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# *Living Water*

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# *Living Water* — Issue No. 70

July - August 2005

<b>Recent Ministry</b>		<b>Page</b>
MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES — THYATIRA Continuing this series		<b>1</b>
OVERCOMERS — DANIEL The start of a new four-part series	Ken Hollands	<b>4</b>
THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD	David Burr	<b>6</b>
FOUR THINGS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN Extracts from an address on John 17	Andrew Spiers	<b>13</b>

## **Poetry Selection**

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM	Charles Leflaive	<b>17</b>
MEDITATION	Charles Leflaive	<b>18</b>
THE POTTER Contributed by Hilda M. Gilpin after reading “The Wheel of Life” in issue number 67	Beatrice Cleland	<b>18</b>

## **Testimony Section**

THREE RECENT TESTIMONIES TO THE POWER OF GOD An extract from a letter from Ghana An old family Bible still doing its work A personal testimony Editor’s Note		<b>19</b>
--	--	-----------

## **A voice from the past**

“THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD WHEREIN YE STAND”	J. N. Darby	<b>21</b>
--	-------------	-----------

## **A word for today**

NUMBERS Continuing this series on the first five books of the Bible.	Malcolm Biggs	<b>23</b>
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## MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES — THYATIRA

**“And to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, he that has his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass:**

“I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than the first. But I have against thee that thou permittest the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray my servants to commit fornication and to eat of idol sacrifices. And I gave her time that she should repent, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and her children will I kill with death; and all the assemblies shall know that I am he that searches the reins and the hearts; and I will give to you each according to your works. But to you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira, as many who have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I do not cast upon you any other burden; but what ye have hold fast till I shall come. And he that overcomes, and he that keeps unto the end my works, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod; as vessels of pottery are they broken in pieces, as I also have received from my Father; and I will give to him the morning star.

**“He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”  
(Revelation 2:18-29)**

In each of the addresses to the last four churches (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) there is a reference to the coming of the Lord. It has been suggested that, if we are looking at these messages as showing prophetically the whole history of the church from Pentecost onward, these references show that the moral state found in the last four churches is something which goes on to the coming of the Lord. We need therefore to have opened ears to hear what the Spirit is saying so that we can take account of these historical churches and the features that were pleasing or displeasing to the Lord in them and apply them to our own day. These features are still abroad today.

The state of the church in Thyatira was characterised by the “woman Jezebel” being in their midst. This produces a state of things where people are led astray and others, described figuratively as “her children”, follow her teaching and terrible example. Where Satan, through some agent, gets in amongst the people of God there can only be disaster.

Jezebel was one of the most wicked women in the Old Testament. Her story, together with that of her husband King Ahab, is given in the first book of Kings.

Ahab was an unfaithful king of Israel who married a Baal worshipper and that brought great evil into the nation. It led eventually to God acting through Elijah who was strengthened to stand up against Jezebel and all that she stood for. Jezebel is described here as, “she who calls herself prophetess, and she teaches and leads astray my servants”. This kind of activity has produced the most serious results in the history of the church. It can come into a company very easily. Paul, speaking to the Ephesian elders, warns them of what would come in and calls for them to be on their guard: “from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). The passage in Acts 20 makes it quite clear what would be the end of it all: “to draw away the disciples after them”. A very simple test is, ‘Who is promoted in any system of teaching? Is the Lord magnified and His interests set forward, or is man and his interests the centre?’

It is interesting that the Lord gave Jezebel time “that she should repent”. Sometimes the Lord allows time for concern to arise to see what those who fear His name will do. It was very gracious that time was given to Jezebel herself to repent, not only to those whom she had led astray.

Jezebel is marked by great presumption. We see it in our own day. Certain people make great, but untrue, claims to have light from God. Jezebel was like that. We know it was not light from God; it was the depths of Satan. We can only meet this through the word of God. Jezebel got into a company that was marked by works, love, faith, service, and endurance, which makes the whole matter very serious.

When presumption and pretension came in to Ephesus from those who, “say that themselves are apostles and are not” (Revelation 2:2), there was discernment in the company and power to deal with the matter. Sadly, in Thyatira there was not that power and accordingly the problem spread. That is what is implied when the Scripture speaks of Jezebel’s children.

The Lord’s action here, to “cast her into a bed”, is figurative but it is intended to help us to see the true character of Jezebel. There is a subtle seductive line in all this. “She leads astray my servants”. They were truly the Lord’s servants but they were led astray by this line. There are times when we do not discern things as we should and are led astray. The Lord in His grace comes in to show us things as they truly are.

The Lord points out that, where this sort of thing is allowed, it leads to full-blown iniquity. It may not be very evident at the beginning but it leads to something very dreadful, which brings discredit to the Lord. That is what makes this so solemn and requires us to be watchful in our own hearts. The need for this may

be why the Lord goes on to speak about searching the reins and the heart. We need to pass beyond what is outward to see the motives and intentions of our own hearts.

