in the Bible about teaching and learning, as well as lessons about many things, so that the hymnwriter was led to pen:

Apply Thy Word that rules must give,
And teach us lessons how to live,
And firmly to believe.

Gadsby's 1134 verse 2

One of the things that makes a good pupil is to have some understanding of our ignorance – which may seem like a strange

thing to say! I am sure you know that those who think they “know it all” often do not, and are certainly not ready to learn. Again, in the book of Job, Elihu says, *“That which I see not teach Thou me”* (Job 34.32).

Another requirement to be a good learner is the fear of the Lord: *“What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose”* (Psalm 25.12). Many years ago, there was a lady attending Eastbourne Chapel, and that word was the whole compass of her religion. She could not speak of much else, but I believe she had the right credentials for heaven. You see, if you have the Lord to be your Teacher, He, and He alone, can give eternal life. *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life”* (John 10.27, 28).

As I said earlier, there is much in the Word of God regarding teaching, and the psalmist is no exception. In Psalm 34 verse 11, there is this blessed invitation: *“Come, ye children, hearken unto Me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”*

Now this heavenly Teacher never fails to improve His pupils: *“I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go”* (Isaiah 48.17). You will not need any other to help or guide you. He is all-sufficient. *“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him”* (1 John 2.27). This word may relate to those who are called to preach, but it will be well if you can pray for the ministers and ask God that what they preach will indeed come from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Then your soul will be fed, and you will learn good gospel lessons.

The Lord Jesus was an excellent Teacher, and we have some examples left on record. There is one in Matthew 22.15-22 (and in Mark 12.13-17 and Luke 20.20-26), being the account of the Pharisees seeking to entangle Him in His talk. What a lesson He gave them, so that *“they marvelled, and left Him, and went*

their way." There is a lesson for us too, when Jesus said, "*Shew Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*" Here He gives us a double lesson.

First: "*Render therefore unto Caesar...*" Here is something which hymn 1134 above touches on: "Apply Thy word that rules must give, and teach us lessons how to live." We are to pay our taxes, rates, etc. as rightly demanded by the authorities. In my professional life as an accountant, I have been surprised by some, professing to be Christians, who were very reluctant to pay their income tax.

Second: "*and unto God the things that are God's.*" Here, my dear young friends, is a most important lesson which affects our hearts, rather than just our minds. O how we need to "*Give unto the LORD ... the glory due unto His name...*" (see Psalm 96.7-10). May you be helped to withstand the continual barrage imposed upon you by so-called scientists as regards the theory of evolution. There is the need to give God the glory for the creation of all things by His great power and wisdom. Yet, what an exceedingly great mercy it will be if we can give glory unto the Lord for quickening our soul into life. Then we will say by way of exclamation: "*Who teacheth like Him!*"

B.P. Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SICKNESS AND DISEASE. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 9 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who was the first person we read of in the Bible being "sick"? (Genesis 48.1)
2. A man sick of the palsy (paralysis) was brought to Jesus. What did Jesus say to him first? (Mark 2.3-5)
3. Leprosy was normally incurable, but one Syrian came to the prophet Elisha and was healed. Who was he? (2 Kings 5.14)
4. Jesus healed a woman with an "issue of blood" who came and touched His garment. What did He say to her? (Luke 8.43-48)
5. Which wicked king of Judah, as Elijah had prophesied, had a disease of the bowels of which he died? (2 Chronicles 21.15-20)
6. We read of three people who were miraculously cured of a fever. Who were they? (Luke 4; John 4; Acts 28)
7. Of whom did Jesus say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"? (John 11)
8. Which three people in the Bible were smitten with leprosy by God in judgment for their sin? (Numbers 12; 2 Kings 5; 2 Chronicles 26)
9. Which two godly men in Scripture were afflicted with boils? (2 Kings 20; Job 2)

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
2. "Save His people from their sins."
3. "I came not to send peace, but a sword."
"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
"I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."
"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."
4. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19.10)
"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." (John 9.39)
"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10.10). The word "they" refers to Christ's sheep.
5. To bear witness unto the truth. (John 18.37)
6. The law. (Matthew 5.17, Isaiah 42.21)
7. "It is finished." (John 19.30)

PRAYER FOR GRACE AND TEACHING

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111.10)

To me, a little child,
O Lord, Thy grace impart;
And make it clearly manifest
Thy fear is in my heart.

Teach me, O Lord, to pray;
Thy Spirit much I need,
That I may call on Thee aright,
And at Thy throne may plead.

I read, Lord, in Thy Word,
That some as young as I
Were by Thy Spirit taught to pray,
And Thou didst hear their cry.

Thus I would venture too;
Thy love is still the same;
And all that now my soul would ask
I'd ask in Jesus' name.

Unworthy though I am
That Thou shouldst look on me,
This blessing I would crave from Thee
In true humility.

Let love and grace abound
In this poor heart of mine,
And may I by Thy Spirit know
That I through grace am Thine.

Then may I live to Thee,
And praise and bless Thee too;
Trusting to Thee, and Thee alone,
To bring me safely through.

S.C., Little Gleaner

The Friendly Companion



“Who hath made man’s mouth? ... Now therefore go, and I
will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”
(Exodus 4.11,12)

February 2021

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Volume 147

February 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	27
Our Front Cover Picture	29
Undeserved Kindness.	30
For the Very Little Ones: The Death of Elisha.....	32
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 13.16.....	33
Bible Lessons: Aaron's Rod that Budded ..	34
Lost on the Moor.....	36
Wintertime	38
Short Biography of the Early Life of Francis Covell	39
Answered Prayer	42
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Learning from the Lord Jesus	43
Bible Questions: Things Which God Used	46
Poetry: Longing to Know the Saviour's Love	48

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By J.R. Rutt

My dear young friends,

Another month of our short lives is gone, never to return. May this thought cause us to reflect on what the Bible teaches, that there is *“a time to be born, and a time to die”* (Ecclesiastes 3.2). The wise woman of Tekoah said to King David, *“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him”* (2 Samuel 14.14).

You may ask the question, “Why do we need to die?” The Apostle Paul, writing to the church in Rome, declares, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6.23). The Bible teaches us that we all have sinned, and therefore, we all must die. When Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, God had warned them before: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely die**”* (Genesis 2.16,17).

Adam is our head (representative); because Adam sinned, we are born in sin and *“shapen in iniquity”* (Psalm 51.5). We are not able to please God because our hearts are sinful. When writing to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul said, *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9.27). So, the Bible teaches us that after we die, we must all appear at the judgment seat of God. One of the old hymnwriters wrote:

Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day,
O wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away.

My dear young friends, it is only God that can prepare you to die. If He does prepare you to die, He will, by the Holy Spirit, give you spiritual life. He will show you that you are a sinner and need a Saviour. He will teach you in your heart that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1 Timothy 1.15). The Holy Spirit will give you faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and this will give you a precious hope in His salvation. You will then become a follower or disciple of Jesus Christ. As you are drawn to Christ, you will begin to understand that you have a heavenly Father, and those lovely words will begin to mean something to you. *"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"* (Jeremiah 31.3).

The Lord Jesus teaches us: *"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6.44). We notice from these teachings that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all involved in our salvation. As the Scripture in the first paragraph states, *"Yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him."* The sacred means used is the precious blood of Christ which washes from all sin.

There is another very encouraging Scripture for poor, seeking souls: *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"* (Luke 11.13) May these precious words encourage you to keep seeking the Lord, and as the apostle puts it, *"feeling after Him"* (see Acts 17.27).

You may be very tempted to think that the Lord will not hear the prayer of one so young, but that is not true. Even the Lord Jesus said, *"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 19.14). May the following hymn be your prayer.

And am I born to die,
To lay this body down?
And must my trembling spirit fly
Into a world unknown?

When from the earth I go,
What will become of me?
Eternal happiness or woe
Must then my portion be.

I must from God be driven,
Or with the Saviour dwell;
Must come, at His command, to heaven,
Or else depart to hell.

Teach me, O Lord, to flee
Thy dreadful wrath severe;
That when the Judge of all I see,
I may with joy appear.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The kangaroo, pictured on the front cover, is a recognisable symbol of Australia. The kangaroo and emu are featured on the Australian coat of arms. Kangaroos have also been featured on coins, most notably the five kangaroos on the Australian one dollar coin.

The red kangaroo is the largest surviving marsupial anywhere in the world. It occupies the arid and semi-arid centre of Australia. The highest population densities of the red kangaroo occur in the rangelands of western New South Wales. A large male can be two metres (6 feet 7 inches) tall and weighs 90 kg (200 lb), and the normal lifespan in the wild seldom exceeds seven years.

Kangaroos are the only large animals to use hopping as a means of locomotion. The comfortable hopping speed for a red kangaroo is about 20-25 km/h (12-16 mph), but speeds of up to

70 km/h (43 mph) can be attained over short distances. It can sustain a speed of 40 km/h (25 mph) for nearly 2 km (1.2 miles).

During a hop, the powerful gastrocnemius muscles (calf muscles) lift the body off the ground, while the smaller plantaris muscle, which attaches near the large fourth toe, is used for push-off. Seventy per cent of potential energy is stored in the elastic tendons. At slow speeds, it employs pentapedal (five legged) locomotion, using its tail to form a tripod with its two forelimbs, while bringing its hind feet forward. Both pentapedal walking and fast hopping are energetically costly. Hopping at moderate speeds is the most energy efficient, and a kangaroo moving above 15 km/h (9.3 mph) maintains energy consistency more than similarly sized animals running at the same speed. Kangaroos are adept swimmers, and often flee into waterways if threatened by a predator. If pursued into the water, a kangaroo may use its forepaws to hold the predator underwater so as to drown it.

The Book of Genesis is quite emphatic that in the first week of history, God created every kind of creature that has ever inhabited the earth. While kangaroos are not mentioned by name, we are told that *"God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind"* (Genesis 1.25). This description certainly encompasses the kangaroo "kind."

UNDESERVED KINDNESS

The following is an anecdote from the book Forty Years in the Wilderness by John Chandler. He tells the story of a time during his youth, when he and four other boys had agreed to go and steal some grapes from a vineyard.

The vineyard we were going to rob was on the Yarra River. We started on our way after dinner, as I had to attend to my horses in the morning. We went down Simpson's Road and through Cole's garden. The vineyard was on the other side of the river, and we took a native canoe which belonged to the

garden in order to cross the river. The canoe was made out of an old hollow log with the middle burned out. The bottom was round, and it was kept from rolling over by those in it balancing themselves. The five of us had to sit in single file on sticks placed across the canoe. The middle boy used the paddle, which is in one piece and broad at both ends – this gives a rolling sensation as he uses first one end and then the other. It is not unpleasant if you have confidence, but very dangerous if you have not; you must by no means lose your presence of mind in order to keep yourself balanced. It did not matter much to the natives if they did capsize, as they were as much at home in the water as on the land. However, only two of us boys could swim. If we had capsized the canoe, we would have gone to the bottom like a stone. But we had no thought of any danger. How hard and thoughtless is the human heart! We were all spared, although on a sinful errand, and we got safely across.

We had just begun to help ourselves to grapes in the vineyard, when the owner came upon us. My first impression was to run, but he did not seem a bit angry. He asked us to stop and hear what he had to say. He was very sorry that we had not come in by the gate and asked him for grapes. He told us that we were doing ourselves more harm than we were doing him, for we were committing two sins – Sabbath-breaking and stealing. He then referred to God's great mercy in sparing us on our dangerous voyage across the river. He wondered how we got safely over, seeing we knew nothing about how to manage a canoe. Afterwards, he invited us up to his house and gave us as many grapes as we could eat. He did not upbraid us any more, but told us we had better go around and take the punt (ferry) home. We were so ashamed and sorry, that we said we would take the canoe back to the owner.

I am sure this kindness did us more good than any threats or punishment. I have never robbed a garden since. We took the canoe back, and I went home with a sting in my conscience. I felt very unhappy. This old gentleman was a true Christian.

Adapted from Forty Years in the Wilderness by John Chandler

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE DEATH OF ELISHA**

When he first became king of Israel, Jehu obeyed God. He slew the wicked family of Ahab and destroyed the worship of Baal. But Jehu did not continue to serve the Lord. He worshipped the golden calves that Jeroboam had set up many years before.

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, reigned next. He also did evil and worshipped the golden calves. The Lord was angry with Israel and allowed the Syrians to oppress them.

Joash, his son, was the next king. Like his father and grandfather, he worshipped the golden calves. At that time, the great prophet Elisha was dying, and Joash wept over him. Elisha told him to take a bow and arrows. Elisha put his hands upon the hands of the king. He told Joash to shoot an arrow from the window, saying it was *"the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria."* Then, Elisha told him to strike arrows upon the ground, and Joash did so three times. Elisha was angry that he did not strike them many times. He said that Israel would beat Syria in battle only three times.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jehu worship? (3 words)
2. Who was dying when Joash was king?
3. What was he told to shoot from the window?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. A chest.
2. Ungodly princes.
3. Zechariah.

*“And Elisha
put his
hands upon
the king’s
hands.”*

2 Kings 13.16

BIBLE LESSONS**AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDERD**

When we read of the deaths of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families, we often forget that they were not the only ones God slew in His just wrath on that day. Two hundred and fifty princes who associated with them were also destroyed when fire fell upon them from the Lord. They thought they had a right to offer incense unto the Lord as much as the sons of Aaron. When Nadab and Abihu offered with strange fire, they were destroyed by fire from the Lord. These princes of Israel now suffered the same judgment.

Eleazar, who would soon become high priest in the place of his father Aaron, was commanded to take the brasen censers by which the two hundred and fifty princes had offered incense and make plates to cover the brasen altar. These plates would be a memorial and a warning to the children of Israel *“that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company.”*

When Moses told the people to depart from those wicked men, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, he expressly warned them to *“touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.”* The very next morning, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, *“Ye have killed the people of the LORD.”* They had touched something far worse than the possessions of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They had touched their spirit! They murmured!

Whenever you and I speak ill of God's servants or of His people, we have also touched the spirit of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Although God may not destroy us, as He did them, we can be sure that He is very grieved with us.

As the congregation was murmuring against Moses, they looked toward the tabernacle. They saw a cloud was covering the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared. God spoke unto Moses, *“Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.”* Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the Lord.

Moses saw that God's wrath had gone out to afflict the people with a deadly plague. He instructed Aaron to take a censer, put fire from the brasen altar in it, and burn incense to make an atonement for the people. The Bible tells us Aaron did just as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the people. *"And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed."* Fourteen thousand and seven hundred people lay dead in the midst of the camp.

Lest Aaron's position as the high priest should still be questioned, the Lord commanded Moses to have every tribe take a rod. They were to write the name of the leading man of each tribe upon the rod. Aaron's name was to be written on the rod for the tribe of Levi. Moses was to take the rods and lay them up before the Lord in the tabernacle.

The Lord told Moses that the man's rod whom He had chosen to be the high priest would blossom, a sign of fruitfulness. Twelve dry sticks were laid up before the Lord in the tabernacle. The next morning, Moses went into the tabernacle and brought out the rods for the people to see. They had all looked the same the night before, but in the morning, one of the rods was different. It *"budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."* It was Aaron's rod! God had clearly made known His choice.

The Lord commanded that Aaron's rod be brought back into the tabernacle *"to be kept for a token against the rebels."* It would be a witness to take away the murmurings of the people.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 16 verses 26 to 50 and chapter 17.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people touch of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? (2 words)
2. What did God afflict the people with? How many died?
3. What happened to one of the twelve rods? (12 words)
4. Whose rod budded?
5. What was this rod to be kept for? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Korah.
 2. Dathan and Abiram. Reuben.
 3. God.
 4. *"Touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins."*
 5. The earth opened and swallowed them up.
-

LOST ON THE MOOR

Many years ago, on a bleak, stormy day in the depth of winter, a minister set out from a Dartmoor village for another village on the other side of the moor where he was expected to preach. It would have lengthened his journey several miles to go by the main road. Therefore, he decided to go across the moor by the grass paths. They were plain enough in clear weather, but could be difficult to follow when it was foggy.

The minister travelled some distance with a light heart, thinking he knew the way. Then, he somehow strayed from the path and became lost among the furze (prickly shrubs), heather and huge boulders with which the moor abounds. By this time, it was almost night, and he wondered what to do. To stand still would only make matters worse; therefore, he pushed on through the mist.

After continuing for about half an hour, he came to a small grove of trees, where he paused. There seemed nothing to

guide him, and he might be getting further from his destination rather than nearer.

Finally, he knelt down under the trees, and sought the guidance of that God who had never failed him in the past. While doing this, he felt an assurance that help would come.

In a nearby village, there lived a highly-esteemed captain. He was always ready to assist anyone, and God often found him work to do.

On the evening in which the minister was lost, the captain sat by his fireside, feeling very thankful that he had a comfortable home and that there was no need for him to go out into the storm. In a moment, however, a thought flashed into his mind. He quickly rose and said to his wife, "I am going out, but I shall not be long."

"Where can you be going on such a night as this?" she asked. "Do stay in where it is warm."

Yielding to her persuasion, he resumed his seat, but not for long. He rose a second time, saying, "I feel that God has something for me to do." Again, his wife convinced him to stay, but he became restless. He could not settle down to read.

At last, taking up his hat, he remarked, "I have a deep impression that God wishes me to go and help someone in distress. I have not the slightest idea who it can be, but I must go out and see."

With these words, he left the house, and wandered up a narrow lane which led on to the moor. He had not been walking more than ten minutes, when, as if by instinct, he stood still to listen and look around.

"What is that?" he said to himself. "It sounds like the voice of someone who is in trouble, and it seems to come from the place with trees. I will go and see."

Quietly he crept along until he came near enough to see a man kneeling in prayer, and to hear these words: "Lord, I am Thy servant. I am engaged in Thy service; and, as Thou knowest, I have lost my way, and know not where I am. Be pleased to send someone to help me."

The captain at once stepped forward and gave his hand to the minister, saying, "I am your helper. God has sent me."

The minister then told his story, and the captain, in return, told his. The captain led the wayfarer to his own home and told his wife that this was the man God had sent him to help. The minister was given dry clothing, a good supper, and a warm bed for the night. They thanked God for the wonderful deliverance.

When morning came, the minister felt refreshed and went on his way rejoicing. He believed more fully than ever in the efficacy of prayer. The captain was given another illustration that the Lord will find work for those who are willing to serve Him, and He will make them a blessing to others.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1889

WINTERTIME

The well-known minister, F.W. Krummacher, of Erfurt, Germany, once visited a sick woman in her home. The woman was in a very depressed mood. Mr. Krummacher knew that she was a God-fearing woman and wondered how he could help her. He knew well enough that of himself he could do nothing, but being a servant of the Lord, he wanted to speak a word in due season to one that was weary. In quiet prayer, he sighed to the Lord for help and light. He then tried to comfort her with the promises the Lord has given in His Word, but it did not help at all. After praying with her, he prepared to leave.

By this time, he himself became dejected, because he had so hoped that God's promises would revive her hope and faith. He walked back and forth through the room and looked through the windows into the large garden, which was covered with snow. He saw fruit trees, bare of leaves, shaking in the raw, cold, winter wind. Suddenly, he realised that these impressions in his mind came from God.

He said to the dejected woman, "Those trees are so barren; I see nothing but black branches without leaves and without fruit. Why don't you have them cut down?"

The woman answered in great surprise, "How can you say such a thing? When spring comes, they will form new buds and bear fruit again. If you think those trees are dead, you are certainly mistaken!"

The minister looked at her solemnly and said, "You have a solution for those trees, but not for yourself. Also, in your heart, you can see no leaves or fruit; it is as cold as winter and as barren. However, do you not believe that your faithful God, who in nature gives spring after winter, is the same who will give spring after winter in your heart by the working of the Holy Spirit?"

All was quiet for a while. Then he said to her, "Come now, don't you trust the Lord any longer? Has He ever put to shame His children who call upon Him in spiritual winters, and allowed them to perish in the cold?"

The woman remained silent a while longer. Then her face changed, and she said, "You are right, minister, I will wait. Peace will return again, because God is faithful; His promises will never fail."

Greatly cheered, Mr. Krummacher left the woman. He knew that the darkness was already clearing up, and soon her restless soul would exclaim, "*Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God*" (Psalm 43.5).

Adapted from For the Generations to Come, Volume 1

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF FRANCIS COVELL

Francis Covell was the pastor at Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, West Street, Croydon, South London. He was one of the most loved and respected Strict Baptist ministers in late Victorian England. He was highly esteemed for his faithfulness, both as a minister of the gospel and also as a pastor over the people who sat under his ministry.

Mr. Covell was a native of Croydon, his ancestors having lived there for more than two hundred years. He was born in 1808, when the town was very small. His father ran a hardware shop in the high street, and their living quarters were behind the shop.

He was brought up to attend the parish church. From the time he was a boy, Francis had convictions of sin. If he had done anything wrong, he went into a secret place to pray and vowed not to do it again. He watched over his words and set about a general reformation. He became satisfied with his own righteousness and believed that his religion was pleasing to God. One Lord's day, he walked up the aisle of the parish church, thinking that "if the people only knew how holy I was, they would think me a good young man indeed." That very day, he went to his bedroom to repeat the set forms of prayer, when the Lord suddenly opened up to him the true state of his heart before God. "All my sins, my secret sins, lies, over-reachings, and things long forgotten passed in review before me, and oh the depravity, evil and corruption I saw heaving, moving and working in my wicked heart! I cried, I groaned, I roared, I prayed for mercy. I needed no one to tell me that I deserved hell; I felt it." Francis wandered in the fields and lonely places, praying, "*God be merciful to me a sinner,*" and shedding thousands of tears of sorrow.

About this time, his father sent him to work in London to improve his knowledge for his business career. While in London, feeling his utterly-ruined state before God, it pleased the Lord to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to his soul as the Saviour of sinners. A sweet hope was raised by the Holy Ghost that Christ was his Saviour. He was filled with joy and peace in believing, and he walked in this sweet enjoyment for some months.

This inward teaching of the Holy Ghost led him to become very dissatisfied with the preaching of the Church of England. Each weekend, he returned home and went with his parents to the church. However, the time came when he could no longer

attend, for his soul yearned after a living ministry with unction and power. His father was not happy about this and accused his son of thinking that he knew better than the parson. He told him either to give up his new beliefs or to leave the house. The Lord graciously sustained Francis in this sad trial by the words, *"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up"* (Psalm 27.10). Soon after this, his father was taken ill. Then he relented of his treatment of his son and received him back with affection.

Although he attended various places of worship, Francis felt that much of the ministry was dry and formal. One day, a friend suggested that he should go to a Strict Baptist Chapel in Gower Street, London. William Gadsby was the preacher that particular day, and he took for his text, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8.28). Francis felt such a wonderful blessing, with his own case being traced out, and the truth being preached. From that day on, he was united in heart with the Strict Baptists. He tried to get the people with whom he worshipped at Croydon to have such men preach as Gadsby and Warburton, but was unsuccessful. Therefore, he left the chapel and met with his wife in their own home for reading and prayer. In the following four or five years, they were joined by ten or twelve others.

Soon after this, Francis began to be exercised about the ministry himself. He felt such a love to the Lord Jesus that he wanted to declare to others the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. This continued for about seven or eight years. Then, the little group that had started meeting together at his own house, began urging him to speak a little from the Word of God. He was extremely reluctant, and there was also an apparent impossibility in the way. He was afflicted with a terrible stammer in his speech. At times, even the customers in his shop could not understand what he was trying to say. This was such a barrier that he tried to give up all thoughts of preaching – but he could not. He became more and more deeply exercised in

the matter. It just would not go away. He told the Lord that he could not speak with such a great impediment, but the Lord answered, "*Who bath made man's mouth?*" That broke the snare, and with much fear and trembling, he attempted to speak for the first time the very next Lord's day. Then something remarkable happened. As he began speaking, his stammer completely disappeared, and it never came back. Everyone present was astonished. What a miracle!

Word got around, and the little group increased in number so much that they had to find a larger place to gather. First, they met at a chapel called "Ebenezer," but that also became too small for the increasing numbers who attended. They were able to purchase a plot of land in West Street, where Providence Chapel was built. He continued as pastor until his death in 1879.

A.T. Pickett

ANSWERED PRAYER

Mr. Francis Covell, pastor of Providence Chapel, Croydon, and his wife Elizabeth had five children. Two of them died in infancy, and the eldest son was afflicted from the age of two years until his death in September 1879. Mr. Covell's beloved wife died after a very short illness in June 1870.

The afflicted son was a source of great trial and anxiety for them, and he required much care. It was Mr. Covell's prayer for many years that, if it was the Lord's will, he might be present at the death of his son. The Lord graciously answered his petitions by taking the son to Himself a few weeks before Mr. Covell.

The first time Mr. Covell preached after the death of his son, he said, "Just to show how God answers His people's prayers, although He often sorely tries their patience first, I must touch upon something in my own case. I mean my poor boy's death, though I cannot say very much about it, for it is a very tender point with me ... No one knows the many petitions I have put up that God would spare me to see the dear boy's end, for I

knew that nobody would care for him, and bear with him as I did, neither could anyone be expected to; but I have often kicked against it till the last three months, when I have felt such submission to the Lord's will, and that if He did take me first, all would be well. And now His time was come to deliver him, and to answer my three petitions, which were: that I should be with him at the last, that a medical attendant should be also present at his death, and that he should be spared much suffering."

A short time later, a fellow minister came to see him. Mr. Covell said, "And now God has answered all my requests, and I have nothing to live for but to enjoy Him. I think of a morning when I get up, if the Lord were to come and say to me, 'Now, Covell, I have come,' I should reply, 'Here I am, any minute, Lord.' It is not that I want to die to get out of trouble, not that, for I have every earthly comfort; but oh, to see Him! Oh, to be near Him! Oh, to be like Him! Oh, to get at Him! Oh, to bask in His smiles! Oh, to get at the Fountain! Oh, to have a look from His eyes, and a smile from His face! – what is all below to this?"

Francis Covell passed away on November 26th, 1879 after a brief, intense illness. Some of his last words were, "I'm so happy, so happy – it's all ordered well! All ordered well!"

Taken from Gathered Fragments in the Life of Francis Covell

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

LEARNING FROM THE LORD JESUS

Last month, I ventured to bring out a few things from the Bible about teaching. The purpose of teaching is that the recipients of that teaching may learn. There are some important truths in God's Word which are based on the subject of learning.

We cannot do better than to start with the well-known invitation of the Lord Jesus: "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ...*" (Matthew 11.28,29). If we are

taught in the school of Christ, this is how we must learn: *“Take My yoke upon you.”*

What a wonderful way to learn! Joined to the sacred Teacher by His yoke – this means to walk with Him, and this is the best way to learn of Him. It means leaving what you and I wanted to do, and where we wanted to go, and submitting ourselves unto Him.

O that my load of sin were gone!
O that I could at last submit
At Jesus’ feet to lay it down,
To lay my soul at Jesus’ feet!

Gadsby’s 1019

The Saviour gave a number of specific instructions for learning, such as: *“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Matthew 9.13). An important lesson – but how slow we are to learn this: *“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”* How often we look to works for our justification before God, but it will not do. He says, *“I will have mercy.”* How the poor publican blessed God for this! And *“this man went down to his house justified rather than the other”* (Luke 18.14).

“Now learn a parable.” You can find it in Matthew 24 verses 32 and 33. Here, in just two verses, Jesus gave His parable, and simply expounded it, so that the meaning was clear. Ah! *“Who teacheth like Him?”* (Job 36.22)

Neither is the Old Testament silent in these matters. In Isaiah 1 verse 17, it says, *“Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”* Perhaps some of you feel to need more help than others to learn your subjects in school or college (or at home). I am sure a living child of God will often have to plead, *“Lord, help me”* (Matthew 15.25), in Christ’s school, and some lessons just do not come

easily. Indeed, sometimes our rebellion is a hindrance, and then the Lord will chastise us:

He shall by means like these
Thy stubborn temper break;
Softened thy heart by due degrees,
And make thy spirit meek.

Gadsby's 872

The late Mrs. Lois Dobell, former matron at Tunbridge Wells Bethesda Home, told some of us that one wintry season, her car turned (rolled) over on the ice. She stepped out unharmed, but that very verse spoke to her, and then she knew why it had happened. It is a mercy to recognise the Lord's correcting hand upon us and to understand why He has applied it.

Two Scriptures from the Epistles illustrate the effect of good teaching upon poor sinners:

1. *"But ye have not so learned Christ"* (Ephesians 4.20). This was addressed to those who had not been left to walk *"in the vanity of their mind"* (verse 17). It is a warning to us! Has the Lord shown you a little of the natural vanity of your mind? Now I must give you the complete word, for it is very comprehensive: *"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus."*

2. *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4.11). This is a lesson which may take many years, even a lifetime, really to learn.

Now, just a warning from the Word of God. The Apostle Paul begins 2 Timothy chapter 3 with those well-known words: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."* He goes on to speak of some sad characters who were *"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (verse 7). What a terrible thing! This will never happen if the Lord Jesus is your Teacher.

Next, there is a wonderful text in Hebrews chapter 5. Did you know that the Saviour "had" to learn things while here upon

this earth? Yes, He did, but He was willing to do it for love's sake, for He had undertaken to rescue ruined sinners from eternal ignorance and destruction! *"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered"* (verse 8). This He learned most painfully, all for His dear people's sake, so that poor sinners in due time are led to say:

My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine.

Without this obedience of Jesus Christ, there would be no hope for any of us. Therefore, the Lord Jesus invites poor sinners still – to learn of Him, who learned obedience to God's holy law for us.

Finally, in this life, we learn not only academic lessons, but also gain skills in other areas, such as music. There is a very discriminating word in the Revelation chapter 14 verse 3: *"And they sung as it were a new song before the throne ... and no man could learn that song but the ... redeemed..."* So, the great question is: are we among the redeemed? What a lesson it is if the Lord has shown you, and you have learned a little of this: *"And ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price"* (1 Corinthians 6.19,20). That means redeemed, with Jesus' precious blood, redeemed.

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THINGS WHICH GOD USED. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did David use, in reliance upon God, to kill Goliath?
(1 Samuel 17.40)

2. What three apparently foolish things were given to the soldiers who followed Gideon into battle against the Midianites? (Judges 7.16)
3. The Philistines drew near to battle as Samuel was offering up a burnt sacrifice. What did God use to discomfit (defeat) them? (1 Samuel 7.10)
4. What did God show Moses to use to sweeten the bitter waters of Marah? (Exodus 15.23-25)
5. What means did God use to feed the prophet Elijah whilst he was in hiding by the brook Cherith? (1 King 17.4-6)
6. What did Elisha cast into the water springs at Jericho, which under God's blessing purified them from then on? (2 Kings 2)
7. Some "sons of the prophets" had mixed wild gourds in a pottage (stew) without realising they were poisonous. What did Elisha mix with the pottage so that it became harmless? (2 Kings 4)
8. What did God command should happen, after which the walls of Jericho would fall down flat? (Joshua 6)
9. In which four of the plagues which were sent upon the Egyptians did God use an abundance of living creatures? (Exodus 8, 10)
10. Jesus used spittle (spit) as a means miraculously to heal three people. Who were they? (Mark, John)

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Jacob.
2. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."
3. Naaman.
4. "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."
5. Jehoram.
6. Simon Peter's wife's mother; The son of the nobleman at Capernaum; the father of Publius (Luke 4.38,39; John 4.46-54; Acts 28.8).
7. Lazarus (John 11.1-4).
8. Miriam, Gehazi, Uzziah (Numbers 12.10; 2 Kings 5.25-27; 2 Chronicles 26.16-21).
9. Hezekiah, Job (2 Kings 20.7; Job 2.7)

LONGING TO KNOW THE SAVIOUR'S LOVE

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3.5).

Come, Thou Holy, blessed Spirit,
Glorify the Lord in me;
Then shall I reject all merit,
And enjoy true liberty.

Once I laboured to be holy;
Thought I ought to keep the law;
Strove to keep the precept wholly,
And from thence some comfort draw.

But, alas! The ground was rotten;
All deceptive were my schemes;
Till anew of God begotten,
Then I left my fleshly dreams.

Now I long to see the Saviour
In His Godhead and His grace,
And participate the favour
Poured upon His chosen race.

Come, Thou ever-blessed Spirit,
Shed the Saviour's love abroad;
Then shall I in truth inherit
The rich fulness of my God.

H. Fowler

The Friendly Companion



“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart:
and merciful men are taken away, none considering that
the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”

(Isaiah 57.1)

March 2021

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Volume 147

March 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	51
Our Front Cover Picture	52
A Dollar's Worth.....	54
The Holy Scriptures	55
For the Very Little Ones: Amaziah, A King who Would not Listen	56
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 14.11	57
Bible Lessons: The Temptation at Kadesh	58
The Life-Giving Word	60
"It Shall not Return Unto Me Void"	61
The Bible in the Trunk.....	62
Short Biography of William Cowper	63
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Knowledge.....	66
Bible Questions: Sowing and Reaping	69
Poetry: Hope, the Anchor of the Soul	72

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Many of our readers have likely been given a Bible as a gift at some time in their life. Perhaps some of our younger readers have received it from the Sunday School they attend. Others may have received one from their parents or grandparents to mark a certain birthday or a special achievement in their life. Some of you may have received a Bible for a memorisation project that you completed.

When such Bibles are presented, it is customary for the giver to write on the front inside cover or first page the name of the person to whom it is given, along with the date it is given, and the occasion for which it is presented. Often, the giver will also add a Bible verse or text that expresses his or her desire for the person receiving the Bible.

Through the years, the Editor has had many Bibles sent or brought to him for rebinding. We have been amazed to read the loving and prayerful desires that have been written in the Bibles. We cannot help but wonder if the sincere wishes of the givers have been fulfilled in those who have received the Bibles.

There are certain texts which seem to be preferred more than others. For example, Proverbs 3 verses 5 and 6: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."* Also, Isaiah 55 verse 6: *"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."* Another is John 5 verse 39: *"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."* Some other favourites that we have seen are Ecclesiastes 12 verse 1, Matthew 6 verse 33, James 1 verse 5 and Psalm 90 verse 12, all of which are most suitable for such occasions.

While we were in Choteau, Montana, for the funeral service of their pastor, Mr. M. Pickett, we found a Bible on his desk which was given to him by the chapel that sent him out to preach. In the beautifully-written dedication was inscribed Isaiah 41 verse 10: *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not*

dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." We thought it was a very suitable text for such an occasion. We were told by his wife that just prior to him being sent out, his pastor spoke from that text. The following week, a visiting minister at the chapel, knowing nothing of the circumstances, preached from the same text. What a confirmation that must have been for Mr. Pickett, as well as a source of encouragement through the years.

The Editor himself has a Bible on his desk that was given to him by two dear friends from Hope Chapel, Blackboys, when he visited England in February 1989, after he was sent out to preach. The text they wrote on the inside has been a means of encouragement through the years. The text is 1 Corinthians 15 verse 58: *"Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*

Perhaps it would be beneficial if all of our readers, young and old, would look to see what is written in the front of their Bibles by a loving parent, grandparent, friend, Sunday School teacher, or a pastor. Has the prayerful wish of that person really been granted? If so, that which has been written in the front of the Bible will be sweetly, graciously confirmed by what is written in the Word of God itself. It is our prayer that it may be so, and that your Bible will prove to be your greatest treasure and guide through this life.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

.....

Note: The Editor would be pleased to hear from any who received a Bible with a text inscribed that has been a means of help and blessing to them.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

An anchor is a very small part of a boat or ship, yet it is a most necessary part. When a boat or ship comes into the harbour, an anchor is lowered to hold the boat in place. When the Lord

Jesus preached to the people from Peter's boat, He told Peter to go out a little from the shore. Then Peter put out an anchor, so the boat stayed in place while the Lord preached His sermon.

The word "anchor" appears only in the New Testament. There is the well-known account of the great storm, called Euroclydon, when Paul was on the ship bringing him to Rome. The shipmen were afraid they were about to be driven upon rocks, and they cast out four anchors to hold the ship against the fierce winds. Through that dark, stormy night, they were kept safe by means of the anchors.

The only other mention of an anchor is found in Hebrews chapter six, where hope is called "*the anchor of the soul.*" Here, God sets forth His great promises of blessing and salvation, and how immutable (unchangeable) His promises are to His people. *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus"* (Hebrews 6.17-20).

For an anchor to be of any use, there must be some sure, solid ground upon which it can hold. The love of God is a sure ground upon which the anchor, hope, finds a good hold. God said to Jeremiah, *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love"* (Jeremiah 31.3). We are told in Zephaniah that God *"will rest in His love"* (Zephaniah 3.17).

Another ground for hope to take hold of is the death of Christ. Jesus said, *"I lay down My life for the sheep"* (John 10.15). The resurrection of Christ is very good ground for hope to anchor in. By His resurrection, Jesus became the first fruits of all who are raised with Him. He has become their justification before God.

Another ground that hope anchors in is the mediation and intercession of Christ. *"Wherefore He is able also to save them*

to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7.25).

The covenant of grace is very sure ground for faith to anchor in. David’s hope anchored there when he said, *“Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow”* (2 Samuel 23.5).

Hope will also anchor in the sure ground of God’s mercy: *“His mercy endureth for ever”* (Psalm 136); His mercies are *“new every morning”* (Lamentations 3.23); *“He delighteth in mercy”* (Micah 7.18); *“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy”* (Psalm 147.11).

Every promise of God is very sure ground for hope to anchor in. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* (Titus 1.2)

This hope must be joined with faith and love, which God gives freely to poor and needy souls. What a blessed anchor it is in all the trials and storms of life.

A DOLLAR’S WORTH

The first Bible that was printed in the United States in the city of Philadelphia was the work of Mr. Robert Aitkin, a godly bookseller of that city. Soon afterwards, a man came into his bookstore and enquired if he had Paine’s *Age of Reason* for sale. After a little conversation, he perceived that the man was an atheist. He told him that he did not have the *Age of Reason*, but he had a better Book, which he usually sold for a dollar. He would lend the Book to him if he would promise to read it. Mr. Aitkin added that, after he had actually read it, if he did not think it worth a dollar, he would take it back again.

The stranger consented, and the bookseller immediately put one of the new Bibles into his hand. The atheist smiled when he saw what Book he had promised to read. However, he confessed that he had never read it before, and he said he would fulfil his promise.

After some weeks, having finished reading the Bible, the man returned to the bookstore. He expressed his deepest gratitude to Mr. Aitkin for his recommendation of the Book. With emphasis, he said that it had made him *a happy man*, for he had found in it the way of salvation through Christ Jesus.

Mr. Aitkin rejoiced with him. He had the satisfaction of seeing this reader of the Bible, from that time to the end of his life, bearing the character of a consistent Christian, and dying with the full hope of eternal life.

Oh, beloved reader, there is much more than a dollar's worth of value in the Bible! What would all the riches in the world avail if you had the gloomy prospect of hell staring you in the face? What would it all be worth in comparison to being able to say, on solid, Scriptural grounds, "Christ is mine, and I am His"?

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1879

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Young people, **do** value the Bible! Oh, do value this Book! Read it, bend your knees to God, and ask Him to give you understanding in it, that it may be life to you. Eschew (cast off) every contradiction of it; read it, and may you believe it to be given by the inspiration of God, and therefore it is "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3.16).

Whenever we take up a human book, we may ask, "Can I receive every word of this?" And we may be critical properly. When we take up this divine Book, then we may say, "I believe, or should believe, every word, for '*every word of God is pure.*'" It is absolutely free from all error of every sort and kind.

May we value it, cleave to it, follow it... Be it the light of God in our understandings, be it the life of God in our souls. Its maxims may we follow, its teachings receive, and may the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word to us.

J.K. Popham

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**AMAZIAH, A KING WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN**

Amaziah was king of Judah while Joash was king in Israel. Amaziah called his army to go and fight the Edomites. He also hired the army of Israel to help them. The Lord sent a man to warn Amaziah to send them back to Israel, or he would lose the battle. Amaziah told the man of God about all the silver he had paid to the army of Israel. He answered, *"The LORD is able to give thee much more than this."* So, the army of Israel was sent back.

The Lord gave Amaziah a great victory, but he was not thankful. Instead, he brought the idols of Edom back to his home and worshipped them. A prophet of God was sent to warn him, but he would not listen.

Amaziah became proud of his strength. He wanted Joash to meet him face to face in a battle between Judah and Israel. The army of Judah was smitten and fled. Joash brought Amaziah back to Jerusalem, and he broke down part of the city wall. He also took away gold and silver from the house of God, and he took Amaziah's treasures.

QUESTIONS:

1. Whom did Amaziah and his army go to fight?
2. What did he bring back to his home? (4 words)
3. In what way did he want Joash to meet him? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. The golden calves.
2. Elisha.
3. An arrow.

Contributed

*“But
Amaziah
would not
hear.”*

2 Kings 14.11

BIBLE LESSONS**THE TEMPTATION AT KADESH**

The wilderness through which the children of Israel wandered for forty years was divided into sections. When they first came out of Egypt, they passed through the wilderness of Shur. Then, they continued through the wilderness of Sin, the wilderness of Sinai, the wilderness of Paran and finally, the wilderness of Zin. In each of these places, the people experienced trials, afflictions and the deaths of many among them. The Bible does not tell us about everything they endured during the long forty years, but the events that are recorded are for our own instruction and admonition.

After the sad rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the children of Israel came to Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. Here Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died and was buried. It is very sad that she is perhaps most remembered for her rebellion against Moses and the dreaded disease of leprosy that came upon her. However, you may also remember that it was through Miriam that the mother of Moses (and her own mother too) was brought to Pharaoh's daughter, so that she was able to care for Moses during those important early years of his life. When Pharaoh's army was destroyed in the Red Sea, Miriam led the women in singing songs of praise unto the Lord.

While the people were at Kadesh, they again found themselves without water. What a hard way it was! What hard hearts they had! They soon complained to Moses with fearful words: *"Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink."*

After all the forty years of care and provisions, judgments and deaths, they had not learned the goodness and faithfulness of their God. The manna fell every day at the appointed time. The bitter waters of Marah had been sweetened for them to drink. The

rock in Horeb had been smitten, and the water flowed out and followed them. It is very easy to say, “the Lord will provide.” But, when everything appears against it, how hard it is to believe!

Moses and Aaron were afraid for the people. They feared the Lord would destroy them. They went up to the door of the tabernacle and fell upon their faces in great humility before the Lord. The Lord made His presence known by His glory (an exceeding bright light) appearing unto them.

The Lord spoke unto Moses, *“Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.”*

In Horeb, Moses was told to strike the rock; now he was told to speak unto it. With all the congregation before him, Moses rose up in anger against them. The Bible tells us that *“it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips”* (Psalm 106.32,33). Oh, the evil things we say and do when our spirits are provoked! Even the meek Moses fell under the temptation.

How sharp were his words: *“Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?”* Moses lifted up his hand with the rod. He needed only to lift up his voice! With great strength, he smote the rock; not once, but twice. We might think that his disobedience would prevent the water from flowing, but we are told, *“the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts.”* Tens of thousands of people, along with their flocks and cattle, had sufficient to drink.

The Lord was very displeased with Moses and Aaron. He charged them with the great sin of unbelief by failing to speak to the rock: *“Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”*

These waters were later called Meribah, which means “waters of strife.”

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 20 verses 1 to 13.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who died at Kadesh?
2. What was Moses commanded to do to the rock?
3. What did Moses do to the rock instead?
4. In what way did the water come out of the rock?
5. What were the waters called?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Their spirit.
 2. A deadly plague. Fourteen thousand and seven hundred.
 3. It "*budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.*"
 4. Aaron's.
 5. "*A token against the rebels.*"
-

THE LIFE-GIVING WORD

There was a certain private in the British army who was serving in France. He did not find it easy to speak with others, but he knew his Bible well, and he also knew something of the power of the Holy Spirit. One night, it was laid upon the soldier's heart that he ought to go and visit a certain man and speak with him about the salvation of his soul. He did not have any clever or persuasive words to say. In fact, almost the only thing he felt able to do was to repeat some passages of Scripture to him.

The man to whom he spoke did not seem to be much moved, and the poor private went away feeling very cast down. The next day, however, a junior officer came to the private and thanked him for what he had spoken to the other man about his soul. He had overheard the words, and they had been blessed to him. The message of salvation, more or less a recitation of Scripture, was accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost.

That young officer became a bright and shining light; he bore a clear testimony of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Then, as happened so many times in the war, he was shot on the battlefield and died instantly. However, the officer knew the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and was taken to glory.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1915

“IT SHALL NOT RETURN UNTO ME VOID” (Isaiah 55.11)

A Christian lady gave a Bible to a man in her neighbourhood. He was determined to burn it up as soon as she left the house, although his wife begged him not to. His wife left the house for a while, and when she returned, she found that her husband had indeed torn up the Bible and burned it. But, one leaf remained, which had fallen to the ground. She picked up this page, but he seized it from her and threw it into the flames. However, before it caught fire, he saw the text, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24.35).

The following night, the man was very restless, tossing on his bed from one side to another. At last, he said to his wife, “Can you tell me where the woman lives, who gave me the Bible?” His wife knew the address, and as soon as it was day, he went to visit her. He told her what that one text of the Bible had done to him. She kindly gave him another Bible, which he gladly accepted. He went on to read it, and found how a man like himself could be saved. It was not long before that sinful man was changed, and he became a monument to the grace of God.

Adapted from Cheering Words May 1996

THE BIBLE IN THE TRUNK

Three young men, who were eighteen years of age, became room mates at a boarding house. Each of them was studying to become a clerk (accountant). Sunday morning came, and one of them felt a secret desire to get the Bible, which his mother had given him, out of his trunk and read it. At home, he had been brought up to read a chapter or two in his Bible, but now he felt afraid of doing so before his roommates.

At last, his conscience spoke more strongly; he went to the trunk and half raised the lid. Then, the thought occurred that it would make him look overly pious, so he went back to his seat. For twenty minutes, he felt quite miserable, feeling that he was doing wrong in being ashamed of reading Word of God. He went to the trunk a second time and laid his hands upon the little Bible. Then, overcome with the fear of being laughed at, he closed the trunk again. As he turned away, one of the other young men laughingly asked, "What is the matter? You seem to be so restless."

Feeling that it was best to be truthful, he told them both the cause of his strange behaviour. To his great surprise and delight, they both answered that they also had Bibles in their trunks. They had secretly been wishing to read them, but they were afraid of being laughed at. They all agreed to get them out and read them together, and they felt much happier as a result.

The following Sunday, while they were all reading their Bibles, two boarders came in from another room. At first, they just stared at the three young men. Then, one of them said, "You have more courage than I have. I have a Bible too, but I have not read it since coming here. Now that you have broken the ice, I will take mine out." The other visitor suggested that someone should read aloud, and they all sat quietly and listened.

That evening, the three room mates agreed to read a chapter together every night at nine o'clock, and they strictly adhered to their intention. A few evenings later, four or five other boarders (for there were sixteen boarders in that house) happened to be in the room talking when the clock struck nine. One of the room

mates opened his Bible to read. The visitors looked on with curiosity, and the custom was explained. "We'll all stay and listen," they said, almost unanimously.

The result was that, without an exception, every one of the sixteen clerks spent time each day and the Lord's day mornings reading the Bible. They were called the "Bible Clerks," and the moral effect upon the house was marked. All of these youths became useful men, and more than one was called to labour in the ministry of the gospel.

This story shows what an influence for good one person, even a youth, may have. No one should be ashamed to do his duty. A hundred hearts may desire to act in a right way, but they only need a leader to set the example and encourage them.

Adapted from Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 1

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper is best known today as a hymnwriter, whose hymns are still found in most evangelical hymnbooks. The best known is perhaps the one beginning: "God moves in a mysterious way." In many ways, this describes the life of Cowper, as he had many mysterious events to pass through and suffered much throughout his life from depression.

He was born in 1731 at the vicarage in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England. His father was the vicar, but he was also chaplain to King George II. Very sadly, Cowper's mother passed away when he was only six years old, which no doubt had an impact on the rest of his life. Soon after this, he was sent as a boarder to Dr. Pitman's school in Markyate. While he was there, he first had a very serious impression of God. He was terribly bullied by a much older boy; he put so much fear into young William that he constantly dreaded meeting him. One day, while sitting upon a bench in great fear of this bully, the words of Psalm 56 verse 4 came to him: "*I will not fear what flesh [man] can do unto me.*" His fear was replaced with a trust in God. There was no more bullying, and soon after, the bully was expelled from the school.

At eight years of age, William suffered from an affliction in his eyes, which he referred to as “specks.” Possibly, it was what we would call “floaters.” His father sent him to live with a Mr. & Mrs. Disney, who were both oculists (eye surgeons), but after two years, they had been of no help to him.

In 1742, at the age of eleven, he was sent to the famous Westminster school in London in order to receive an excellent education, for his father had hopes that William would become a lawyer. He was evidently very studious, but he was also taken up with sports, such as cricket. He would often take long walks by the River Thames, where he enjoyed the nature that was there in abundance nearly three hundred years ago!

At the age of eighteen, he left school and spent a few months with his father. Then, he returned to London as an apprentice to a lawyer, Mr. Chapman. The next few years proved to be extremely difficult for young William, who was venturing out into life. He worked and studied very hard, perhaps too hard, as he was burning the candle at both ends. He fell in love with a young lady, his cousin, Theodora Cowper. They had much in common and spent as much time as they could together, going out for long walks in Hampstead Heath, near where she lived. Sadly, they both displayed traits of violent mood swings. Over their seven years of courtship, they had many a quarrel, falling out with each other and dreading to meet up again, lest the other should be in a bad mood. Theodora’s father could see that this relationship would never work, and he stepped in to end it. They parted and never saw each other again.

About the same time, William’s father died, and one of his best friends drowned while swimming in a river. His delicate nervous disposition became even weaker. William continued relentlessly with his studies, but he was struggling with all of the issues in his life. A vacancy came up at the House of Lords for Clerk to the Journals. Normally, through the influence of family and friends, the job would have been given to him without any interview. But on this occasion, someone else desired the post. This came as a thunderbolt to William, whose nerves were already very fragile. As the day for the interview drew near, he

suffered a complete nervous breakdown and was taken to an asylum in St. Albans. Not only was he in a dreadful mental state, but his physical health was also affected. In addition to that, he was in great soul trouble, being convicted of his sins and fearing there could be no hope at all of being saved.

William came close to utter despair at times, fearing there was no mercy for him. However, the time came when the Lord graciously brought the prisoner out of his prison, from darkness into light, and from the depths of despair into the glorious light of the gospel. He slowly began to recover and felt less dismal. Following a visit from his younger brother, a ray of light sprang up in his heart, as the words “still there is mercy” often filled his thoughts. Then, one day, he described the following in his own words: “The happy period that was to strike off my fetters and to afford me a clear opening into the free mercy of the blessed God in Jesus was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window seat, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The verse I saw was Romans 3 verse 25, where Jesus is set forth as the propitiation for our sins. Immediately, I received strength to believe it. Immediately, the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of my justification. In a moment I believed and received the gospel. Whatsoever my friend Madam had said to me so long before recurred to me with the clearest evidence of its truth, ‘with demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’”

William Cowper never did become a lawyer, but made a career using his gifts as a poet, producing works that became best-sellers in their day. He eventually moved to Olney, where he was befriended by John Newton. Between them, they produced a hymnbook called *Olney Hymns*. When Newton moved to London, Cowper really struggled with the loss, as they had become very close friends. Sadly, the latter years of Cowper were overshadowed with many sorrows and afflictions. He passed away on 25th April 1800.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**KNOWLEDGE**

Having considered teaching and learning, we must go on to knowledge and wisdom. The whole purpose of teaching and learning is to convey knowledge, with the object of making the recipient wise. This month I would like to consider knowledge.

In the Word of God, we first hear of knowledge in a very solemn way, when we read of the fall of man. Indeed, it is bound up in the first commandment God ever gave to man: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying ... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Genesis 2.16,17).

It is solemn indeed that the serpent lured Eve and Adam to an unhealthy thirst for knowledge, with its fatal consequences. Look at the effect of Satan’s lie and his temptation: *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ...”* In a moment, she and Adam had disobeyed God’s command and alienated themselves from their Maker.

Falling into sin is just the same today. Disguise it as you will, sin is the consequence of an unhealthy thirst for this “knowledge of good and evil.” None of us can keep ourselves from falling into sin; thirst for this “knowledge” is so deeply embedded in us. If the Lord touches your heart, quickening your soul into life, it will make you cry with the hymnwriter:

Myself I cannot save;
Myself I cannot keep;
But strength in Thee I fain would have,
Whose eyelids never sleep.

Gadsby’s Hymn 1059

So, did this “knowledge of good and evil” do Adam and Eve any good? Their eyes were certainly opened, but the first thing

they learned was that they were naked. For the first time, they hid themselves from their Creator – why? They knew they had disobeyed His command, and in that sense, darkness now fell upon them – a separation from God.

Dear young people, you are surrounded today by knowledge sources of all kinds. Many of them are unhealthy, and some are downright harmful. Do beware of that spirit that wants “to see what things are like.” It is in us all, but really this desire is just like it was with Adam and Eve. When these desires get hold of us, we should ask this question: “Will I offend God if I pursue after this?”

Many sources of knowledge are lawful and necessary for us to live out our lives in a responsible way. Yet, while there can be a right pleasure in it, do you find that the acquisition of earthly knowledge still leaves you feeling hollow? What about these lines?

Knowledge of all terrestrial things
Ne'er to my soul true pleasure brings;
No peace, but in the Son of God;
No joy, but through His pardoning blood.

Gadsby's Hymn 771

There is another kind of knowledge that is only discovered when God opens our eyes and hearts to understand it. That is God's knowledge of us, as David tells us in Psalm 139 verses 1 to 5. It brought him to say: *“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”* David was humbled in the dust under the glimpse he had of God's knowledge of him, a poor sinner. Yet, through God's mercy, David was shown more than this. He saw that the Lord's knowledge of him was more than just that of one whom He had created, and he acknowledged: *“How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”*

Now, the wonder of God's love to sinners is that before Adam and Eve were banished from that glorious garden of Eden, He gave them hope in the promise of the coming of Jesus Christ: *"And the LORD God said unto the serpent ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."*

In short, the knowledge of Jesus Christ was set before Adam and Eve, though the words were addressed to the serpent. I believe that they were driven out of that garden with a healthy thirst for a very different kind of knowledge – the knowledge of Jesus as their Saviour.

It has pleased God ever since, to call sinful man out of nature's darkness into His marvellous light, granting a desire after Christ, as David expressed in Psalm 42: *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"*

Much of the conflict in the professing church of Christ has been caused by our depraved nature attempting to mix the *"knowledge of good and evil,"* acquired through our fallen hearts and minds, with the true knowledge of Christ, which is only obtained by spiritual revelation. Sin ever hardens our heart and blunts the conscience. Therefore, our deceitful hearts, which are desperately wicked, aided by Satan, who transforms himself into an angel of light, can cause us to think that we have the right knowledge, when it is nothing more than the knowledge obtained by partaking of the forbidden fruit. The test is this – does our "knowledge" bring us to the feet of Jesus?

It is remarkable that the Apostle Paul, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes to the Corinthians: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness [in the creation work], hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4.6). This will bring a sinner to the feet of Jesus.

Now, here is something most precious: *“the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* This is knowledge that truly excels all things else beside, and this is *given* to sin-stricken mortals! The glory of God cannot be revealed to natural eyes. Remember Moses’ prayer: *“I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory,”* and God’s answer: *“Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live”* (Exodus 33.18,20).

Yet, God reveals, in the face of a suffering Saviour, His love to guilty sinners. What glory is there, my dear young friends! Well might the hymnwriter say:

On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally.

Gadsby’s Hymn 766

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SOWING AND REAPING. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

If a farmer sows wheat in a field, he hopes for a harvest of wheat, (not barley or rye e.g.), worth much more than the seed he sowed. These two themes, that the harvest reaped is the same as the seed sown, and yet much more than what was sown, are often referred to in the Bible.

1. Isaac is the first person in Bible whom we read of sowing seed. How many times more did he reap than he had sowed? (Genesis 26.12)

2. What happens to those who “plough iniquity, and sow wickedness”? (Job 4.8)
3. Proverbs 6.16-19 tells of things which God hates. One thing is a person who is sowing bad seed. What does he sow?
4. Write out the solemn warning which the Apostle Paul gives concerning reaping what we have sown. (Galatians 6.7)
5. Jesus spoke of a man who sowed good seed in his field, but later his servants noticed something was wrong. What had happened, and what did the man tell them to do? (Matthew 13.24-30)
6. A farmer would not sow a mixture of different seeds together in the same field. Find a verse in Deuteronomy 22 where God tells the Israelites not to do this and gives the reason why.
7. Jesus spoke of a man sowing seed – but on three kinds of ground where the seed fell there was nothing to reap. What kinds of ground? (Luke 8)
8. Both sowing and reaping cannot always be done in ideal weather. Find a verse in Ecclesiastes 11 where Solomon mentions this.
9. When Ruth came back from Moab with Naomi she went to glean among the reapers. What kind of grain did she gather? (Ruth 2)
10. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Find the reference and write down what lesson Jesus was teaching.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. A shepherd's sling and pebbles from a brook.
2. A pitcher, a lamp and a trumpet.
3. A thunderstorm.
4. God showed Moses a tree which was cast into the waters of Marah to make them sweet.
5. Ravens, which brought Elijah bread and flesh, morning and evening.
6. Salt. (2 Kings 2.19-22)
7. Meal. (2 Kings 4.38-41)
8. The priests should sound with the ram's horn trumpets and the people should shout when they heard it. (Joshua 6.5)
9. Frogs, lice, flies, locusts. (Exodus 8.5-7, 16-18, 20-24; 10.12-15)
10. A deaf man with a speech impediment (Mark 7. 32-35). A blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8. 22-26). A man born blind (John 9).

HOPE, THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every rough and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, and His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood,
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

I trust His righteous character,
His counsel, promise, and His power.
His honour and His name's at stake,
To save me from the burning lake.

When I shall launch in worlds unseen,
O may I then be found in Him,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

Young People's Hymn 153

The Friendly Companion



“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

(2 Corinthians 4.18)

April 2021

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Volume 147

April 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	75
Our Front Cover Picture	77
Eternity..	79
First Impressions.....	79
For the Very Little Ones: Uzziah, the King with Leprosy	80
Colouring Text: 2 Chronicles 26:5	81
Bible Lessons: The Serpent of Brass	82
I Was That Soldier	84
An All-Important Question... ..	87
Short Biography of Joseph C. Philpot	89
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Wisdom.. ..	91
Bible Questions: True and False Worship.	94
Poetry: And Then Eternity.....	96

Front cover photo by Colin Kirton of Worldwide Photos – courtesy of Warren Cardwell – Eternity Production & Design.

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Is there one particular part of the Easter story that you especially love to hear? It is important for us to remember that there could be no resurrection without the cross and the death of the Lord Jesus. He had to suffer sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane, scourging in the judgment hall, and endure the shame of Calvary. He had to bear sin with its curse upon the tree (cross), and endure the sting of death before He could experience the resurrection.

Many of the Lord's people have enjoyed reading about the women going to the sepulchre very early on the first day of the week, wondering who could roll away the great stone from the door of the sepulchre. They were amazed when they found the stone had already been rolled away. It is a beautiful reminder to those who seek Jesus that He is able to roll away all the great stones in their lives.

Some love to read the account of Peter and John coming to the sepulchre. Entering in, they saw the linen clothes that were wrapped around His body, now lying as if they were no longer needed. The napkin that was around His head was now folded and set by itself. What a wonderful account we read of dear John, "...*he saw, and believed*" (John 20.8). Although they saw clear evidence of His resurrection, Peter and John could not perceive how near the Lord was unto them.

As soon as Peter and John left the sepulchre, the Lord made His first appearance to Mary Magdalene, who had stayed behind. Many love to read of the wonderful way in which Jesus made Himself known to Mary by speaking her name. Moments before, she did not recognise Him, but when the Lord speaks the name of one of His people, they know the voice of their Master. He helped her unbelief, He turned her sorrow into joy, and He wiped away her tears. May He do the same for each of you young friends, who, through His grace, may long to find Him for yourself.

One part of the resurrection story that the Lord's people love to think on is the appearance that Jesus made to Peter. We are not told where He met Peter or what He said to him; yet, what a meeting! For three days, Peter felt bitter sorrow, dreadful guilt and foreboding fear. How could the Lord ever forgive such a sinner? Whatever it was that the Lord said to him, we may believe the Lord will still speak something of the same to guilty, self-condemned sinners.

Perhaps, for many, their favourite story is the one of which we have the most detail, when the Lord joined the two who were returning to Emmaus. What a wonderful report we have of that event: *"Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them"* (Luke 24.15). Is that your desire? They expressed their sorrow over all that had happened at Jerusalem with the death of their Lord. Then Jesus began to show them from all the Scriptures how it had been prophesied from the beginning. He made their heart to burn within them as a light began to shine from the Scriptures into their heart. It is lovely to read of the two constraining Jesus to abide with them, and then the clear revelation of Himself when He blessed and broke the bread. How many of the Lord's fearing, trembling people have been blessed and comforted by this story of the resurrection!

The evening meeting in the upper room with His disciples seems such a fitting end to the resurrection day. They were all conversing on the events of the day and the personal appearances the Lord had made to some of their company. What a good thing it would be if that was how we ended the Lord's day! Has He made any appearances to you? They had shut and barred the doors to the room, lest the Jewish leaders should come to arrest them; but suddenly, Jesus stood in their midst, speaking peace unto them. Then, to ease their fears, He stretched out His hands, showing the scars left by the nails, and showed them His side, where the spear had pierced Him. It was a most sacred scene. What unspeakable joy they must have experienced!

Whenever reading those beautiful chapters at the end of each of the gospels, I have often found myself contemplating the beginning of that resurrection day; before the women came to the sepulchre, or the stone was rolled away from the door. Although no eye of man was permitted to see, what rejoicing there was inside the sepulchre, when the Lord Jesus fulfilled the word: *"I have power to lay it [His life] down, and I have power to take it again"* (John 10.18). His sleep had been so sweet unto Him. He waited for the angel to roll back the stone, and THEN he took leave of the grave. He had broken the power of the grave for all His people. *"As a bridegroom coming out of His chamber"* (Psalm 19.5), the Lord left the tomb with the great anticipation of showing Himself to all His dear people.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise;
Christ has opened paradise.

May the Lord make one or more of these resurrection stories a special blessing to us.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The front cover shows the picture of an illuminated sign that was displayed on the Sydney Harbour Bridge at the end of opening ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. It was clearly seen by hundreds of millions of people during the fireworks display.

The Sydney Harbour Bridge in Sydney, Australia, is a bridge that joins north Sydney with south Sydney. People can cross the bridge by car, by foot or by train. There is also a tunnel that goes underneath. The bridge is an important tourist attraction, where tourists can experience the Bridge Climb over the arch or a walk across the pedestrian walkway.

The bridge is 1,149 metres (3,770 feet) long and 49 metres (161 feet) wide. The highest point of the arch is 134 metres

(440 feet) tall. Building began on 19th March 1923 and ended in 1932.

The word “**Eternity**” was displayed on the bridge at the turn of the millennium for the New Year’s Eve celebrations, and also in September of the same year at the end of the opening ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games. It was in remembrance of Arthur Stace, who was a homeless, illiterate former soldier, petty criminal and alcoholic who became a devout Christian in the late 1940s. After his conversion, he spent the rest of his life writing the word “**Eternity**” all over the city in yellow chalk. From 1932 to 1967, approximately thirty-five years, it is estimated that the word was written over half a million times in his distinctive copperplate script handwriting.

For years, the citizens of the city wondered who was writing the “one-word sermon” and why. Every once in a while, someone would claim responsibility for the graffiti, and the newspapers would print the stories.

In 1956, Arthur Stace was a member of the Burton Street Baptist Church, where he also served as the janitor and a prayer leader. One day, the pastor of the church, Lisle M. Thompson, stumbled across Stace while he was writing his chalk message on a sidewalk, and the mystery of the **Eternity** messages all over Sydney was solved.

Stace said that after his conversion to Christianity, he heard a sermon in which the evangelist said, “Eternity! Eternity! Oh, that this word could be emblazoned across the streets of Sydney!” In his simple way, Stace decided to do just that.

He is remembered in Sydney for his nearly forty years of colourful lettering, which was designed to prompt people to think about eternity and their own mortality.

Only two original Eternity inscriptions are known to exist. One is on a piece of cardboard that Stace gave to a fellow parishioner, and it is held by the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The other, and the only remaining inscription in situ, is inside the bell of the Sydney General Post Office clock tower.

Contributed by A. Seymour

ETERNITY

Years ago, I met an old Arab sitting on the beach by the sea at Kuwait and playing with sand as a child. I watched him and asked, "What are you doing?"

"Go away," he said, "I am thinking on eternity."

"And what is eternity?"

Looking at me with deep earnestness, he replied (as the sand slipped through his fingers): "Eternity – eternity – if a bird should carry away one grain of all this sand, one grain a year – when all the sand had disappeared, eternity would just begin!"

Samuel M. Zwemer, D.D. (Friendly Companion 1945)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

While reading the February *Friendly Companion*, some words in the Monthly Message caught my attention. These were the words of the Lord Jesus, "*Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 19.14). Mr. Rutt made the comment: "You may be very tempted to think that the Lord will not hear the prayer of one so young, but that is not true."

This reminded me of when I first began to seek the Lord. I was around thirteen years old, and at that time, I did not know of anyone personally who had been called by grace when so young. Yet, I began to realise that I needed a Saviour, and I had to pray to Him. The devil would tell me that I was too young, and there was no point in praying; but I remembered that the Lord Jesus Himself had said, "*Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not*" (Luke 18.16). This was a great encouragement to me to continue pleading and seeking. (As a teenager, naturally speaking, I would not have liked being referred to as a "little child", but I was willing to be as a little child if only I could find Christ, and He would have mercy on me.) Thankfully, some months later, while I was still thirteen, my prayers were answered, and I did come to feel that I knew Him as my Saviour and my Friend.

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**UZZIAH, THE KING WITH LEPROSY**

The people of Judah made Uzziah king after the death of his father, Amaziah. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-two years. Uzziah sought the Lord when Zechariah was the prophet, *“and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.”*

Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem, and made machines to shoot arrows and great stones from the towers. He had a very large army of fighting men. Uzziah also had much cattle and many vineyards. His name became famous, *“for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.”*

When Uzziah was strong, *“his heart was lifted up”* with pride. He went into the temple of God to burn incense as only the priests were allowed to do. The priests tried to stop him, but Uzziah became angry. Then the Lord struck him with the terrible disease of leprosy. Uzziah had to live in a house apart from others, and he was never again able to go into the house of the Lord.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the prophet when Uzziah sought the Lord?
2. What was Uzziah's heart lifted up with?
3. With what disease did the Lord strike Uzziah?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. The Edomites.
2. The idols of Edom.
3. Face to face.

Contributed

*“... as long as
he sought
the LORD,
God made him
to prosper.”*

2 Chronicles 26.5

BIBLE LESSONS**THE SERPENT OF BRASS**

For nearly twenty years, the Lord led the Israelites in a southerly direction, further and further away from the land of Canaan, the promised possession. It meant that another twenty years would be spent making their way back northward. The forty years of wandering were filled with long, tedious and trying days.

As they made their way back toward Canaan, they came to the country of Edom. The shortest and easiest way to Canaan was through this land. The Edomites were close relatives to the Israelites. They were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother.

The children of Israel numbered in the hundreds of thousands. What an intimidating company they would have made, along with their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle! They would be a great burden on any country they passed through. Thus, Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom, telling him all they had experienced in Egypt and how God had heard their cry and delivered them. Now they were at the border of Edom, and Moses requested of the king, *"Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, and we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders."*

The king of Edom sent the messengers back, telling Moses that they were not allowed to pass. Moses tried to assure the Edomites that that they would only go by the highway, and if they or their cattle drank any water, they would pay for it. This time, the king of Edom came out against Israel with an army of strong men. What a bitter disappointment! They must go the long way around Edom.

In the way around Edom, they came to Mount Hor. As they camped there, God told Moses to take Aaron, his brother, and Eleazar, Aaron's son, up into the mount. Aaron was to die in the mount. What a sad day it was for Moses! His brother had been

such a strong support for him through the years. All of Israel watched as the three men went out of the camp and ascended the mount. Out of the sight of the people, Moses took the high priest's garments off Aaron and put them on Eleazar.

There, in the mount, Aaron died and was buried. God told Moses it was because he and Aaron had rebelled against His Word at Meribah, when they struck the rock instead of speaking to it. When Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount, the congregation knew that Aaron was dead, and they mourned for him thirty days.

As they journeyed away from Mount Hor, the people became very discouraged because of the hard way they were going. The land of Canaan seemed so far away! The hot desert sand seemed to be endless. They had become so weary of the manna that they began to loathe it, and they were parched with thirst. Everything looked bleak. Again, they complained to Moses, *"Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"*

The anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites. Suddenly, fiery serpents that lived in the desert came into the camp. They seemed to be everywhere, and their bite was filled with deadly poison. Soon, those who were bitten began to experience an agonising death. This generation was not as stubborn as their fathers were, and they soon realised their sin. They went to Moses, saying, *"We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us."*

Once again, Moses interceded unto God for the people. The Lord showed His remedy unto Israel. Rather than taking the serpents away immediately, He commanded Moses to make a fiery serpent of brass and to set it upon a pole. When Moses lifted up the pole in the middle of the camp, he told the people that they only needed to look at the serpent of brass, and they would live. They were to look away from the biting serpents on the ground, away from their fellow Israelites who had also been bitten, even away from Moses who had made the serpent of

brass. They must look with a single eye to the serpent of brass that was lifted up. How foolish it would be for one who was bitten, not to look to the remedy that was so near. How solemn if their unbelief should prevent them from obtaining the healing of their body.

What a clear, yet simple, picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Jesus said of Himself, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3.14,15). A little later in His ministry, Jesus added, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [when on the cross], will draw all men unto Me"* (John 12.32).

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 20 verses 14 to 29 and chapter 21 verses 4 to 9.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was made the high priest in place of Aaron?
2. What did God send among the people when they murmured?
3. What was Moses commanded to make for a remedy?
4. What must the Israelites do when bitten? (6 words)
5. What did Jesus say He would do if lifted up from the earth? (6 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Miriam.
2. Speak unto it.
3. He smote it.
4. Abundantly.
5. Meribah.

I WAS THAT SOLDIER

Many years ago, a man named Ralph Newman worked for a farmer in an English village. There was not much respect for him in the village because he only lived for pleasure. His

evenings were spent with a group of friends in bars and dance halls, and he was usually the leader. They had no concern about God and His commandments.

One evening in the bar, the discussion was about a new, young minister who had come to live in their village. "He seems to be a wonderful person," remarked Randall, the wagon-builder. "I hear nothing but compliments about him."

"What do you mean, an excellent fellow?" exclaimed Ralph. "Are you becoming religious? Be careful that he doesn't catch you in his net."

"Worry about yourself, Newman. Perhaps, you will be the one persuaded and brought in by him."

Ralph Newman laughed loudly at the suggestion that he might be found in church and persuaded by one who was just beginning in the ministry. The others also burst out laughing and asked to have their glasses refilled with liquor. Only, this time, Randall did not join in. Newman became more excited and had nothing good to say about the young minister.

Randall reacted calmly to all they said. "It takes no skill to criticise someone behind their back. If you were an honest man, you would say those things right to the minister's face. Go to church once, and after the service, tell the minister what you think of him. Then you can show how much nerve you have."

Ralph hesitated, for he did not know what to reply. Even the others were shocked by Randall's bold challenge. Newman later admitted that this was a most difficult situation. He did not want to have a public clash with the minister, and thus he remained undecided what to do.

"You don't seem to have the nerve to do it, Ralph!" a few of his companions sneered. This taunting became unbearable for Ralph. He was not going to ignore this.

"Friends, if you are willing to go to church with me this Sunday, I will tell the minister exactly what I think about him. Do you agree?" he asked. Most of them did not really want to do this, but to refuse would hurt their pride. Thus, they all agreed to go with him.

It became an unforgettable Sunday in the village. Many people, the minister included, had been made aware of what was to take place during the morning service. All the benches in the church were filled with people, and among them were Ralph Newman and his friends.

The minister was very calm. His text was: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 14.1). He spoke very solemnly about these words. The application was about the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. He said, "My hearers, ... God's own Son was nailed to the cross as a malefactor. He was despised and rejected. A Roman soldier, who was among the mockers, pierced His side. Blood flowed out of the wound. Little did the soldier realise how significant his action was. The precious blood that flowed is the sacrifice for sin. Christ's death was the atonement for sin, and only through His blood can sinners be reconciled unto God."

The service ended, and all eyes were fixed on Ralph. Throughout most of the sermon, he had showed nothing but scorn, but towards the end, the look on his face changed completely. When the minister said, "Amen," Ralph remained silent. He glanced at his companions, but he did not move. It seemed as if he had been struck dumb and lost all courage to speak as he had intended. Just as the minister announced the closing hymn, Ralph sprang to his feet. He cried out, "God, forgive me, I am that soldier!" For a moment, there was complete silence. Then the organist began playing, and the congregation sang the last hymn.

After the service, the minister seated himself next to Ralph on the bench and spoke to him. What they spoke about was only known by them.

Shortly afterward, Ralph left to go to London. He was asked what had brought about such a great change in his life. He replied that an arrow had been shot into his heart when the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was described – the Lord's side being pierced by the mocking soldier and the blood flowing forth pointed to the possibility of forgiveness for the greatest

sinner. Ralph wept and said, "God forgive me, I am that soldier. I am the same as all those mockers. I have crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, because I hated Him!" The former mocker became an evangelist who preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Adapted from For the Generations to Come, Volume 2

AN ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION

The grand point I would keep before you is that we must die; death is the fruit of sin, and we must die because we have sinned. Adam's sin ruined the whole world. The sin you commit is a personal thing; it is your own; it brings condemnation to you.

We must enter into eternity. Is it a question with you: "How shall I enter that inconceivable state?" Eternity, as the word is absolutely used, is God's residence. "*Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy*" (Isaiah 57.15). To us it will be an eternity when we enter upon that state which knows no change. To die is a terrible thought to man; that the body will become corruption and dust. But the soul, the immortal part, *that* remains, that never dies.

The certainty of death came by sin. Can this state of sin be changed? The Apostle Paul tells us how such a change can be made: "*He that bath wrought us [for heaven, for a blessed eternity] ... is God.*" (2 Corinthians 5.5). The Lord Jesus taught Nicodemus, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3.7). God works the change. He is the Author of this great, this marvellous change.

When a person is born again, at the beginning he may not understand what has happened to him; a strange change has come. He sees as never before that there is a God in heaven, and that God is holy. He sees as never before that God is just, and that he himself is unjust. Perhaps you can say, "I did not know God was working in my soul when I became troubled for my sins; I did not know the Holy Spirit was in the work of conviction when He set eternity before me, and I saw the heaven that I could not attain and the hell I deserved."

But now, the witness of the Spirit is given. *“Who also bath given unto us **the earnest of the Spirit**”* (2 Corinthians 5.5). An earnest, you know, is a part. It may be very little, but it is a part of the inheritance and an evidence of it. What is this earnest? The forgiveness of sin, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the powerful witness of the Spirit. *“The Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Romans 8.17). Have you had a little earnest?

When you saw Christ to be just suitable to your case, was there a hope raised that perhaps one day He would be your Saviour, such a Saviour as *you needed*? Do not despise that, do not say it was nothing; it came from heaven. When you were reading the Scriptures, and some passage took hold of you, you felt a hope that it was His Word to you; do not give that up, it came from heaven. When you were afflicted or in perplexity, you prostrated your soul before Him, and poured out your case to Him, and said, *“Lord, help me.”* That was from heaven; it came from the fulness of Christ’s grace; it came out of and from the love of God to you. *“The earnest of the Spirit.”*

Sometimes, you may be enabled to remember many little things (little, as you would speak of them), which came from heaven. I think it is Philpot who says that “put together, they would make quite a respectable heap.” If you put together what you have had in the things that I have named, and other things, you will find you have a witness, an earnest, in your heart.

We come back again to two things before us. Oh, may they be in our hearts now! **Time and eternity.** Time, very short. I have lived, as men speak, a long time; before this year expires (1934), I shall be eighty-seven years old, and how short my life is as I look back! Though there are many things to look back upon, it seems very short. But eternity! I am soon to enter that. What about the change to you, my friends? You say, “I do not know.” Can you ask God to tell you? Do you kneel before Him at times and say, *“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation”*? (Psalm 35.3). What will it matter, in a short time, that we were troubled

on every side? What will it matter that the devil was our sworn enemy and plagued us, pursued us and injured us? What will it matter whether we were poor or rich? The grave extinguishes all these distinctions, and then eternity, eternity!

I remember when I was quite a small child, trying to reckon eternity. I would lie in bed and think about eternity; and then I used to wish in my little mind that there was no God, because I was not fit to stand before Him. Now I think of eternity otherwise. It is desirable, it is desired sometimes. Have not some of you wished the day would come soon when you would be in eternity? Have you not wished that God would make haste? "*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*" Why? God has fitted you for it, fitted you for the change, and given you an earnest of it, the witness of it.

God help us to go to Him with these two things before us: time, in the shortness of it, with the burdens of it; and eternity – where shall we be? In heaven, for which God has made the soul fit; or hell, for which we have made ourselves fit?

J.K. Popham (adapted from Friendly Companion 1946)

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH C. PHILPOT

J. C. Philpot, as he is so often referred to, is best known as the editor of the *Gospel Standard* magazine from 1840 to 1869. When he died, the monthly circulation had risen to 14,000.

He was born in 1802, near the coast in Kent, south-east England, in a village called Ripple. His father was the vicar, and Joseph was one of eight children, of whom only four reached adulthood. He was educated at home until he was nine, when he was sent to a school in London. He had not been there long when he came down with an affliction similar to one which had claimed the lives of two of his sisters. He was sent straight home, where he remained very poorly for some time. Mercifully, his life was spared, but the illness left him with a weak chest that would trouble him for the rest of his life. Although very weak and poorly, he spent a great deal of time in reading all sorts of

books from his father's library. By the age of twelve, he had recovered sufficiently to return to school in London, this time to St. Paul's, where he remained until he was nineteen. It was here that he studied, amongst other things, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, which would be helpful to him years later.