The way the Lord presents Himself to this church shows how He takes account of all these things. He has “eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass”. He searches and judges everything. One of the striking things about all of these letters is that they contain, in one way or another, some expression of the Lord’s right to judge. The Lord commends those in Thyatira for their works, love, faith, service and endurance. There were some who had remained clear of the defilement Jezebel brought in. The Lord addresses them as, “the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I do not cast upon you any other burden”. Clearly there were those in Thyatira who were faithful. The last works were more than the first. Even in the most adverse circumstances individual souls who are seeking the help of the Lord are making progress. Indeed, the adversity may be bringing them nearer to the Lord.

However bad the state, and some of the assemblies addressed were very sad places, the Lord looks for the overcomer in each one of them. There is no excuse for just switching off because things are too difficult. Because they are difficult more commitment is needed. The Lord exhorts the faithful in Thyatira to hold on, to keep that which they have. “I do not cast upon you any other burden; but what ye have hold fast till I shall come”. The key is the coming of the Lord. We are on no account to conclude that if we are in such a company as this we are to sit quietly by. “Hold fast till I shall come” should mean that we hold firmly to what is right. This spirit is called for today.

Those in Thyatira would have found it testing. If they constantly asserted that the teaching and practice of Jezebel was wrong they would soon have found where they stood. Some of the most grievous times in the Church’s public history are those where those taking character from Jezebel have persecuted faithful souls.

The word to the overcomer takes up the language of the second Psalm and refers directly to the Lord’s millennial reign: “Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron”, (Psalm 2:9). It links with the way that the Lord presents Himself to this assembly — “these things says the Son of God” — since one of the purposes of the second Psalm is to assert the deity of the Son. “Thou art my Son; I this day have begotten thee”. Then, too, those who have claimed a false authority down here will have to see that the Lord has authority and deals with the world in His own way. Attempts to deal with it outside His authority are doomed to failure.

The one who overcomes in Thyatira will be given authority. Permitting the woman Jezebel is a great affront to the Lord's authority. Those who overcame were standing aside from that and will have authority given to them in the day to come.

Another part of the promise made to the overcomer is, "I will give to him the morning star". The morning star is an allusion to the rapture, the Lord's coming for His own. Peter speaks of the Lord in this way: "...until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). The light of the Lord's coming would strengthen the overcomer. A practical illustration is to be found in the life of Mr. D. Otsing, a Russian believer. On his way to a Siberian Labour Camp, never to return, he wrote:

'Midst darkness faith clearly sees beaming  
The light of Thy coming afar;  
We watch for the dawn of the morning,  
And hail Thee the bright Morning Star.  
The word of Thy patience we're keeping,  
Thy radiancy draws us apart —  
A beacon us heavenward attracting —  
To meet Thee the Hope of our heart.'

*Based on a reading in Croydon, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002.*

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Thyatira, modern Akhisar, is sited in the Lycus valley in western Turkey. It was a dyeing centre and Lydia, whom the apostle Paul met at Philippi, came from here (see Acts 16).

## OVERCOMERS — DANIEL

**“And Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king's delicate food, nor with the wine which he drank; and he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not have to pollute himself. And God granted Daniel favour and mercy before the prince of the eunuchs”**  
**(Daniel 1:8-9).**

Daniel might only have been in his teens at the time when the events recorded in chapter 1 of the Book of Daniel took place (He was probably in his eighties, or even nineties by the time you come to chapter 12) but he was in a very difficult situation. Things had gone to pieces among the people of God. They had disobeyed

God and refused His appeals through His prophets and eventually they went into captivity to Babylon, then ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was among those taken captive. Daniel was not to blame for this catastrophe. It was not his fault that for centuries the children of Israel had disobeyed God but he was caught up in the consequences. Here he was, a young man with no outward support, taken captive with others, carried away to Babylon far from his own country.

I don't know how the young people here would feel or how I would feel if I were taken captive to a country like Iraq. King Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch; if he said he wanted someone executed, they were put to death with no questions asked! Daniel is here, a young slave, a Jew, in an alien country, in an alien culture. He was ordered to learn the language of the Chaldeans and their culture and he did not refuse but when asked to eat food prohibited by God's law he said, 'No'. Some foods were prohibited according to Leviticus 11 and 17. Daniel knew that the kind of food that was offered to him was against the law of Moses and he purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the King's delicate food.

I wonder what you or I would have done under those circumstances? The King of Babylon wanted to assimilate these Jews into his culture so that they would form part of the Empire and be just the same as every one else. But Daniel said no. Why? Because God's law said, 'No'.

The children of Israel had an inheritance in the land of Israel but they also had the law for an inheritance. "Moses commanded us a law, the inheritance of the children of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). They were driven out from their national inheritance through their own folly but the law of Moses remained as an inheritance. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the King's delicate food. That was faith on Daniel's part. He stood by the law of God and God supported him.