His father fully intended for Joseph to follow his footsteps into the ministry of the Church of England. Having been so successful at St. Paul's, he was offered a scholarship at Worcester College, Oxford University. He pursued his studies rigorously, and three years later, he was rewarded with a First Class Honours in Classics. He remained working at Oxford as a private tutor, but he also continued his own studies, seeking a Fellowship of the college when one became available.

It was around this time in 1825 that Joseph proved what he often quoted while preaching, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD"* (Isaiah 55.8). A wealthy gentleman was returning from London back to his home in Ireland when he called at Oxford looking for a suitable private tutor for his two sons. After spending a few days there without finding one, he gave up and was about to leave, when there was a delay in the departure of his coach. Just at this time, he met Joseph Philpot, and offered him the position virtually straightaway. Joseph admitted that he was tempted by the very high salary and privileges that came with this position. Within a short time, he was over in Ireland. While he was there, two major events took place that greatly affected him. He fell deeply in love with one of the daughters of his employer, with their affection appearing to be mutual. Yet the father, being upper class, would not hear of it. He immediately stopped the friendship and sent his daughter to live elsewhere, while Joseph had to finish his employment. The other event manifested God's mercy toward him as a sinner. To use his own words, "In the beginning of 1827, in the early spring, the Lord was pleased to bring upon me a very great trial and affliction, which I cannot name, but it was one of the greatest sorrows I ever passed through in my life; and it was in and under that affliction that

the Lord was pleased, I have every reason to believe, to begin His work of grace upon my soul, and to do for me the things I have spoken of, in giving me the light of life, planting His fear in my heart, pouring upon me the spirit of prayer.”

When he eventually returned to Oxford, Joseph was unable to continue in the worldly ways of others. The work of grace was continually being deepened. He was ordained as a clergyman in the Church of England and became the vicar of Stadhampton (not far from Oxford) for a few years. He was eventually brought out of that church and cast in his lot among the Strict Baptists. This came about after he met William Tiptaft, who was also a vicar in the Church of England, and had also been called by God’s grace. The two met at a clerical meeting, and a bond of friendship sprung up immediately.

Soon after, William Tiptaft left the Church of England, and a chapel was built at Abingdon, where he preached. On one occasion, John Warburton of Trowbridge was invited to preach at Abingdon, where Joseph Philpot met him for the first time. After long, inward struggles with the inconsistencies in some of the Church of England services, Joseph resigned his Fellowship at Oxford University and his curacy at Stadhampton. He went to live at Allington in Wiltshire, where several months later he was baptized by John Warburton.

He eventually became the pastor of Stamford and Oakham Chapels, where he remained until poor health forced him to retire and move south to Croydon. He passed away in December 1869.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

WISDOM

“Wisdom,” says the Word of God, *“is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom”* (Proverbs 4.7).

There is no doubt that wisdom is distinct from knowledge, the subject I sought to bring before you last month. Let me

point out at once that both true knowledge and true wisdom are gifts of God, and in their perfection, meet in Him. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”* (Romans 11.33).

Knowledge, of itself, cannot make one wise, although this is what Eve foolishly believed under the temptation of Satan. No, wisdom is a gift in itself, that is to be sought for as James declares: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1.5).

Want we wisdom? He must give it;
Hearing ears, and seeing eyes.

Gadsby's Hymn 180

In Proverbs chapter 3, God enlightens us as to the importance and benefits of *“sound wisdom”* (verse 21). Much of the chapter points us to wisdom, but not before two warnings are sounded: *“Lean not unto thine own understanding”* (verse 5), and *“Be not wise in thine own eyes”* (verse 7). To ignore those warnings will only take us further from God, for that is the same spirit as when the serpent beguiled Adam and Eve with *“to be desired to make one wise.”* The real nature of the wisdom which is from above is so different: *“She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her”* (Proverbs 3.15). The Apostle James clearly shows us that there can be no mixing of earthly wisdom with *“the wisdom that is from above.”* As James points out, what a difference there is between them! Regarding earthly wisdom: *“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish”* (James 3.15). Compare it against this: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”* (verse 17).

Solemnly, we find that many unbelievers regard the Word of God as full of partiality, particularly when it does not please them. This is not the case, dear young friends, but rather, the

Word of God is a discriminating word, *“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4.12). See here how wisdom (discernment) is inseparable from the Word as that two-edged sword!

Do any of you remember Mr. Worldly Wiseman in *The Pilgrim's Progress*? He imparted a kind of wisdom to Christian in advising him where he could rid himself of his burden, but it proved to be an awful deceit. Were it not for kind Evangelist who sought Christian out and pointed him in the right direction, one shudders to think where Christian would have ended up. Thus, there are many voices today, especially aimed at you, dear young friends, which falsely claim to point you to a wisdom better than your own. For instance, the promotion of transgender ideology is sold on the pretext of being a radical new view-point on the whole question of gender and sexuality. Those who promote this ideology are very insistent that they are right, and all traditional and other views are wrong. Yet, even now, the evidences of delusion under this Satanic (see the reference to James 3 verse 15 above) influence are becoming increasingly apparent. No wonder that so many are bewildered by these things.

The Word of God has the answer: *“Doth not Wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and My voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of My lips shall be **right things**”* (Proverbs 8.1-6). Here, wisdom is likened to a Person, and as we read on in the chapter, we find that it clearly points to none other than Jesus Christ (verses 22-30 especially). Now, this makes the wisdom of God very precious indeed, and the same

chapter declares: *"I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me"* (verse 17).

There is much emphasis in the Word of God upon wisdom, and how vital it is to be truly wise. Wisdom comprises knowledge, understanding and discernment. How solemn when it is lacking, as for instance when God spoke to Jonah, *"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"* (Jonah 4.11). Though spared for a season, we know that Nineveh was finally destroyed, and its ruins are still evident today.

The Lord Jesus gave a very telling parable in Matthew 25. Well known it is, but has the Lord made us truly concerned about what He teaches in that parable? Jesus makes it very clear that to be made *"wise unto salvation"* is not merely a state of mind, but rather it is to be a possessor. The wise virgins, being enlightened by the wisdom which is from above, *"took oil in their vessels with their lamps."* It was this, and this alone, which made the vital difference when the bridegroom came.

May it be our favoured portion to receive Wisdom – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. *"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name"* (John 1.12).

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about TRUE AND FALSE WORSHIP. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 9 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who in the Book of Genesis "worshipped the Lord," having seen his prayers so clearly answered? (Genesis 24.26)
2. What did Jesus say true worshippers do? (John 4.23)

3. Jesus said of some, "In vain do they worship Me." What was wrong with their worship? (Matthew 15.9)
4. God says, "To this man will I look ...". How is "this man" described? (Isaiah 66.2)
5. A blind man whose sight was restored, worshipped the Lord Jesus. What did he believe? (John 9.35-38)
6. When the wise men came to Jerusalem when Jesus was born, Herod expressed the desire to "come and worship Him also." How do we know that was a lie? (Matthew 2)
7. With what prayer did "a woman of Canaan" come and worship Jesus? (Matthew 15)
8. Satan tempted the Lord Jesus saying, "If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine." What did Jesus answer? (Luke 4)
9. Much of the Book of Malachi is taken up with God's complaints of the worship of Israel, but at the end of chapter 3 and in chapter 4, some gracious encouragements are given to some. How are these characters described?
10. In Isaiah 58 God describes the worship of Israel, which seemed on the surface to be right (verse 2). In your own words, describe briefly what was wrong with it.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. One hundred times as much.
2. Those who "plough iniquity and sow wickedness" reap the same.
3. Discord among brethren.
4. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
5. An enemy had sown tares amongst the wheat. The man told his servants to let the tares and wheat grow together until the harvest and then the tares would be gathered together and burnt.
6. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled." (Deuteronomy 22.9)
7. Seed which fell by the wayside, on stony or rocky ground, and among thorns, never brought forth fruit. (Luke 8.5-8)
8. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." (Ecclesiastes 11.4)

9. Barley. (Ruth 2.17)
10. Matthew 7.16. As the fruit of a tree is always consistent with its nature, so it is with men too. Therefore "by their fruits ye shall know them."

AND THEN ETERNITY

A few more years to sow and reap,
A few more years to smile and weep,
A few more years to wake and sleep,
And then – eternity!

A few more miles for weary feet,
A few more trials yet to meet,
A few more lessons to complete,
And then – eternity!

A little while to watch and pray,
To labour while 'tis called "Today,"
Prepare for heaven while we may,
And then – eternity!

Our life, how soon it will be past!
The golden hours are going fast,
This very day may be our last!
And then – eternity!

As fades the mist before the sun,
As song that dies when just begun,
So passes life – so quickly gone,
And then – eternity!

Thomas O. Chisholm

The Friendly Companion



"All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints
shall bless Thee."
(Psalm 145.10)

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CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	99
Our Front Cover Picture	100
For the Very Little Ones: Jotham and Ahaz	102
Colouring Text: 2 Chronicles 28.19	103
Bible Lessons: Victory Over Sihon and Og	104
Bible Inscriptions	106
One Word.....	107
What You Can Never Catch ..	108
A Wonderful Visitor.....	109
They That Seek Me Early Shall Find Me	112
Short Biography of Augustus Toplady	113
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Revelation	115
Bible Questions: Things Which Please God	118
Poetry: "Thou God Seest Me"	120

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

One very sad evidence that marks the deterioration of society is the use of sinful, vile and offensive language. While certain occupations are known for the use of depraved language, we have heard some of the most offensive language come from those in very prominent, professional positions. It is most distressing to hear children and young people routinely using filthy and debasing words. It suggests that they have become accustomed to hearing such language. We wonder if many of them really understand the meaning of the words they use.

When Peter was charged in front of the Lord's enemies with being one of Jesus' disciples, he began to curse and swear. We cannot help but wonder if that had been his way of life prior to the Lord converting him. In a moment of weakness and fear, he fell into the snare laid for him. He sinned with a solemn oath that he did not know the Lord. Afterward, he felt so defiled and wept bitterly over his conduct!

There were many words that we were forbidden to use when we were children. If our parents heard us say them, we were warned that our mouths would be washed out with soap if they were spoken again. There were times when the warning was acted upon, and we found that soap had a terrible taste. While it put a check upon the words we spoke, it could not cleanse us from the defiling nature of such words.

David knew the remedy that would provide such cleansing. He wrote in Psalm 141, *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing"* (Psalm 141.3-4). May the Lord teach us the vital truth and blessing of this prayer. David wrote again in Psalm 39, *"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me"* (Psalm 39.1).

It is our prayerful concern that our young readers may be delivered from such corrosive language. It is very harmful. When those who are older use such words in conversation, they

wound the conscience of younger ones. In our community, there are many who profess to be Christians, and yet they are caught in this snare. In the Epistle of James, we are warned: *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain"* (James 1.26). James further adds: *"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body"* (James 3.2).

We deceive ourselves when we think that we can praise and bless the Lord while, with the same mouth, we speak and use many words that are unbecoming and very grievous to the Holy Spirit. James also writes, *"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be"* (James 3.10). Note that he is addressing his brethren, or in other words, those who have been called of God and are a part of the church.

Dear young friends, in these days of darkness, profaneness and coarseness, may the Lord keep you from such vices. May He fill your hearts with His Word, that your conversation may be God-honouring and an example to your family and friends.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Imagine for a moment that you are walking through a forest. There are many things that might come to mind, but it is likely a quiet and peaceful scene. However, at this time of year, some forests in North America are humming with a loud, continual, almost melodic buzz. The buzzing is due to cicadas. Cicadas produce a sound of ninety decibels, which is equivalent to that of a lawn mower, or standing within a few feet of a chainsaw.

As seen on the front cover, a cicada bears some resemblance to a locust, although it is a distinctly different species. There are between three and four thousand different species of cicada in the world. The particular cicadas we are considering are periodical cicadas, called magicicadas. Beginning this month,

and continuing through the next couple of months, billions of these cicadas will emerge across parts of the eastern United States. It is part of the largest insect emergence in the world.

These periodical cicadas emerge every seventeen or every thirteen years, hence their name. They are identified by the year in which they emerge in groups, called broods. There are twelve broods of seventeen-year magicicada and three broods of thirteen-year magicicada. Each brood is found in very distinct regions. This year, one of the largest broods is set to emerge, called Brood X. In some places, the cicadas will be so dense that there will be approximately one and a half million cicadas within one acre.

The spectacular phenomenon that will soon unfold is unique to North America. The exact timing of the emergence is based on a number of factors, primarily relating to the season and weather. Nonetheless, they will all emerge at approximately the same time. They will shed their exoskeleton overnight, giving rise to the winged adult form. The adult lifespan is only four to six weeks.

After mating, each female lays hundreds of eggs on small branches, after which all of the adult cicadas die. As the eggs hatch, the nymphs drop to the ground and burrow one to two feet into the soil, where they will spend the next seventeen years. While many scientists try to explain how magicicada evolved their remarkable patterns, we know they were created with them innately programmed. We are told that locusts *"have no king, yet they go forth by bands"* (Proverbs 30:27). These cicadas do the same; having no leader, they all emerge from the ground together. At a time when many are trying to suppress the praises of God, His creation shows forth His handiwork and sings His praise!

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JOTHAM AND AHAZ**

After King Uzziah became a leper, his son Jotham ruled over the people for him. Jotham reigned alone as king after Uzziah died, *“and he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.”* He built cities in the mountains and castles in the forests. The Lord made him a mighty king.

When Jotham died, his son Ahaz became the next king. He was very wicked and worshipped idols. The Lord sent the king of Syria against Ahaz, and he took many people away from Judah as captives.

Then, the king of Israel came against Judah *“because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.”* He killed many thousands of men, and the women and children were taken captive. A prophet of the Lord reproved the army of Israel, saying, *“The fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.”* So, Israel clothed and fed the captives, and took them back to the land of Judah.

Ahaz shut the doors of the house of the Lord and cut in pieces the vessels that were used in the temple. He built another altar on which he offered sacrifices to idols.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who made Jotham a mighty king?
2. Which king was very wicked and worshipped idols?
3. What did Israel do to the captives? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Zechariah.
2. Pride.
3. Leprosy.

*“For the
LORD
brought
Judah low
because of
Ahaz ...”*

2 Chronicles 28.19

BIBLE LESSONS**VICTORY OVER SIHON AND OG**

It must have been a bitter-sweet time when the children of Israel left the camp where so many Israelites had perished from the venomous bites of the fiery serpents. Ahead of them lay the county of Moab. They were not allowed to harm the Moabites because they were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

Thus, they passed over the river Arnon, which served as the border between Moab and the Amorites. Moses rehearsed the way the Lord had led them in the Book of Deuteronomy. He wrote, *"And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession"* (Deuteronomy 2.9).

Entering the wilderness between the Moabites and the Amorites, they found themselves without water to drink. They did not murmur, as in times past, but trusted in the Lord. The Lord showed His knowledge of their need and care for them, and He told Moses: *"Gather the people together, and I will give them water"* (Numbers 21.16). Moses commanded the princes and nobles of the people to dig a well, and soon the people were singing, *"Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it"* (verse 17). What special seasons they are when the people sing praises unto God! At the beginning of the forty-year journey, they sang His praises on the banks of the Red Sea when the Egyptian army had been destroyed. Now, as they neared the end of the forty years, they sang His praises again. It is a sad thought that they lost so many opportunities to sing His praises during those forty years; their unbelief, murmuring and rebellion had prevented it.

The long wilderness journey of forty years was nearly over. The last forty or fifty miles to the border of Canaan remained. Right to the end, there were major obstacles in the way. The Amorites were a strong and evil nation. Moses sent a message to Sihon, their king, asking for permission to pass through the land. Sihon gathered all his people together and went to fight

against Israel. He thought he would drive Israel back into the wilderness.

The Lord helped the Israelites and gave them a great victory. Then the Israelites took possession of all the villages and the city where Sihon had lived. To the north of the Amorites was another strong nation called Bashan. Knowing that Israel had destroyed the Amorites, Og, the king of Bashan, gathered all his people and went out to fight against Israel. Og was a very wicked king, like Sihon was. He and his people worshipped idols and practised all the abominations of the nations of Canaan, for which the Lord had determined to destroy them.

How Israel must have feared, when they learned that the powerful country of Bashan, with their cruel leader, had come out against them! But Israel's defence was that God was watching over them. He spoke unto Moses, *"Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sibun king of the Amorites"* (verse 34).

Israel smote Og and his sons, and all the people, so there was not one left alive. Lest we should think lightly of this great victory that God gave to Israel, Moses was led to record many more details about it in the Book of Deuteronomy. There, he tells us that they took all of the cities of Bashan, which were sixty in number. Moses adds that these cities were fenced with high walls, gates and bars. They also took a great many unwallled towns. Moses gave the land of the Amorites and Bashan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.

Moses further reminded the children of Israel of the character of Og, the king of Bashan. He was one of the few remaining giants. We are told that his bed was made of iron, measuring over thirteen feet long.

What a preparation these two remarkable victories were over such powerful enemies! They only marked the beginning of the battles that were yet to be fought to take possession of the land promised to Israel.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 21 verses 11 to 35 and Deuteronomy chapter 2 verses 9 to 37 and chapter 3 verses 1 to 17.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who dug the well that supplied them water? (4 words)
2. What were the words of the song they sung? (8 words)
3. What was Israel's defence? (5 words)
4. How many cities of Bashan did they capture?
5. To which tribes was the land of the Amorites and Bashan given?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Eleazar.
 2. Fiery serpents.
 3. A serpent of brass.
 4. Look at the serpent of brass.
 5. Will draw all men unto Me.
-

BIBLE INSCRIPTIONS

The children in our family were always given a Bible by our parents as the first gift after we had learned to read, usually about five years of age.

Inside the Bibles, my mother always wrote the following verse, which I have never seen anywhere else. It was a verse passed down by her mother, my grandmother, and was written in her own Bible.

My grandmother was not a lady who was associated with or born into our denomination, nor was my mother, but she treasured her Bible above all other books. My lasting memory of her was on her deathbed; when asked if she had anything to say to us, her grandchildren, she just said, *"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."* I think of that every time I see

this verse that she passed on in the front of her Bibles and was written in ours, and I now write in my children's Bibles.

This book is a golden casket
Where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heaven-drawn picture
OF CHRIST THE LIVING WORD.

My mother always writes "CHRIST THE LIVING WORD" in capital letters!

Contributed

ONE WORD

There once was a man working as part of a construction crew. His co-workers knew that he regularly attended a place of worship and professed to be a Christian. One day, he hit his thumb hard with a hammer, and he uttered a foul word in the agony and frustration of the moment. His co-workers immediately smiled, saying they did not think he spoke words like that. His conscience struck him as he realised the damage he had done.

Although they had never spoken to him about it, the workers had marked how he conducted himself and the language he used. They made note that he was different. When he said something he should not have, they were happy to point it out. When he said that word, just one word, it removed the distinction or separation between them. Although he immediately apologised, his co-workers assured him that he did not need to do so. They were happy that he had erred, and it made him seem more like them.

Whether we are at school or work, those around us will note that we attend a place of worship. They will watch how we speak and act. We know that attending a chapel does not mean that we are saved or are true Christians, but it provides a distinction. To the world around us, it is a mark of separation. They watch carefully to see what difference there is in how we conduct

ourselves. Is there a difference? They expect that those who attend chapel will act differently. How solemn, if they happily note that there is very little, or no difference at all. How we need to watch carefully how we speak and act at all times!

When you are young, especially as you go through your teenage years and early adulthood, you will face incredible pressure from your peers to join with them and conform to their standards. When you face this, may you ask God to show you what is right and never compromise on it! Paul exhorted Timothy, *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Timothy 4.12).

May the Lord grant you grace to be such an example in all your interactions. It is only with the Lord's help that anyone is able to do so. To have an outward distinction from the world is one thing, but it is another to be made different inwardly. While we may conduct ourselves in an exemplary manner, we are truly no different from others unless the Lord changes the heart.

A kind and gentle spirit speaks far more than attending church or a difference in appearance. May the Lord implant His fear in your heart, and may He also keep you from a self-righteous spirit. Paul again writes; *"Only let your conversation,"* or conduct, *"be as it becometh the gospel of Christ"* (Philippians 1.27).

Contributed

WHAT YOU CAN NEVER CATCH

Children, what is it that you can never catch? Even if you were to chase after it as quickly as possible, you can never catch the word that has once gone out of your lips. Once spoken, it is out of your power. No matter what you do, you can never recall it; therefore, take care what you say. *"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise"* (Proverbs 10.19).

Little Gleaner 1889

A WONDERFUL VISITOR

After a very busy day, I settled into a comfortable chair. The children sang the hymn “Abide with me” before going to bed. One of the verses seemed to come with new beauty and power.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,
But as Thou dwellest with Thy disciples, Lord;
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

The thought came, “Suppose Jesus did come to abide; am I altogether prepared to receive Him into my house?” As I meditated on the subject, I fell asleep and dreamed.

The door of the room opened, and in walked One whom I knew at once to be Christ. Not the glorified Redeemer, as seen by John in the isle of Patmos, but in a humble human form; familiar, condescending and patient.

I knelt before Him, but He said, “Arise, for I have come to tarry with you.” In the morning, I gathered my children around me and told them that Jesus had come to stay with us. The little ones were filled with joy, and my dear wife’s face beamed with pleasure. Just then, the Lord Himself entered the room, and we took our seats around the breakfast table. What wondrous peace filled our hearts as He talked with us! Family worship was most memorable, as He opened up the Scriptures.

Then I was filled with perplexity. I worked at an accounting firm, and it would mean great loss to stay away from my office that day. But what should I do with my Visitor? To leave Him at home might be disrespectful; but how could I take Him with me?

The Saviour surely knew my thoughts, for He said, “I will go with you. Did you not say, ‘Come not to sojourn, but abide with me’? So, whatever you are doing, I will be beside you.”

So, I started for my office with the dear Lord by my side. At the accounting firm, I found a man impatiently waiting for me. He was a stockbroker who transacted considerable business for me. To tell the truth, I was not very pleased to see him. I was afraid he might bring up things which I did not feel comfortable

talking about with Jesus listening to our conversation. It was as I feared. He had come to tell me of a transaction he had arranged. It was perfectly acceptable according to the usual code of morals of the share market, but it meant saving myself from loss by placing another person in danger of it. He laid the whole scheme before me without taking the slightest notice of the Lord. I do not know if he even saw Him.

I cannot tell the bitter shame I felt. I saw how impossible it was to make such a transaction by the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." I could not hide the fact that the broker told me of it in a way that meant he had no doubt whatever that I would applaud him for his cleverness and eagerly close with the offer. What must that mean to Christ? Would it not tell Him that I was in the habit of dealing with one thought in my mind – how I could benefit myself? The broker was astonished when I rejected his proposal on the ground that it would be prejudicial to the interest of the other party in the transaction. He left me abruptly, apparently thinking I had developed a mild case of insanity.

Humbled, I fell at the Saviour's feet, and pleaded with Him to forgive my past sinfulness, and to give me strength to transact business honourably in the future.

"My child," He said with a tender voice, "you speak as if My presence was something strange, but I have always been with you. I have seen with grief the way you have dealt with your associates in business, and marvelled at your unbelief of My promise always to be with you. Have I not said, *'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?'*" (Matthew 28.20)

Just as He said these words, another gentleman entered the office. He was a customer whom I could not afford to offend. I had always shown him a cordiality which I did not feel in my heart. He was vulgar, profane and often obscene in his talk. He had not been long in my office before he made use of an expression that brought a hot blush to my face. I had heard him speak in a similar way before, but met it with faint laughter for fear of offending him, even though I felt repelled by it. But now,

this feeling was intensified by the realisation of the absolute purity of the divine One who had been a hearer of the speech. I quickly reproved the gentleman before me, and he angrily exclaimed, "You seem to have suddenly grown very prudish." Then, he left the office in a rage.

Again, I turned to Christ with a cry for pardon. Again, I learned, to my shame, that He had seen all my former conversations with this man.

I was now called into the adjoining office, where my clerks were employed. One of them had made a foolish mistake, which would mean a considerable complication and perhaps loss. I am naturally irritable, and at once, I lost my temper and spoke in very harsh terms to the erring clerk. Turning my head, I saw that Jesus had followed me out of my private office, and was standing close beside me. Again, I was humbled, and had to cry for mercy.

Through all that strange day, similar incidents occurred. The presence of the Master, which I thought would have been a pleasure, was often a rebuke to me. It showed me, as I had never imagined before, that I had conducted my life on the supposition that He had but little to do with it.

But, on the other hand, there were times during the day when my soul was filled with joy; times when He smiled on me in loving approval, when He spoke words of forgiveness, or when He opened before me some fresh beauty of His character and Person.

There was also such a time when we returned to my home. The children came crowding around Him, and I scolded them, saying, "Run away, children! Do not bother the Master with such small things." He seated Himself and took my curly-headed little boy on His knee. Then, He called my two little girls to His side, saying, "*Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*" (Luke 10.16).

Suddenly, I awoke, and it was a dream. However, I was left with a deep realisation of the Lord's presence in our lives. He is always a silent observer of our words and actions. We ought to

conduct ourselves with this in view, *"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He pondereth all his goings"* (Proverbs 5.21).

Adapted from Touching Incidents and Remarkable Answers to Prayer

THEY THAT SEEK ME EARLY SHALL FIND ME

On Dartmoor there stood a lonely farmhouse where a godly farmer lived. The whole family always went to the service on Sunday morning. However, one Sunday, a little girl, age thirteen, was recovering from a cold. The morning was very windy, and her mother decided that she ought to stay at home.

She was all alone in the big, lonely farmhouse. Some time after her parents and brothers and sisters had gone to chapel, two men came to the door and asked if the farmer was in. Nellie told them that he was out, but they could come in and wait, as she thought her father would be back in half an hour.

They accepted the invitation. She gave them chairs by the fire and asked them if they would like a cup of tea. One of the men asked Nellie if she wasn't afraid of being in the house all alone.

She answered, "Oh no, for the Bible says that *'The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them'* (Psalm 34.7). I have just been singing,

'The hosts of God encamp around the dwellings of the just,

Delivering them who make the Lord of Hosts their trust.'

My father believes in God and serves Him, and I desire to do so too, and I know the angels will take care of me." The men seemed uncomfortable and then got up, saying they could not wait any longer. So they went off.

Some months later, the farmer was asked to visit a dying man as he had something to say to him. He told the farmer that he was one of the men that came to the farm that Sunday morning, intending to rob the house. But the little girl's trust in God and

her complete fearlessness had such an effect on them that they felt powerless to touch anything.

Friendly Companion 1995

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

The hymn “Rock of Ages” is one of the most well-known hymns that is still sung around the world. Little did Augustus Toplady realise, when he sheltered from a storm of rain, thunder and lightning within a cleft of a rock face just off the road, that his hymn coming from that experience would be so widely known and loved. What a mercy if we can truly enter into the language of that hymn, singing from the heart and with understanding. Toplady is mostly remembered today for that one hymn, but he did write many more. There are twenty-two of his hymns in Gadsby’s collection.

Augustus Montague Toplady was born in 1740. His father, who was a native Irishman and an officer in the army, died (it is believed of yellow fever) while going to South America at the time that Augustus was born. After moving with his mother to London, Augustus was able to enter Westminster School at the age of nine. It is believed that rich friends of his mother assisted with the school fees. Augustus commenced at this school during the last term that William Cowper was there, and he was taught by the same teachers. One of the teachers, “Vinney” Bourne, was said to be an excellent Latin poet, whom Cowper certainly respected and admired. We wonder what influence this man might have had on both Toplady and Cowper to instil in them a love of poetry, which God later used in the hymns they were helped to compose. Like Cowper, Augustus was very zealous in his studies and very moral in his behaviour. At the age of eleven, he wrote, “I set down these rules: First, I must beware of spiritual pride; secondly, of uncleanness; thirdly, of lying; fourthly, of neglecting that great precept of loving God with all my heart, mind and strength. The love of God consists in a thorough obedience to His mandates, which gives such pleasing

ideas that the soul is transported in a manner beyond itself.” While still in his early teens, Toplady was already producing works of poetry of a very high standard.

After years of difficulty, Toplady’s mother was finally able to gain possession of her late husband’s estate in County Wexford, Ireland. Moving there just before he was fifteen, Toplady continued his education at Trinity College, Dublin. During the summer of 1756, when he was sixteen years of age, Toplady visited his family estate eighty miles south of Dublin. He went to hear a well-known, yet uneducated minister, Mr. James Morris, preach in a barn. Toplady wrote of this memorable time twelve years later: “At night, after my return from Exeter, my desires were strongly drawn out, and drawn up to God. I could, indeed, say that I groaned with the groans of love, joy and peace; but so it was, even with comfortable groans that cannot be uttered. That sweet text, Ephesians 2 verse 13: *‘Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ,’* was particularly delightful and refreshing to my soul; and the more so, as it reminded me of the days and months that are past, even the day of my sensible espousals to the Bridegroom of the elect. It was from that passage that Mr. Morris preached on that memorable evening of my effectual call by the grace of God. Under the ministry of that dear messenger, and by that sermon, I was, I trust, brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God’s people, met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one, who could hardly spell his name! Surely it was the Lord’s doing and it was marvellous. The excellency of such power must be of God and cannot be of man. The regenerating Spirit breathes not only on whom, but likewise when, where, and as He listeth.”

After five years of studying in Dublin, Toplady returned to London and sought to be ordained in the Church of England. Around this time, he became friendly with William Romaine, George Whitefield and John Gill. Sometimes he would hear Gill

preach in the afternoon, and then he would rush over to hear Whitefield preach in the evening.

Following his ordination in the Church of England, Toplady was appointed (preaching) deacon at a village called Blagden, Somerset, where he remained for two years. Sadly, the congregation there was very divided over various issues, and Toplady struggled to try and keep peace. It was while he was there, that the incident of sheltering within the cleft of the rock took place.

In 1766, Toplady removed to become the vicar of Harpford and Fen-Ottery, two small villages in South Devon. After two years, he moved on to become vicar at Broad Hembury, further north in Devon, a position that he retained until his death from tuberculosis in 1778, although he moved to London in 1775 because of ill-health. At London, he regularly preached at Orange Street Chapel, Leicester Square. Augustus Toplady was the editor of the Gospel Magazine from 1775 to 1776.

Toplady was one of the principal opponents to John Wesley's false doctrine that man is saved by his own works (Arminianism) rather than solely by the free grace of God (Calvinism). The opposition that he faced in opposing John Wesley was very bitter, with Toplady often being misinterpreted and misunderstood.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

REVELATION

As you know, the last Book in the Bible is called "Revelation" for short. The full title is "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." In fact, the opening words give a better understanding: *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ ... by His angel unto His servant John: who bare record ..."* (Revelation 1.1,2).

I do not propose to make this lesson a study of the Book of "The Revelation." Nonetheless, you can understand something of the nature of Scriptural revelation as you read through that

last Book. John uses expressions such as these: *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet”* (Revelation 1.10); *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven”* (chapter 4.1); *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude”* (chapter 7.9); *“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel”* (chapter 10.8); *“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven”* (chapter 12.1); *“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw”* (chapter 13.1); *“And I heard a great voice out of the temple”* (chapter 16.1).

Now, you and I may be ready to say that the Revelation given to the dear Apostle John was nothing like anything we might experience. True, but God is still the same God, and He can choose to reveal matters still to His people who are pilgrims on this earth. We have examples in the Word of God, and do not forget that they were all men of *“like passions as we are”* (James 5.17).

The word “revelation” is derived from the verb “to reveal,” which means to uncover something that is hidden. How Daniel proved that God is a God of revelation! *“Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision”* (Daniel 2.19), which later caused the king to acknowledge, *“Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets”* (verse 47). It is noteworthy that the king understood it was Daniel’s God who gave the revelation of the secret, even though he greatly honoured Daniel as a consequence.

God uses many means to reveal His purposes to poor, mortal sinners. What a wonder that He does! When He does, the recipients are often filled with a sacred awe – this is apparent again and again. For instance, consider Manoah and his wife when the birth of Samson was foretold: *“And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have shewed us all these things,*

nor would as at this time have told us such things as these" (Judges 13.22,23).

Then, of course, there was Jacob at Bethel, after the Lord appeared to him in a dream. *"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful"* (full of awe) *"is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"* (Genesis 28.16,17).

Sometimes God used strange means to reveal His purposes. Consider Balaam: three times his ass saw *"the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and His sword drawn in His band"* (Numbers 22.23) and tried to save Balaam from danger. It was when Balaam smote the ass that God performed a miracle, causing the ass to speak in self-defence. We are not left to wonder how matters would have fallen out between Balaam and his ass, because we read: *"Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD"* (verse 31). The whole purpose of this incident was to impress Balaam most deeply and solemnly that *"only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shall speak"* (verse 35).

Many things were revealed to the prophets of the Lord regarding both the present and the future. Not one of the revelations of God proved to be false; all were true and fell out as the Lord revealed them. So, must we not acknowledge that the revelations of God transcend all earthly conceptions? In every case, a deep impression is made on the mind and heart of the recipient, often paving the way for God to work, as instanced in Acts chapter 9, when Ananias was sent to Saul. In a vision, the Lord had said to Ananias regarding Saul, *"For, behold, he prayeth"* (verse 11); yet, Ananias still protested to the Lord, rehearsing the reputation of Saul up to that present time. Then came the divine command that Ananias must obey, *"Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake"* (verses 15,16).

Dear young friends, can you now perhaps think of other instances in the Bible where God revealed His purposes to ordinary, sinful mortals? But the greatest revelation of all is couched in those words in Revelation chapter 1 verse 1, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" The whole of the Word of God is, in effect, the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is described in Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2, "*God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.*" While we may feel, in reading these revelations of God in His Word, that they were special instances of revelation to special people (and so they were), do not lose sight of this, that God still gives revelation of divine things to poor sinners through His Word. He has "*spoken unto us by His Son.*"

A revelation of Jesus on the cross, dying in the sinner's place, will indeed bring forth love, adoration and wonder under a sense of holy, sacred awe in the heart of a trembling sinner. Yea, this revelation is promised: "*And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced*" (Zechariah 12.10).

May this be our cry:

Amidst ten thousand anxious cares,
The world and Satan's deep-laid snares,
This my incessant cry shall be,
Jesus, reveal Thyself to me.

Gadsby's Hymn 399

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THINGS WHICH PLEASE GOD. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. "And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing." What had Solomon prayed for? (1 Kings 3. 9,10)

2. "Children, ... for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Fill in the missing words. (Colossians 3. 20)
3. Who does the Apostle Paul say "cannot please God"? (Romans 8. 8)
4. "When a man's ways please the LORD ..." Complete the text. (Proverbs 16.7)
5. "The LORD taketh pleasure in ..." Whom? (Psalm 147. 11)
6. By what means did it please God to save them that believe? (1 Corinthians 1)
7. What promise does God make to those who "keep My sabbaths, and choose the things which please Me"? (Isaiah 56)
8. Who "had this testimony, that he pleased God," and what did he possess by which he pleased God? (Hebrews 11)
9. "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." What "sacrifices"? (Hebrews 13)
10. On which two occasions did God the Father bear testimony concerning the Lord Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"?

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Abraham's servant.
2. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."
3. The people drew nigh unto God with their mouth, and honoured Him with their lips; but their heart was far from Him. They taught for doctrines the commandments of men.
4. "Him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word."
5. The man believed that Jesus was the Son of God.
6. Herod had no desire to worship Jesus because he slew all the babies in Bethlehem in an attempt to kill Him. (Matthew 2.16)
7. "Lord, help me." (Matthew 15.25)
8. "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Luke 4.8)
9. Those that fear the Lord and think upon His name. (Malachi 3.16;4.2)
10. The worship was not acceptable because the people's conduct (smiting, strife, oppression, causing grief to others) was grieving to God.

“THOU GOD SEEST ME”

(Genesis 16.13)

I'm not too young for God to see,
He knows my name and nature, too,
And all day long He looks at me,
And sees my actions through and through.

He listens to the words I say,
And knows the thoughts I have within;
And whether I'm at work or play,
He's sure to see me if I sin.

O how could children tell a lie,
Or cheat in play, or steal, or fight,
If they remembered God was by,
And had them always in His sight?

If some good minister is near,
It makes us careful what we do;
And how much more we ought to fear
The Lord, who sees us through and through.

Then when I want to do amiss,
However pleasant it may be,
O may I always think of this,
I'm not too young for God to see.

Young People's Hymn 22

The

Friendly Companion



Double rainbow over Lake Michigan, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, USA

“Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.”
Psalm 2.6

June 2021

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Volume 147

June 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	123
Our Front Cover Picture: The Rainbow	125
For the Very Little Ones: Hezekiah	128
Colouring Text: 1 Chronicles 31:21	129
Bible Lessons: Psalm 119	130
Bible Inscriptions	132
A Solemn Admonition	133
The Cobweb in the Corner	134
“Boast Not Thyself of Tomorrow”	135
Short Biography of the Early Life of John Kershaw.....	136
Bible Study for the Older Ones: The Kingdom of God.	139
Bible Questions: Obedience	142
Poetry: Lord, Teach a Little Child	144

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By J.R. Rutt

My dear young friends,

In the gospels, we read of what each of the four evangelists saw and recorded of the life of Jesus Christ. All four of them were witnesses of these things. In the beginning of the gospel of Luke, we read, *"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed"* (Luke 1.1-4).

In John's gospel we read, *"This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen"* (John 21.24,25).

We must always remember that the holy Scriptures are divinely inspired by the Holy Ghost. *"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3.14-17). Everything that we stand in need of for our spiritual good, for our guidance in life's journey, is found in the holy Scriptures. Jesus said, *"Search the Scriptures"* (John 5.39).

I would guide you to the words of John the Baptist to his disciples when he saw the Lord Jesus Christ. *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of*

God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1.29). What beautiful words! What a beautiful description of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: the Lamb of God! A lamb is one of the most helpless creatures. In the Book of Exodus, the Lord commanded Moses to take a lamb and to sacrifice it, and all the children of Israel were to do the same thing. They were to put its blood on the doorposts of their houses, take it indoors, roast it with fire and eat it. That night, the solemn judgment of God was to fall on the Egyptians; every firstborn of man and beast was to be slain. The destroying angel of death would pass through Egypt, and the Lord said, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you"* (Exodus 12.13). No death where the blood was!

The blood of the lamb represents the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was crucified. The destroying angel could do no damage where they were sheltering beneath the blood; he passed over. If, by the grace of God, we are sheltering beneath the blood of Jesus Christ, we are safe from eternal judgment. We read, *"And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1.7). If by faith we *"behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1.29), we shall be eternally safe from the judgment of God for a never-ending eternity.

My dear young friends, this is our chief desire for you, that you may be found in Christ. May your desire be the same as the Apostle Paul: *"That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"* (Philippians 3.8,9). May the Holy Spirit lead, guide and direct you unto Him and grant that you may *"behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."*

We read of our Lord Jesus Christ, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth"* (Isaiah 53.6,7). This is what every true child of God desires to know: were my

sins laid on Jesus, and was He crucified for me? Ask the Lord to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ unto you.

We pray that the Lord will heal and restore your editor, Mr. TenBroeke, and grant him strength to continue.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE: THE RAINBOW

Recently, when on holiday on a very hot, sunny day, we found a beautiful water fountain. As we sat down to look at it, one of the children said, "There's a rainbow in the water!" The hot sun shining through the droplets of water as they fell like rain from the water fountain made the most beautiful rainbow. Sun and water droplets (rain) will always create a rainbow.

In response to the alarming introduction of "Gay Pride Month" in some UK schools each June over the past three years, this article has been written to try and guide our young friends on how to respond in a Christian, yet non-combative way, if they are asked to engage in promoting LGBT activities.

THE RAINBOW: If anyone at school, or elsewhere, shows you a rainbow, telling you that it means something different, remember that God first created it. He calls it "*My bow*" (Genesis 9.13). It belongs to Him, and He meant it as a very precious promise to His people, that He would always watch over them and never destroy the earth by a flood again. It is called a "covenant promise," something that can never change. Hymn 162 in the Young People's Hymnal says:

A sign in which by faith we read
The covenant God with Noah made;
A noble end and truly great;
But something greater lies there yet.

This bow that beams with vivid light,
Presents a sign to Christian sight,
That God has sworn (who dares condemn?)
He will no more be wroth with them.

Thus the believer, when he views
The rainbow in its various hues,

May say, "Those lively colours shine
To show that heaven is surely mine."

It is displeasing to God, and should make us sad, when the symbol of the rainbow is used to show anything beside the covenant love and promise of God, or when it is used as a symbol for sins which God forbids in His Word.

PRIDE: You may hear the word "pride" or "gay pride" linked to a picture of a rainbow with six colours. That is not a true rainbow, for God's rainbow has seven colours. What does the Bible say about pride? Proverbs 16 verse 18 tells us: "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*" Do you remember what happened before God set His bow in the cloud in Genesis chapter 9? There was the terrible destruction of the whole world. God is not mocked, and destruction will come after pride. "*And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them*" (Genesis 6.5-8).

So, we see that God is able to destroy the wicked. While we all constantly sin against God, those who do not believe in Him seem to accept and promote sins more and more, such as the gay pride movement. Those sins are against His Word. God must be looking at our world today in the same way that is recorded in Genesis chapter 6 verse 5. We must not forget that even if God allows this wickedness to continue for a while, at His appointed time, He will come and destroy the wicked.

GOD'S EYE ON US: In verse 8, it says, "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*" It is so important to pray that we may find favour in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was shut safely into the ark of His mercy. May we plead for the precious blood of Jesus to cover us and make us safe when He comes again to destroy this earth. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only way to

heaven. Do pray to be shown that He died for you, to save you from hell – the destruction of the wicked.

Many people spoke against Noah while he was building the ark and were unkind to him. Yet, it did not stop him from listening to the word of God rather than to wicked people. We should be the same, even though it is hard to stand alone. God says, *“Them that honour Me I will honour”* (1 Samuel 2.30).

THE BIBLE: Some people will try to tell you that the Bible is not true. They say that God does not exist, or He is not able to destroy the wicked. Some say that the Bible is not to be our rule of life; it is old-fashioned and out of date. Psalm 119 verse 160 says, *“Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.”* The Bible is not made up. It is the Word of God, and God cannot lie. Titus 1.2 says *“God ... cannot lie.”* His Word is pure, and it can never change. God’s laws and His righteous judgments do not need to “change with the times.” 2 Corinthians 1.18 says *“God is true.”* Romans 3.4, says *“Let God be true, but every man a liar.”*

YOUR RESPONSE: If you are told something very different from the Word of God, you should reject it; for example, that the rainbow means something other than what is written in Genesis, or that pride is a very good thing. Please refer to Romans chapter 1, which lists many sins that God forbids, but the “pride” movement promotes as good.

We should always treat others with kindness, politeness and respect; but you can politely, firmly, say that you believe the Bible is the Word of God. If asked to draw a rainbow flag with a nice message, you could draw a “true” rainbow with seven colours and write: *“I do set My bow in the cloud.”* If someone challenges you, making you feel very uncomfortable, you can say, “That is not my opinion, but it is in God’s Word, and I am free to mention that.” Even if your parents are not there to speak for you or to help you, God hears prayer wherever you are if you pray to Him for help. Remember the text: *“Them that honour Me I will honour”* (1 Samuel 2.30).

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**HEZEKIAH**

After Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah became king. Ahaz had been very wicked, but Hezekiah *“did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.”* In the very first month of his reign, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. He asked the priests and the Levites to clean the house of the Lord, and they did it quickly.

Then Hezekiah rose early and went up to the house of the Lord with the rulers of the city. They offered sacrifices, *“and all the congregation worshipped.”*

Hezekiah sent letters to all Israel and Judah. He asked the people to come and keep the passover at Jerusalem. Some mocked and laughed at the message. However, many humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. There was great joy in the city as they kept the passover. Then the priests arose and blessed the people: *“and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. Hezekiah opened the doors of what place? (5 words)
2. What did all the congregation do? (1 word)
3. What were the people to keep at Jerusalem? (2 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. The Lord.
2. Ahaz.
3. Fed and clothed (or brought them back).

Contributed

*“...he did it
with all his
heart, and
prospered.”*

1 Chronicles 31.21

BIBLE LESSONS

Note: Due to the hospitalisation and ongoing recovery of the editor, we have inserted the following Bible Lesson written by the former editor, Mr. G. D. Buss.

PSALM 119

I expect most, if not all, of our readers know that the longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. Just two psalms previous, Psalm 117, is the shortest chapter!

Psalm 119 has many very interesting and profitable lessons. You will notice that it is divided into twenty-two sections or stanzas. Each stanza is headed by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse in that stanza begins with that letter. The Greek alphabet has twenty-four letters, while the Chinese Mandarin has 54,648 letters! Think how difficult it must be for a Chinese schoolchild to learn the language! Apparently, you can follow a conversation after knowing about 2,000 letters.

So, Aleph is the first Hebrew letter, and verses 1 to 8 all begin with “aleph” in the original Hebrew. It is interesting to note that, like most languages in the Middle East, it is written from right to left; unlike English, for example, which is written from left to right. The Hebrew language is renowned for its short sentences, which is very evident in Psalm 119.

The fact that there are eight verses in each section is significant. The number “eight” is significant of new life in Hebrew. So, you will read of the eighth day being the start of a new week in the New Testament.

Psalm 119 tells us something about the character of the psalmist. The frequent reference to the Scriptures, in one way or another, tells us that he loved them *“with his whole heart”* (verse 10), meaning unreservedly.

There are ten ways in which the Scriptures are described. Ten is the number of witnesses that were needed for legal enactments. So, Boaz gathered ten men at the gate of Bethlehem to arrange his marriage with Ruth. Likewise, Abraham hoped there might be ten witness for the Lord in ungodly Sodom. There is just one verse in the psalm, verse 90, which does not mention the Scriptures directly. The ten

different ways are, in alphabetical order: commandments, judgments, law, precepts, righteousness, statutes, testimonies, truth, way and word.

Verse 139 is very significant because it was mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ when He purged the temple: *"My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten Thy truth."*

It is very instructive to notice that the psalmist begins verse 1 on a very high note! *"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD."* This is the right standard, and those who love the Lord will desire so to do. There is, however, only One who has ever walked consistently and without wavering in the law of the Lord, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who with His Father and the Spirit, is the Lawgiver. Right at the end of the psalm, in verse 176, the psalmist confesses his own path: *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments."* It is a great mercy that the One who perfectly obeyed verse 1, has, as the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for His sheep, who have to confess as the psalmist did, *"I have gone astray."*

A very interesting, true story is told of a lad who was taught by his parents to memorise the whole of Psalm 119. When he grew up, sadly, he came into conflict with the law of the land (about four hundred years ago), and was sentenced to be hung. The terrible day arrived, but before the punishment was enacted, he was permitted to say something to the watching crowd. He began slowly to recite Psalm 119. He had just reached the last stanza (perhaps the last verse!), when a man on horseback rode up in great haste with a pardon for the condemned man! How glad he must have been that his parents insisted that he learn the psalm, and that it had remained in his memory for such an occasion. It literally saved his life!

How much more precious it would be to my readers if the Holy Spirit wrote in their hearts the precious truths in this remarkable psalm, that they might be saved. May it be said of us each: *"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

G.D. Buss

QUESTIONS:

1. Which is the longest chapter in the Bible? The shortest?
 2. What is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet?
 3. How many verses are in each section of Psalm 119?
 4. Which verse did the Lord Jesus mention when He purged the temple?
 5. What did the psalmist confess in the last verse? (8 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. The princes and nobles.
 2. “*Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.*”
 3. God was watching over them.
 4. Sixty.
 5. Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.
-

BIBLE INSCRIPTIONS

In my family, we were always given a Bible at the age of seven. I remember sitting at the kitchen table watching my mother cutting and shaping the top of a text card bookmark (because it was slightly too large to fit inside the front cover) and placing it in the front of my Bible. She said that she wanted me to have it there, because it might mean something to me one day. The card had on it the following rhyme:

The Bible is a mine of gold,
Of priceless gems and wealth untold.
Read now and pray that you might find,
Rich treasures for the heart and mind.

The text given below the rhyme was: “*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psalm 119.105). I read this little card often when I looked at my Bible. In 2012, when I was baptized, my heart was greatly softened by the memory of

that occasion in my childhood. I felt that now I truly understood the text on the card and my mother's words to me at the time. The card is now placed in the front of my daughter's Bible, with the hope that one day it may have the same meaning for her.

I also had a text written by my father in a hymnbook, which my parents gave to me in my late teens. This was: "*Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near*" (Isaiah 55.6). Just previous to the hymnbook being given, this text was on my mind, and I was truly astonished to find it written in my new hymnbook by my father. I said to my mother, "It is really strange, but I have had that text on my mind a lot recently, and then I found Dad had written it in my new book." My mother replied, "No doubt there is something in that."

This text has stayed in my mind all my life, and the text was a constant guidance and force with me that I should seek the Lord while I was able. What is written in the front of gifted Bibles can have a lasting effect throughout that person's life, as I have experienced for myself.

Contributed

A SOLEMN ADMONITION

One Sunday morning, two men of respectable appearance came into Providence Chapel, Croydon. As the service proceeded, it appeared they had come to make fun of the preacher. Mr. Covell observed their actions and looked straight at them. In the midst of his discourse, he said in a most solemn and impressive manner:

Fools make a mock at sin,
And with destruction sport;
But death will stop their simple grin,
And cut their laughter short.

The arrow evidently hit its mark, for the two men at once arose from their seats and left the chapel.

Adapted from The Life of Francis Covell

THE COBWEB IN THE CORNER

In my younger days, I went to call at a very elegant mansion. I was shown into a beautiful room to wait for the lady of the house. Never had I seen a room so elegantly furnished. The walls were covered with the loveliest wallpaper, and a few choice paintings hung upon them. The costly carpet was a delicate white, and the chairs had such beautiful flowers woven into the fabric that I was afraid to sit down. I regarded the room with wonder; the walls, carpet, furniture and pictures seemed to form a work of perfection.

On looking up toward the ceiling at the lovely, white trim along the top of the wall, I saw a cobweb in the corner. It seemed as if it were there to point out a moral or lesson. How could a spider be allowed to weave her web in such a magnificent room? Perhaps the extreme delicacy was the cause. If the room had been less costly, a servant might have entered it more frequently and noticed the web.

In whatever way it came to be there, the black web on the snowy white cornice taught me a lesson. It told me that we must not expect to be without annoyances. In the fairest earthly home, there is "a cobweb in the corner." *"The spider taketh bold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces"* (Proverbs 30.28).

Sometimes, a trifling circumstance occurs, and at other times, an event of great importance brings this lesson home to our hearts. We go on day after day, persuading ourselves that when we are rid of a certain trouble, or have gained possession of something we desired, we shall be happy. No such thing! There ever was, now is, and ever will be something to spoil our honeypot; a shadow in the most sunshiny path, "a cobweb in the corner." On earth, there will always be "a cobweb in the corner."

It would be well if this truth was more often in our thoughts. There will always be something that we wish was not there, or something that we wish was different. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* (Matthew 6.19). The trials and afflictions

of this earth often make the Lord's people long for heaven, where they will be free from the stain and ruin of sin and have perfect fellowship with Christ in His presence. May we each be found among those who *"desire a better country, that is an heavenly"* (Hebrews 11.16).

Adapted from Old Humphrey's Half Hours

"BOAST NOT THYSELF OF TOMORROW"

It was a lovely evening in early summer, and a crowd of hearers was leaving the place where God's Word had been preached. There was an inscription upon a wall of the building: *"For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (James 4.14). However, we wonder if any took notice of it as they went out. Among the hearers in that congregation was a young man in the prime of life. By dawn of the next morning, he had been carried home to take his last breath. What a solemn warning it was! *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27.1).

On that same Sunday evening, in the same small town, another congregation was dispersing. The last hymn was finished, and the organ was closed. There was no warning voice to tell the organ player that he would never open it again or that his fingers had touched those keys for the last time. Yet, the next morning, the life of the organ player suddenly ended. The startling news of his unexpected death was told to a woman by her servant. It came as such a shock to the woman, that her own heart failed. Medical assistance proved of no avail, and the poor woman herself passed away. Thoughtless ones, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow."*

Yet again, on the same Sunday evening in that small town, a third congregation was departing. If a voice had cried out that a lad among them would never see another sunset, perhaps each young person would have anxiously asked the question, "Is it I?" On Monday afternoon, a youth from that third congregation was

carried home dead. Young reader, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow."*

The writer of this account lived in that town, and he never forgot the impression of that solemn day. Four persons in the prime of life were suddenly taken away by death. May the Scripture, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow,"* arrest many by the Spirit of God. Perhaps the warning may be heeded by some, for God has said: *"So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"* (Isaiah 55.11).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner, 1877

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN KERSHAW

In his youth, John Kershaw was taken up with many worldly pursuits. He sometimes joined with the crowd of people watching a cock-fighting event. If anyone had seen him at that time, they would have found it hard to believe that in a few years he would become a faithful minister of the gospel and hate all those worldly activities in which he found such pleasure.

Young John Kershaw was a constant grief to his parents, something he mourned over for the rest of his life! Although he was brought up to attend chapel, John became very rebellious, despising the warnings and chastenings of his father. He would often spend the Lord's day playing with friends and being involved in all sorts of mischief. Yet, afterwards, he always had a guilty conscience, feeling that he had done wrong and kicking against the pricks of conscience.

At one time, he was very taken up with gambling and card playing, which were very popular in Victorian England. After saving up quite a bit of money, he went with a few friends one night to play cards with an experienced old lady. They were so taken up with the game, that after she had won all their money,

they suddenly noticed it was after two o'clock in the morning. Upon returning home, John was given a beating by his father.

On another occasion, rather than going to the evening service on the Lord's day, he went out with some friends in complete disobedience to his father. Upon returning home, he suffered severely for it. To use his own words, "My father did not spare the rod that night, for he took me into the back yard and beat me so severely that I could hardly turn myself in bed, I was so sore. This was a night of sorrow I shall never forget; a sorely-wounded conscience within, and a sore body without. I felt ashamed that I had done wrong, and not that hatred which I had felt heretofore against my father."

The Lord used the very sudden death of his schoolmaster to cause him to consider what would happen if he was to die suddenly. When someone mentioned this death, Kershaw writes, "I looked at him who gave the report and trembled. Death and eternal realities presented themselves to my view in such a solemn manner as I trust I shall never forget. The Lord wrought very powerfully in my soul by His Holy Spirit at this time, leading me into the vast importance of the language of Moses, '*Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*' (Deuteronomy 32.29). I was taught to consider my latter end."

Around this time, a terrible fever was afflicting many in his town. Among those who died was a companion of his, about the same age. He became very troubled about the state of his never-dying soul and what would happen when he died. Upon attending the funeral of this companion, he found the Lord was powerfully working on his mind, leading him constantly to consider death and eternity. He was also being drawn away from his former sinful ways and companions. He asked his father the following question: "When my body dies, will not my soul die with it, and all be over?" His father replied, "No, when thy body dies, it will return to the dust till the resurrection morning, and thy soul will live for ever, in heaven or hell."

John was now taught by the Holy Spirit to cry unto God for mercy. One day at work, being so bowed down with the guilt of

sin, he sought a private place to cry unto God. The only place he could find was a dry pit in a corner of a nearby field. This place became his “closet,” where he would often resort for private prayer. He became very diligent in chapel attendance.

After a time, religious pride began to creep into John. His religion was more about what he was doing, than about what God was working in him. One week, he managed to go to a service or religious lecture every single night, and he was very pleased with how “good” he was becoming.

One night, he went to a prayer meeting, where he heard an old man expound Matthew chapter 6. This man spoke about how the scribes and Pharisees, with all their religious efforts, were worse than the publicans and sinners, because they thought they were so good and holy. This cut John Kershaw to the quick. He felt that if all his reformation of life and good deeds would not save him, nothing would. and he almost turned back to his old ways. Mercifully, the Lord would not allow him to return. He continued to teach John that he was a guilty sinner and that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one and only Saviour. He began to see how the Lord Jesus had finished that great plan of salvation for all His people. As the Holy Spirit led him to understand the doctrine of election, he was brought to see how the Lord had chosen His own people, and a hope was raised up that he was numbered amongst them.

Kershaw was greatly blessed at a time when he was feeling particularly troubled about his state as a sinner. The following words came to his mind with such power, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Romans 7.24). He realised where these words were found in the Bible, and while reading the chapter, he felt a union with the Apostle Paul in all his feelings. Then, he read the first verse of chapter 8, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* The Lord effectually applied the words into his soul, and he rejoiced in the sweet hope that he was found in Christ Jesus.

Not long after this, John Kershaw felt constrained to be baptised. Some time later, he was sent out to preach, and he eventually became the pastor of Hope Chapel, Rochdale. He remained as the pastor for the next fifty-two years, until his death in 1870.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This subject began to exercise my heart after preaching to my own dear people at Eastbourne from John 12 verse 15: *"Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."*

A kingdom needs a king, and a king needs a kingdom: there is a sense in which you will not have the one without the other. The kingdom of God is referred to both directly and indirectly throughout the Word of God. Yet, if a poor sinner is truly saved by grace, how often does he consider the Lord Jesus as his King? Conversely, how often does the sinner regard himself, or herself, as one of the subjects or citizens in the kingdom of God? From time to time, we have reminders in our worship – for instance, Gadsby's Hymn 379:

Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

The kingdom of God, then, is a kingdom like no other, and we need help from God to consider it well; not from an academic viewpoint, but with a concern to know: "Am I one of the Lord's people?"

The first clear indication that God would have a people to call His own was given to Abraham when he was still called Abram in Genesis chapter 12 verses 2 and 3: *"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy*

name great; and thou shalt be a blessing,” and again in verse 7, *“Unto thy seed will I give this land.”* God appeared again to him in chapter 15 verses 1 to 5. Then we read in verse 6: *“And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Though Abram and Sarai sadly conspired together to raise up a seed in Abram’s name, God remained faithful to His own promise. In chapter 17, this promise was renewed at the same time that Abram’s name was changed to Abraham (which means “Father of a great multitude”): *“And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”* (verses 7, 8). Then God spoke to Abraham, giving the promise of Isaac to be born, and Sarah his wife to be *“a mother of nations.”*

Immediately, Abraham, as a man, balked at the impossibility of it, seeing he and Sarah were past the age for having children. This was soon followed, though, by the visit of the three men when Abraham was encamped in the plains of Mamre, with the wonderful promise: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”* (Genesis 18.14). And again: *“The LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”* (Genesis 18.17,18) Here, as in Genesis 12 verse 3, there is a prophecy regarding the Lord Jesus Christ: *“All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him.”*

We see, then, that the promises to Abraham regarding this nation of Israel are, in fact, the promises regarding the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, as so resoundingly declared in those well-known words in Isaiah 9 verses 6 and 7: *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and*

His name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

A great deal had happened to the nation of Israel from Abraham's time until Isaiah prophesied, and a great deal happened to Israel as a nation until the birth of Jesus; but the promise, as amplified through the mouth of Jacob, says: "*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*" (Genesis 49.10). This promise was and will ever be fulfilled.

It is solemn to consider that King Jesus will be seen in the last great day by everyone: "*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him*" (Revelation 1.7). Also: "*I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear*" (Isaiah 45.23). Yet, not all will welcome that glorious sight, as we are solemnly told in Revelation 6 verses 15 to 17: "*And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*"

Thus far, then, we learn from the Word of God that He, as King of kings and Lord of lords, will have an everlasting kingdom, but not everyone will be part of it. Indeed, from what we have seen so far, we may well ask, "Who will be the subjects of this glorious kingdom?" The main point of the promise to Abraham is that "*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in Him.*" It does not necessarily include all the natural seed of

Abraham himself; that is clear from much of the Scriptures, for instance: *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"* (John 1.11). Neither does it include everyone from *"all the nations of the earth,"* as clearly expressed in Daniel 12 verse 2: *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

So, who are the citizens of the kingdom of God? The answer is given in Revelation chapter 7 verses 9 and 14: *"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about OBEDIENCE. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 9 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope. Help from parents is permitted, especially on the last question!

1. What command did God give to Adam in the Garden of Eden, which Adam and Eve disobeyed? (Genesis 2.16-17; 3.6-12)
2. Why did the children of Israel have to wander for forty years in the wilderness? (Joshua 5.6)
3. What command does God especially give to children? (Ephesians 6.1; Colossians 3.20)

Simon Peter was a fisherman, and twice we read of him working all night and catching nothing. On both occasions Jesus told Peter to do something which in the circumstances might have seemed foolish. The next two questions are about the first account in Luke 5.1-11.

4. What did Jesus tell Peter to do and what happened when he obeyed?
 5. What effect did this event have on Peter?
- The next question is about the second occasion when Peter caught nothing. It is recorded in John 21.
6. What did Jesus tell Peter to do and what happened when he obeyed?
 7. Which king of Israel was rejected because he disobeyed God's command? Complete the words of Samuel to him – "To obey is better ..." (1 Samuel 15)
 8. The high priest asked the apostles why they had disobeyed the command of the council not to teach in the name of Jesus. What did Peter and the apostles say in reply? (Acts 5)
 9. What had the Lord Jesus commanded the apostles to do before He ascended into heaven? (Mark 16)
 10. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom 5.19). Explain simply the meaning of this text: who the "one man" is, what his disobedience was, and who the obedient "one" is and who the "many" are who shall be made righteous.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. An understanding heart.
2. "Obey your parents in all things."
3. "They that are in the flesh."
4. "He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"
5. "Them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."
6. The foolishness of preaching. (1 Corinthians 1.21)
7. "Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 56.5)
8. Enoch, faith. (Hebrews 11.5-6)
9. "To do good and to communicate." (Hebrews 13.16)
10. At the baptism of the Lord Jesus. On the mount of transfiguration. (Matthew 3.17; 17.5)

LORD, TEACH A LITTLE CHILD

Lord, teach a little child to pray,
Thy grace betimes impart;
And grant Thy Holy Spirit may
Renew my youthful heart.

A sinful creature I was born,
And from my birth have strayed;
I must be wretched and forlorn
Without Thy mercy's aid.

But Christ can all my sins forgive,
And wash away their stain;
Can fit my soul with Him to live,
And in His kingdom reign.

To Him let little children come,
For He has said they may;
His bosom then shall be their home;
Their tears He'll wipe away.

For all who early seek His face
Shall surely taste His love;
Jesus shall guide them by His grace,
To dwell with Him above.

Young People's Hymn 129

The Friendly Companion



“Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee:
Thou saidst, Fear not.”
(Lamentations 3.57)

July 2021

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CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	147
Our Front Cover Picture – The Platypus	150
Telling the Truth	152
Forgetting to Look Up	153
Faith Made Perfect by Works	153
For the Very Little Ones: Israel Carried Away	154
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 17.23	155
Bible Lessons: The King of Moab Sends for Balaam	156
Honouring the Lord's Day	158
The Cloud of Witnesses	160
Short Biography of the Early Life of Matthew Henry	161
Bible Study for the Older Ones: The Kingdom of God Pt. 2	163
Bible Questions: Unbelief	166
Poetry: The End of the Way.. ..	168

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

During a recent hospital stay, we had a clear view of a major road junction from the window of our room. There were certain times of the day when traffic was very heavy. We watched as cars travelled north, south, east and west, while others turned right or left from each direction. All the vehicles moved safely through that road junction, being guided by traffic laws and signals. How important were the traffic laws! They kept multitudes of people safe and prevented a pile-up of vehicles. All the people going through that road junction were governed and guided by the same laws.

There were two principles that came to mind: first, how important it was that drivers had knowledge of the traffic laws; second, that drivers obeyed or followed the traffic laws.

By now, you may be wondering why we are writing about traffic laws, when many of you are too young to drive. Each of us, including children, are given important laws to guide us through life. These laws, often called “the ten commandments,” were given by God. They reveal the nature of God and make known His will. These laws tell us how we are to behave toward God Himself, how we are to keep the Sabbath day, and how we are to behave toward other people.

The first three commandments are regarding God Himself. First, we are told: “*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*” (Exodus 20.3). You may remember that Israel made an idol (golden calf) right at the base of Mount Sinai. Later, the prophet Jeremiah wrote: “*for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods [idols], O Judah*” (Jeremiah 2.28). We have not mentioned the nations that did not know God or His laws. Israel and Judah knew the laws of God but did not obey them.

God also commanded: “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them*” (verses 4,5). The first commandment forbids the worshipping of a false god; this commandment forbids the

worship of God in a false way. Our world today is filled with many images, pictures and relics. People say that such things help them to worship, but God has promised something far better to help us, namely the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, all our worship (whether in forms, customs, formality or various images) will be in contradiction with God's law.

In the third commandment, we are warned: "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*" (verse 7). Men, women, boys and girls are disobeying this commandment every day. We must remember that the law suffers no damage when we do not keep it, but we will suffer greatly for our disobedience. We read: "*Holy and reverend is His name*" (Psalm 111.9). How careful and watchful we ought to be whenever we speak of His name. We do not have space to write of the many ways in which God's name is used profanely or in vain, but we would mention just a couple of them. How often God's name is taken in vain when people use one of His names in a fit of anger or frustration. Many swear an oath in God's name without a thought of God's honour. How often we hear the expression, "Oh my God," in such a light, careless or sinful way! "*The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain*" (verse 7).

The commandment respecting the Sabbath day and keeping it holy, is one that is very often disobeyed. Those of the world disobey it, being ignorant of the laws of God. However, multitudes who gather in churches of various denominations are not ignorant of the ten commandments, yet give no thought to keeping this one. Even their worship services lack the spirit of holiness. After those services are over, the rest of the day is spent in worldly activities (shopping, recreation, vain pleasures) or in social gatherings with family or friends, where there is only worldly conversation, without any solemnity of heart or thought. For a thorough exposition on what it is to keep this commandment, we recommend that families read the exhortation of Thomas Watson in his volume entitled *The Ten Commandments*.

Many of our youngest readers may find it difficult to understand the things we have written thus far. The next commandment comes down closer to you: *"Honour thy father and thy mother"* (verse 12). The Word of God has so many references to this commandment, especially in the Book of Proverbs. What a sad and disgraceful thing it is to see little children show disrespect to their parents by speaking back to them or by disobeying them! It is a spirit of rebellion. In his epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul wrote to the children: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)"* (chapter 6.1,2). What was the promise? Length of days. Paul wrote to the children attending the church at Colosse: *"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord"* (Colossians 3.20). Perhaps some of you have wondered how you can please God. It is very pleasing to God when you show respect and honour to your parents. However, this "pleasing God" does not obtain salvation. That is only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us in his second Epistle to Timothy that one of the many evils that will mark the last days is disobedience to parents.

The last five commandments, *"Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet,"* are laws that no one is ignorant of. Yet, people (including you and me) willingly disobey them. Mankind is continually behaving contrary to God's holy laws. When we do not obey God's laws, it shows that we do not love them, and thus we cannot love Him.

There is one Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who never disobeyed any of God's laws. It was written of Him, *"I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart"* (Psalm 40.8). The great wonder is that He obeyed and kept them on behalf of His dear people. May God reveal this great truth to each of us before the day of our death.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE – THE PLATYPUS

The front cover picture this month is of a highly unusual animal found only in Australia. The natural habitat of the platypus (scientific name *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is the lakes and streams of eastern Australia and Tasmania. This animal reveals an amazing array of design features.

Not only is it **venomous**, but it is also a member of a group of curious mammals called **monotremes**. Mammals usually give birth to live young, but monotremes lay eggs, from which the young hatch. They also provide milk for lactation, as mammals do! There are only five species of monotreme: the platypus and four species of Echidna.

At first glance, the platypus looks like a strange mixture of several different animals. It has the webbed feet and brown coat of an otter, the flattened tail of a beaver, and the large bill of a duck. It is commonly called the **duck-billed platypus**.

The bizarre appearance of the platypus caused much confusion among early naturalists. In 1799, Dr. George Shaw, a keeper at the British Museum, was presented with a dried platypus skin. The animal's appearance was so unusual that Dr. Shaw was suspicious that the museum had fallen victim to an elaborate hoax. Believing someone had joined a duck's bill to another animal's body, he used scissors to try to separate the parts. The marks his scissors left on the skin can still be seen today!

Males are larger than females, averaging 50 cm (20 inches) in total length. The average body length of females is 43 cm (17 inches). The body and tail of the platypus are covered with dense, waterproof fur that traps a layer of warm, insulating air close to the animal's body.

The platypus builds resting and nesting burrows in the banks of the rivers. The male has a home range of up to 4.3 miles (7 km). This may overlap that of three or four females. The young remain in the burrow for about four months, during which time the mother provides them with milk.

The platypus is usually either nocturnal (active at night) or crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk). However, it is occasionally seen during the day.

The platypus's legs are attached to the sides of its body, rather than underneath. This gives the animal a reptile-like gait. When walking on land, the platypus walks on the knuckles of its front feet to protect the webbing between its toes. There is less webbing on the hind feet. The platypus is a carnivore and eats worms, insect larvae, freshwater shrimps and crayfish, all of which are found in its freshwater habitat. The platypus hunts underwater, using its cheek-pouches to carry prey to the surface before eating. The platypus needs to consume around twenty percent of its body weight in food each day. This means that it spends an average of twelve hours per day looking for food.

They also have another conspicuous feature; they can glow in the dark. Platypus fur appears brown in visible light, but as new research shows, their fur glows green or cyan (blue) under ultraviolet light. They are one of only three known biofluorescent mammals, the other two being opossums and flying squirrels.

The platypus is one of the very few mammals that are venomous. The male platypus has spurs on each ankle that can deliver venom powerful enough to kill small animals, such as dogs. While not lethal to humans, the venom can cause excruciating pain. The female is also born with spurs, but they drop off within the first year of life and are not venomous.

Perhaps you thought that, with the egg-laying and venom production, the platypus was already quite strange enough. Well, it does not end there. When underwater, the platypus closes the grooves containing its eyes and ears. This means that it is blind and deaf while hunting. So, how does it find food? Incredibly, the platypus uses **electrolocation** to locate the small creatures on which it feeds. Its bill contains sensors that detect the tiny electrical fields generated by the muscular contractions of its prey. When the platypus is hunting, it moves its head from side to side, allowing it to detect where its prey is hiding.

In 1943, Winston Churchill requested David Fleay, an Australian naturalist, to send him six live platypuses from Australia. Fleay, knowing how difficult it was for the animals to travel, settled on sending just one, whom they named "Winston." He was placed in a platypusary, specially designed to handle the long sea voyage on the *MV Port Phillip*, along with a huge supply of his favourite food. Remarkably, Winston was thriving on the ship until it was forced to launch a depth charge against a submarine. The nerve receptors in his highly sensitive bill could not cope with the violent explosion, and he died. Winston did make it to England, but the British prime minister had to settle for his new pet being mounted on his desk.

The platypus is featured on the reverse side of Australia's twenty-cent coin. It is a truly unique creature, and one that continues to baffle those who insist on making it fit into an evolutionary tree. The truth is that "design" indicates a "designer," and natural selection is inadequate to explain amazing creatures such as the platypus. *"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth"* (Colossians 1.16).

A. Seymour

TELLING THE TRUTH

Truth is beautiful, as well as safe and powerful. A young boy, twelve years of age, conquered a smart, shrewd lawyer who was fighting for a bad cause. Truth was his only weapon.

The lad was the most important witness in a lawsuit. After cross-examining him, one of the lawyers asked severely, "Your father has been talking to you, and telling you how to testify, hasn't he?"

"Yes," answered the boy.

"Now," said the lawyer, "just tell us how your father told you to testify."

"Well," said the boy modestly, "Father told me that the lawyers would try and tangle me up in my testimony, but if I

would be very careful to tell only the truth, I could tell the same thing every time.”

After hearing that, the lawyer no longer tried to tangle up the boy in his testimony.

Adapted from Cheering Words 1997

FORGETTING TO LOOK UP

A man often went to a neighbour's cornfield to steal grain. One day, he took his son, who was eight years old, with him. The father told him to hold the bag, while he looked to see if anyone was nearby to see him. He stood on the fence and carefully peered through the corn rows. Then, he returned to take the bag from his son and began his sinful work.

“Father,” said the boy; “you forgot to look somewhere else.”

The man quickly dropped the bag in fear, asking, “Which way?” He supposed that his son had seen someone.

“You forgot to look up to the sky to see if God was noticing you.” The father felt this reproof by his child so much that he left the corn, returned home, and never again ventured to steal from his neighbour. He always remembered the truth his child had taught him: “*Thou God seest me*” (Genesis 16.13).

Young People's Magazine

FAITH MADE PERFECT BY WORKS

Do as much good as you possibly can, and you will be amply rewarded in doing it; but ever remember that no good deeds will merit God's favour or give you a title to heaven. Nothing short of an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done will save you; but those who belong to Him will necessarily bring forth good fruit. “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” (James 2.26)

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1885

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ISRAEL CARRIED AWAY**

For many years, the children of Israel had been divided into two parts. Ten tribes were called Israel, and their king lived in Samaria. Judah had two tribes, and their king lived at Jerusalem.

All the kings of Judah were from the family of David. Many of those kings feared the Lord, and they worshipped God in the temple.

Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes of Israel, made two golden calves. He told the people to worship them instead of God. All the kings of Israel worshipped idols.

The children of Israel sinned against the Lord when they served idols. God sent prophets to warn them to turn from their evil ways, but they would not hear. *“Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight.”* The king of Assyria came into the land and carried the people of Israel away into the land of Assyria. That happened when Hezekiah was king of Judah, and *“there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. From which family were all the kings of Judah? (1 word)
2. What did all the kings of Israel worship? (1 word)
3. The people of Israel were carried into what land?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. The house of the Lord.
2. Worshipped.
3. The Passover.

Contributed

*“So was Israel
carried away
out of their
own land
to Assyria”*

2 Kings 17.23

BIBLE LESSONS**THE KING OF MOAB SENDS FOR BALAAM**

After forty long, wearisome years, the land of Canaan was in sight. Only the river Jordan yet stood in the way. The children of Israel camped in the plains of Moab. God had forbidden them from entering Moab, but now they pitched on the border between Moab and Canaan.

Balak, the king of Moab, heard how Israel had destroyed the Amorites. The Moabites were in great distress because there were so many Israelites. Moab sought to join forces with Midian, a nearby country. Even with the Midianites joining them, Balak was afraid that the God of Israel would fight for them and destroy the Moabites, as He had the Egyptians and the Amorites. Balak heard of a man who was reported to have power to bless and to curse people. That man's name was Balaam.

Balak sent messengers to Balaam, saying, *"Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth ... Come now therefore ... curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me ... that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."*

The messengers came to Balaam with a great reward in their hand. When Balaam heard the message of Balak, he told them to stay for the night that he might ask for the Lord's direction. The Lord asked Balaam who the men were that had entered his house. Balaam told Him all the words of Balak, and that he wanted him to curse a certain people. God said unto Balaam, *"Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."*

In the morning, Balaam told the messengers that God refused to let him go with them. It would have been hard to tell who was more disappointed; the messengers who had to return unsuccessfully, or Balaam who lost the reward they brought.

When Balak heard that Balaam had refused to come, he sent other messengers; princes, more in number and more noble than the first. He told Balaam to let nothing hinder him from

coming, and Balak promised great honour and riches to Balaam. How he wanted to have them! Could Balaam resist such a temptation? He gave a God-honouring answer: *"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more."* God had told him before that he should not go, but he would ask the Lord again. Thus, he invited the messengers to stay with him until the morning.

That night, God told Balaam that if the men called for him in the morning, he should rise and go with them. Yet, he must speak only the words that God would give him. Balaam was so eager to go that he rose and saddled his ass; he did not wait to see if the men would call for him.

God's anger burned against Balaam because he went. God sent an angel to stand in the way as an adversary to oppose him. Balaam was blinded by his covetous greed. When the ass saw the angel with his sword drawn, she turned out of the way into a field. Balaam smote the ass in his anger, to turn her back into the way. As they proceeded, they came to a place of vineyards, with a wall on either side of the path to keep people from treading on the tender vines. Here the angel stood again. The ass seeing him, moved to the side of the path, crushing Balaam's foot against the stones of the wall. Balaam smote her again.

Then the angel moved into a very narrow passage, so the ass could not pass on either side and fell down under Balaam. With great anger, Balaam smote the ass with his staff. *"And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"* What hardness of heart in rebellious man! Even when an animal spoke with the words of a man, Balaam took no notice and answered, *"Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee."* And the ass said, *"Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee?"* And Balaam said, *"Nay."* What a mighty miracle the

Lord performed! Not only did He make the ass to speak, but to speak with the reasoning of a man.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where did the children of Israel camp? (5 words)
2. Who was the king of Moab, and to whom did he send messengers?
3. What did Balak promise to Balaam? (4 words)
4. What was Balaam blinded by? (2 words)
5. What did the Lord open? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Psalm 119. Psalm 117
2. Aleph.
3. Eight.
4. Verse 139.
5. *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep."*

HONOURING THE LORD'S DAY

A youth named Charles Brown obtained a position in a store in a large coastal city of the United States. On the Saturday evening after his first week of employment, he was told that he must be at his usual place on the next day, which was Sunday. Charles respectfully told his employer that he could not do so, as he had always been taught to honour the Lord's day. The employer bluntly told Charles that if he would not do as he was asked, there would be no further need for his services. He should come on Monday morning, receive his wages, and then his job was finished. How discouraging this was! Yet, Charles kept his resolution of keeping the Sabbath.

On Monday morning, Charles proceeded to the store to get his wages and receive his discharge. It had been his duty to open the store early in the morning. He went at the usual time, while

it was yet dark. On his way to the store, he noticed a man trying to read the signs over various warehouse doors.

Asking him what he was looking for, the man replied that he was the captain of a ship. He was looking for a provision store in order to get supplies for his vessel, which was coming down the river with the tide. Forgetting all about his employer's unkind dismissal, Charles told the stranger that if he would go with him to the store where he worked, he would be sure to find the articles that he was looking for.

Upon entering the store, the captain selected a large supply of provisions, and he was willing to pay well for them. In short, it was an excellent sales transaction. By the time the captain came to pay for the purchases, the chief clerk had arrived for the day. He saw that the bank notes given in payment were from very reputable banks. This was an important point, because many unsound business dealings were being conducted at that time. Soon, the stranger's ship arrived at the wharf attached to the store. The goods were safely placed on board, and it proceeded on its voyage.

A little later, Charles' employer came into the store. The clerk told him what the new lad had done in bringing about that excellent business transaction, even before others were going about in the morning.

"A very good price, too, he paid for the goods," said the owner, as he looked over the invoice. "But," he continued, "depend upon it, Charles has been taken advantage of and bad bank notes were given."

"No," replied the clerk; "They were all right. I attended to that part myself."