Now think of the present time. Are you a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ? What the devil tries to do is to make Christians become the same as others. What happens then? There is no witness. No testimony! The devil is always trying to drag believers down and assimilate them with the world and he has been very successful.

Daniel said, 'No'. It does not say that he prayed about it. It says that he purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the King's delicate food. No doubt he did pray, as we read later. In fact we read that he prayed three times a day on his knees with his windows opened to Jerusalem but it does not say here he prayed. He had received the word of God and he stuck to the word of God and he put the word of God into action. That is what we believers also need to do



today.

Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). That is the way Daniel sought to live and God supported him. I would like to encourage all here whether boys and girls or older ones to cling to the word of God, the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of the Lord and His apostles and seek help from God to put it into practice. And once we have the word of God let us practise it irrespective of what happens. That is faith.

Faith does not look at the difficulties. You may say, ‘Well, I cannot do anything else; I must go along with the stream’, but that is not the case at all. Daniel took a stand for God and God supported him. He was a young person with no outward support. He could not go to the Jewish priests for help. He could not rely upon a Jewish King. He relied upon God. God remains. God’s power remains and not only that but we have something more than Daniel had; we have a wonderful model in Jesus. He is the great overcomer who could say, “as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Daniel had knowledge of God’s word; he purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself. He did not pollute himself and God helped him. Young brother, younger sister, older brother and older sister, let us remember his example. God’s power has not changed. His word has not changed. The word that He gave through Jesus and His apostles is the standard for us today just as much as for christians in apostolic times. There is no change with God’s standard. And if we stand by God’s standard, by God’s word, we can prove the support of heaven. God protected Daniel, not once or twice but many times in his life here. Let Daniel’s God be our God. Let us be marked by overcoming even as he was.

*Ken Hollands*

*Extracted from an address in Glasgow, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2001*

*The next in this series will be “Sampson”*

## **THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD**

**Luke 4:16-21**

**Acts 2:36-38**

For this preaching of the gospel I have drawn upon two preachings from long ago. One is by the Son of God, preached as He opened His ministry and the second is a preaching by Peter the apostle, quite soon after the Lord Jesus had been crucified and had borne the sins of all those who have believed on Him.

Each of these preachings is quite consistent with the other but they are also rather different. I want to draw upon them to present the gospel of the grace of God to you so that you might believe it and be saved from your sins. That is what Jesus came to do. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

I know some who are here and I am confident that among them will be many very real Christians but it is not my job to see into your heart. That is God’s matter — He is the heart-knowing God. He knows you far better than you know yourself. All that a preacher can do is to present the gospel as it has reached him. So, tonight, I seek to present to you the gospel of the grace of God, so that you might, as before God, believe it for yourself and act upon it.

Now, in this first preaching by the Lord Jesus Christ we learn a great deal about the heart of God and why Jesus came into this world. It is a remarkable thing; we all know that the Lord Jesus, as born amongst men, belonged to Nazareth, a small and despised place up in the north of Israel. Just before where we started to read, it says, “He taught in their synagogues”. The Lord Jesus went to a good many places and the day came when He came to Nazareth. What would He say to those whom He knew best and who might know Him best, those in the place where He had grown up?

He was presented with a passage of Scripture; you can find it for yourself in the Old Testament. It was a message had been on record for many centuries. What did it mean? If you had heard it in the day when Isaiah the prophet was moved to write it you would have needed a great deal of faith to see that this was really God’s message. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, found the place. This is what He began to read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”. (The Lord, in that Scripture, is God Himself and the Spirit is the One who is spoken of on the very first page of Scripture as moving on the face of the deep, interested and concerned for the history of the universe and of this world in particular.) We should remember that God was in the preaching by the Lord Jesus. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me”. The Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. That is how He preached. Anyone who had eyes to see could see that His preaching was in the power of God.

Now this is what He said, “he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor”. Any gospel preaching should come to you as good news. God means it to be that. It is not just telling you your faults, though that may come into it, but it comes as good news — glad tidings. The first people for whom it is glad tidings are the poor. Now, you may have money or no money, but let me put it to you that in God’s sight, until you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are poor.

You say, 'You are using language that does not relate to my way of looking at life'. Yet all the money in the world does not account for anything in God's sight. What you have here in money and possessions you will have to leave here. In the presence of God, your money or your possessions will count for nothing.

The Lord Jesus tells a story elsewhere in this gospel which makes that perfectly plain and He ends it with the words: "Thus is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Paul, when he comes to write to the Corinthians says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by his poverty, might be enriched" (2 Corinthians 8:9). So every one of us needs to be enriched through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. It is the only thing that counts as true wealth in the sight of God.

Let us go to the next thing, "he has sent me to preach to captives deliverance". The sort of prisoners spoken about here are people who cannot get out. In the epistle to the Romans the apostle Paul speaks about people who are bondmen of sin. That is the worst kind of bondage to be in — where you cannot get away. People like to talk about free will and doing as you like, but the Bible does not speak like that. If you are not doing the will of God you might think you are doing your own will, but you are actually doing Satan's will. Satan does not have any good in mind for you. If you are not sure that "every one that practises sin is the bondman of sin" (John 8: 34) come back with me to London and take a look at a few people on the streets who are well and truly captives to sin. It only makes obvious in their cases what is actually true of us all as away from God, that we have habits and ways of going on that are wrong and that we cannot stop; we are bondmen of sin.

The Lord Jesus came to preach that people who are like that, all of them, and you and me, can be actually set free. You will know if there is anything that grips you that you cannot break free of. You do not have to tell me about it, God knows about it. You can tell Him about it and there is freedom to be had, from your burden of sin and the bondage that sin brings.

Then we read: "To the blind sight". Perhaps all of us would be ready to say, 'I do not always see things quite as I should' but this is worse than that. To be blind means that you do not see anything as it really is. That is how you are if you are away from God. If you saw things as God sees them you would want to change your way of life because you would become concerned as to what God thinks about things.

We do need not read on many verses before we find out what blindness is like:

these people in the synagogue listened to Jesus' preaching, and they wondered at the words of grace that were coming out of His mouth but they deeply resented being told a few facts about themselves and they were prepared to take Him to a nearby precipice and cast Him over! If that is not blindness I do not know what is! We hear the truth, truth that would do us good, and we resent the channel through which it comes, so we are willing to throw the whole matter over.

Next in the list is: "To send forth the crushed delivered". There are plenty of people who are crushed. Perhaps you are among them. It could even be that christians find themselves crushed from time to time. Words like, "I can't cope" are the language of crushed. There is a message here, "To send forth the crushed, delivered".

I think the Lord Jesus covered just about every one who was in that audience. I would love you to see that whatever your state of soul, whatever your need, the word of God and the gospel is wide enough to embrace you. Be assured that whatever your case is, the Lord Jesus is sufficient to meet it and resolve it and give you deliverance. The Lord Jesus rolled up the book, and then He began to preach from it saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears". He probably said rather more than Luke records because they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded out of His mouth and I think there was more than just one short sentence.

It must have been a very great privilege to hear the Lord Jesus Himself preach. We are not in that day, but it is the day when this Scripture, and other Scriptures, have been fulfilled and we can present the gospel to you as something already fulfilled. Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears. So, you see why we sometimes speak of the gospel as the gospel of the grace of God. That is one way that the Bible speaks of it. You can see from verses like this what grace means. Grace is a great reality; it has opposites like harshness, rudeness and brutality, but grace is the way that God approaches humanity. He has approached every one of us in our Lord Jesus Christ, in a spirit of grace, as we read, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

When Jesus was here He knew what was in man, and He could tell people what was in them, and show that they needed forgiveness of sins. You do not find any account of Jesus coming just to find fault with people and send them away again to go and brood over their troubles. Jesus was here to seek and to save that which was lost, to bind up what was bruised and in trouble. That should be the spirit of any gospel preacher and, indeed, of any christian. We want to see people healed and bound up.

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Now, a word on Peter's preaching recorded in the Acts. A great deal has happened between the events recorded in Luke 4 and those of Acts 2. It is not that so many years have passed but what has been accomplished in the meantime. Where I began to read is the very end of a gospel preaching by Peter. As far as we know it is his first public preaching. While his audience were Jews, the message is not just for Jews; it is just as important for you and me as it was for those who heard it then. What they needed to know was what you need to know, that, "God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ". In that short reference Peter takes them back to their responsibility for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are two sides to the cross as Peter shows here in what he says: "Jesus the Nazaraean, ... — him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain". On the one hand there is man's responsibility — Jesus had been taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain. There are plenty of wicked things that go on in the world but man's wickedness and folly can be summed up by the fact that they crucified the Lord of glory. There were crude Roman soldiers that actually nailed the Lord to the cross; there were those that connived to bring about the crucifixion and there was the crowd that stood by mocking. Every kind of person was there. In spirit, you and I were there.

Then there is another side as to how it ever came about that God allowed His Son to be crucified. God allowed Jesus to be crucified. God gave Him up to be crucified so that He might bear our sins in His body on the tree. Human wickedness and God's righteousness and holiness came together at the cross. The Lord of glory was crucified and He was made sin for us. Scripture takes up many expressions to seek in measure to convey what that meant for the Son of God. When we read, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21), we can see how human language, even led of the Holy Spirit, almost fails to express what needs to be conveyed: that the Lord Jesus, the Holy One of God, was made sin! That statement shows that it was not only a question of the sins that were committed but the very root cause of it, the state of heart of man. The Bible says, sin is lawlessness. Sin is doing what you think you like to do but is actually what Satan likes you to do. The Lord Jesus was made that very root principle of evil so that we might become "the righteousness of God in Him".