Presently Charles came up to his employer's desk.

"Well," said his employer, in good humour, "what do you want?"

"Oh sir, you told me that I was to come to you today and get my wages and dismissal."

"Nonsense!" replied the business owner. "Go to your work, and let me hear no more of that."

So, Charles went to work. He kept his job, and he also retained a good conscience. God blessed his youthful practices, and Charles later became a very successful trader. *“For them that honour Me I will honour”* (1 Samuel 2.30).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1888

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

In the present day, there are many misconceptions about heaven. People speak about heaven in ways that are not based on the Word of God, which is the true authority. For example, it is a popular belief that deceased loved ones in heaven are looking down upon their families and friends on earth.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12.1). This text is sometimes used to support the idea that loved ones who have died are monitoring our daily lives on earth, but that is not the case.

The great *“cloud of witnesses”* of Hebrews 12 refers to the previous chapter, as indicated by the word *“wherefore.”* These witnesses are the saints referred to in Hebrews 11; the men and women *“of whom the world was not worthy,”* including Noah, Abraham, Sarah and Moses. All those witnesses in Hebrews 11 provide instruction for us through the Scriptural record of their lives. They are not a witness of those living upon earth. They are witnesses to us!

Abel, who was murdered by his jealous brother Cain, is among the cloud of witnesses. Although he died, through his faith he still speaks (gives witness) to us. *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh”* (Hebrews 11.4).

By the witness of their enduring, triumphant faith, they are examples that inspire believers of all generations to live and die by faith in the Lord. These all finished well, *“having obtained a good report through faith”* (Hebrews 11.39).

Adapted from Answers magazine, July 2019 by Dale Mason

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF MATTHEW HENRY

Matthew Henry is especially remembered for his commentary on the Holy Bible. For over three hundred years, this commentary has been the most widely known and is still available, both in print and online.

Matthew Henry was born in 1662 during a very turbulent time in the nation and in the churches. That was the year of the great ejection of two thousand ministers from the Church of England. They refused to conform to the requirements demanded of them by the Act of Uniformity. Among those ejected from their churches and homes was Philip Henry, the father of Matthew. He was forced to leave the vicarage in Worthenbury, near Wrexham, on the border between England and Wales. Due to his wife coming from an affluent family, who were also sympathetic to the Henrys, they were able to live nearby in relatively comfortable circumstances. Very soon after their move, Matthew was born on 18th October 1662. It has been said that his birth was premature. He was so weak and poorly that he was not expected to live. Although preserved, he was troubled with ill health for the rest of his life.

Family life in the Henry household was greatly influenced by the Puritan ethos. Family worship took place every morning and evening, in which the father expounded a little upon the passage read and also questioned the children to see if they were paying attention. The children were also instructed from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, with the father explaining anything they did not understand. For a time, they still attended the Church of England services at Worthenbury on Lord's days; but on these days, the father had extended family worship, which would be a service in its own right.

Matthew's father oversaw the education of his children himself, at times employing young scholars heading for university to assist in the education of the children. Matthew proved to be quick in learning, having a very retentive memory and an ability to comprehend information easily. At times, his

mother would suggest going for a walk in the countryside, as he spent so much time indoors studying. It was not until Matthew was eighteen years old, that he was sent to a dissenting academy in London, run by a Dr. Doolittle. This would have been an enormous change for Matthew, who had spent all his life in the country. After being there for only a very short time, Matthew, along with most of the other students, came down with a type of fever. Several of them died, including a close friend of Matthew's. Once again, the Lord was pleased to spare Matthew. As soon as he had recovered sufficiently, it was decided that he should return home and study under his father's supervision, which he did until he was twenty-two.

It is very difficult to state when the Lord began the work of grace in Matthew. At the age of thirteen, he wrote what he described as "A Catalogue of the Mercies of God." In it, he wrote very personally of the spiritual mercies in Christ, and how thankful he was for the throne of grace and the Scriptures. He went on to write of a time three years previously when he heard a sermon preached by his father from Psalm 51 verse 7, in which he began to be convinced of the truth of the gospel. He wrote, "I think it was that that melted me; afterwards I began to enquire after Christ." About a year later, he examined his own heart before God and felt he had repentance for sin and sorrow for all that was past, although not in the measure he really desired. He also spoke of a time when he heard a sermon preached on the nature and growth of true grace, as compared in the Scriptures to a grain of mustard seed. He was very burdened to know that he had received the blessed grain of true grace.

At the age of twenty-two, Matthew was advised to study law at Gray's Inn, London. Although he put all his energy into this course, his heart was not really in it. He had a strong belief that he would be sent forth into the gospel ministry. This came about after he had completed his legal training and returned home. A friend invited him to preach at his home at Nantwich on a Lord's day evening. Further requests followed, which eventually resulted in him preaching very regularly. Then he

received an invitation to become a pastor at the market town of Chester, where he remained until 1711. After this, he eventually accepted a very pressing invitation from a church at Hackney, London. Back then, Hackney was a small village on the outskirts of London! He was not to live long at Hackney, as he died in 1714 at the age of fifty-two.

The commentary of Matthew Henry was really the outcome of extensive sermon notes he had written, which he then decided to collate together into a formal Bible commentary. Similar to many ministers at that time, he would go through the Bible systematically. He had gotten as far as the Book of Acts when he died, the rest of the commentary being written by others.

A. T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE KINGDOM OF GOD (PART TWO)

These few lessons can never encompass all that may be understood by “the kingdom of God”; yet, may the Lord direct me through His Word. We read: “Where the word of a king is, there is power” (Ecclesiastes 8.4). Thus, the hymnwriter penned these lines:

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on His firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave TO BE.

Gadsby's Hymn 4

The establishment of the kingdom of God is set forth everywhere in the Old Testament, both in types and shadows, as well as in prophecy.

One of the most significant types of the kingdom of God is the account of the children of Israel being brought out of Egypt, led through the wilderness, and after forty years, entering into the promised land. It is a beautiful, and at times solemn, type

of the journey of poor sinners through the wilderness of this life to the heavenly Canaan above. The beginning of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage was brought about by the word of their heavenly King: *"Let My people go"* (Exodus 9.1). This illustrates the point that the children of God are His, even before they set forth on their journey to that "better country." God still delivers His people from their servitude under the prince of this world (John 12.31 and 14.30) and sets them at liberty. They are, therefore, the favoured subjects of the kingdom of heaven whilst here below, always under the watchful eye of their King, but in this time state, they are ever journeying to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The psalmist, after some painful lessons in Psalm 73, acknowledged this important truth: *"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory"* (verse 24). As the children of Israel had many painful lessons to learn in their wilderness journey, so the Lord's people prove *"that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14.22). It is their sovereign Lord's divine purpose to teach His people in such a way through the journey, that when He brings them to the end, they want nothing more to do but die, so that they may enter into the presence of their Lord, Master and King for ever. Be assured of this, though: by the time they do reach the end of the wilderness journey here below, they have no other desire but to praise, bless and honour their King, who gave His life for them. Peter, in preaching, made it clear what God had done: *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 5.30,31).

Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.

Gadsby's Hymn 267

Both David and Solomon were types of the King of kings, bringing out different aspects of the throne and majesty of God. David was a prophet as well as a king. The utterances of David in the Psalms were truly prophetic of the Lord Jesus, even to those very words of Jesus on the cross: *“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”* (Psalm 22.1). Yet, it is the tracing of the royal line from David to Christ which features so prominently in the Scriptures of truth. (See Luke 2.4.)

When needy sinners came to Jesus in the gospels, they often cried after Him as the Son of David; for example, the woman in Matthew 15.22. This shows us that those in real need must come to a king, one who is of true, royal seed. What a consideration is hinted at here – Jesus is the Son of God! May we more feelingly be humbled more often and fall at His dear feet! No other but He can give to His subjects the gift of eternal life. (See Romans 6.23.)

Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived (2 Kings 3.12), as well as being king. So, Solomon was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ as regarding Wisdom (see Bible lesson for April 2021). This wisdom of Solomon’s was not only natural (1 Kings 4.29-34), but also bore testimony to the greater wisdom of Christ in answering the hard questions of coming sinners, as in the visit of the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10.1-13). At the same time, Solomon’s glory and kingdom was a faint type of the glory and kingdom of King Jesus (1 Kings 10.8,9).

Then there is the prophecy in the Old Testament, for example: *“Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.”* This is significantly followed by: *“And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land”* (Isaiah 32.1,2). The lesson is that God will not have His subjects overwhelmed by His majesty, but reminds them continually of what He has done and will do for them. There is a wonderful balance in the Word of God, all the way through. God reminds us again in

prophecy that He is His people's King, in the word linked to that which I mentioned at the beginning last month: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass"* (Zechariah 9.9; cited John 12.15). If the Lord were to give such a message to you, there would be no doubt that you were one of His subjects.

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about UNBELIEF. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

Many times God speaks solemnly of the sin of unbelief. Unbelief is not acknowledging the truth of God's Word, sometimes through ignorance, but often in wilful rebellion against it. Unbelief is often associated with disobedience (see June questions).

1. Why were most of the children of Israel who left Egypt not permitted to enter the promised land? (Hebrews 3. 19)
2. God had so often appeared for the children of Israel and provided for them, yet His anger was shown on many occasions. Write out Psalm 78.22 which gives the reason.
3. Who was struck dumb because he did not believe the words an angel spoke to him? (Luke 1.20)
4. "He did not many mighty words *there* because of their unbelief." To which place was Jesus referring? (Matthew 13.58)
5. Write out John 3.36, which describes the difference between a believer and an unbeliever.
6. A man who came to Jesus with a lunatic son was rebuked by the words, "If thou canst believe..." What reply did the man tearfully give? (Mark 9)

7. Jesus upbraided His disciples after His resurrection because of their unbelief. Which disciple declared he would not believe, but afterwards was brought to repentance? (John 20)
8. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him" (John 12). What will judge the unbeliever and when?
9. The Jews said to Jesus, "What sign shewest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee?" What miracle or sign had they witnessed the day before – yet still did not believe? (John 6)
10. God's people are often troubled by unbelief. To whom did God say, "Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel....," and what happened as a result?

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
2. "For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness ... because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD."
3. "Children, obey your parents ..."
4. Jesus told Peter to let down his net for a draught. Peter caught so many fish that the net broke.
5. Peter fell down at Jesus knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
6. Jesus told Peter to cast his net on the right side of the ship. Peter caught 153 "great fishes." (John 21.6,11)
7. Saul. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15.22,23)
8. "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5. 28-29)
9. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16.15)
10. Adam, by his disobedience in eating of the forbidden fruit, brought ruin on all mankind. Jesus, by obeying the law on behalf of His own elect people and suffering for their sin, enables them to be accounted just and righteous before God.

THE END OF THE WAY

My life is a wearisome journey;
I'm sick with the dust and the heat;
The rays of the sun beat upon me;
The briars are wounding my feet;
But the city to which I am journeying
Will more than my trials repay,
All the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

There are so many hills to climb upward,
I often am longing for rest;
But He who appoints me my pathway
Knows just what is needful and best;
I know in His Word He has promised
That my strength shall be as my day;
And the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

Though now I am footsore and weary,
I shall rest when I'm safely at home;
I know I'll receive a glad welcome,
For the Saviour Himself has said, "Come!"
So, when I am weary in body
And sinking in spirit, I say,
All the toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

Cooling fountains are there for the thirsty;
There are cordials for those who are faint;
There are robes that are whiter and purer
Than any that fancy can paint;
Then I'll try to press hopefully onward,
Thinking often through each weary day,
The toils of the road will seem nothing
When I get to the end of the way.

These lines were written by a young woman in Nova Scotia, who suffered for many years with spinal disease, but in whom the grace of God was most wonderfully manifested.

Sower 1885

The Friendly Companion



Tree of 40 Fruit: "Tree 75"



One week's harvest

"The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the
desire of the righteous shall be granted."
(Proverbs 10.24)

August 2021

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Volume 147

August 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	171
Our Front Cover Picture	173
A Dying Child's Prayer	174
For the Very Little Ones: The Lord Defends Jerusalem	176
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 19.20	177
Bible Lessons: God Causes Balaam to Bless Israel.....	178
A Chinese Girl's Prayer Answered	180
The Perfect Way of God	181
A Woman's Last Prayer	184
Short Biography of the Early Life of John Warburton Jr.	185
Bible Study for the Older Ones: The Kingdom of God Pt. 3	188
Bible Questions: "What Shall I Do?"	190
Poetry: Balaam's Prayer	192

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

In the Book of Job, we are told of something so costly that its price cannot be known by man. Do you know what it is? This great, all-important, chief thing is **wisdom**. The Book of Proverbs tells us that it is *"the principal thing"* (Proverbs 4.7). What a blessing it must be to obtain this wisdom! *"It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof"* (Job 28.15).

The most valuable gold in Bible times was "the gold of Ophir." Yet, the wisdom spoken of cannot be valued by pure gold, nor compared to the costliest jewels. *"For the price of wisdom is above rubies"* (Job 28.18). Where does this wisdom come from and how can it be obtained? *"God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof"* (verse 23). *"And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom"* (verse 28).

How many of our young readers feel the need of this wisdom? Do you feel your lack of understanding in the Scriptures, your lack of knowledge of the Lord Jesus? The Lord speaks in His Word to those who truly feel this lack: *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"* (James 1.5). This wisdom is not *"the wisdom of this world [which] is foolishness with God"* (1 Corinthians 3.19). Rather, it is the wisdom which makes one *"wise unto salvation"* (2 Timothy 3.15). May the Lord help us to pray with Moses in Psalm 90: *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."*

While this wisdom from above is without price, there is something else that has such great value and worth that no price can be paid for it. It is your soul! On one occasion, when Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He asked them, *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16.26).

The richest men in the world, with their billions of dollars, euros or pounds, cannot deliver their souls from God's eternal justice. Yet, there is hope for those who feel themselves to be lost and ruined. They feel the value of their souls, the eternal value! While they cannot give anything in exchange for their souls, they are taught that *"the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever"* (Psalm 49.8). With what is the soul redeemed? It must be something far more precious than gold, silver, dollars, euros or pounds. In his first epistle, Peter wrote of that which redeemed such souls: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1.18,19). Here is that which far outweighs the value of precious souls: the **precious blood of Christ**.

There is one thing more with value that far excels everything of this world: the Person of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Judas Iscariot thought His value to be thirty pieces of silver. Many today make the same bargain as Judas. They obtain many possessions to satisfy their carnal (worldly) appetites. They place themselves in situations where they can easily be absent from the house of God. They do not love His Word or seek Him in prayer. In these and many other ways, they are making the solemn bargain of Judas. They have not yet learned to value a precious Jesus.

In a parable, the Lord Jesus once spoke of a very wealthy man whose ground brought forth abundantly. He had so much grain that he had no room for it to be stored. What could he do? He selfishly thought that he should tear down his barns and build much larger ones. That being done, he promised himself a life of ease, but the Lord said, *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"* (Luke 12.20).

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Our front cover picture this month shows an unusual and beautiful type of tree, along with some of the fruits harvested from that type of tree in one week's time. A plant usually bears only one type of fruit, but on this tree, there are several different types of fruit growing from the same branch. How is that possible?

This tree is called a "Tree of Forty Fruit." It is one of a small number of trees cultivated by professor and artist Sam Van Aken, of Syracuse University, New York. He thought of doing this when a large orchard near his home was being closed due to a lack of funding. To preserve some of the heirloom fruit varieties that would have been lost, he began grafting some of those fruits onto other trees. He continues to develop these trees for both artistic and practical purposes. Each tree eventually produces over forty different types of stone fruit, such as peaches, plums, cherries and almonds.

Grafting, the process used to make a "Tree of Forty Fruit," is an ancient technique. The gardener makes an incision in the working tree, and then takes a sliver from a different type of tree, which includes a bud. He inserts the sliver into the incision, tapes the new bud into the tree, and lets it set and heal over the winter. If all goes well, the new bud will grow into the tree and begin to produce fruit.

Several times in the Bible, the Lord Jesus is compared to a plant or a tree. He speaks of Himself as a vine in John 15, to show that His people must depend upon Him for everything. He says, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."* He gives life to His people, in the same way that a tree gives life to its branches.

Although the Lord's people are not born believing on Jesus, they eventually will all be united to Him and to each other by faith, like new buds grafted onto the same tree. They are removed from their native tree, where they can never bear good fruit, and grafted into the Lord Jesus. Through Him, they receive life and begin to bear good, spiritual fruits, like *"love, joy, peace,*

longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5.22-23).

The appearance of these fruits may vary from person to person, just like the "Tree of Forty Fruit" bears many different types of fruit. This is by the Lord's design; He gives His people different gifts for His own sovereign purposes. But their fruits will all be genuine, good spiritual fruits, not the counterfeit fruits produced by unbelief.

In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul uses the idea of grafting to illustrate the salvation of the Gentiles, and to keep them from boasting of that salvation. He compares the Israelites to branches broken off from a good olive tree, and the Gentiles to wild olive branches grafted into that same tree. *"Because of unbelief they were broken off,"* he tells the believing Gentiles, *"and thou standest by faith."* But he warns them, *"Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee."* Yet he also gives hope for the Israelites, saying, *"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again."*

Perhaps you have seen a tree that is dead or dying. Although the tree may still be standing, it cannot continue to produce fruit, and eventually it will decay. By nature, we are like branches growing on a tree that is going to die. Our only hope of salvation is to be cut out of this tree and grafted by faith onto the living tree, Jesus Christ. May this blessing be given to each of us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Contributed

A DYING CHILD'S PRAYER

This true story was told by the minister who is mentioned. We love true stories of how God hears and answers prayer, and we hope you will find this one both interesting and helpful.

A little boy who went to Sunday school at a Baptist chapel in Gloucestershire became very ill. This little boy had come to love the Lord Jesus Christ. He thought a great deal of the minister at

the chapel where he attended, although he had never spoken to him. Sad to say, the child's home was not a happy place, for his father was a drunkard, a most ungodly man. The little boy's illness was very serious, and it soon became apparent that he would die. One night, he was very restless, feeling troubled about his father. As he lay dying, he prayed that the Lord Jesus would send the minister to speak to his father, and that his father would become a Christian and give up drinking.

That same night, the minister, who was a young man, sat up very late in his study reading. At last, he closed the book and prepared to go to bed. But he suddenly felt impressed that he was needed, that someone wanted help. Instead of going to bed as he intended, he took down his hat, unchained the dog, and started out down the road. Then, he began to tell himself that he was being foolish; he turned around and went back home. Still, the impression of being needed was so strong that he started out again. This time, there was no turning back. An unseen hand guided him into a road that was completely unfamiliar, and led him to stop at a strange house.

The minister was admitted, and he found it was the home of the little dying boy who attended his own Sunday school. Quickly, he was told about the child's prayer, and the minister and the father became engaged in earnest conversation. The blessing of the Holy Spirit was on that conversation. The drunken father was brought to realise the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and he was brought to a measure of hope in God's salvation through the finished work of atonement. The deathbed of his little son was brightened with joy over the change, and there was joy in heaven among the angels over a repentant sinner.

That father eventually became a minister of the everlasting gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins in a village of Wiltshire. Dear readers, let us be encouraged to pray for ourselves and for our friends. God is ever ready to hear and answer prayer.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1915

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE LORD DEFENDS JERUSALEM**

People from ten tribes of Israel had been taken far away to the land of Assyria. Now, a great army of Assyrians came to fight against those that remained in Jerusalem. King Hezekiah received a letter from the king of Assyria, saying that the Lord God of Israel was not able to save them from his power. Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord and spread the letter before the Lord. He prayed that the Lord would defend them from the king of Assyria.

Then Isaiah the prophet told Hezekiah that his prayer was heard. The Lord said that the king of Assyria *“shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there ... for I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake.”*

That night, the Lord sent an angel to slay all the mighty men in the camp of the Assyrians. The king of Assyria had no army left. He returned to his own land, where he was slain by the sword. *“Thus, the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem”* from the power of the enemy.

QUESTIONS:

1. Hezekiah received a letter from whom? (4 words)
2. Before whom did Hezekiah spread the letter? (2 words)
3. Whom did the Lord send to slay the Assyrians?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. David.
2. Idols.
3. Assyria.

Contributed

*“That which
thou hast
prayed to
Me ... I
have heard”
2 Kings 19.20*

BIBLE LESSONS**GOD CAUSES BALAAM TO BLESS ISRAEL**

The story of Balaam is one of the strangest and most fearful accounts in the Word of God. He seemed to be so religious, yet he was so covetous of money and worldly honour. He was a man to whom God spoke, and he prophesied of God's blessing upon Israel. Yet, he later advised Moab to tempt Israel to sin against God so He would be angry with them.

When the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam to see the angel of the Lord standing in the path with his sword drawn, he fell flat on his face. The angel reproved him because he had smitten his ass three times, saying, *"Unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive."*

Balaam is a very solemn character, for he even seemed sorry for what he had done. He said, *"I have sinned ... therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."* Balaam's repentance was like many in the present day. For a brief time, they seem to be convicted of their sin, yet they really want to continue on in the same way.

The angel granted Balaam permission to go with the messengers of Balak. That was really just what Balaam wanted. Balaam was told a second time that he could only speak the word that God would give him.

When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him. He reminded Balaam that he had great riches and honour to bestow on him if only he would curse the children of Israel. We wonder if Balak showed him the riches (gold and silver) that he would give him. Balaam had to answer that he could only speak what God would tell him.

The next morning, Balak took Balaam to the top of a mountain where he could look over the camp of Israel. Balaam told the king to make seven altars, and they offered a burnt sacrifice of an ox and a sheep upon each altar. We cannot help but wonder if Balaam thought these burnt sacrifices would please God, and then He would permit him to curse Israel. Balaam withdrew a short distance from Balak, and he asked the

Lord to come to meet him. Balaam told the Lord that he had offered up oxen and rams upon seven altars.

God sent Balaam back to King Balak with His word. Balaam started his prophecy: *"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?"* He also declared that Israel was a people who would dwell alone, separate from all other nations. They would multiply in number so that it would be impossible to count the fourth part of them. Balaam then expressed his well-known prayer, *"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"* What a powerful testimony to the blessedness of God's people! How many of us have really desired to be found with the righteous in the day of death? It can only be so if we walk in the ways of the righteous.

Balaam's desire was not granted to him, and a few things give proof that his prayer was not answered. One proof was shown by his actions that followed. Twice more, at the invitation of Balak, he went to certain vantage points with the thought or hope that he might be able to curse Israel. Still, you may wonder how a man could speak the words that God gave him and pray such a wonderful prayer. Perhaps this very narrative gives the answer. If God put words into the mouth of the ass and caused her to speak, could He not also put words into the mouth of a false prophet? Even this is not too hard for the Lord to do.

When Balak heard Balaam declare the blessing upon Israel, he reproved him, saying, *"What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold thou hast blessed them altogether."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Balaam do when he saw the angel of the Lord?
2. What did the angel say he would have done to Balaam?
3. How did Balaam start his prophecy? (9 words)
4. What did Balaam declare about how Israel would dwell?
5. Write out Balaam's prayer. (16 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. In the plains of Moab.
 2. Balak. Balaam.
 3. Great honour and riches.
 4. Covetous greed.
 5. The mouth of the ass.
-

A CHINESE GIRL'S PRAYER ANSWERED

An incident related by Mrs. Howard Taylor about a little Chinese girl whose Mohammedan grandfather was in the habit of beating her for praying in the name of Jesus.

It was a time of great distress and danger on account of roaming gangs of thieves, who appeared as soldiers. The grandfather had suffered much in the past when such a company had taken up residence in his home. One day, while he was walking on the city wall, he saw that the same robbers were returning to the city. He was alarmed and tried in vain to think of some way to escape from them.

Suddenly the grandfather thought of his little granddaughter, who was about eight years of age. Did she not pray? Rushing home, he found her and cried, "If ever you prayed in your life, pray now. Those robbers are coming back; I have seen them from the city wall. They will soon be here. You say that God answers prayer; go into that room and pray. Pray that they will not come to our house." He roughly pushed the child into an empty room and closed the door.

The little girl immediately knelt down to pray. Was she frightened or tearful? No! Her mother, who was in another room, heard her pour out her heart to the Lord. "Heavenly Father," she said, "I am so happy, so thankful that my grandfather has told me to pray. Always before, he has beaten me or kicked me if I prayed, but now he has told me to pray. Heavenly Father, please show my grandfather that Thou dost answer prayer; please don't let the robbers come to our house: for Jesus' sake."

The soldiers entered the city and came down the very street where they lived. The gate leading to the house was standing open, for grandfather knew it would be of no use to close it. The leader of the band of robbers came to the open gate and turned the head of his horse to go inside. That was the place he intended to go, but inside the house, a little girl was praying: "Don't let them come to our house, heavenly Father; please show my grandfather that Thou dost answer prayer."

Was the little girl heard and answered? Oh yes! Something happened; perhaps the last thing one would have thought. The horse simply would not go through the gate. It backed and kicked; it turned this way and that way – nothing would make it go inside. The officer beat it and dug his spurs into it, but all to no avail. At that time, the Chinese were very superstitious, and the officer was overcome by fear. Turning to his fellow soldiers, he said, "This court is full of demons; we cannot see them, but the horse can. Not one of you shall go in there." He turned his horse and led the robbers to another part of the town.

What the horse saw or feared, we do not know. We do know what the ass of Balaam saw long ago when it turned aside in the way. And we know it would be just as easy for the Lord to send His angel with a drawn sword now as it was then. We know also from a missionary in that city that the grandfather came to the Mission House the next morning. When they met, tears were in the eyes of the proud Mohammedan. "To think," he said, "that all the while, my little granddaughter was right, and I was wrong. Teach me about the God who answers prayer like that; teach me to pray."

Adapted from Friendly Companion 1995

THE PERFECT WAY OF GOD

Children and young people are often very concerned about their appearance. They sometimes wish they were taller or shorter, or that their hair, nose or eyes were different.

Sometimes they think they are not as attractive or pretty as a friend or someone else in the family.

A girl named Gladys Aylward felt just like that. She had straight, black hair arranged in stiff braids. "Other girls have much nicer hair than I do," she grumbled. "Other girls are bigger too! It seems like I am not growing at all. I am staying so small! People never tell me that I look pretty. I am stupid and small."

Gladys always felt inferior to others. She seemed to remain small, and she felt unattractive compared to her sister and friends. She also had trouble learning at school. However, she had many good qualities. She was able to see obstacles in her life and overcome them. What she could not attain due to a lack of understanding, she made up for by being quick-witted and practical. In this way, from childhood on, Gladys was often able to change difficult or stressful situations into cheerful ones.

When she was in her late teens, the Lord converted Gladys. After her eyes were opened to her own spiritual need, she felt concerned for the souls of others. With great seriousness, she felt compelled to talk with those around her and to warn them about eternity and the need for their souls to be saved.

One day, Gladys read about the great need for missionaries in China, where millions of people had never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. She felt a great burden for those people, although she knew very little about China. As time went on, she felt the Lord was calling her to bring the Word of God to the Chinese people.

Step by step, the Lord led Gladys along. She was told about an urgent plea for help by an aged missionary in China. After much prayer, Gladys was moved to go and help this woman who worked in a very remote area of China. Along the journey, Gladys came to a small mission post at Teshchow, where she was warmly welcomed by Mrs. Smith, the missionary working there. She wanted to prepare Gladys for the difficult task that awaited her and to explain some of the customs in China.

"It is best that you start wearing Chinese clothing right away," Mrs. Smith advised Gladys. "Look what a beautiful Chinese gown I have here! Try it on."

After the long journey, Gladys was glad to exchange her dirty, worn dress for the blue Chinese gown.

"This is what the rural people of the Shansi province wear," Mrs. Smith explained. She turned Gladys around a few times, crying out in amazement, "Child, you almost look like a Chinese woman in this blue gown! Your hair is just as straight and black as theirs, and you are just as small as they are too! Go and look in the mirror!"

Gladys looked at herself for a long time. At last, she turned to Mrs. Smith, who noticed tears in her eyes. In a motherly way, she asked Gladys if it was hard for her to wear this kind of clothing.

"No," Gladys answered. "No, that's not it, but now I understand! Yes, now I understand!"

She told Mrs. Smith that she had two great sorrows as a young girl. The first was her straight, black hair. It was so very black! "I had never seen such hair on any other girl. I wore it in two stiff, hard braids, like two little pigtails. I just could not bear it! No one knows how many tears I shed because of those two black braids. My second great sorrow was that I appeared different from the rest of my family. I thought they were attractive, while I was not. I seemed to stop growing halfway. It seemed unfair that even when I wore nice dresses, I did not look pretty, like my sister and friends. I always remained very small in size. But now I understand why my hair had to be so black. Now that I have seen Chinese women, I realise that the colour of their hair is exactly the same as mine. Exactly the same! Now I understand why I had to stay so small. I have the same build as the Chinese. Oh, see in what a perfect way God handles His affairs! In His wisdom, He foresees all things."

Mrs. Smith smiled at her joy. "Yes, Gladys," she replied, "You should adapt to the customs of the people as soon as possible.

The Chinese people don't like strangers, but they may accept you." Again, Mrs. Smith admired Gladys in her blue gown and encouraged her, saying, "Although your skin colour is lighter, you look exactly like them!"

Now Gladys understood that all the outward things, such as her appearance and her natural abilities, were appointed by God. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55.8,9).

Adapted from The Woman with the Book

A WOMAN'S LAST PRAYER

Recently, there was an account given of an elderly woman who had passed away. Her daughter had been trying to reach her by phone, but when she did not respond, the daughter went to her home. She found that her mother had passed away while kneeling by her bedside. It is a remarkable thought to consider that one may be speaking with Jesus in prayer one moment, and the next moment see Him face to face. What a blessed exchange for those who know Him as their Saviour and Lord!

Before she left the house, the daughter found her mother's Bible open with a notepad on it. On the notepad, her mother had written these words: *"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"* (1 Corinthians 15.26). We trust that for her it was a blessed anticipation! For those who have been saved, death gives way to life everlasting; but for those outside of Christ, death is but the beginning of eternal misery. What will it be for you and me?

The Bible tells us: *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always"* (Luke 21.36). No one knows when he or she will be called to die. May we each be found watching and praying to be found ready for that solemn day. You may have heard the expression in prayer, asking the Lord to come and convert us "while we are yet on praying ground." We need help to pray for God's mercy

while we are able, because one day it will be too late. David put up many prayers over his lifetime, but then we read, *"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"* (Psalm 72.20).

Contributed

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN WarBURTON JUNIOR

Some children put their parents through an awful lot of pain and grief. The subject of this short biography was one of those. He was the eleventh child of John and Lydia Warburton, his father being the pastor of Zion Strict Baptist Chapel, Trowbridge. Born in 1815, he lived throughout the Victorian era, and he died in 1892, nine years before Queen Victoria died.

Two notable events took place while John was young, and they left an impression upon him for the rest of his life. He had a younger sister, called Rhoda, with whom he would often have played. Very sadly, she died when only three years of age, when John would have been five. This must have been extremely distressing for him. The other event was at an unknown age; he went downstairs to his older sister's workroom to get dressed, as a fire had been lit to warm the room. With his back to the fire, in a moment, his shirt became engulfed in flames. He ran screaming to the next room, where his parents managed to extinguish the flames. However, he was badly burnt, and had physical scars for the rest of his life.

As John grew up, he became friends with some who had a bad influence on him. He writes of himself: "My element, when a youth, was to ramble about the fields in company with other youths addicted to all manner of idle habits." (We wonder what he would have been like today, with mobile phones, etc.?) At times, his father would hear of his misbehaviour and would lovingly reprove him. He pointed out what would be the sure result of such things. "What hours of grief I should have escaped had I taken his advice," he later wrote.

At the age of fourteen, John was apprenticed to a tailor to learn that trade, which he did not appear to enjoy. Around that

time, he began to visit public houses (pubs); not because he enjoyed alcohol or getting drunk, but for the socialising. Again, he writes, “Cards, romancing and frivolity in every shape was my delight. Never was I at rest but when in such disgraceful company.” We wonder at the sight of this lad sitting amongst such worldly companions, and then found at chapel with his mother and siblings on the Lord’s day, while his father preached the glorious gospel. No doubt, he longed for the “Amen”!

Around the age of seventeen, John began what he called “his ramblings.” For whatever reason (which he could not give at that time or even years later), he felt a strong urge to wander off. He writes: “A rambling fit now came upon me, and a strange thought of leaving home, for what I could not tell, or where to go I knew not. Strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact. I resolved to go on tramp, leaving a good home, a kind father, kind mother, kind sisters and a home stored with every comfort.” His first tramp took him off for a few days, leaving home without informing anyone. He made his way down to the south coast, eventually reaching Portsmouth. John was now exhausted, penniless and hungry, so he called at a friend of his father, Mr. Doudney. Just as he was settling down, a coach arrived outside with his father, who had been anxiously pursuing him all the way down.

Although John attempted to keep himself from wandering off again, the temptation became too strong. This time, he went to London and then up to Manchester, where his uncle found him work. This did not last long, and he wandered off again. He headed back down south, even coming for one night to Trowbridge, and stayed with one of his sisters. Yet he refused to see his parents, and then went off to Bristol. It was on this particular wandering that he ended up somewhere he had not intended to go. From Bristol, he headed down to Exeter. On his arrival there, he must have been penniless, extremely hungry and without any hope of obtaining nourishment. In this sad state, he felt there was only one option left – to join the army. On July 11th, 1837, he enlisted in the 37th Regiment of Foot.

He and some other new recruits were marched down to Plymouth. His new home was the barracks, and at first, he enjoyed this new life.

John had not been there long when he was called by God's almighty grace. He writes: "The time had arrived, appointed in eternal counsel, to put a stop to my evil course of sin." Although we do not read in detail what actually happened, it appears that the Lord very powerfully convicted him of his sins. He was cut down, but not cut off. Now, with the fear of God in his heart, he found the barracks a terrible place to live, and with the knowledge that he might be posted to India, his heart was filled with great fear. It was around this time that he wrote to his parents, explaining his situation. His father wrote to Mr. Arthur Triggs, who was a Strict Baptist pastor at Plymouth, asking him to visit his son. Mr. Triggs did so, and in his reply to John's father, informed him that he felt the Lord was at work in the heart of his son. Through various means, it became possible for young John to be discharged from the army, and he returned home a very different person.

John was baptized by his father at Trowbridge in April 1838. Just before going down into the water, his father said to him, "Come, my brother, take up thy cross and follow a precious Christ." Soon after this, he married a young lady named Emma. However, John struggled to find work and eventually moved to London to seek employment. Around that time, he became exercised about the ministry. He kept putting such thoughts away, feeling to be so ignorant and foolish. He writes, "Ah," I said to myself, "Preach indeed! They may preach who want to, but as for me, I never will; no never!" But he had to learn to submit to God's will, and in January 1844, he went to Rochester in Kent and preached the gospel for the first time.

He eventually became pastor at a Baptist chapel in a small village called Southill, Bedfordshire, where he remained until his death in 1892.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE KINGDOM OF GOD – PART 3

The kingdom of God is not referred to as such anywhere in the Old Testament. It is not until Matthew chapter 6 in the New Testament that this expression is first used by the Lord Jesus. What a word of exhortation He uttered! *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Yet, it is clear throughout the Old Testament, as we have seen in the last lesson, that God has chosen a people unto Himself. This is clearly set forth in Exodus 19 verse 6, but I feel I must quote from verse 3 onwards: *“And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain [Sinai], saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: **and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom** of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”*

In every kingdom there are laws which govern the relationship between the king and his subjects. While the laws of the land are intended to convey the privileges bestowed on his people by the reigning monarch, they also define the obligations of the subjects (or citizens). These obligations are given as tokens of allegiance to the sovereign and are apparent in such behaviour as the monarch would expect of them. In return, the law recognises the benefits to be enjoyed by the citizens of the realm. Thus, God gave, through Moses, on Mount Sinai all of His holy law for His people. Through both the Old and New Testaments, we see again and again how the people of God have forfeited their “rights” and privileges by their persistent disobedience. The wonder of the kingdom of God is that, notwithstanding the continual failure of its subjects to keep and observe these laws, the King does not disown them all. That is, He does not cast off those whom He has set His love upon

from all eternity. *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified”* (Romans 8.28-30). It is worth noting what follows: *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (verse 31). These words from Romans 8 surely define every single person who is savingly brought into the kingdom of God and their path to glory.

The Apostle Peter gives us another viewpoint: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1.3-5).

Now, I want to point out a truth which is revealed in the passage from Romans 8, and it is this: *“that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (verse 29). The fact is that, through Jesus Christ, all the subjects in the kingdom of God are related, being *“joint-heirs with Christ”* (verse 17). In other words, the King is the head of one great family. Do we often think of this? It is very sad that in our little circle of churches, there is and has been much division on account of partiality based on family units. Natural family ties are all too often preferred over the union described above between the members of Christ's mystical body. It ought not to be so, should it?

There is a family on earth,
Whose Father fills a throne!
But though a seed of heavenly birth,
To men they're little known.

Gadsby's 1013 verse 1

Do read the rest of the hymn, as it is right on our subject, and the concluding lines should be well considered by those who hope they are indeed amongst this family:

Content all honour to forego,
But that which comes from God

Verse 5

In many respects, the kingdom of God is not like a natural kingdom, and the Saviour made this clear many times during His earthly ministry. For instance: *"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17.20,21). We see here that this kingdom is of an entirely spiritual, not a natural character. Again, in the judgment hall, Jesus said (to Pilate): *"My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence"* (John 18.36).

The kingdom of God is an immovable kingdom. Bear in mind the words of Jesus in Luke 17 verse 21 above. Then, consider the Scripture of truth in Hebrews 12 verses 28 and 29: *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."*

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are based around the question "WHAT SHALL I DO?" Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. In John 6.6, it is recorded of Jesus, "He Himself knew what He would do." What question had Jesus asked just prior to this?
2. To which question did God give the answer, "I will shew thee what thou shalt do"? (1 Samuel 16.2,3)

For the next four questions, write down the answer given to each question.

3. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" (Luke 18. 41)
4. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16. 30)
5. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9. 6)
6. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6)
7. Who was asked three times in succession, "What shall we do?" (Luke 3)
8. "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" What did God reply to the answer to this? (Luke 12)
9. A similar question was asked of the Lord Jesus in both Luke 10 and Luke 18 – in both cases Jesus pointed to the law of Moses. What was the question?
10. The unjust steward in Luke 16 asked the question, "What shall I do?" What did he do which was both dishonest and unfaithful to his master's interests, and for his own selfish ends?

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. "They could not enter in because of unbelief."
2. "Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation."
3. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.
4. "His own country," i.e. Nazareth.
5. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
6. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9.24)
7. Thomas. (John 20.24-29)
8. "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12.48)
9. The feeding of the five thousand. (John 6.5-14)
10. Moses and Aaron, who were refused permission to enter the promised land of Canaan. (Numbers 20.12)

BALAAM'S PRAYER

How blessed the righteous are,
When they resign their breath!
No wonder Balaam wished to share
In such a happy death.

“O! let me die,” said he,
“The death the righteous do;
When life is ended let me be
Found with the faithful few.”

The force of truth, how great!
When enemies confess,
None but the righteous, whom they hate,
A solid hope possess.

But Balaam's wish was vain,
His heart was insincere;
He thirsted for unrighteous gain,
And sought a portion here.

He seemed the Lord to know,
And to offend Him loath;
But mammon proved his overthrow;
For none can serve them both.