There is therefore for us no question of just drifting on as we are. Those that heard Peter preach were very quickly convicted that they could not hear a message like this and just walk away as though nothing had happened. Peter had laid the key facts of the gospel before them, they believed it ("having heard it they were pricked in heart"). It does not say they were pricked in mind. Not much is

achieved by being affected in your mind. Plenty of people have assented to the language of the gospel but their hearts have not been touched and so nothing really happens. The word is addressed to you and to your heart. We find the call much earlier in Scripture, “My son, give me thy heart” (Proverbs 23:26). That is where change really takes place.

Those who heard Peter were pricked in heart. They could not go on as they were. I wonder whether you are aware of having such a thing as a conscience; it is God’s gift. An enlightened conscience always says the same thing: that God is right and I am wrong. Conscience is a very interesting thing, even for a christian. It is a good thing to have your conscience active so that your instinct tells you that you should not do certain things, or, of course, that you should do certain things. I wonder if you have ever felt, as I have, that if I actually did not do something, which I felt God was telling me to do, I would not be able to sleep comfortably at night. Have you ever felt that way? God would not have you to just leave something that He has laid upon you. He looks for you to get on and do it. You need to do something about the message of the gospel that comes to you.

The gospel had been preached and, being believed, produced godly sorrow in those who heard. So they turned to Peter and the other apostles and said, “What shall we do, brethren?” Peter seized the opportunity and told them exactly what they needed to do — they needed to repent. Now, the message is exactly the same as it was then. So let us all make it our own. As believing the gospel, be sorry for the things that you have done that have made a distance between you and God. Our sins make the distance between us and God. Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

If you look at another preaching of his, he says, “repent and be converted”. That rules out just saying, ‘I am sorry’, then going on again just as you were before. A change is needed. The first part of Peter’s answer is to repent, but we each need to be converted, to seek help of God to lead a different kind of life.

The gospel is preached with a view to you being touched in heart so that you are truly sorry and repent. Instead of having your back to God you have your face to God, looking to Him. Peter shows that this is an individual matter; he says, “each one of you”. Do not try to say, ‘We are all coming the same way’. The emperor Constantine took that line and the whole of the Roman Empire became supposedly christian. It does not work that way at all. It has to be your transaction with the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. No other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. There are no alternative ways to God. The forgiveness of sins is preached in His name alone.

As believing in Him our sins are put out of God's sight and out of our sight as well. The most important thing for us is to know that our sins have gone out of God's sight. God says as to those that have come to Him, "their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more" (Hebrews 10:17). That is God's side. Then God gives you the right to leave your sins where He has left them, that is, at the cross of Christ. If you do not know what I mean, perhaps at some time you have had a look at Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". It is the story of a man who was carrying the mighty burden (of his sins) on his journey through life, until he reached the cross. When he reached the cross he found the burden rolled away. That is how it is:

*'At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light,  
And the burden of my heart rolled away.'*

That is how it has been for many of us, and it can be for you as well.

Now Peter brings in a promise: "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". As believing in Christ you say, 'I am sorry for what has gone before. I would like the strength and power to seek to please God now'. But you find that you are no better in yourself than ever you were. The apostle Paul describing that experience said, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell" (Romans 7:18). However earnest I am, I do not seem to improve. It is a very good thing if all of us go that way, to find out that as Christians we are no stronger in ourselves than we ever were. That is why we need the gift of the Holy Spirit. Of course, the gift of the Holy Spirit is not just to keep us in the right way; His service to us is very expansive. It is the Holy Spirit who sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts and gives us the conscious enjoyment of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The forgiveness of sins does not rest on how sure I am; it rests on how sure God is. We rest on what God has done in Christ in giving Him as a Saviour. We read, "God so loved the world ... ". We often quote that, but let us see it in its context, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal" (John 3:16). That is God's proposal and God's work. He has given His Son so that anyone who believes on Him as Saviour, as the One who was lifted up to die for us, has their sins forgiven. We rest on that.

If you want the assurance in your heart that all of this is true and that God has embraced you as one of His returning sons and that you now belong to Him, well then, the Holy Spirit is a witness to that in your heart and will confirm to you that what the Bible has to say is true.

The question now is making all this your own and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, the One who has died for us and has shed His blood for us. You will not get past the blood as the way of salvation nor will you get past it at the Lord's supper for the Lord says in that connection, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:19, 20). I feel it is important that we might be reminded of the fact that the memorial that the Lord has left us is one which presses upon us regularly that the cup "is the new covenant", in His blood.

I can only now say, as the Scripture says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). For the Lord's name's sake.

*David Burr*

*A gospel preaching, Defford, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2002*

## **FOUR THINGS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN**

### **John 17:1-26**

This prayer of the Lord, recorded for us in John 17, is one of the parts of scripture that can be read over and over again. I have read it several times in the last few days and each time I have found in it something precious and different. While recognising that in the first instance this prayer is for the apostles — the Lord was committing them into the care of the Father during the time when He was away — it comes down to our day, since the Lord says that He does not demand for them only but for all who believe through their word (v. 20). The matter I particularly want to draw your attention to in this prayer is the references to four things we have been given.