May you, my friends, and I
Warning, from hence receive,
If like the righteous we would die,
To choose the life they live.

John Newton

The Friendly Companion



“Yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

Philippians 1.22-24

September 2021

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Volume 147

September 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	195
Our Front Cover Picture	196
For the Very Little Ones: The Sickness of Hezekiah.....	198
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 20.5	199
Bible Lessons: Balaam Continues to Bless Israel	200
The Shadow Returned Backward	202
A Refuge for the Weary.....	203
The Wrong Passport!.. ..	204
“Be Sure to Have Your Passes Ready!”	205
Keeping the Sabbath	206
A Remarkable Prayer	207
Letters of John Warburton, Jr.....	208
Bible Study for the Older Ones: The Kingdom of God Pt. 4	210
Bible Questions: Hiding Places	213
Poetry: Choose Thou for Me	216

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

There are many times in our lives when we have to make a choice. When you go to a restaurant, you are given a menu from which you choose what you would like to eat. As you grow older, you will have to make many choices, such as the type of clothes you wear, the friends you have, the things you do and the places you go. The choices we make in these things, and many others, often reveal the true bent of our nature, the real state of our hearts.

What a solemn choice Lot made when his uncle Abraham told him to separate from him! We are told that Lot looked at the flourishing plains of Jordan which led down towards Sodom. He never sought the Lord's direction in the matter. Although he chose to go toward Sodom, he likely never thought that one day he would live right in the midst of Sodom. The first choice opened the door to all that followed. After Lot was in Sodom, his soul was sorely vexed (troubled) by the sins of the people. Yet, he did not choose to leave. When Lot was finally delivered from Sodom, he lost his wife, his home and all his possessions. What a costly choice!

Joshua, before he died, commanded all the tribes of Israel to come to him in Shechem. He called for the elders of each tribe, along with their judges and officers, to present themselves before the Lord. He spoke the words of God to them, rehearsing the history of God's wonderful care, deliverances and provision for them in bringing them into Canaan. Joshua said, *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [Jordan], and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served ... or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24.14,15). Joshua's choice was made by faith, believing that God would supply all his needs, satisfy all his desires, sanctify all

his troubles and make him truly happy. How much better was Joshua's choice than that of Lot!

What a good choice Solomon was helped to make! Right in the beginning of his reign, while he was yet a young man, God appeared to Solomon in a dream during the night, saying, "*Ask what I shall give thee*" (1 Kings 3.5). What an opportunity!

There are some important truths we should remember regarding such an invitation. First, it tells us of the willingness of God to do it. Perhaps you are tempted to think that God does not speak to men with such invitations today. The Lord Jesus taught the people, saying, "*Ask, and it shall be given you*" (Matthew 7.7). Second, when God invites us to ask what He shall give us or do for us, we should remember that He is **able** to do it. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. When a leper asked the Lord to heal his leprosy, the Lord did it. When a blind man asked for his sight, the Lord opened his eyes. Third, we need grace to ask in faith. On one occasion, the Lord asked the great question, "*Believe ye that I am able to do this?*" Very simply, this faith is in the name of the Lord Jesus. This leads us to the fourth point: we need to ask in the name of the Lord Jesus. If we are helped to remember these things, then, like Solomon, we will ask for wisdom. What a good choice he made in asking for that which pleased God. He was given a wise and understanding heart, as well as that which he had not asked for, both riches and honour.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Twenty years ago, on September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by a group of terrorists, evil men who were intent on causing great destruction and death. The World Trade Center was located in two skyscrapers that stood side by side. Each building was more than one hundred storeys tall. They were usually referred to as "the twin towers." These evil men hijacked (forcibly took over) jets filled with passengers and full

of jet fuel and flew them into the twin towers. There was an enormous explosion of debris, fire and smoke, and eventually, both of the buildings collapsed. Nearly three thousand people lost their lives. Our front cover shows a picture of the twin towers shortly after they were struck by the jets.

A third hijacked jet flew into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Defense Department. One hundred and twenty-five people were killed and many were injured.

A fourth jet was also hijacked by terrorists. It is believed that they intended to fly the jet into the United States Capitol. However, brave men attempted to retake control of the jet and prevented them. This plan was revealed in cell phone calls by passengers to their loved ones. The jet crashed, killing all forty passengers and crew, along with the terrorists.

The awful scenes of suffering and death that took place on that day cannot be fully described. Amidst the horror, there were also many acts of great heroism. People who were total strangers helped each other as they attempted to escape. Firefighters bravely went into the face of danger, performing daring acts of courage. They saved over five thousand lives, but three hundred and forty-three firefighters perished. Sixty police officers and Port Authority officers also died.

The twin towers were constructed of very strong materials and were thought to be entirely safe. Yet, a great number of factors combined to bring them down. The Word of God tells us of a “*strong tower*” that can never be destroyed. Those who find refuge in that tower will be eternally safe. “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*” (Proverbs 18.10).

The events of that terrible day have caused much speculation, and many questions have been asked. The Lord Jesus once asked, “*Of those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men...? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13.4,5).

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE SICKNESS OF HEZEKIAH**

King Hezekiah was very sick. The prophet Isaiah came to him, saying, *“Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.”* Hezekiah did not feel ready to die, and he had no son to be king after him. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall. He wept and prayed.

The Lord sent Isaiah back to tell Hezekiah that his prayer was heard. The Lord would heal him, and in three days, he would be able to go up to the house of the Lord. The Lord said that He would add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. The Lord gave Hezekiah a very special sign. The shadow on the sun dial of the king went back by ten degrees.

After Hezekiah was healed, he wrote, *“Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back,”* meaning that his sins were forgiven. He gave thanks to the Lord, saying: *“The LORD was ready to save me.”* Later, the Lord gave Hezekiah a son, who was named Manasseh.

QUESTIONS:

1. Isaiah told Hezekiah that he would —_? (1 word)
2. Hezekiah turned to the wall and did what? (3 words)
3. How many years did the Lord add to his life?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. The King of Assyria.
2. The Lord.
3. An angel.

Contributed

*“I have
heard thy
prayer,
I have seen
thy tears”
2 Kings 20.5*

BIBLE LESSONS**BALAAH CONTINUES TO BLESS ISRAEL**

Balak was so obsessed with the destruction of Israel that he could not give up his plan to have Israel cursed. He took Balaam to another place, from which he could view only a small part of Israel and not all of them. He brought him to the top of Mount Pisgah and built seven more altars, and he offered a bullock and a ram on each one.

Again, Balaam told Balak that he would go and *“meet the LORD yonder.”* What a mystery is this whole narrative! We would think that God would have nothing more to do with this false prophet who seemed to resemble a sorcerer more than a prophet. The Lord did meet with Balaam and sent him to Balak with another message. The Bible tells us that he took up his parable and said, *“Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me ... God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: bath He said, and shall He not do it? Or bath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”* Even though the instrument (Balaam) by whom the message came was corrupt, the message was true and pure. God would never go back from His word of promise to Abraham, *“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee”* (Genesis 12.3).

Again, Balaam said that he had received a commandment to bless Israel, and he could not reverse it. He told Balak that God did not see iniquity in Israel. We are not to think these words mean that there was no sin or evil in Israel, but rather that God had wonderfully removed (forgiven) it, so that it was not seen by Him. Balaam added that God was with Israel, and *“the shout of a King [Jesus] is among them.”* God had brought them out of Egypt, subdued their enemies and turned every evil design against them into a blessing. Thus, it would be said of Israel, *“What bath God wrought!”*

Balak was so distressed that he told Balaam to remain quiet; if he could not curse Israel, at least he should not bless them. Yet, Balak could not rest. He still thought Balaam had power to curse Israel. We read in Isaiah 57.20: *“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up*

mire and dirt." That is a good description of Balak and Balaam with all their plotting, desiring God to curse His people.

Balak took Balaam to a third place, the top of Peor. He said, *"Peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence."* Again, they built seven altars and offered a bullock and a ram on each altar. Nothing seems too much effort for the wicked to obtain their carnal wishes. When Balaam considered that it had pleased the Lord to bless Israel on the former occasions, he did not go to seek for enchantments as he had done before. We cannot know for sure what those enchantments were, yet we can say that it was a device of Satan. Thus, on the two former occasions, when he went to meet with the Lord, he also consulted with the devil by enchantments or sorcery.

Balaam set his face toward the camp of Israel. Perhaps he thought that if he did not consult with God, he would still be able to curse them. While Balaam would not seek words from God, the Lord came upon him by His Spirit. He began his parable by declaring how blessed Israel was in their dwellings: they were like flourishing gardens planted by the rivers; their kingdom would be exalted, and they would reign over the nations round about them. He ended by saying, *"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."*

In a rage, Balak smote his hands together, saying, *"I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times ... now flee thou to thy place."* Before he left, Balaam told Balak what Israel would do to his people (the Moabites) in years to come. He began by saying, *"I shall see Him [God], but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."* Then Balaam declared that Edom (the children of Esau) would become a possession of Israel; Amalek, the first of the nations, would perish; the Kenites, in their strong habitation, would be destroyed. Finally, Balaam made a solemn statement: *"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!"*

QUESTIONS:

1. To what mount did Balak bring Balaam?
2. When Balaam told Balak to rise up and hear him, what did he say about God? (27 words)
3. Balaam said that God did not see what in Israel?
4. What would be said of Israel because of all that God had done in bringing them out of Egypt? (4 words)
5. What did Balaam say would come out of Jacob? What would rise out of Israel?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Fell flat on his face.
2. Slain him.
3. "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?"
4. Alone.
5. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

THE SHADOW RETURNED BACKWARD

In the Bible, we are told that Hezekiah was given a very special sign that he would be healed of his sickness (see p. 198). The shadow in the sundial would return back ten degrees. For that to happen, the natural movement of the earth would have to go in reverse for a short time. Naturally speaking, that was impossible. *"And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord: and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Abaz"* (2 Kings 20.11). This event is also recorded in Isaiah chapter 38.8: *"So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down."* The reversal of the day's progression must have been observed by many. The king of Babylon sent ambassadors to Hezekiah *"to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land"* (2 Chronicles 32.31).

How this great miracle was performed is beyond the comprehension of human minds. It was impossible! Yet, the Lord caused it to happen for a poor sinner. Oh, how great is His power! *"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"* (Genesis 18.14).

Note by the Editor

A REFUGE FOR THE WEARY

Feeling weary and homesick, a young woman made her way to chapel one rainy Sunday evening. She hurried, for she was very late. She craved something the world could not give her. It was the first time that she had lived away from home. Her time had been fully occupied with the duties required of her until this evening. The surroundings at her place of employment were very worldly. Now that there was an opportunity for going to the Lord's house, she did not want to lose one moment. Exhausted, she sat down; but oh how sweet the Word seemed! In a solemn tone, Mr. Hazelton was reading about the battle of the kings in Genesis chapter 14. He took his text from Psalm 118.27, *"God is the LORD, which bath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."* The solemn impressions remained long afterwards.

Reader, do you love the house of prayer? Where would you seek refreshment if all your strength was gone? How true is that word: *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matthew 6.21). Likewise: *"And being let go, they went to their own company"* (Acts 4.23).

On another Sunday afternoon, the young woman was free and able to attend a Bible class. The subject was on the cities of refuge, and again, the Lord satisfied her hungry soul. For the guilty one who was fleeing, there was safety only in those cities of refuge. When the high priest died, he who had killed his neighbour unawares could go out free. What a sweet type of Jesus, whose death atoned for those whose sins prove a heavy burden and who seek forgiveness from Him! His life alone provides their righteousness; His death their full discharge.

With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met;
And while they feast upon His grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1937

THE WRONG PASSPORT!

Some years ago, I needed to fly to Canada at short notice for a church meeting. I was able to book my flight with ease, and I was dropped off in good time for the flight. I made my way to the check-in desk where tickets and passports were being examined, and I handed over my documents to the very pleasant lady who was processing them. After handing in what I thought was my passport, she looked at me very closely and asked if I had altered my hairstyle since the passport was issued. I assured her that I had not, whereupon she handed the passport back for me to examine. There looking at me was the face of my dear wife. I had brought the wrong passport! Of course, I could not be admitted on my wife's passport. What was I to do? The only answer was for my own passport to be brought from Chippenham, ninety miles away. There was just an hour and a half before the flight! In answer to prayer, and through the kindness of my family, my passport arrived just in time for me to be swiftly moved through customs, and I was able to fly out as expected.

Pondering this event, which the Lord so kindly overruled for me, I could see there was a very important lesson. As John Bunyan put it in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, we need a certificate from Almighty God, by His Spirit, to enter heaven at the end of our days here below. The character Ignorance thought it was not necessary, and he proved to his eternal ruin that there was a way down to hell from the very gate of heaven.

Furthermore, we cannot get to heaven on the certificate of someone else. My wife's passport, however dear she is to me,

would not admit me to the gate where the plane was leaving. Real religion and admittance to heaven is a personal matter, and we need the personal witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Neither a husband, wife, child, brother, sister, mother, father, friend or minister can share their certificate with you. Our title for heaven begins with the new birth, and it is confirmed by the sealing of the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to the work of Christ on behalf of sinners. In His own time and way, He will confirm His own work in the heart.

Dear readers, have you got a certificate, and if so, did it come from God?

Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear Thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God.

G.D. Buss

“BE SURE TO HAVE YOUR PASSES READY!”

During a recent summer holiday, we decided to take a boat trip from Holyhead to visit Dublin for a day. All went well, until we arrived back at the harbour at Dun Laoghaire, near Dublin, for our return journey. We were greeted with the news that because of a weld fracture in the mast of the ship, the sailing would be delayed for a few hours. While we digested this unexpected news, a further announcement was made: **“Be sure to have your passes ready.”** We were very glad of this announcement, because, at least, it gave us some prospect of sailing. So, we hurried along to the office to collect our passes, where the officials emphatically said: **“Keep them safely, in readiness for the eventual time of departure.”**

After spending the unexpected hours in the area, we returned to the harbour. By this time, we were tired and anxious to get going. To our surprise, there was already a long queue (line) of people, all facing the same direction and all **hoping to go through the gates**. We soon realised just **how important our passes were**, as we, rather timidly, went to the

front of the queue and **presented** them. How glad we were, as they were **accepted and everything was in order so that we could go through the gates!**

Some people were very angry, as they were hoping to go **the same way**, but **they were not ready**, as they had **no passes**.

As in so many things which happen in our lives, these events brought home to us the truth of the Scriptures. We read of the wise virgins who were **ready** to go into the marriage feast and also of the words, "*But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first*" (Matthew 19.30).

What an important question it is for each of us to answer!

How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus' blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?

B. Izzard (Friendly Companion June 1997)

KEEPING THE SABBATH

From childhood, a young man had been accustomed to attend the house of the Lord, and he was well acquainted with the Scriptures. However, on one occasion, he was urged to join an excursion on the Thames on the Lord's day. His conscience reproved him, but the love of pleasure, and the temptation of being among an entertaining group of young friends, silenced the monitor. The day was agreed upon, and the weather was unusually fine. The party, about twelve in number, assembled on the bank of the river, ready to proceed to Richmond. Among them was this young man. Just as he was stepping onto the boat, the Word of God came powerfully into his thoughts: "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*" (Exodus 20.8). Conscience instantly added, "*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Genesis 39.9). He could proceed no farther. Amidst the jeers and ridicule of the company, he departed.

Later, the young man received very solemn tidings. As the group of young people was returning from their day of amusement, the boat came upon a barge laden with coal. Being half intoxicated, they saw but were unable to avoid striking the barge. The screams were heard on the shore, but help could not reach them in time. Seven of the passengers perished. How unprepared they were to enter eternity! How thankful the young man felt for having departed from these worldly companions! The Lord had caused him to remember the Scriptures and given him courage to obey. Thus, his own life had been preserved.

The Shorter Catechism illustrated by John Whitecross

A REMARKABLE PRAYER

Mr. Duncan was much annoyed and grieved by the carelessness and frivolity of the people where he ministered. A dancing school had been started. Feeling this would be the undoing of his own labours among the young, he endeavoured to persuade the parents to keep their sons and daughters from attending. Appeals from the pulpit and the Sunday school were unavailing. While some were convinced to stay away, enough remained to allow the dancing teacher to continue.

As a last resort, Mr. Duncan spoke to the teacher. He offered to pay all the fees due to him if he would discontinue the class. However, the teacher declined. He and his pupils enjoyed their triumph over the minister.

One evening, to the great astonishment of all present, the minister entered the dancing room, and stood with his back up to the door until the music stopped. The dancers stood still in wonder at the sight of the minister. A moment later, with his back still to the door, Mr. Duncan said, "Let us pray." What a prayer it was! One girl, the narrator of this story, said that "*she felt as if the floor were opening and she sinking through.*" All was perfectly still, save the voice of the minister.

As soon as he closed the prayer, Mr. Duncan stepped forward, away from the door. A rush was made for the door, and the room was left to the teacher and the minister. Most of them never returned. The shock was never to be forgotten. The female who related this, said she danced no more after that day.

An extract from The Life of "Rabbi" Duncan

LETTERS OF JOHN Warburton, JR.

Rather than another short biography this month, we have felt led to insert two letters written by young John Warburton Jr. from the army barracks to his dear father. These letters were written by a young man in deep distress, which he had brought upon himself and only had himself to blame. He was under real conviction of sin, along with a guilty conscience. He was in great need of forgiveness, most of all from God, but also from his natural father. May these two letters be impressed upon us, showing how God deals with His people, in causing them to turn unto Himself with a broken heart and contrite spirit. May we know something of this true grace ourselves.

A.T. Pickett

Plymouth,

August 8th, 1837

Dear Father and Mother,

I am ashamed to write to you, but still I cannot rest until I have written to inform you where I am. What must have been your feelings all this while? I picture to myself the astonishment you will be in, when I inform you that I am a soldier. I enlisted at Exeter, for I was obliged to, or starve; but you might ask if there was any occasion for my leaving home. No, there was not, and I have no one to thank but myself. Ah, Father, I have known some trouble within this last fortnight! The hours of grief and torment I endure night and day, with the stings of a guilty conscience. Who can bear it? Would to God He would take my life and let me know the worst of it! What grief have I cost you, and the hours of sorrow you have had on my account. Why was

I born and for what purpose but to fill up my cup and then sink to rise no more? It is like a hell to me in the barracks; some swearing, others singing, and of a Sunday no more reverence than if they were beasts. In the afternoon I take a walk by myself, as miserable as can be, and there is no one I can open my mind to; but I have brought it all on myself, and therefore it is a rod of my own making; and what depth of sin have I run to? Here I must close the scene, for I dare not reveal all. I shall make myself as comfortable as possible. I expect before this year is out to go out of England to India. I suppose it will be in October. I should like to see you before I go, though one look would cut me through and through; but that cannot be, and now I must draw to a close, but before I conclude, dare I ask forgiveness? No, I dare not, and will not, for I never can believe that ever you can look or speak to me again; but if you could find it in your heart to send a little money, I assure you it would be thankfully received for I have no pay, as all my pay goes for the paying of my kit. I have only two meals a day; in the morning we get a pound of bread, no butter, and a pint of coffee, and then a little meat and bread for dinner, and no supper, so that if I had a little money to find a bit, it would be doing me good, but I do not expect any. Shall I beg a letter from you? Yes, I cannot conclude without begging the favour of a letter, even if it is the last you ever intend sending, and I would take it as a kindness if you would mention anybody in Plymouth of your friends, where I might call and spend a quiet half-hour, for I cannot get it in the barracks. Remember me to all my brothers and sisters, and especially to poor Ruth, poor thing, I often think of her. I am well in health. Of your prayers I rest assured.

John Warburton

August 14th, 1837

Dear Father,

Yours this morning I received, and its contents were truly cutting, not for its harshness, but its kindness; such kindness I never expected from you after treating you in the manner I have.

You desire me to answer yours in a candid manner, which I shall do, knowing that the eye of that God, who can dash worlds to pieces and make them if He please, is upon me. You wish to know whether I am willing to come home or not. Yes, Father, I am, and to remain at home as long as I live; and I only wish I was within sight of the house, I would very soon be there. I think if you had upbraided me with all that I have done, it never would have so cut my feelings up as your kindness did this morning. I could not help weeping when I read its contents. What miserable, worthless wretches we are! And where should we not run to if we had our own way? God only knows. What must hell be when the stings of a guilty conscience on earth are so keen? You will enquire about getting the discharge, and proceed with it in the regular way, by sending the money, which I think is twenty pounds. Of course, you will learn who to send the money to. I think it would be best if Isaac Moore would enquire of the Sergeant-Major, of the troops you have at Trowbridge, and let it be with all possible speed, for I long to get out of this hell upon earth, and once more see your face. I now must draw to a close. This morning we marched five miles to see the disgraceful sight of a soldier flogged; he received 150 lashes. I hope this will find you well in health, as I am happy to say it leaves me. The half-sovereign I received, and thank you heartily for it. Remember me to all. I am, etc.,

John Warburton

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE KINGDOM OF GOD (PART FOUR)

The kingdom of God under the rule of Christ is perhaps the most significant aspect of this subject. It is spoken of in prophecy, as already mentioned in the June lesson, but here is the word again: *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of*

His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9.6,7).

These words are read, often publicly, at Christmas time, but how many really understand what they mean? Perhaps more to the point though, is how (relatively) few will be found in the "us" at the beginning: "*For unto us a Child is born...*"

This little word "us" is taken up by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians: "*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*" (Colossians 1.12-14). What a consideration is this! To be translated (and here it means a complete change) from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's only begotten Son. It is only accomplished by what Jesus Christ has done in shedding His own heart's blood. This precious blood is the price of redemption, being the only way that release from the power of Satan can be fulfilled. Joseph Hart sets it out so beautifully:

Dearly we're bought, highly esteemed;
Redeemed, with Jesus' blood redeemed.

Gadsby's Hymn 102

These two lines are the refrain for each verse of the hymn, and verse four truly tells of the kingdom of God:

Lift up your ravished eyes,
And view the glory given;
All lower things despise,
Ye citizens of heaven.
Dearly, &c. (as above)

Perhaps some of you were a little mystified last month when I mentioned the words of Jesus, *“For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”* How does this agree with much of Scripture, which (as we have seen) refers to the kingdom of God as something into which a sinner is brought? Do you remember Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and his certificate (a roll with writing in it)? Bunyan says, “This roll was the assurance of his life, and acceptance at the desired haven.” It is worth noting that when Christian receives his roll with a seal upon it from the third Shining One at the foot of the Cross, Bunyan refers to Ephesians 1 verse 13: *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”* This word describes being brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, and at the same time refers to the evidence of the Spirit’s sealing within and upon the heart.

What a blessed kingdom! To be brought into it is a wonder indeed, and to have that witness within, wrought by the Holy Spirit, is most precious. In Christian’s case, the roll (or certificate) was his passport to the Celestial City when at last he arrived there. Bunyan’s allegory (part one) concludes with the solemn view he had of Ignorance, who “fumbled in his bosom for a certificate and found none.” Bunyan saw Ignorance taken from the very gate of heaven, down into hell. Such will be the lot of everyone who has not the witness within that they are indeed born of God.

Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer’s blood;
And bear Thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God.

Gadsby’s Hymn 24

The citizens of the kingdom of God cannot always be distinguished by outward appearances or their circumstances. We need to remember this. The Lord Jesus made many

references to the kingdom of God in His parables, amongst which is the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 verses 1 to 13. Here Matthew is directed by the Holy Spirit to call it “the kingdom of heaven,” but it means the same as “the kingdom of God.” What clear teaching the Saviour gave in that parable! Many a lesson and many a sermon have been based on that Scripture.

In conclusion, I want to mention the parable of the wheat and the tares from Matthew 13 verses 24 to 30 and verses 36 to 43. It is evident from Christ’s own exposition of His parable that the angels, being the reapers, can distinguish between the wheat and the tares. I expect some of you know the problem in your garden, especially when plants are young; it is difficult sometimes to tell the difference between a weed and the plant you so hope will grow well. It is safest not to attempt to pull up the suspected weed; firstly, in case you make a mistake, and secondly, in case you severely damage (or even destroy) the good plant growing right next to it. Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like that, and He said of the wheat and the tares: “*Let both grow together until the harvest.*”

The time of harvest is the vital season when those in the kingdom of God will be taken to be forever with the Lord; “*but gather the wheat into My barn.*” May the Lord grant that you and I will be found at last “*as a shock of corn cometh in in his season*” (Job 5.26).

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about HIDING PLACES. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who was hidden for six years in the house of the Lord? (2 Kings 11.2-3)

2. Where did Rahab hide the spies which Joshua had sent to view Jericho? (Joshua 2.6)
3. What three things did Achan hide in his tent contrary to God's commandment? (Joshua 7.21)
4. Who betrayed David's hiding place twice when he was trying to escape from King Saul? (1 Samuel 23.19; 26.1)
5. What did Jeremiah the prophet hide in a "hole of the rock"? (Jeremiah 13.4)
6. Where did Ahimaaz and Jonathan hide when pursued by Absalom's servants? (2 Samuel 17)
7. From whom are gospel blessings hidden and unto whom are they revealed? (Luke 10)
8. What did David hide in his heart and why? (Psalm 119)
9. Why did Adam and Eve hide "themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden?" (Genesis 3)
10. Find two texts which declare the impossibility of hiding ourselves from God. (Jeremiah 23; Amos 9)

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"
2. "How can I go?"
3. "Lord, that I may receive my sight."
4. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
5. "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."
6. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John 6.28,29)
7. John the Baptist. (Luke 3. 10-14)
8. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke 12.20)
9. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10.25 & 18.18)
10. The unjust steward let two of his master's debtors go free having paid less than they owed, in the hope that they would treat him kindly in the future. (Luke 16.4-7)

CHOOSE THOU FOR ME

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine, so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.

Not mine, not mine the choice
In things both great and small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom and my All.

Horatius Bonar

The Friendly Companion



“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken
than the fat of rams.”
(1 Samuel 15.22)

October 2021

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Volume 147

October 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	219
Our Front Cover Picture	220
Learn Jesus First	223
Study the Scriptures... ..	223
For the Very Little Ones: The Reign of Manasseh	224
Colouring Text: 2 Chronicles 33.13	225
Bible Lessons: Israel Ensnared by the Moabites	226
The Sixteen Soldiers	228
Prayer and Providence	229
Short Biography of the Early Life of Anne Steele	232
Preparation for Death	235
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Mysteries in the Bible	235
Bible Questions: Sheep and Shepherds	238
Poetry: We All Do Fade as a Leaf	240

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

In the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, we are given a list of men who lived to a very great age. The youngest was seven hundred and seventy years old when he died, while the oldest was nine hundred and sixty-nine years. Today, if someone lives to be one hundred, we think that person has had a very long life.

Some of you may be ready to think that we failed to mention one in that chapter who did not attain the age of four hundred years. That is true, but we are also told that he did not die, for the Lord took him to heaven without experiencing death. Enoch was a favoured man, not just because he never experienced death, but because he *“walked with God”* and had the testimony that *“he pleased God.”* How blessed he was to have the witness in his heart that he pleased God! He was blessed to walk *“by faith.”* God the Father declared of His Son, Jesus, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matthew 3.17).

There was another man in that very early period of time who pleased God, yet he had to experience death. His name was Abel. What a terrible death it was to be murdered by his brother! He was the first of mankind to die. Although we are not told how old he was, we may believe that he was relatively young.

What caused his brother to be so angry with him? Had he stolen something from him or falsely accused him? Cain's hatred of Abel was due to the fact that Abel *“offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”* Thus, we are told that, *“The Lord had respect unto [was pleased with] Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect [was not pleased with].”*

What did Abel's offering have that Cain's did not have? First, it was according to the pattern that God showed to Adam and Eve in the garden before He cast them out. God was very jealous of the pattern He gave. Later, when He commanded Moses and Israel to make the tabernacle, God charged them to make all things after the pattern He had showed Moses in the mount.

Second, Abel's was a living sacrifice that necessitated a death. By killing the lamb (which we firmly believe was the animal used), he showed he was worthy of death.

Third, Abel's offering was with blood shed. Later, the Lord made known to Israel the importance of blood when He declared, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exodus 12.13). We are further taught in the Book of Hebrews, "*Without shedding of blood is no remission [forgiveness]*" (Hebrews 9.22).

Fourth, Abel's offering was with the fat of the animal. We so often miss this part, but it was required of God. In Leviticus 3 verses 16 and 17, we read, "*The priest shall burn them upon the altar ... all the fat is the LORD's. It shall be a perpetual statute ... that ye eat neither fat nor blood.*" The fat was the richest part of the animal; thus, God required it for His part.

When the Lord chastened the children of Israel in Ezekiel's day, He instructed them that upon their return to the land of promise, "*The priests the Levites ... shall come near to Me to minister unto Me, and they shall stand before Me to offer unto Me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD*" (Ezekiel 44.15). This gives wonderful light on the parable of the prodigal son when the father called for the "*fatted calf*" to be slain.

The fifth thing that Abel's offering had was that it was made by faith, looking unto Jesus. We read in Hebrews 11 verse 4, "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice.*"

Dear young friends, may the Lord teach us these great truths as He taught Abel.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

THE PALM BEACH BIBLE GARDEN, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Gerald Hercules Robinson founded the Bible Garden in 1966, believing the land and the view from it to be "a perfect example of the glory of God's creation." The garden is nestled

within the sandstone escarpment at the southern end of Palm Beach in the Northern Beaches region of Sydney.

Mr. Robinson purchased the Bible Garden block at Palm Beach in 1957 with no particular purpose in mind. He soon decided that “this glorious view of creation was too lovely for a house.” He then heard about a Bible garden in the grounds of Bangor Cathedral in North Wales, established by Professor Tatum Whitehead. After visiting Bangor Cathedral in 1963, he was inspired to create one on his land at Palm Beach.

Already in his seventies, Mr. Robinson commenced work to establish the garden devoted to plants in the Bible’s Old and New Testaments. He did most of the initial work of terracing the steep land and creating garden beds himself.

The Palm Beach Bible Garden, containing a Bible and a biblical plaque in an attractively landscaped setting, was designed and planned in a similar fashion to the Welsh Bible Garden. Plantings were laid out in biblical, chronological order, commencing with plants at the top of the slope mentioned in the Book of Genesis and ending with a plant at the lowest point of the site representing immortality, *Helicbrysum orientale* (everlasting). A fishpond on the lower terrace contains Biblical water plants.

G.H. Robinson envisaged the Bible Garden as encouraging “comprehensive reflection of biblical meanings and to serve as a collection of Holy Land plants.” Many of the plants were germinated from seeds imported from overseas by Mr. Robinson, because these sorts of plants were not readily available at local nurseries. Of the 148 plants mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, it is believed 143 were planted by him.

Now owned by the Northern Beaches Council, weddings are permitted to be held there, but in limited numbers (up to sixty), as the site is quite small and in a residential suburb where parking is also restricted.

Another Bible garden has been established within the grounds of Charles Stuart University on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra, ACT, the capital of Australia. The

menorah (the seven golden candlesticks) is used as part of its layout design. It was officially opened in August 2008. It was established with a benevolent grant from The Bible Garden Trust, for the purpose of creating and maintaining gardens that feature the botany described in the Holy Bible. It is hoped, through this activity, to educate Christians, particularly young Christians, in the Scriptures.

There are two very significant gardens mentioned in Scripture, being the scene of two of the most influential events in the history of the earth. **The Garden of Eden** was spoken into existence during creation week, with the first fully-grown (as opposed to being evolved) man and woman to inhabit it. That was a perfect scene; so, when God saw all that He had made, He pronounced it to be “*very good*” (Genesis 1.31). There were no millions of years of dead animals or plant fossils under their feet, as the theistic evolutionists (people who believe that God used evolution to create the world) would have us believe. Soon after this paradise was created, we read of the Fall, in which Eve was tempted by the serpent (the devil) to take of the fruit of the forbidden tree of “*the knowledge of good and evil*,” and she also gave it to Adam. Their disobedience caused sin to enter into the world and death by sin. This act of rebellion had an irreversible and global aftermath, affecting everything created in the universe forever. But, before banishing them from the garden, God prophesied of Christ’s coming into the world to overturn the works of Satan (Genesis 3.15).

In the fulness of time, when Jesus Christ was manifest as the God-Man, the work of redemption was set forth more fully in the **Garden of Gethsemane**, where He sweat great drops of blood on account of His people’s sins and endured the wrath of God. He suffered many things in their stead at the hands of cruel and wicked men, and was crucified on the cross at Calvary. This He did willingly, out of love to His people. While entirely without sin Himself, He made the victory sure on their behalf, by His obedience, death, resurrection and ascension.

The first Adam's sin of **disobedience** was committed in a garden, and the sentence of death on account of sin was passed there. So, it was fitting that the second Adam's **obedience unto death for sin** was commenced in a garden, as the only way for man's eternal redemption.

May we be diligent to make our calling and election sure, to be found as one of His eternally-loved people.

A. Seymour

LEARN JESUS FIRST

Many years ago, a woman in one of the southern states had never learned to read and write. She was now past the age of eighty, but she longed to be able to read for herself. She had to commence with the alphabet, but she was so diligent that she learned the letters in a few days. As soon as she mastered them, she said to her teacher, "Now, I want to learn the name of Jesus first, for the rest will come easier if I learn to spell that blessed name first."

And so it is and ever will be. All things will come easier to those who learn the name of Jesus first. All wisdom, knowledge and understanding shall be poured into the minds by Him who is "*the light of the world*" (John 8.12), as well as its life. "*If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus*" (Ephesians 4.21).

Adapted from The Gospel Echo March 1913

STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

John Locke, a little before his death, being asked what was the shortest and surest way for a young man to attain a true knowledge of the Christian religion, made this reply, "Let him study the holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

The Shorter Catechism Illustrated

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE REIGN OF MANASSEH**

Manasseh became king after his father Hezekiah died. He was only twelve years of age. Hezekiah had been a good king, but Manasseh was very wicked. He worshipped many idols, and he put a carved image in the house of the Lord. Manasseh caused many innocent people to be killed. He made the people to sin more than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed in the land before Israel.

The Lord warned Manasseh and the people, but they would not hear. Then, the king of Assyria came against them. He bound Manasseh with chains and brought him far away to Babylon. When he was in affliction, Manasseh humbled himself greatly before the Lord and prayed. The Lord heard Manasseh and brought him back to Jerusalem.

Now Manasseh took away the idols and worshipped the Lord. He repaired the altar of the Lord and “*commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.*” Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, longer than any other king.

QUESTIONS:

1. How old was Manasseh when he became king? (1 word)
2. When did he humble himself and pray? (2 words)
3. How long did Manasseh reign?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Die.
2. Wept and prayed.
3. Fifteen.

Contributed

*“Then
Manasseh
knew that
the LORD
He was God.”*

2 Chronicles 33.13

BIBLE LESSONS

ISRAEL ENSNARED BY THE MOABITES

Balaam was prevented by God from cursing Israel, and he had to pronounce a blessing upon them instead. Yet, he advised Balak on how to humble Israel and bring God's anger upon them. Three times in the New Testament we are told of Balaam's treacherous advice. Peter, in his second Epistle, named it "*the way of Balaam*" (2 Peter 2.15). Jude, in his short Epistle, called it "*the error of Balaam*" (verse 11). The Lord Jesus called it "*the doctrine [teaching] of Balaam*" (Revelation 2.14).

Balaam told Balak to make friends with the people of Israel. Soon, Israel would mingle with the Moabites and forget their God and His commandments. Neither Balaam nor Balak could have imagined how successful this evil counsel would be.

While the Israelites were in Shittim (the plains of Moab), the Moabites became very friendly with them. Soon, the young men of Israel began to lust after the daughters of Moab. Israel was ensnared! The Moabites invited them to their great feasts, where they offered sacrifices to their gods and bowed down before them. Many of Israel joined with the Moabites and committed the twin whoredoms of fornication and idolatry.

"The anger of the LORD was kindled [hot] against Israel." The Lord told Moses to take all the elders of the people, who were the leaders in this sin, and hang them up before the Lord that His fierce anger might be turned away from Israel.

Moses had not participated in the evil deeds, but he trembled for the people of Israel. Quickly, he called for the judges and said, *"Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor."* What a solemn thought! Moses did not call for sacrifices to be made in order to appease God. The sin was so great, the hearts of the people so hardened, that the offenders must be put to death.

Moses, and the people who had not participated in this sin with Moab, stood weeping before the door of the tabernacle, humbling themselves before the Lord. Even at such a time, one of the men of Israel boldly brought a Midianitish woman into his

tent in the sight of Moses and the people. Young friends, see what sin does to us! It hardens our hearts and makes us bold, daring to sin even in the sight of others.

When he saw this bold, sinful action, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron the priest, went after them into the tent. He thrust a javelin through the man and the woman so that they died. The Bible tells us that twenty-four thousand people of Israel died because of the plague God sent. The man whom Phinehas slew belonged to one of the chief families of the tribe of Simeon.

The Lord told Moses that because Phinehas was zealous for His glory and had turned away His anger from Israel, *“Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.”*

The Lord commanded Moses and Israel to *“vex the Midianites, and smite them: for they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you.”* This was the doctrine of Balaam.

Israel obeyed the Lord and warred against Midian, slaying five of their kings, and Balaam, with the sword.

QUESTIONS:

1. What three things was Balaam's advice called in the New Testament?
2. What was Moses told to do with the elders of the people who led them in this sin? (6 words).
3. What did Moses tell the judges to do? (11 words)
4. Who stayed God's anger against Israel by slaying a man of Israel and a Midianitish woman?
5. How did Balaam die? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Mount Pisgah.
 2. *God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: bath He said, and shall He not do it?*
 3. Iniquity.
 4. *What bath God wrought!*
 5. A star. A sceptre.
-

THE SIXTEEN SOLDIERS

Two missionaries in Malaysia had to go to the nearest town. It was a considerable distance away, across rough country. They needed to collect money which had come for them to a bank in that town.

The missionaries set off on foot early one morning, hoping to return the same day. They arrived at the town, collected the money and set off again on their trek across the wild and lonely country. After walking for some time, they became so tired that they could not continue toward their home station that night. Committing themselves to God, they camped upon a hillside and soon fell asleep, weary with the long journey.

Morning came, and they were very relieved that they had not been disturbed by bandits or beasts. They went on their way and arrived safely at their mission station.

Some weeks later, a man came into the mission hospital for treatment. He stared at the missionary who attended him, and said, "I have seen you before."

"No," replied the missionary, "I don't think we have met."

"O yes, we have," said the man. "You were camping out on the hillside at such and such a place a few weeks back."

"Yes, we were," said the missionary. "How did you know? We didn't see anyone."

"I followed you with some of my companions from the town. We saw you go to the bank and knew you had money with you. We waited until dark to creep up and rob you. When we found you, we didn't dare attack because of the soldiers."

“Soldiers?” the missionary laughed. “There were no soldiers with us, my friend.”

The bandit was adamant, saying, “We counted them. There were sixteen soldiers, and each one had a sword.”

The missionary did not argue with the man. He dismissed his remarks, thinking that he had only imagined it.

Later, when the missionary went on furlough to England, he related the incident at a gathering in his home town. After the meeting, a man came up to him.

“What date was it that you camped out on the hillside?”

The missionary turned to his diary and said, “It was such and such a night.”

His questioner turned up his diary too. “That night we had our weekly meeting for prayer. Your name came up, and every one of us felt the urge to pray for you in a special way. There were sixteen of us at the prayer meeting that night.”