At the end of chapter 16 the Lord refers to His disciples being scattered, but in chapter 17 He prays that they all may be one. If we look at the prayer in relation to what the conditions were at the time, it gives us a sense of the Lord's feelings for His own. He has those same feelings for us now, even though He is in glory, for He is still the same. Hebrews tells us that He is "the same, yesterday, today, and to the ages to come" (Hebrews 13:8). What an encouragement this is to us.



**1. “As to all that thou hast given him, he should give them eternal life”**  
(v.2).

The first thing that is spoken of as being “given” is eternal life. This takes us back into eternal purpose. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (see Ephesians 1:4). We are chosen and given to Christ that He might impart eternal life. This is most wonderful and it is a truth that we all need to lay hold of in our christian pathway.

John speaks a good deal in his gospel about eternal life. In chapter 3 he says, “He that believes on the Son has life eternal”. That little word “on” in the verse means to believe on Him as a Person; it is not belief in a theory, or in something obscure but to believe on a Person. The blessedness of eternal life is for our enjoyment now and the first step in it is that we should believe.

Then in chapter 4 the Lord speaks of a fountain of water, springing up to eternal life. I think that involves the enjoyment of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. He is essential to the enjoyment of eternal life. Without the Holy Spirit we would not have a true link with the Lord in heaven. As believers we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we might enjoy the things that the Lord would give us.

In chapter 5 the Lord charges some with the words, “ye will not come to me that ye might have life”. That was addressed to persons who searched the Scriptures but who were not willing to come to the Lord. It is good to search the Scriptures, but the great point is that you come to Him, for there, and only there, will you find eternal life.

Again, in John 6 we read, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal”. This eating and drinking does not refer to the Lord’s Supper but to my appropriating His death, and that is the way into the enjoyment of eternal life. In our pathway here we are never to forget the way that the Lord went into death. We are to contemplate and feed our souls on it. As we do so, we increasingly realise what it means practically that we have died with Him and that our life is hid with the Christ in God (Colossians 3:3); this is to govern us in our walk here. The prayer in John 17 is not only about our place in heavenly privilege but in practical testimony here.

**2. “For the words which thou hast given me I have given them” (v.8).**

The second thing spoken of as “given” is His words, “for the words which thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them” (v.8). These words would relate to the communications that the Lord gave to His

own during His walk down here. There were wonderful communications from the Lord regarding what He would have them engaged with and we see something of these in Matthew's gospel chapters 5 to 7 and, uniquely so, in John 13 and onwards.

At the end of Matthew chapter 7 the Lord says, "Whoever therefore hears my words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock". The man who hears the Lord's words and does not do them is likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. When the rains came and the wind the house built on the sand fell. How many of us have built on sand and seen what we have built swept away?

What does it mean to build on the rock? It means that Christ Himself is the foundation stone for every christian. The man who listens and acts on the Lord's words is prudent. What about you and me? Are we prepared to listen to the Lord's words and to do them?

In John chapter 6 we find some who found the Lord's words hard. They said, "This word is hard, who can hear it?" The apostles accepted what was said, but many others went away back. What about us tonight? It is interesting that in John 17 the Lord says that the disciples had not only heard His words but had received them. The words of the Lord are given to us in the four gospels and then His words are given through His servants in the Epistles. Do we receive them? They are there for the believer to feed on and absorb into our spiritual being. The passage goes on: "they... have known truly that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou sentest me". The apostles had it firmly fixed in their hearts that the Father had sent the Son.

The Lord did not demand concerning the world – He was about to go out of the world. He was concerned for His own. Is He less concerned now? Not in the least! It is very affecting to remember, that despite all the pressure that lay upon the Saviour as He was about to go to the cross, He was praying in relation to the continuation of things here, that His own might be preserved from what is in the world. That is still His concern today; He does not change.

### **3. "I have given them thy word" (v. 14).**

The next thing is: "I have given them thy word", then the Lord adds "and the world has hated them". I think that you find those in the enjoyment of the Father's word in the early Acts. That is where you see particularly the animosity of the world coming out. Think of Stephen; he had been given the word. It was seen in the way he spoke and how he acted. What happened? The world hated

him. There was hatred for Peter and Paul and for others. James was slain early on because of that hatred. That is just as true today. If you witness to the Lord in the street preaching or in your place of work, what sort of reception do you get? You often find that such witness brings animosity but we are called to be lights in the world. It is not easy. Spiritual men like J. N. Darby and C. A. Coates said that they found it difficult to testify to the name of the Lord. How about us? It is not easy, but once you have done it there is a triumph. I would encourage all of us to testify to the name of the Saviour. It will save you from an awful lot in this world if it is known that you are a believer. As soon as you speak of Christ, separation from the world will be an easy matter for they will not want you. As we read here: “the world has hated them” and it has not changed.

#### **4. “The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them” (v. 22)**

The last thing I wanted to refer to is “the glory thou hast given me, I have given them”. What is this glory? It is the glory of sonship! That is very precious. Is it precious to you? It is a glory given to all His own. You will notice what it says: “I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word; that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”. It comes right down to today and puts us in the sphere of privilege.

The prayer begins with privilege – with eternal life, and then you have the “words” and the “word”, two things that relate to the testimony here. Finally, you have this sphere of sonship into which we are brought. What dignity it gives. We each are sons of the heavenly Father. Do we walk accordingly and do we praise as those in the joy of the Father’s love? We are sons of God by adoption, but the glory that the Lord puts on you and me is that of sonship. That was what was in His mind, that we should be clothed with the glory of sonship. May we know what it is in the service of praise to shine out as having this glory.

*Andrew Spiers*

*Extracted from an address at Worthing, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2004.*

## “THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM”

O Glorious Lord! we bless Thee  
As in Thy name we meet;  
Supreme, our hearts confess Thee  
Low bending at Thy feet.

To Thee we raise our voices,  
Attuned by heavenly grace,  
And Thine own heart rejoices  
To give us sonship's place.

There love's divinest treasures  
Meet our adoring gaze,  
And everlasting pleasures  
Before Thy Father's face.

E'en now Thy grace has brought us  
To share that portion bright;  
Thy wondrous love has taught us  
To joy in heavenly light.

O grace that passes telling!  
O love, beyond compare,  
That brings us to its dwelling  
Its deepest joys to share.

We hail the day that's nearing  
When Thou shalt take Thy throne,  
The crown of glory wearing,  
And earth Thy rights shall own.

*Charles Leflaive, 1914*

## MEDITATION

O hour more blest than all beside,  
When Thee in death we call to mind;  
When round us flows the unfathomed tide  
Of love, which there did outlet find.

Set free from earth and all its care,  
We meditate on Thee, O Lord,  
In Thee supremely blest, e'en prayer  
Is silent: be Thy name adored.

Declarer of the Father's name,  
Thou lead'st the praises of Thine own;  
Thou blessed Son, who art "the Same",  
As Man came down to make Him known.

Thus led by Thee we enter in,  
The sanctuary's our present place;  
Our portion there, within the veil,  
We joy before the Father's face.

*Charles Leflaive, 1914*

## THE POTTER

**"Be still and know that I am God"** (Psalm 46:10)

Stay still in the hand of the Potter,  
Lie low neath His wonderful touch,  
He shapeth and mouldeth in mercy  
The clay, that He loveth so much;  
Surrender yourself to His working,  
The curve and the hollow He wills,  
Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure;  
For the vessel He fashions, He fills!

*Beatrice Cleland*  
(Contributed by *Hilda M. Gilpin*)

## **AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM GHANA**

I have some good news for you. Alex Antwi, a well-known drunkard, who passed away on the evening of 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005, accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour before he died.

I called on Mr Antwi a few days before he died and I was told that he was suffering from a kidney disease. As he was pale and very restless I thought that I should leave quickly; however he told me that he was dying and did not know what would happen to him after death. He asked me to tell him if Christ would accept someone who had wasted forty-eight years drinking alcohol. I read chapter three of the gospel of John to him. At the end of my visit he smiled and said, "I can now face death happily and courageously as the blood of Jesus Christ was shed on Calvary for me".

On 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2005 I was informed that Alex had passed away peacefully on the evening of the previous day and left a message for me that he would meet me on the resurrection day.

George Adu

## **AN OLD FAMILY BIBLE STILL DOING ITS WORK!**

A "new-ager" called John often passed the Chapter Two Christian Bookshop in Plumstead on his way home from the pub. His life was one of immorality, drug abuse, and attendance at rock festivals. He often slept rough and when he was not doing this he lived in squats with others with similar lives. One night on his way back to the squat his attention was caught by the Victorian family Bible that is always on display in the Chapter Two shop window. It was open at John's gospel and, because his name was John, he thought that perhaps God had something to say to him. He read the opened page and later came into the shop to ask for the page to be turned over so that he could go on reading!

One day those in the shop rejoiced to receive a letter from John telling them how he had been saved and had quit the new age movement and was going on with the Lord. For someone who has no Christian background such a change is enormous but John has continued in the faith, is serving the Lord and his life is a complete contrast to what it was before. No doubt he gives thanks for that Bible through which he first became aware that God really did have something to say to him!

## A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I married at eighteen and I had a very stormy marriage. I had a drinking problem and was drunk most nights. Eventually I lost my driving licence, my job and my wife! After a few years I met Rosemary and we got married. I knew she was a Christian and I wanted to start again. We had two children, Sean and Lois, and for a time things were better but I soon went back to my old ways and I lost my driving licence again.

By this time both Sean and Lois were also Christians and Rosemary started going to a local church. Later Sean's fiancée came to live with us – she also was a Christian and I began to feel totally left out. It was not only that Christians surrounded me but that they had a happiness that I longed for.