Adapted from The Friendly Companion 1995

PRAYER AND PROVIDENCE

In a large, lonely house situated in the south of England, there lived many years ago a lady whose only companions were two maidservants. Although far from any other homes, they lived in peace and safety, for they trusted in God and feared no evil under His protecting care. It was the lady's custom to pass round the house with her maidservants every night to see that all the doors and windows were properly secured. Then she would lie down and sleep in peace “*under the shadow of the Almighty*,” who was her trust and her shield.

One night, the servants accompanied her about the house as usual, and being satisfied that all was right, they left her alone in the passage close to her room. Then, they went to their own apartment, which was at the far side of the house. As the lady opened the door into her room, she distinctly saw the feet of a man under her bed. Her fears may only be imagined. Her servants were far away and could not hear if she called for help.

Even if they did hear, she might be murdered before they could arrive. Three weak, defenceless women would be no match for an armed burglar.

Danger was before her; it was impossible to flee. What could she do? What did she do? She did what it is always safe to do – she trusted in the Lord. She knew that she had a God to go to, who never leaves nor forsakes His confiding people. Making no outcry, and giving no sign that she observed anything wrong, she quietly closed the door. She locked the door on the inside, as she was in the habit of doing, and leisurely brushed her hair. All the while, she prayed for help and guidance of the Lord. Putting on her nightgown, she took her Bible and calmly sat down and read the Word of God, which is *“quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword”* (Hebrews 4.12).

Guided of the Lord, she selected a portion of Scripture which speaks of the watchful care of God over His people by night and by day. She read aloud, and never had she read a chapter with such feeling! In that lonely house, with a robber hidden in the room, she read of the mighty promises of God, whose Word can never fail. She stayed her soul upon the assurance of His divine protection, which cannot disappoint the hope of those who trust in the Most High. Her heart gained strength as she read. Closing the Bible, she kneeled and prayed aloud to God as she had never prayed before. She told the Lord of her helplessness and need. She commended herself and her servants to the care of a protecting God. She dwelt upon their utter lack of all human defence and clung to the sacred promises given for comfort in trouble and distress. She lingered long in prayer, for it was her hour of need. She came boldly to the throne of grace, for every other refuge was in vain. At last, she rose from her knees, put out her candle, and laid down upon her bed.

Soon, she became conscious that the man was standing by her bedside. He begged her not to be alarmed, and said, “I came to rob the house, and if necessary, to kill you. I have companions out in the garden ready to obey my call for help. However, after hearing the words you have read, and the prayers

you have uttered, no power on earth could induce me to hurt you or to touch a thing in your house. If you had given the slightest alarm or token of resistance, I had fully determined to murder you. It was God's guidance that led you to pursue the course you took. You must still remain perfectly quiet and not attempt to interfere with me. I will give a signal to my companions, which they will understand, and then we will go away, and you may sleep in peace. I give you my solemn word that no one will harm you, and not the smallest thing belonging to you shall be disturbed."

He went to the window, opened it, and whistled softly as a signal to his comrades to disperse to a distance. Returning to the bedside of the lady, who had neither spoken nor moved throughout the whole, he said, "Now I am going. Your prayer has been heard, and no harm will befall you. But I never heard such words before. I must have the Book you read out of." Taking her Bible, willingly enough given, he bade her goodnight and disappeared through the open window.

But what became of the robber? He came for treasure, and he got it. He sought gold and silver, and he gained that which is better than thousands of silver and gold. He carried away the Word of God that outweighs all treasures, and liveth and abideth for ever. The lady continued to pray for him, but neither she nor anyone else knew what happened to him after that night. But God followed him, the Holy Spirit pursued him, and the message of God's mercy was in his hands.

In the month of April 1867, an aged lady, Mrs. Hannah P., fell asleep in Christ in the city of Boston, United States. She was a native of England, and in her old age, she often related stories of her early English life. She said that when she was a little girl, she went with her mother to a Bible Society meeting in Yorkshire. After several clergymen and others had addressed the meeting, a man arose, who was one of the book-sellers of the Society. He told the story of that midnight scene as a testimony to the saving power of Almighty God. He declared that through the influence of that Bible, and the prayers of that Christian

woman, the robber was led to Christ for mercy and salvation. He paused in his narration, and the assembly eagerly waited for the conclusion. He said, "I was that man!" Instantly, an elderly lady rose from her seat in the midst of the congregation. She quietly said, "It is all true; I was the lady!" She sat down again, for she could say no more.

Many years had elapsed since the lady and robber had parted. She had never heard of him since that night, but the Lord had watched over and taught that sinful man. He stood forth as a monument of the guiding providence and saving grace of God.

Adapted from The Friendly Companion 1955

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF ANNE STEELE

The hymns of Anne Steele have been a source of great comfort to many a burdened, longing soul seeking to find grace in the sight of God. Many of those walking in a path of affliction and distress have found their hearts drawn out to the Lord in the language expressed in these hymns. It will not, then, be surprising to learn that Anne Steele had to walk in such a path of affliction and sorrow for the greater part of her life.

She was born in 1717 in a village called Broughton, approximately twenty miles north of Southampton, where she remained for the rest of her life. In this village was a Particular Baptist chapel, where her great uncle, William Steele, was the pastor. Very sadly, Anne's mother passed away in childbirth when Anne was three years of age. She had an older brother, William, who would have been five at this distressing time. Her father married again three years later, so Anne had now a stepmother, who proved to be very loving and kind to her stepchildren. A stepsister, Mary (always called Molly), was born a year later.

Although very little is known about Anne's early education, a letter she wrote to her stepmother in 1729 reveals that she was away at school in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. As this letter gives

insight into Anne as an eleven-year-old girl, we quote in full: "I received your acceptable letter ('tis good to hear from you) but am sorry to hear of my brother's illness and Aunt's death and doubt not but my cousins are in a great deal of trouble for the death of their mother, but I hope the same God that no doubt for wise ends took her from them, will enable them to bear their affliction with patience. As to my liking this place, I suppose you know my mistress is an odd-tempered woman, but she is as kind to me as to the rest. Our work is most on headcloths and I hope I shall learn very well. I think your acquaintances here are all very well at present. I also am, through mercy, in good health. Cousin Betty is sent for home, which makes me a little dull to be without her. I long to see you all and hope I shall see my father in a little time. Cousin Cottles and Mrs. Hurn give their services to you, this with my duty to my father and to yourself and love to sister Molly is from your dutiful and obedient daughter, Anne Steele. P.S. I desire you would excuse my bad handwriting, being by candle, because we work till it's dark now."

In November of the following year, Anne had measles, and then early in the next year, she was ill with what was described as "the ague." She suffered from this on and off for the rest of her life. It is now known that this illness was tertian malaria, an illness reasonably common during the eighteenth century with people living in marshy areas. The house where Anne lived was in a very damp area, surrounded by the River Wallop. The symptoms included nausea, high fever and anaemia. This would have been a very debilitating illness and must have caused Anne a lot of distress.

It is very probable that this long affliction was sanctified by God in bringing Anne into concern for her never-dying soul. Her stepmother's diary has been preserved, and there are entries around this time which indicate that this was the case. "I was led to cry earnestly on Anne's account that as God has been pleased to make her sensible of the want and worth of a Saviour, so He would also give her a well-grounded hope that she has an

interest in that Saviour, so that she might be happy here and forever." In March 1732, she writes, "I have great hope that God has indeed begun to work upon the souls of our children." Anne appears to have been greatly affected when her older brother William came forward to be baptized. We believe that she was in soul-trouble, longing for a confirmation from the Lord that she had found grace in His sight. On June 11th, 1732, Anne, with two others, gave her testimony of the Lord's gracious dealings with her before the church at Broughton. She was received by the church and baptized (no doubt publicly in the river) on Lord's day, July 9th. Although we do not know what Anne related about the Lord's dealings with her, we can glean from her hymns the desires she expressed concerning herself as a sinner and the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour and only hope for eternity.

Anne suffered a very sad experience during 1737. She was in a friendship with a young man named James Elcomb, who lived in Ringwood, Hampshire. Some have thought they were engaged to be married, but this is not entirely clear. In May of that year, he went to bathe in the local river but went out too far. Sadly, he was caught in a strong current and drowned. He was twenty-one years of age and Anne was twenty at that time. A letter has survived that was written five years later by Benjamin Beddome, who was a hymnwriter and also pastor at a Baptist chapel in Gloucestershire. He asked the favour of Anne's hand in marriage. However, Anne did not feel inclined or led to accept, and she remained single for her entire life.

From an early age, Anne must have displayed her gift of writing poetry. She loved the countryside and wrote many poems about it. In 1760, her hymns were first published under the title, *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional, in two volumes by Theodosia*. Theodosia was her pen name. She seemed to be greatly influenced by Isaac Watts, both in writing a number of the Psalms in poetic English metre, and also in writing hymns based on Scriptural subjects. Another notable mark of her hymns is the strong, prayerful desire to be found right with God.

She did not have a religion that “took it for granted” or was satisfied with an outward appearance, but she longed for the assurance that she had found grace in the sight of God.

After the death of her father, she moved in with her brother. She remained living there, with failing health, until she died in 1778.

A.T. Pickett

PREPARATION FOR DEATH

When you lie down at night, compose your spirits as if you were not to awake till the heavens be no more; and when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last, and live accordingly. Surely that night cometh of which you will never see the morning, or that morning of which you will never see the night; but which of your mornings or nights will be such you know not.

Let the mantle of worldly enjoyments hang loose about you, that it may be easily dropped when death comes to carry you into another world. When the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one, and then we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us.

T. Boston

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

MYSTERIES IN THE BIBLE

The Word of God is like no other. For instance, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3.16).

No other book can comprehensively claim that it is **all** given by inspiration of God. Therefore, at first sight, it may seem to

be somewhat strange to find that there are mysteries in the Bible – surely it is not that sort of book? Well, it may be surprising, but there are a number of mysteries in the Bible, and they comprise some very important truths. Let us look at some of them; although, by their very nature, mysteries are often difficult!

What is a mystery? My dictionary gives the following definitions, amongst others: “anything very obscure; that which is beyond human knowledge to explain; anything artfully made difficult.” It would be wrong indeed to associate the last definition with the God of all truth; nevertheless, in the first mystery which I bring before you this month, there is, at times, something very artful about it: “**the mystery of iniquity.**” The artfulness is found in the very nature of him who perpetrates it, namely, Satan.

These words are found in 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 7. Here, the apostle is warning us about “the son of perdition” and the fact that this “*Wicked*” (verse 8) one is often hidden, and the way that he works is often hidden, indeed, subtle (see Genesis 3.1).

The subject this month is particularly difficult. Many have regarded the character described in verse 3, “*that man of sin ... the son of perdition*” as indicative of the popes of Rome. Indeed, verse 9 seems to support a distinction here from Satan. The Holy Spirit has seen fit to reveal only certain things, and even godly commentators, such as John Gill, are not entirely clear about it. In his commentary on verse 3, Gill says, “Yet the man of sin is here distinguished from Satan.” Before he concludes on verse 3, he tries to show what is meant by “*that man of sin.*” He describes many characters, including the whole hierarchy of Rome. Then, writing on the second phrase, “*the son of perdition*” (which is clearly synonymous with “that man of sin”) Gill says, “Since these (all the characters he has just described) are not only the Apollyon, the king of the bottomless pit, the destroyer, the cause of the perdition of thousands of souls ...” Thus, Gill comes back to “Apollyon, the king of the bottomless

pit,” who is surely none other than Satan himself. Hence, I refer to Satan in that which follows.

Satan not only works craftily, but there is a certain mystery about the very nature of sin. Often, the first few steps seem harmless enough, but before long, the victim finds that he is held fast by the snare and cannot escape. There is no doubt that Solomon was permitted to discover much about this mystery of iniquity, and he writes many times about it in the Proverbs, such as in chapter 23 verses 27-35. In verse 10 of the very first chapter of Proverbs, Solomon warns, *“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”*

The whole chapter where the expression, *“the mystery of iniquity,”* is found (2 Thessalonians 2) is very profitable to read and study. First, there is the warning: *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”* (verse 3).

Then, there is a further description of the outworking of this iniquity. How extensive it is! *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (verses 9,10).

How blessed it is that God gives us in this chapter the only remedy for the mystery of iniquity! It is the love of Christ: *“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work”* (verses 16,17). How comprehensive are the effects of the love of Christ! It is the love of the truth alone which can give us that wonderful preservative against *“the mystery of iniquity.”* Dear young friends – do you love God’s Word? *“Buy the truth, and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23.23). Where truth is upheld, there is certainty, clarity and conviction – that is, being persuaded about what is right.

Going back to verse 7, the Bible says: "*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work.*" It is clear that sin is already active and present, whatever we do. No wonder the hymnwriter says:

How sad our state by nature is;
Our sin how deep its stains;
And Satan binds our captive minds
Fast in his slavish chains.

Gadsby's Hymn 764

We cannot distance ourselves from the mystery of iniquity and say that we will be free from it by our own efforts. Dear Jeremiah proved this and tells us: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17.9)

"*The mystery of iniquity*" thrives in darkness and is particularly fueled by that which is in us all by nature: enmity against God. When the Lord Jesus takes possession of a sinner's heart, He breaks down "*the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity*" (Ephesians 2. 14,15).

How great is God's salvation in Jesus Christ to deliver us from "*the mystery of iniquity*"!

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who was the first "keeper of sheep" mentioned in the Bible? (Genesis 4.2)
2. A shepherd was looking after his sheep when a lion and a bear came and took a lamb. Who was the shepherd, and what did

- he do? (1 Samuel 17.34-37)
3. When a sheep was offered as a sacrifice in Israel, what would make the offering “an abomination” to God? (Deuteronomy 17.1)
 4. Who asked the question, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” and what was offered as a burnt offering? (Genesis 22.7,13)
 5. What do sheep sometimes do which is mentioned in Psalm 119.176, Isaiah 53.6 and 1 Peter 2.25?
 6. In Jeremiah 50, God says, “My people hath been lost sheep.” Why they were lost?
 7. “What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears?” (1 Samuel 15). What did it mean?
 8. In Israel, if a sheep was stolen and killed, the thief had to restore four sheep in its place (Exodus 22.1). Which king of Israel referred to this law, unaware that he was the thief? (2 Samuel 12)
 9. What title did John the Baptist give to the Lord Jesus as he looked on Him? (John 1)
 10. The Lord Jesus also likened Himself to the Good Shepherd and His people to sheep. From John 10, write a summary of the things which the Good Shepherd does for his sheep.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Joash.
2. Rahab hid the spies amongst the stalks of flax on the roof of her house.
3. Silver, gold and a “goodly Babylonish garment.”
4. The Ziphites.
5. A girdle.
6. In a well; the mouth of which was covered and had ground corn spread over the covering. (2 Samuel 17.18,19)
7. They are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. (Luke 10.21)
8. “Thy Word,” “that I might not sin against Thee.” (Psalm 119.11)
9. Adam and Eve hid themselves from God because they realised they were naked and had disobeyed His command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 3.6-8)
10. Jeremiah 23.24; Amos 9.2,3.

WE ALL DO FADE AS A LEAF
(Isaiah 64.6)

Who can view the dead leaves falling
And restrain the heavy sigh?
Or, their beauteous youth recalling,
Wish they did not bloom to die?

Who can gaze, with cold indifference,
On chill autumn's changing scene?
Who that calls not to remembrance
Days which time can ne'er redeem?

Mourn not summer's days departed;
Spring again will clothe the trees;
Cheer the dull and drooping-hearted
With its soft enlivening breeze.

Mourn, ye young, your youth is fleeting,
You are changing as the leaf;
And *your* spring knows no repeating,
Quick it passes, bright and brief.

Think not days of joy and gladness,
Ease and peace will long remain.
There must be a time for sadness,
Time for death, and time for pain.

Changing as the leaf, and tender,
You may fall and fade away;
But you've *souls*, and they *must* render
Their account on that great day.

Let not autumn's solemn warning
Pass unheeded and unheard;
Every leaf which now is falling
Speaks a solemn warning word.

Author Unknown, Little Gleaner 1941

The Friendly Companion



“The memory of the just is blessed.”
(Proverbs 10.7)

November 2021

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CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message: The Life of J.K. Stehouwer	243
Our Front Cover Picture	247
A Time of Thanksgiving.....	248
For the Very Little Ones: Josiah, the Young King	250
Colouring Text: 2 Chronicles 34.21	251
Bible Lessons: "And be sure your Sin will find you out"	252
A Soldier Led by a Little Child.....	254
Short Biography of the Early Life of James Bourne	256
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Mysteries in the Bible Pt. 2	259
Bible Questions: True and False Trust.....	262
Poetry: Divine Leadings.....	264

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE
THE LIFE OF J.K. STEHOUWER

Dear Children and Young People,

It is a great mercy if, during our childhood years, we have been blessed with the influence and example of a godly person. It may be a pastor, deacon, member of the church, a relative or friend. By godly counsel, heavenly conversation, gracious behaviour, and a steadfast profession, such a person has often shown the true nature of the grace of Jesus Christ. He or she has condescended to little ones and shown a prayerful concern for their souls, desiring the Lord's blessing upon them, which is worth more than any amount of money. In this monthly message and the next, I have written of the one who stood out for faithfulness, diligence and grace in my own life.

Since the death of Mr. J.K. Stehouwer, who was for many years my pastor, there have been numerous ways in which I thought of writing an account of his life. I have felt led to write more about the influence he had upon myself, my wife, and many others. From our earliest memory, he was a steady, influential member of the church at Zion, Grand Rapids. He was a teacher in the Sunday School, and we have always counted it a great privilege to have been in his class. He taught with great simplicity and solemnity, and many of those lessons have never been forgotten. With simple illustrations, he helped us to understand such profound truths as the depravity of our hearts, the reality of time and eternity, the act of justification, the nature of redemption, the truth of election, and other truths which glorify the doctrines of grace. Mr. Stehouwer had a strong, clear voice, and it always rang out in the singing.

During our younger years, there were times of upheaval and conflicts in the church. Some, whom we had esteemed as leaders and teachers, acted in an unbecoming way that seemed so unlike Christ. It caused many of the children and young adults to question the reality of religion. During those times, Mr. Stehouwer, as a deacon and Sunday School teacher, stood fast, ever contending for the truth. He never wavered! To us,

he seemed like a rock that all the troubles and conflicts could not move. Looking back, we marvel at how the Lord helped him to stand fast.

Mr. Stehouwer's army experiences during World War II had a major impact on his life. The trials and temptations were like so many fires into which he was cast and from which he was delivered. Many times, he heard the cries and groans of the wounded and the parting sighs of the dying. Since the little booklet *Kept* was produced some years ago, wherein some of his experiences were written, we will not dwell at great length on that period of his life.

The time when Mr. Stehouwer became the pastor at Zion, Grand Rapids, was a truly remarkable occasion for those who were attending. As the year 1975 was drawing to a close, the pastor, Mr. E.J. Knight, had announced his exercise about returning to England. He also stated that he believed the Lord would appear in providing for the church and congregation, and that he felt sure there would be a continuing ministry. Although many in the congregation wondered from where such a provision might arise, several members had been exercised in prayer for Mr. Stehouwer. Mr. Stehouwer, himself, had secretly been exercised about the ministry for some time. He had been fighting against it, feeling his poverty, inability and want of grace. Nevertheless, at this crucial time, his exercise was brought to light, and he was made willing in the day of God's power. He was sent forth into the ministry and called to the pastorate at Zion at the same time.

Prior to his departure in May of 1976, Mr. Knight took the installation service for Mr. Stehouwer. It was a time to be remembered! *"The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad"* (Psalm 126.3). Although he felt to be the poorest of all God's servants, yet the Lord sealed the ministry of His servant with power to His exercised people.

We pass over the forty-two years of Mr. Stehouwer's pastorate to come to the last year of his life and especially the last few days. For the last year and a half, he was in a home for the elderly. He

would listen to the services at Zion via the phone line. One of the chapel friends would sit with him and help make the necessary connections. He would feel miserable if anything interfered with hearing the service or if a malfunction occurred with the phone transmission. He was always anxious to know how the friends at Zion were faring and whether there would still be a crumb from the Master's table for himself. There were many times when he would lament that the Lord seemed so silent to him, saying, "I go over all my sins again and again, looking for any unconfessed sins; anything that could be lying between myself and my God." Often, when the congregation was singing, he would say things like, "I **like** that language," or "**beautiful** language," or "that is what God's people walk out." He was no longer able to sing along with them because of shortness of breath, but at times he would try, managing a few lines or a verse.

At first, when Mr. Stehouwer was in the nursing home and no longer able to preach, he would often wonder why his life was being extended, adding, "I long for the Lord to take me." At the beginning of 2019, we noticed a change in his spirit. He seemed more resigned to the will of God, saying, "I believe there is a purpose for me to be here yet." In our weekly phone calls, he would relate what chapters he had been reading and would speak briefly on certain points. It reminded us of those Sunday School lessons of so many years before.

During our visit to Grand Rapids in June 2019, we found Mr. Stehouwer in a very contemplative spirit, pondering God's mercies to such a sinner as he felt himself to be. He seemed to be much in the spirit of Toplady's hymn (472):

When languor and disease invade
This trembling house of clay,
'Tis sweet to look beyond our cage,
And long to fly away.

Sweet to look back, and see my name
In life's fair book set down;

Sweet to look forward, and behold
Eternal joys my own.

Sweet to reflect how grace divine
My sins on Jesus laid;
Sweet to remember that His blood
My debt of suffering paid.

If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be?
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from Thee!

Mr. Stehouwer was often thinking upon the election of God. Many times, he said, "Just to think that God had thoughts of me before the world was made; that He knew my name; that He loved me with an everlasting love. Precious truth, precious election." He often thought of his brother who had passed away two years previously. He told many who visited him, how his mother had admonished his brother about going into the world and participating in its pleasures. His brother would answer with tears, "But Mother, I love the world too much to leave it." Mr. Stehouwer would then say, "I was the opposite. I wanted to leave the things of the world, but it was the Lord who made me to differ." He would then say, often with tears, "Why me, why me? Why did the Lord choose such an awful wretch like me? He had thoughts of me long, long ago, in eternity, before the world began. Oh, how can it be? I am nothing!"

Mr. Stehouwer's room was a little sanctuary to many who entered, a place of kindness and welcome. He was always so glad and appreciative of every visitor who came. On one occasion, a visitor came while he was in the dining area of the home and sat beside him. Mr. Stehouwer spoke on religious things in a rather loud voice; since he had become hard of hearing, he often spoke in a loud voice. A few tables away, a man said somewhat sarcastically, "He is still preaching." Thus, he was still a witness and example to those around him who took no delight, as he did, in the things of God. He always had

his Bible on his lap or beside him. Thus, he was a witness to all who took care of him and to those who passed by his room.

(To be continued)

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE: THE HARVEST

One evening recently, when coming in from work, I looked across the field to our neighbour who was combining. It caused me to think upon the meaning of harvest spiritually.

In one area of the field, the wheat was growing amongst the weeds, and you could clearly see that the weeds had overtaken the wheat. Sadly, there are times in our lives when we are overtaken by the things of the world, and our love to the Lord becomes suffocated.

There were places in the corners of the field or around obstacles where the combine had completely missed the wheat. The wheat looked perfectly good, but it had been left out, reminding me of the text: *"For many are called, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22.14).

Then, I looked at the combine, and the farmer was chopping up the straw. This was done because the farmer does not need the straw. Therefore, it is shredded as it comes out the back of the combine, so it can be incorporated back into the ground. This made me think about how much gets chopped out, and it is only the small grains of wheat that the farmer needs. How often our religion needs stripping back! There is so much of pride and self in us. The **real** part of our religion is so small, and we are brought to the point: *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3.30).

Then, there was the chaff which was blowing away in the wind. The combine separates the chaff from the wheat, and the farmer will check to be sure the combine is set up correctly to get all the chaff out. We read that the ungodly *"are like the chaff which the wind driveth away"* (Psalm 1.4).

When I was a lad, it was a common practice for farmers to set fire to the fields after the combine had cut the crop. This was done to get rid of the chaff, any weed seeds, and to generally

clean up the ground to be ready for drilling the new crop. Solemnly, I saw the fire as a type of hell, where the ungodly will go.

After the grain is separated, it is put into a trailer and taken to the farm. At the farm, there is a barn, which was built on purpose to store the grain. Before the harvest, the barn is cleaned and prepared, so the grain can be stored in the best possible condition.

When fully ripe, the grain will be brought in and stored. After all the harvest is gathered in, the doors of the barn will be shut and locked, so the grain is safe and secure. I saw this as a type of heaven, and that text came to mind: *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14.2,3).

What a mercy if we each may be prepared and made ready for that day, when we, too, shall stand before Almighty God. May we be like the five wise virgins who were made ready. *"They went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut"* (Matthew 25.10).

Contributed

A TIME OF THANKSGIVING

When the Pilgrims arrived in America at the end of 1620, they faced tremendous hardships, including winter weather and a low supply of food. They managed to build a few homes for shelter. Then, disease swept through the colony, killing half of the pilgrims. "It was the Lord which upheld them," wrote William Bradford about that period of time.

Finally, spring arrived, with gentle rains and warmer days. They planted crops, hoping for a good food supply for the next year. One of their greatest fears was an attack by the native American Indians, but the Lord wonderfully intervened. Two of the Indians they first met spoke English. Samoset introduced

them to Chief Massasoit, the leader of the nearest tribe, and helped the Pilgrims arrange a peace treaty with him. Squanto became an invaluable teacher, showing them how to plant corn (maize) and catch fish. William Bradford considered Squanto to be “a special instrument sent of God.” These Indians served as interpreters and taught the Pilgrims about their new land.

William Bradford, age 31, became the governor of the colony in late spring 1621, after Governor John Carver died. By the summer’s end, their crops had produced a bountiful harvest. The corn that Squanto showed them how to plant far excelled the peas and barley brought from England. It became the staple crop grown in America. The Indians were faithful to their peace treaty, so the people could walk about in safety and without fear. There was also an abundance of fowl, fish, clams, and lobsters.

In gratitude for the plentiful 1621 harvest, Governor Bradford called for a thanksgiving observance. He dispatched a four-man hunting party to obtain game for the celebration. The hunters returned with a week’s supply of water-fowl and wild turkeys. A supply of venison was contributed by the Indians. Chief Massasoit and more than ninety members of his tribe attended the celebration, which lasted for three days. The Indians were entertained and feasted as honoured guests by the Pilgrims. According to the usual custom, the feast would have been preceded by a worship service, led by their spiritual leader, Elder William Brewster.

This first thanksgiving observance by the Pilgrims in America four hundred years ago, in November 1621, served as a pattern. The fourth Thursday of November is still kept as a National Day of Thanksgiving in the United States.

Adapted from Bradford’s History of Plymouth Plantation

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JOSIAH, THE YOUNG KING**

After Manasseh died, his son Amon became king. He worshipped idols, like his father did at first. But Amon did not pray to the Lord like Manasseh. He did more and more evil. After two years, his own servants killed him.

The people of the land made Josiah his son king. Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign. He did right in the sight of the Lord. *"While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David."*

Josiah caused the temple to be cleaned and repaired. The high priest found a treasure there. He said, *"I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD."* When the words of the book were read to Josiah, he rent or tore his clothes. He said, *"Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people."* Josiah knew that the wrath of the Lord was upon Israel and Judah because they had not kept the words that were written in the book of the law.

Josiah gathered all the people to Jerusalem, both small and great, and read to them the words of the book.

QUESTIONS:

1. How old was Josiah when he began to reign? (1 word)
2. When did he begin to seek God? (5 words)
3. What was found in the house of the Lord? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Twelve.
2. In affliction.
3. Fifty-five years.

Contributed

*“Go,
inquire of
the LORD
for me ...”*

2 Chronicles 34.21

BIBLE LESSONS**“AND BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT”**

The Lord sent a plague to destroy those who sinned with Moab. Twenty-four thousand Israelites had to be buried in the plain of Moab, near the banks of the River Jordan. They had come through forty years of wilderness travel, only to perish on the borders of Canaan.

In the plains of Moab, God gave Moses and Eleazar, who was the high priest in place of his father Aaron, a command to number the children of Israel. They were to count all the men twenty years old and upward, who were able to go to war. The number of men able to fight was a little over 600,000.

Nearly forty years earlier, Moses was commanded to number all the men who could go forth to war. The number at that time was also a little over 600,000. Of all those counted the first time, none were left except for Caleb and Joshua. Thus, over 600,000 Israelites had died during the forty years' journey through the wilderness. Some had been slain by their enemies in war, some died when bitten by the fiery serpents, and others perished in the plagues sent by God.

The children of Israel now possessed the land on the east side of Jordan. It was a land rich with green pastures and streams of water, a land very suitable for cattle. The tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben had a very great number of cattle, and they came to Moses, asking to have their inheritance on this side of Jordan.

Moses was displeased with these tribes, and half the tribe of Manasseh, who joined with them in the request. He was afraid it would discourage all the other tribes, who faced warfare in order to receive their inheritance. He feared that it would cause Israel to refuse to take possession of the land for the second time. Moses answered these tribes, *“Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? ... Behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment [increase] yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.”* (Numbers 32.6,14). Moses feared that if Israel turned from the Lord this

second time, they would be left in the wilderness to be destroyed.

The elders of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh came near to Moses with their proposal, saying, *“We will build sheep folds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: ... we will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.”*

This promise from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh satisfied Moses, and he divided the land on the east side of Jordan to these tribes. He also warned them that if they failed to keep their promise, they would sin against the Lord. He then added some very solemn and searching words: *“and be sure your sin will find you out”* (Numbers 32.23).

These words of Moses are just as true today. It will be a good thing if we remember this verse whenever we are tempted to sin. Every lie we tell, every deceit we practice, and every evil that we do will one day find us out. Our sins will bring us guilty before the Lord, and they will be exposed before God and men.

Moses divided up all the land that once belonged to Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan, between the tribes of Gad and Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 25 verse 9, and in Numbers chapters 26 and 32.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was commanded, along with Moses, to number the children of Israel?
2. What position did he have?
3. What was the number of men who were able to go to war each time Israel was numbered?
4. How many of those numbered the first time were still living? What were their names?
5. What great warning did Moses give to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh? (9 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. The way of Balaam, the error of Balaam, and the doctrine of Balaam.
2. Hang them up before the Lord.
3. *"Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor."*
4. Phinehas.
5. With the sword.

Correction:

In our January Bible Lesson, we failed to make a distinction between Korah's children and the children of Dathan and Abiram. Moses gave commandment to all Israel to depart from the tents of these men, lest they be destroyed with them, when God caused the earth to open up right underneath their tents. The sons of Korah withdrew from their father's tent and perished not with their father. It is wonderful to note the various Psalms that were dedicated to the sons of Korah. Please accept our apology for overlooking this important point.

A SOLDIER LED BY A LITTLE CHILD

Many years ago, a German soldier, who had been in the army for ten years, stayed at a farmer's house. His unit had moved to a country district for some leave and rest. The soldiers could either stay in the barracks or with families that were prepared to have them.

The soldier asked a farmer if he could stay at his house, and he was warmly welcomed. It was midday when he arrived, and the family and servants were about to have their dinner. The meal was served, and to his amazement, no one began to eat, but all stood and thanked God: *"The eyes of all wait upon Thee;*

and Thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145.15,16). Then, they quoted the Lord's prayer. Even the youngest stood and joined in the prayer. The soldier stood, but inwardly he trembled. He ate little. When they had finished, they all stood and said, "*O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.*" (Psalm 136.1). Then they returned happily to their tasks; the children to their school lessons and the servants to work on the farm.

The soldier quietly and thoughtfully sat in a corner of the room. Suddenly, the youngest child, a boy about three years old, climbed onto his knee and sweetly asked, "Tell me about the dear Saviour." The soldier began to tell him about birds and animals, but he knew nothing about Christ. The child was amused for a while, but then he asked the soldier again to tell him about the Saviour. He had to say that he knew nothing about Him. The child replied, "And you so big, and know nothing about the Saviour! Then you cannot go to heaven."

The soldier knew in his heart that this was so, but to be told by a young child was a severe rebuke to him. He left the house and joined his comrades for the rest of the day. He tried to shake off his impressions. He stayed out late to avoid the evening meal with the family on the farm.

He arrived back at nine o'clock, and the family had finished their meal, but they left food for him. He sat down and was about to eat, when the young child ran up to him and said, "First pray, then eat." The soldier could not pray, so the young child clasped his hands and prayed for him. "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and bless this food Thou has prepared." The child said, "You pray like that." Then he ran off to bed.

The soldier just sat, deep in thought, convicted and confused. Suddenly, the servants entered for family worship, and they sang a Psalm. The singing was melodious and full of meaning, which pleased the soldier. Then a chapter of the Bible was read, followed by a prayer for God's forgiveness, mercy and protection.

It all seemed like a dream to the soldier. Everyone seemed so contented and thankful to God. They appeared to love the Lord and each other. Finally, the farmer and his wife read a few more promises of God and prayed.

As the soldier was going to bed, the farmer gave him a Bible and said, "Perhaps you would like to read a little more from the Word of God." He thanked the farmer and went to his room. He tried to read the Bible but could not understand it. However, before going to bed, he knelt down and prayed, "God, Thou God of this house, be my God also." He was so impressed with the joy and happiness that existed in this family and their devotion to the Lord.

The next day was the Lord's Day, and the soldier went with the family to the house of God. The soldier heard the message of the gospel, the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. His life was changed, and his heart was filled with love for Christ. He began to love the Word of God and His ways. Now, he took great pleasure in worshipping the Lord.

*Adapted from Strange Events in the Lonely Cabin
by R. Cameron-Smith*

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF JAMES BOURNE

James Bourne (1773-1854) was a member of a congregation meeting in London, under the pastorate of Joseph Burrell, for most of the middle part of his life. They had split from the congregation of William Huntington after his death in 1813. Although they were not Baptists, they were similar to many Strict Baptists in their preaching and conduct. James Bourne had correspondence with William Gadsby, and in a review of *The Life and Letters of James Bourne*, published after his death, J.C. Philpot wrote highly of him.

James Bourne was born at Dalby Hall in Lincolnshire, a large mansion house with spacious grounds. His father was a country gentleman, owning the land and properties all around the area.

Sadly, though, James endured a very unhappy childhood. His mother passed away when he was only eighteen months old, and after his father remarried, he was brought up by a former family servant. It appears that his father turned his affections away from James. At four years of age, he was sent to the grammar school in Louth, where he endured a distressing time, being bullied by some and rejected by others. Eventually, James was moved to another school, where his education greatly improved. When he was fifteen years of age, his father died, leaving most of his large estate to his eldest son, and just a small legacy to the rest of the children from his first wife.

When James left school at sixteen, he went to live in London. For nearly two years, he attempted various types of employment, but could not settle in any of them. He moved to Manchester for a time, but became occupied with idle amusements. As his finances were diminishing, James became very troubled about what he should do. He entered St. John's College, Cambridge, for a time, but this seems to have come to naught.

Around this time, through the influence of a brother, James became involved with the Methodists and outwardly was quite religious. When nothing opened up in the way of employment, he was very troubled to know what to do. Then something quite remarkable happened. James wrote, "I cried unto God, 'O Lord, what shall I do to maintain myself? I cannot endure this miserable way of living.' No sooner were these words out of my mouth, than it was impressed on my mind, 'you must draw.' I was quite surprised, and though as yet I knew not the Lord, yet I considered this a plain direction from Him, and I at once gave up all other plans and began to occupy myself in the art of drawing, which has afforded me a liberal supply for many years." This would have been around the late 1700's. It is believed that he borrowed some money, possibly from his oldest brother, to purchase materials, as well as professional tutoring. After some training, he met an old school friend who took a keen interest in James' talents and introduced him to the Countess of Sutherland and Lord Spencer, who was then the Lord of the Admiralty. Both of them employed James, and a new pathway

opened up as he travelled around the country, being commissioned to draw pictures at certain places. Even today, some of his pictures may be seen in the British Museum and also the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, as well as in a number of private collections.

While James was living in London, his landlady casually mentioned that he should go to hear William Huntington. In hearing the gospel preached faithfully and experimentally, James became very anxious about his own never-dying soul. Although he was warned against reading Huntington's more controversial books, he ended up reading *The Barber*. This small book of Huntington exposed the superficiality and deceitfulness of the popular evangelical religion of the day. Many so-called evangelicals were up in arms against it. Yet, the Lord used it to deepen the work of grace in the heart of James Bourne. He wrote, "It was the first book that was ever attended with light, as well as power, to show me the desperate condition I was in. I had been convicted, and I believe it was the Spirit of God that convicted me; yet I had no light to understand what it meant. That book plainly showed me the difference between the letter and the spirit, the form of godliness and the power. I was forced to cry out, 'Lord save me, or I perish.' Let who will find fault with *The Barber*, I will thank God that He should so condescend to send that book with such power into my heart."

James now became a regular attendant at Huntington's chapel in London. Another great trial came after he warned one of his friends at chapel against becoming engaged to a worldly woman. This friend, along with another, went to visit Huntington and prejudiced his mind against James Bourne. This resulted in Huntington preaching against him from the pulpit, and many in that large congregation started to avoid him. As a result, James became very despondent, hardly knowing how to carry on, as his whole life was being affected. The Lord delivered him in a most remarkable way. Huntington preached from Psalm 86 verse 17: "*Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because Thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.*" Although James believed that Huntington

preached this to favour his estranged friends, the Lord used it for himself, so that he was greatly comforted.

James found a very kind friend in Joseph Burrell, who acted with tenderness towards him in his great straits. After the death of Huntington, when many broke away from that chapel, James Bourne joined with Joseph Burrell and sat under his ministry for a number of years. In the early 1830's, James became associated with Bernard Gilpin, a Church of England clergyman at Hertford, and with others of the Gilpin family who lived in Shropshire and Somerset. In connection with these friends, and his gracious letters to many of them, he became more widely known. The account of his life and his letters have long been highly esteemed among Strict Baptists. Bernard Gilpin also published many interesting accounts of those who came under the care of James Bourne as a minister.

It was the custom of James Bourne to call together all his family and servants for worship each morning. Not only did he read and pray, but he also expounded upon the portion read. It appears that from this practice, he became exercised about the public ministry. It is not known when he was sent forth into the ministry, but it was later on in his life. He became the minister at a chapel that was built for him in Maney, near Sutton Coldfield. He died at this place in 1854.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

MYSTERIES IN THE BIBLE - PART 2

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3.16).

This "*mystery of godliness*" is the very antidote to the mystery of iniquity! Surely, the mystery of godliness is the most wonderful mystery of all! The above verse contains a great deal of vital truth, yet sadly and solemnly, through the darkness of the natural mind, it is often misunderstood.

First of all: *“without controversy,”* and yet there is an awful lot of controversy over the meaning of God’s Word in the religious world. I used to think like this when I was your age, young friends, and I often puzzled over this verse. The explanation of the opening words is really quite simple: *“And without controversy **great** is the mystery of godliness.”* When our minds (and hearts) are truly humbled before God, we will have to agree with this declaration of divine truth. We will be in no doubt that here is a **great** mystery; we will not want to argue about that. So, beware of those who think they can present all the answers and insights of this *“mystery of godliness”* to you – and sometimes it will be entwined with details from their own understanding. God emphatically declares: *“great is the mystery of godliness.”*

Nonetheless, what is *“godliness”*? Again, in my youth, I instinctively related the word *“godliness”* to the behaviour of godly persons. I thought that was what godliness meant – living a godly life and so on.

What we need to do, sometimes, is look at the punctuation and then plead that the Holy Spirit will shine through the words. There is a colon (:) after the word *“godliness”* in the scripture here. This indicates that an opening up of what has gone before is now to follow: *“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit ...”* In other words, the rest of the verse tells us what *“godliness”* is. I am sure you will agree that it is very comprehensive. It is the revelation of these glorious truths by the Holy Spirit to a poor sinner which imparts real godliness into a soul. No wonder Hart sings:

A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so.

Gadsby’s Hymn 89

As Gadsby’s own footnote says: “That is, the Holy Ghost teaches and convinces him what a sinner he is.”

In 1 Timothy 6 verse 6, the Lord says: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”* This is one of the indicators of the

possession of real godliness. A discontented, argumentative spirit does not point to an acquaintance with true godliness.

Thus, here is a great mystery, but God gives us some “clues” in the remainder of the verse; six clues in fact. They all appertain to Jesus Christ, they all belong to the work of salvation and they all define certain aspects of this great mystery. What a mystery! Yet, if we have no part in this mystery, we are lost, and we shall only suffer the awful consequences of being tied up in the dreadful mystery of iniquity.

Blessed be God, the mystery of godliness is all for the salvation of His dear people, and as He unravels the sacred truths of it little by little, you will see that it is a beautiful mystery.

So fair a face bedewed with tears;
What beauty e'en in grief appears!
He wept, he bled, he died for you;
What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?

Gadsby's Hymn 441

There is not time or space here to take each of the six defining clauses in detail, so here are a few thoughts relating to the subject as a whole. Take the Scripture in Song of Solomon 8 verse 5: *“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?”* We see that *“her Beloved”* is God, manifest in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, who left His glory and came down to this sin-stricken world *“to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19.10).

Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 18 verse 12: *“How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?”* *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53.6). Jesus still seeks out His own, as the Word says, and each poor sinner comes up *“from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved.”*

Of course, we have in the Scriptures the eyewitnesses that God was indeed manifest in the flesh during those thirty-three years of His earthly pilgrimage. Nonetheless, it is plain that even the eyewitnesses were mystified many times, and those who were near and dear to the Master often did not understand Him. For instance, even His own parents did not understand Him when He said, "*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?*" (Luke 2.49). Yet, His mother began to learn something of Him when she said at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: "*Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it*" (John 2.5).

How much less, then, shall we be able to understand this great mystery with our natural wisdom? Yet, the Lord gives living faith to believe in Him, as witnessed the eunuch to Philip in the desert: "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (Acts 8.37).

Much remains a mystery to sense and reason, but in our right minds, we would not have it otherwise:

I love the Incarnate Mystery,
And there I fix my trust.

Gadsby's Hymn 1095

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about TRUE AND FALSE TRUST. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Jeremiah 17.5-8 speaks of a cursed man and a blessed man. How are they each described?
2. Complete the following text: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and ..." (Proverbs 3.5)

In the next two questions, what will happen to the following people?

3. "He that trusteth in the Lord." (Psalm 32.10)
4. "They ... that trust in graven images." (Isaiah 42.17)
5. What does the Bible call one that "trusteth in his own heart"? (Proverbs 28.26)
6. What is hard for "them that trust in riches"? (Mark 10)
7. Of whom was it written, "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah"? (2 Kings 18)
8. Who mocked this godly king, saying, "Neither let — make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us"? (Isaiah 36)
9. What wonderful deliverance was given to this king who trusted in God? (Isaiah 37)
10. Which king of Judah gained an incredible victory against his enemies because he trusted in God; then later in life was reproved because he trusted to the Syrian army? (2 Chronicles)

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Abel.
2. David, who killed both the lion and the bear.
3. Any blemish or "evilfavouredness" (deformity).
4. Isaac; a ram caught in a thicket by his horns was offered as a sacrifice.
5. Sheep tend to go astray.
6. The sheep's shepherds had caused them to go astray, by turning them away on the mountains. (Jeremiah 50.6)
7. The bleating of the sheep meant that Saul had not obeyed God's command that all the animals taken in battle with the Amalekites should be killed. (1 Samuel 15.3,14-22)
8. David. (2 Samuel 12.6)
9. "The Lamb of God." (John 1.29,36)
10. The Good Shepherd speaks to his sheep, and they know His voice; He calls them by name and leads them, going before them to find pasture. He lays his life down for them, saves them, enables them to believe in Him and gives them eternal life, so that they cannot perish. (John 10.3,4,9,11,15,26,28)

DIVINE LEADINGS

Trust in the Lord, for He is good;
Commit to Him thy way;
'Tis He that has my Helper been,
And kept me till this day.

My times are in His loving hands;
He has done all things well.
It is of Him that I would boast,
And of His mercy tell.

The way the Lord is pleased to lead
Must surely be the best;
And what are all our sufferings here,
To that eternal rest?

His precious promise cannot fail,
But is for ever sure!
And by His grace I trust I shall
Unto the end endure.

My few remaining days I would
Leave to His gracious will;
And may He teach me, while below,
To know more of Him still.

Oh! Could I feel more love to Him,
For all that He has done!
For 'tis through Jesus' precious blood;
Yea, Christ, and Christ alone!

A Little One – Sower 1890

The Friendly Companion



“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”
(Isaiah 9.6)

“For unto you is born ... a Saviour.”
(Luke 2.11)

December 2021

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Volume 147

December 2021

CONTENTS

Our Monthly Message	267
Our Front Cover Picture	271
For the Very Little Ones: Josiah Serves the Lord.	272
Colouring Text: 2 Kings 23.25	273
Bible Lessons: A Hard Cause Answered	274
Living Waters.....	276
Are You Prepared?.....	278
Short Biography of the Early Life of John Gill.....	279
Bible Study for the Older Ones: Mysteries in the Bible 3	283
Bible Questions: Daniel's Three Friends ..	286
Poetry: Immanuel's Land	287

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE
THE LIFE OF J.K. STEHOUWER – PART TWO

Dear Children and Young People,

I have been writing to you about Mr. J.K. Stehouwer, who was the pastor at Zion Strict Baptist Chapel in the USA for forty-three years. He was also my former pastor and had a great influence upon my life. I now come to the last week and last days of his life, which left a sweet savour upon me and the longing desire: *“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”* (Numbers 23.10)

About a week previous to his death, a friend sat with Mr. Stehouwer on Sunday as he listened to the service at Zion. He asked for help finding the Scripture passages and the hymns because his arm was weak. He seemed unusually exhausted, and was asked if he would prefer to be left alone to rest. However, he did not want to be alone and asked her to read from God’s Word. The friend read a part of Psalm 119, and he often stopped her, asking to have a verse repeated and commented on a few verses.

Due to various circumstances, my wife and I were unable to return to Grand Rapids in August as we had hoped. The chapel at Grand Rapids had visiting ministers in September and October, so we put off our visit until November. As we look back, we can see how perfectly the Lord ordered and overruled all our ways. During those months, we became increasingly aware that Pastor Stehouwer was failing. Previously, we spoke on the phone twice a week, often for forty minutes. By August, he could only talk for thirty minutes, in September for twenty minutes, and by October, he could only talk for ten minutes, being very short of breath. We planned to journey to Grand Rapids on Friday, November 15th. However, we received a phone call from the care manager of the home on Tuesday, saying that he was slipping fast. Thus, we travelled on Thursday and came to the nursing home on Friday morning. We were told that he had not left his bed since Tuesday.

Mr. Stehouwer was sleeping when we arrived, but when he realised we were there, he broke down in tears, saying, “I had

not thought to see you again.” We asked if he felt comfortable, and he answered, “Yes, very.”

At 2 pm, he said, “It seems like all is clear; it is the best way.” I asked what he meant by “all is clear”? He answered, “The Lord’s way.” A little later, he repeated, “I am so happy the Lord showed me that it is well with my soul. He made it all clear.” He looked at us and said, “I do not want to boast, but ‘loudest of the crowd I’ll sing.’” He seemed to be in a state of sweet composure.

After a little sleep, he called out, “Many chores to be done.” I answered, “Your chores are all done; it has been a lifetime of chores.” He responded, “Every day brings something new, Zion’s troubles to renew. What a wonderful, performing God!”

He asked to have the Scriptures read, and I read Isaiah 56, commenting on verses 4 to 8, especially the keeping of the Lord’s Sabbaths, choosing the things that please Him, and taking hold of His covenant by taking hold of Christ the Saviour. Also, the place and the everlasting name that will be given to His people. Lastly, upon the Lord gathering the outcasts, and others, too, unto Himself. Pastor nodded his head, saying, “If we desire Him here, He will know us in that hour.”

He asked what time it was, and I said, “It will not be long, and you will no longer mark time.” After a few minutes, he said, “A dark day.” When we came to visit or speak with Mr. Stehouwer in recent years, he often made this remark. He meant that it was dark spiritually in the world, the nation, and the churches. He would add that it was dark for himself, for the Lord seemed silent, and say, “I long for the Lord to visit me again.”

Fearing the enemy of souls was harassing him again, I asked, “What makes it dark?”

After a short pause, he answered, “The absence of God.” He did not add the usual comment about darkness in himself.

He called out, “My eyes want to shut.” I reminded him of God’s promise to Jacob that Joseph would put his hand upon his eyes; so, Christ shuts the eyes of His people in death – but

opens them to an eternal day. I quoted the lines, "Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand; and glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land."

A few minutes later, he said, "I'm slipping; getting weaker." I quoted the line, "I feel this mud-walled cottage shake and long to see it fall," and he nodded his head in strong agreement.

At 3:40, whatever darkness he may have felt before was taken away, as he cried out in a very strong voice, "Oh that will be glory for me – to see Him face to face."

He slept a little and then suddenly spoke up, saying, "I love the Saviour's name. I wish He would take me." I answered him with the Saviour's words in John chapter 17, "*Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.*" To this, he said, "How blest is the man that believes in Christ. Many think it is a common thing to believe in Jesus, but it is a very special thing, a very rare thing."

After another short sleep, with a very strong voice, he said, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Then he added, "If this is dying, how sweet it is!"

When we left for a meal, his niece and a member of the chapel sat with him. At 6:30, he called out, "**Kept; kept.**" Our friend sang the immortal hymn of Isaac Watts: "O God, our Help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home." After the last line, "Our eternal home," he fixed his eyes on her and groaned out, as if to show that he was longing for that eternal home.

He was sleeping when we returned to his room. At 10:45, he woke and said again, "Everything is clear." I asked, "Are there no clouds?" He responded by shaking his head in a very strong, "No." There was no other response that evening.

We left Mr. Stehouwer at 12:20 am and returned the next morning, November 16th. A short time later, he opened his eyes and smiled. In a much weaker voice, he said, "I thought I would be home by now." He had made the same remark to the home manager earlier that morning. He slept most of the time on that day. There were a number of visitors from the chapel, along

with his niece and nephew. When we mentioned their names or as they spoke to him, he opened his eyes briefly and smiled. He was too weak to say more than a couple of words and soon fall asleep again.

At times, I moistened his dry mouth, saying, "Pastor, just a little more water on earth, but soon you will drink from the fountain of living water." Another time, I said, "You will soon drink from the well of Bethlehem."

When he woke in the early afternoon, I asked if he would like me to read a portion of Scripture. I prayed and read 2 Corinthians 5 verses 1 to 15. When I finished, he nodded his head in agreement and groaned out in heart.

He slept again for some time, waking shortly after 5 pm. Once more, I prayed briefly and read Psalm 73 verses 25 and 26. He could hardly keep his eyes open.

At 7:30, I woke him to say that I was leaving because of the services ahead on the Lord's day. I told him that a couple of friends would stay with him through the night, and I would endeavour to return after the morning service.

Saying goodbye was hard, as I wondered if he would live through the night. I told him that perhaps he would be delivered before I could return, and his eyes would see the Lord Himself. And it proved to be so, for he breathed his last at 6 am on the Sunday morning.

We often reflect on the last year, and especially upon that last Friday. He seemed to be lifted above the world, above sin and self, his heart longing for the exchange, his soul sweetly enlarged for the fulness of the glory that he was about to enter. The impression it left upon us far excels all those from earlier times. *"The memory of the just is blessed."*

At his funeral the following Friday, the chapel was filled to near capacity, and I spoke from Jude 3, *"...that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."* That indeed summarizes Pastor Stehouwer's life and witness.

With love from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The picture on our front cover this month is of an hourglass. The hourglass is an ancient device used for measuring time. It first appeared in Europe in the eighth century. By the early fourteenth century, the sand glass was used commonly in Italy and then throughout Western Europe.

Usually, the hourglass consists of two cone-shaped or oval glass receptacles joined by a narrow neck. Sand, or occasionally a liquid, is placed in the uppermost section and runs through the neck into the lower section in exactly one hour. The hourglass is then turned over to repeat the action. The accuracy of the hourglass may be affected by the size and angle of the glass bulbs, the width of the neck, the volume of sand used and the quality of sand or granular material. It must be fine, dry and consistently formed to flow smoothly. There must also be a tight seal, so that no moisture can get into the chambers. Some of the substances used were fine-grain sand, powdered eggshells and powdered marble.

Hourglasses vary considerably in size; the smallest being the size of a cufflink, the largest up to three feet (1 meter) tall. They are made to measure time in minutes, hours, or up to a full day. The largest hourglass on record is 17 feet (5.2 meters). It was built in Japan in 1991 and takes exactly one year to empty.

The hourglass is often used as a symbol of passing time. It shows that our lives, like the sand in the hourglass, are slowly, but surely running out. In his Epistle, James asks, *“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”* (James 4.14). The prayer of Moses in Psalm 90 reminds us of the swift passing of time. He says, *“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”* (verse 12).

The hymn of Samuel Rutherford on the back cover refers to “the sands of time.” The hymn of nineteen verses was composed from various sayings in his letters and words spoken on his deathbed.

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JOSIAH SERVES THE LORD**

King Josiah listened to the words in the book of the law that was found in the temple. He made a covenant (promise) to keep the laws of the Lord with all his heart. He asked the people to serve only the Lord God of Israel.

Josiah went through all the land and took away the idols. He broke down the altars that were used to worship false gods. He asked the Levites to bring back the ark of God into the temple.

Then Josiah commanded the people to keep the passover unto the Lord, as it was written in the book. Since the time of Samuel the prophet, no passover had been held in Israel like this one of Josiah.

There was no king like Josiah, who *“turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might.”* He was killed in a battle with the king of Egypt, *“and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Josiah make a promise to keep? (5 words)
2. What did he take away out of the land? (2 words)
3. What did he command the people to keep? (2 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Eight.
2. While he was yet young.
3. The book of the law.

Contributed

*“And like unto
him was there
no king ...
that turned
to the Lord
with all his
heart”*

2 Kings 23.25

BIBLE LESSONS**A HARD CAUSE ANSWERED**

Moses was a very wise and prudent leader. When the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh promised to go armed before their brethren into Canaan, he called for Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the chief men of all the tribes. Moses told them what the two and a half tribes had agreed to do. If they kept their word and went over armed before their brethren, they were to be given their inheritance in Gilead, on this side of Jordan. If they refused, then they would be given their inheritance in the land of Canaan with all the other tribes.

The men of these tribes answered Moses in the presence of Eleazar, Joshua and the elders of the people, *"As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do."* What a good example they set for Israel and for us as well! They did not say, "All that Moses has said." No, indeed; they understood that Moses was God's representative, and thus he spoke on God's behalf.

When you are favoured to hear God's servants preach the Word of God, do you ever feel that they are speaking on behalf of God? When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he told them that he and other ministers were *"ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us"* (2 Corinthians 5.20).

Those who seek the Lord are often tempted to think that their case and their concerns are of little importance compared to others. There was a family of the tribe of Manasseh that must have felt that way regarding their cause. They were five sisters, whose father, Zelophehad, was among those who died in the wilderness. They were afraid that no inheritance or possession of land would be given to them because their father had no sons. They came before Moses, Eleazar and the princes of all the tribes at the door of the tabernacle with a great question: *"Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son?"* They requested Moses to give them a possession among the brothers of their father.

We are told something very beautiful about their request: *“And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.”* What an encouragement for us! If we have a cause, we may bring it to the Lord Jesus. After Moses had chosen able men of Israel to help him judge the people, he said: *“the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will bear it”* (Deuteronomy 1.17). In the same way, the Lord will hear our hard causes when we bring them unto Him.

The Lord answered Moses: *“The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren.”*

The words that God spoke to Moses next were very sad ones: *“Get thee up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.”*

What a remarkable man Moses was! Even at the time when God told him he must die, Moses was a very fit, strong man. He was not weak through sickness, nor infirm because of old age. Why was Moses not allowed to go into Canaan with the people? God reminded him of his sin in the wilderness of Zin, when he failed to obey God’s commandment.

Do you remember how the people murmured because of thirst? God told Moses to take the rod, to gather the people before the rock, and to speak to the rock, that it might bring forth water. Sadly, Moses took his rod and smote the rock twice. Because of his disobedience, Moses was forbidden to enter the land of Canaan.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 27 verses 1 to 14 and in chapter 32 verses 28 to 32.

QUESTIONS:

1. If the two and a half tribes refused to go armed before their brethren, where were they to have their inheritance? (5 words)
2. Whose daughters came before Moses with their hard cause?
3. What did they request Moses to give them? (2 words)

4. What did the Lord answer Moses regarding these daughters? (first 16 words)
5. Why was Moses forbidden to enter the land of Canaan? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Eleazar.
2. He was the high priest.
3. 600,000.
4. Two. Caleb and Joshua.
5. "... and be sure your sin will find you out."

LIVING WATERS

One night, at the end of December, eleven-year-old Frances ran up the stairs to her room in the attic. There were not many furnishings in the room, but it was very dear to her. Only recently, she had been allowed to claim it as her very own room.

Frances had been having a lovely time downstairs with all her brothers and sisters. Yesterday was Christmas, and it had been a happy day, full of joy. There had been the worship service, Christmas dinner, carols and gifts. The afternoon and evening were occupied with family and friends, games and books. The festivities had flowed over into the following day.

A change came over Frances the moment she shut the bedroom door. The liveliness in her eyes and movements were replaced with wistfulness. For some months, she and the other children had been eagerly looking forward to Christmas time, but now it was over. The long-awaited day had come and gone, and it seemed like there was nothing to look forward to.

Frances turned the pages of a daily portion book to find the text for the evening of December 26th. It was just three words:

"Shall never thirst" (John 4.14). Frances stood transfixed. Was she not thirsty, always longing for something that would satisfy her heart? She looked at the words again: *"Shall never thirst."* Frances had been taught the Scriptures as far back as she could remember. She knew where the words came from. The Lord Jesus, weary with His journey, was resting at Jacob's well, and he asked the woman of Samaria to give Him a drink of water. The woman was so surprised at the request of Jesus that she began to question Him, and He told her of living water: *"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."* You can read it for yourself in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. Frances gazed at those three words again. They seemed in a mysterious way to be endued with life: *"Shall never thirst."* There must be satisfaction somewhere; there must be something which could fill the void in her heart. How Frances longed for that living water to satisfy her longing soul! As she slipped into bed, she pondered over those words: *"Shall never thirst."*

During the years that followed, the Lord brought Frances to see that only He could satisfy her longing soul. Many people in this world are thirsty and discontented, but in most cases, their longing is for more wealth, more pleasure, more knowledge, or more possessions. They forget the poverty of their souls. Can you say, as David did, *"My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see Thy power and Thy glory"* (Psalm 63.1)? If you have such a thirst after God, the Lord Jesus says, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink"* (John 7.37). *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"* (Matthew 5.6).

Adapted from The Book on the Windowsill and Other Stories

ARE YOU PREPARED?

“O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” Psalm 90.14

The Countess of Huntingdon was not only rich in this world, but rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom. When she was about nine years of age, she saw the dead body of a little child of her own age carried to the grave. She followed the funeral; and it was there that the Holy Spirit first opened her heart to convince her that she needed a Saviour. My dear little children, when you look upon the year that has come to an end, may the Holy Spirit bring you to the same conviction; may the still small voice say in your heart, “Flee now from the wrath to come.” *“Escape for thy life: look not behind thee.”*

Life is very short. *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”* Even those who live longest, when they come to die, look back on their life as upon a dream. It is *“like a sleep.”* The hours pass rapidly away during sleep; and when you awake you hardly know that any time is passed. Such is life. It is like *“a tale that is told.”* When you are listening to an entertaining tale it fills up the time, and makes the hours steal swiftly by; even so *“we spend our years as a tale that is told.”*

You have seen a ship upon the river when the sailors were all on board, the anchor heaved, and the sails spread to the wind, how it glided swiftly past, bounding over the billows; so is it with your days: *“They are passed away as the swift ships.”* Or perhaps you have seen an eagle, when from its nest in the top of the rocks, it darts down with quivering wings to seize upon some smaller bird, how swiftly it flies; so is it with your life: it flies *“as the eagle hasteth to the prey.”* You have noticed the mist on the brow of the mountain early in the morning; and you have seen, when the sun rose with its warm cheering beams, how soon the mist melted away. And *“what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”*

Life is very uncertain. Men are like grass: *"In the morning, it groweth up and flourisheth: in the evening, it is cut down and withereth."* Many men are cut down while they are green. Of most men it may be said, *"He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down."* Death is very certain, but the time is very uncertain. Some may think they shall not die because they are in good health, but you forget that many die in good health, by accidents, and other causes. Again, riches and ease and comforts, good food and good clothing, are no safeguards against dying. It is written, *"The rich man also died, and was buried."* Kind physicians and kind friends cannot keep you from dying. When death comes, it laughs at the efforts of physicians; it tears you from the tenderest arms. Some think they shall not die because they are not prepared to die; but you forget that most people die unprepared, unconverted, unsaved. You forget that it is written of the strait gate, *"Few there be that find it."* Most people lie down in a dark grave, and a darker eternity. Some of you may think you shall not die because you are young. You forget that many die before they reach adulthood. Oh, if you had to stand as often as I have beside the dying bed of little children, you would see how needful it is to seek the Lord. It may be your turn next. Are you prepared to die? Have you fled for refuge to Jesus? Have you found forgiveness? *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."*

Remember the promise, *"They that seek Me early shall find Me"* (Proverbs 8.17).

Adapted from Robert M'Cheyne

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN GILL

John Gill (1697-1771) was, perhaps, the greatest Baptist biblical scholar there has ever been. He possessed a vast knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and he was extremely well-versed in Scripture. He was the Pastor of Goat Yard Chapel, Southwark, London, for fifty-one years. This church goes back to 1650, and it continues today as the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

John Gill was born and brought up in Kettering, Northamptonshire. His parents, Edward and Elizabeth Gill, were both members of the newly formed Particular Baptist Church in that place, and Edward was one of the deacons. On the day that John was born, his father, being greatly delighted to have a son, went outside to tell his wonderful news to the man who was delivering wood. He was overheard by a complete stranger who was passing by. The stranger declared, "Yes, and he will be a scholar too, and all the world cannot hinder it." The stranger disappeared and was never seen or heard of again.

John was sent to the local grammar school at an early age, and he displayed signs of possessing a great intellect. Before he was eleven years of age, he had mastered the basics of Greek and Latin, as well as an understanding of classical literature. He most likely had a photographic memory, being able to retain vast amounts of knowledge. Every market day, John would be found in the local bookshop, consuming as much information as possible. It became a saying in Kettering, if something was to be confirmed as true, "It is as sure as John Gill is to be found in the bookshop."

John's grammar school education came to an abrupt end when the headmaster insisted on taking the children every day to attend prayers at the parish church. The parents of John Gill, and others from the same church with children at the school, could not accept this, and they withdrew their children. Although many kind friends helped to search for one, a suitable school for young John could not be found. One of the main problems was that he was so far ahead of all his peers in education.

So, between the ages of eleven and nineteen, John assisted his father in the family business. He was, however, given plenty of time to pursue his studies at home. John appears to have excelled in teaching himself. He went on to study Hebrew, logic, moral philosophy, science and rhetoric, as well as improving his knowledge of Latin and Greek!

It was during these teenage years that the Lord began His wonderful work of grace in John's heart. One day, he heard his

pastor, Mr Wallis, preach from Genesis 3 verse 9, *"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"* For a long time following, the Word of God having been planted in his heart, the good seed began to grow. He often heard the inner voice of conscience saying, "Where are you? What a wretched state and condition you are in! You will remain miserable, living and dying in an unconverted state." He turned to his pastor for spiritual help and advice, but Mr Wallis passed away very soon after that time. John had to learn to cease from man and to look to the Lord alone for all spiritual help and advice. He felt more and more "the plague of his own heart" and his great need to obtain the mercy of God. The Lord was pleased to enable John to look away from self to the Saviour of sinners. He was raised up to a sweet hope in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sadly, John Gill left no personal account of how he felt led to make an open profession of his faith in the Lord Jesus. He had felt very strongly that once this had been attended to, he would also become a minister of the gospel. On Lord's Day, November 1st, 1716, John Gill, aged nineteen, was baptized in the local river. The following Lord's Day, he was received into church membership and partook of the Lord's Supper with the other church members. On the same evening that he had been received into church membership, a few of the members gathered together in a private house. John was asked to give a short address from the Word of God. He opened his Bible on Isaiah 53 and spoke from a few verses. Afterward, many felt sure that the Lord was raising up this young man to be a minister of the gospel.

The following Lord's Day evening, John was asked to preach a full sermon. He preached from 1 Corinthians 2 verse 2, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."* Many who were present on that occasion felt the Lord's blessing had rested upon them. After continuing to conduct these private house meetings for several weeks, John Gill was officially asked by the church to assist their

pastor, who was struggling with various responsibilities. John then preached from the pulpit in the chapel at Kettering. As word got around to the neighbouring churches, he was soon asked to preach farther afield.

One chapel where John preached was in Higham-Ferrers, nearly ten miles south of Kettering. He found this place to be sadly lacking in spiritual life, apart from at least one person. He was told of a young lady who was “rather odd.” She was often criticized and mocked by her family and friends. When John Gill had an opportunity to speak with her, he found that she had been truly born again by the Holy Ghost. Her whole life, walk and conversation, was becoming the gospel of Christ. The more “fashionable” or “modern” people in the congregation could not accept her, for she would not go along with their worldly ways! This young lady, Elizabeth Negus, and John Gill found that they were brought together in a spiritual bond, and also a loving relationship was formed between them. After a short courtship, they were married and “never regretted it.”

It was not long before the Particular Baptist churches in London heard about this gifted, but gracious, young minister. One of these, the Horsleydown church in Southwark, whose previous pastors had been Benjamin Keach and then Benjamin Stinton, invited John Gill to become their next pastor. After laying the matter before the Lord, he felt quite sure that the matter proceeded from Him and accepted the invitation. John Gill remained there for the next fifty-one years with the Lord’s blessing and approbation.

A.T. Pickett

Bishop Waldegrave was a staunch Protestant and a defender of Reformation principles. On his deathbed he exclaimed, “I thank God more and more for that little word **thick** in the Scripture: *‘I have blotted out, as a **thick** cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.’*”

*BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES***MYSTERIES IN THE BIBLE – PART THREE**

Thus far, we have considered just two great mysteries of the Bible, but there are many more; some that are not even referred to as mysteries. The Lord places a responsibility on us in 1 Corinthians 4.1: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the **mysteries of God.**”*

There is a sacred truth that is sometimes described as a mystery, although the Bible does not actually refer to it as such. That is the mystery of the Holy Trinity – the three Persons of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* (1 John 5.7). Some of the distinctive offices and attributes of each of the sacred Three are seen in Ephesians 3, where the word “mystery” appears no less than three times in one chapter. Here you can read of the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ (the Son) and the Spirit. In Gadsby’s Hymn 29, Joseph Hart describes the sacred Trinity like this:

Thou,* with the Father and the Son,
Art that mysterious Three-in-One,
God blest for evermore!
Whom though we cannot comprehend,
Feeling Thou art the sinner’s Friend,
We love Thee and adore.

*The Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that any understanding of the sacred mysteries of the Word is by revelation. *“How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men”* (Ephesians 3.3,5).

The “mystery” particularly described in Ephesians 3 is *“that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel”* (verse 6). Such is the effect of this revelation upon his spirit that Paul goes on to say, *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our*

Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (verses 14,15). Is it not a mystery that, though God clearly chose the nation of Israel to be His people, and though *"salvation is of the Jews"* (John 4.22), yet that salvation is freely bestowed on some of *"all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues"* (Revelation 7.9)?

Then, what about the wonderful birth of Jesus? We will come to that at the end of this lesson, but His birth is gathered up by these words: "The mystery of Christ." This specific expression appears in Ephesians 3.4 and in Colossians 4.3. It is also contained in Colossians 2.2.

The mystery of Christ is wonderfully illustrated in 1 Peter 2 verse 4 as *"a Living Stone."* Even upon earth, a beautiful gemstone commands the attention of men again and again, as it is looked upon from many angles, each throwing out fresh delights to the eye. How much, much more this "Living Stone" shows fresh attractions to poor, helpless, ignorant sinners!

The Bible gives some of these viewpoints of the Living Stone the title of "mystery" in their own right. For example, in 1 Corinthians 2.6 and 7, we read: *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."* To amplify the real nature of this view of the mystery of Christ, the Scripture goes on to say: *"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"* (verse 8). Dear young friends, what a precious mystery! Do you know a little of it? The prophet says of Jesus: *"and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him"* (Zechariah 12.10). This is what the hymnwriter speaks of:

The soldier pierced His side, 'tis true,
But we have pierced Him through and through.

Gadsby's Hymn 153 part 2

Have you had to come in with that verse in singing it? Yes, what a mystery is the Wisdom of God in that the crucifying of the Lord Jesus was but fulfilling the holy will of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, as the only way in which sin could be put away (2 Samuel 12.13) and sinners reconciled to God (Ephesians 2.13-22)!

“The mystery of the gospel” is another glorious viewpoint from which to observe this “Living Stone,” and it is mentioned in Ephesians 6.19, and effectively in Colossians 1.26 and 27. In the latter verses, we read this: *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* These verses bring us again to 1 Peter 2: *“If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones [Christ in you], are built up a spiritual house”* (verses 3 to 5).

Finally, we come to the birth of Jesus. *“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1.34,35).

Perhaps we shall sing this Christmas season (and what a Christmas it would be if it is the first time from the heart):

This God-like mystery we will gladly sing,
And own the virgin's Babe our God and King;
Jehovah Jesus, we will Thee adore,
And crown Thee Lord of all for evermore.

Gadsby's Hymn 703

Brian Mercer

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about DANIEL'S THREE FRIENDS. Younger children need only answer five questions. Scripture references are to the Book of Daniel. Please give references for questions 6 to 11 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What were the Hebrew names of Daniel's three friends? (1.6)
2. What Babylonish names were given to them? (1.7)
3. When Daniel was honoured, he spoke of his three friends to the king. What did Nebuchadnezzar do for them, which was indirectly the cause of them being brought into trouble later? (2.49)
4. Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold. Who was commanded to come to its dedication and to worship the image? (3.2)
5. What did the king say would happen to any who disobeyed? (3.6)

The three Hebrew children were accused before Nebuchadnezzar as having disobeyed him. In their answer to the king, what did they say that: (3 questions)

6. God was able to do?
7. God would do?
8. They would not do, even if God did not do what they said He was able to do?
9. What happened to the men who threw the Hebrew children into the fire?
10. What happened to Daniel's three friends, and who was with them in the fire?
11. What conclusion did Nebuchadnezzar come to concerning the Lord God of Israel which demonstrated His superiority over all other gods?

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is."
2. "... lean not unto thine own understanding."

3. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."
4. "They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images."
5. A fool.
6. It is hard for those that trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God. (Mark 10.24)
7. Hezekiah. (2 Kings 18.5)
8. Rab-shakeh. (Isaiah 36.13-15)
9. The angel of the Lord went forth and killed 185,000 of the Assyrian army who had come against Jerusalem. (Isaiah 37.36)
10. Asa. (2 Chronicles 14.9-15; 16.1-10)

IMMANUEL'S LAND

Samuel Rutherford's Hymn

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of heaven breaks.
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes.
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

The King there in His beauty,
Without a veil is seen;
It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between.
The lamb, with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

Oh! Christ He is the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:

There, to an ocean fulness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

I have wrestled on toward heaven,
'Gainst storm, and wind, and tide;
Now, like a weary traveller
That leaneth on his guide,
Amid the shades of evening,
While sinks life's ling'ring sand,
I hail the glory dawning
From Immanuel's land.

With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lustred with His love.
I'll bless the hand that guided,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus,
Fill'd with His likeness rise;
To live and to adore Him
To see Him with these eyes.
'Tween me and resurrection
But Paradise doth stand;
Then, then for glory dwelling
In Immanuel's land!

Anne Ross Cousin

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INDEX

EDITOR'S PIECES (G.L. TenBroeke)

Our Monthly Message, 3, 51, 75, 99, 147, 171, 195, 219, 243, 267
Our Front Cover Picture, 5, 29, 52, 77, 100
The Life of J.K. Stehouwer, 243, 267
The Shadow Returned Backward, 202

BIBLE LESSONS (G.L. TenBroeke)

A Hard Cause answered, 274; A Terrible Judgment, 10; Aaron's Rod that budded, 34; "And be sure your sin will find you out", 252; Balaam continues to bless Israel, 200; God causes Balaam to bless Israel, 178; Israel ensnared by the Moabites, 226; The King of Moab sends for Balaam, 156; The Serpent of Brass, 82; The Temptation at Kadesh, 58; Victory over Sihon and Og, 104

BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (contributed)

Daniel's Three Friends, 286; Hiding Places, 213; Obedience, 142; Sheep and Shepherds, 238; Sickness and Disease, 22; Sowing and Reaping, 69; Things which God used, 46; Things which please God, 118; True and False Trust, 262; True and False Worship, 94; Unbelief, 166; "What shall I do?", 190

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES (B. P. Mercer)

Knowledge, 66; Learning from the Lord Jesus, 43; Mysteries in the Bible, 235, 259, 283; Revelation, 115; The Kingdom of God, 139, 163, 188, 210; Wisdom, 91; "Who teacheth like Him?", 20

COLOURING TEXTS

2 Kings 13.16, 33; 2 Kings 14.11, 57; 2 Kings 17.23, 155; 2 Kings 19.20, 177; 2 Kings 20.5, 199; 2 Kings 23.25, 273; 1 Chronicles 31.21, 129; 2 Chronicles 24.22, 9; 2 Chronicles 26.5, 81; 2 Chronicles 28.19, 103; 2 Chronicles 33.13, 225; 2 Chronicles 34.21, 251

CONTRIBUTED AND SELECTED PIECES

Anonymous	Our Front Cover Picture, 125, 173, 196, 247, 271
Anonymous	A Woman's Last Prayer, 184
	Bible Inscriptions, 106, 132
	First Impressions, 79,
	One Word, 107
Boston, Thomas	Preparation for Death, 235
Bradford, William	A Time of Thanksgiving, 248
Buss, G.D.	Bible Lessons: Psalm 119, 130
	The Wrong Passport, 204
Cameron-Smith, R.	A Sermon to One Hearer, 19
	A Soldier Led by a Little Child, 254
Cheering Words 1996	"It shall not return unto Me void", 61

Cheering Words 1997	Telling the Truth, 152
Covell, Francis	Answered Prayer, 42
	A Solemn Admonition, 133
Chandler, John	Undeserved Kindness, 30
'For the Generations to come'	"I was that Soldier", 84; Wintertime, 38
Friendly Companion 1955	Prayer and Providence, 229
Friendly Companion 1993	A New Year Thought, 7
Friendly Companion 1995	A Chinese Girl's Prayer Answered, 180
	The Sixteen Soldiers, 228
	"They that seek Me early shall find Me", 112
Gospel Echo 1913	Learn Jesus First, 223
Illustrated Shorter Catechism	Keeping the Sabbath, 206
Izzard, B.	Study the Scriptures, 223
Life of 'Rabbi Duncan'	"Be sure to have your Passes ready", 205
Little Gleaner 1877	A Remarkable Prayer, 207
Little Gleaner 1879	Boast not thyself of Tomorrow, 135
Little Gleaner 1885	A Dollar's Worth, 54
Little Gleaner 1888	Faith made perfect by Works, 153
Little Gleaner 1889	Honouring the Lord's Day, 158
	Lost on the Moor, 36;
	What you can never catch. 108
Little Gleaner 1892	A Wonderful Deliverance, 15
Little Gleaner 1915	A Dying Child's Prayer, 174
	The Life-giving Word, 60
Little Gleaner 1933	A Refuge for the Weary, 203
M'Cheyne, Robert M.	Are you Prepared?, 278
Mason, Dale	The Cloud of Witnesses, 160
"Old Humphrey"	The Cobweb in the Corner, 134
Popham, J.K.	An All-Important Question, 87
	The Holy Scriptures, 55
Religious Stories Vol. 1	The Bible in the Trunk, 62
Rutt, J.R.	Our Monthly Message, 27, 123
Seymour, A.	Our Front Cover Picture, 150, 220
Sunday School Messenger	The Frightened Atheist, 17
The Book on the Window Sill	Living Waters, 276
The Woman with the Book	God's Perfect Way, 181
Touching Incidents ...	A Wonderful Visitor, 109
Warburton, John (Jnr)	Letters written when a soldier, 208
Young People's Magazine	Forgetting to look up, 153
Zwemer, Samuel	Eternity, 79

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES (Contributed)

A Good Beginning but a Sad End, 8; Amaziah, a King who would not Listen, 56; Hezekiah, 128; Israel carried away, 154; Josiah serves the Lord, 272; Josiah, the Young King, 250; Jotham and Ahaz, 102; The Death of Elisha, 32; The Lord

defends Jerusalem, 176; The Reign of Manasseh, 224; The Sickness of Hezekiah, 198; Uzziah, the King with Leprosy, 80;

POETRY

"And then Eternity" (Thomas O. Chisholm), 96; Balaam's Prayer (John Newton), 192; Choose Thou for me (Horatius Bonar), 216; Divine Leading (Sower 1890), 264; Hope, the Anchor of the Soul (YPH 153), 72; Immanuel's Land (Anne Ross Cousin), 287; Longing to know the Saviour's Love (Henry Fowler), 48; Lord, teach a Little Child (YPH 129), 144; Prayer for Grace and Teaching (S.C.), 24; The End of the Way (Sower 1885), 168; "Thou God seest me" (YPH 22), 120; "We all do fade as a Leaf" (Anon), 240

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF VARIOUS PEOPLE (A. T. Pickett)

James Bourne, 256; Francis Covell, 39; William Cowper, 63; John Gill, 279; Matthew Henry, 161; John Kershaw, 136; Samuel Medley, 13; Joseph C. Philpot, 89; Anne Steele, 232; Augustus Toplady, 113; John Warburton Jnr., 185

OUR MAGAZINES

We would humbly acknowledge the Lord's goodness in supplying our needs in the past year. We hope that the articles have been helpful, instructive, encouraging and correcting. We are very thankful for the continual help of our regular contributors and many others who have supplied pieces through the year. A special thank you to our proof readers and the brethren who so readily helped when we were brought so low early in the year.

The words of Paul to Timothy are so applicable for our times: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Timothy 3.13,14). May God help us to hold fast and stand fast.

Brethren, pray for us.

G.L. TenBroeke