Wherever I went I seemed to be given tracts about Jesus. Rosemary told me that God was calling me. I wanted to become a Christian but I found it hard to understand how. One day a Christian came to see me and asked me how much I wanted to be a Christian. I told him I really wanted to because I seemed to be in danger of losing my family. He showed me a Scripture in Deuteronomy, “But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart...” (Deuteronomy 4:29).

I did seek Jesus and I found Him. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2000 I gave my life to Jesus Christ. Since then my life has got better and my relationship with my family is better. My old ingrained habits have gone. I now have friends who can help me, but my greatest friend is Jesus and I speak to Him every day. I now have a purpose in my life, like the man we read of in John's gospel who said. ‘I was blind before, but now I can see’.

*John McGrath*

### **Editorial Note**

Following publication in issue No 68 of an article about the conscientious objectors held in Richmond Castle during the first World War, two readers of “Living Water” have written to tell of their own father's experiences. He was a local preacher at the Wath-on-Dearne Reform Wesleyan Chapel. This was one of a ‘circuit’ of such chapels in the area. In 1916 he was arrested as a conscientious objector and taken to Pontefract Barracks where he was sentenced to “hard labour” at Wormwood Scrubs prison in London. On his journey to London by train another passenger scornfully gave him a white feather.

One of the best memories of his period in Wormwood Scrubs was of the christians there joining in singing, “All Hail the power of Jesus' name”. Later, he was sent to Dartmoor Prison, at that time an open prison, where a number of christian

conscientious objectors were held. Here, along with others, he took part in a baptism in a stream out on the Moor.

*I thought that this account would be of interest to other readers of this magazine.*  
Ed.

## THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD WHEREIN YE STAND

**“...I have written to you briefly; exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (1 Peter 5:12).**

God is made known to us, as the “God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10), and the position in which we are set as Christians is that of “tasting that the Lord is gracious”. How hard it is for us to believe this, that the Lord is gracious. The natural feeling of our hearts is, “I know that thou art an austere man”; there is a want in all of us naturally of the understanding of the grace of God.

There is sometimes the thought that grace implies God’s passing over sin, but that is not the case. Grace shows that sin is a horribly bad thing, which God cannot tolerate. Were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways, and mend himself so as to be able to stand before God, there would be no need of grace. The very fact of the Lord being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless, and nothing but free grace will meet his need.

We must learn what God is towards us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be, and that is, “the God of all grace”. The moment I understand that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because the Lord knew the full extent of my sin, and what its hatefulfulness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin. The Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me, is the same Lord I have to do with every day of my life, and all His dealings with me are on the same principles of grace. The great secret of growth is, looking up to the Lord as gracious. How precious, how strengthening it is to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love towards me as when He died on the cross for me.

This is a truth that should affect us in the most common everyday circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil in myself, which I find difficult to overcome; let me bring it to Jesus as my friend, and virtue goes out of Him for my need. Faith should be ever thus active against temptations. My own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord being gracious. The natural man in us always disbelieves Christ as the



only source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion, the natural heart says, 'I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ', but He is gracious; and knowing this, the way is to return to Him at once, just as we are, and then confess our sin and weakness to Him. It is only in Him and from Him that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves before Him to be just what we are, we will find that He will show us nothing but grace.

It is Jesus who gives abiding rest to our souls, and not what our thoughts of ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which is in ourselves as its ground of rest; it receives, loves and apprehends what God has revealed, and what are God's thoughts about Jesus, in whom is His rest. As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around; and this too will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself that is not in Him is sin, but then it is not thinking of my own sins, and my own vileness, and being occupied with them that will humble me, but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellency in Him. It is well to be done with ourselves, and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves, we are entitled to forget our sins, we are entitled to forget all but Jesus.

There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of grace, to continue practically conscious that we are not under law but under grace; it is by grace that the heart is "established" (see Hebrews 13:9), but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend than the fullness of grace, that "grace of God wherein ye stand", and to walk in the power and consciousness of it. It is only in the presence of God that we can know it, and there it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God, there will always be certain workings of our own thoughts within us, and our own thoughts can never reach up to the thoughts of God about us, to the "grace of God". Having simple thoughts of grace is the true source of our strength as christians; and the abiding in the sense of grace, in the presence of God, is the secret of all holiness, peace, and quietness of spirit.

The "grace of God" is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that if we get for a moment away from God, we cannot have the true consciousness of it, we have no strength to apprehend it. If we attempt to know it away from Him, we shall only turn it to licentiousness. If we look at the simple fact of what grace is, it has no limit, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is love. Neither our joy nor our peace

is dependant on what we are to God, but on what He is to us, and this is grace. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins — nay, than all the sins in the world are to us; and yet with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be toward us is love.

Grace has reference to what God is, and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the “grace of God”. At the same time we must remember that the object and effect of grace is to bring our souls into communion with God — to sanctify us, by bringing the soul to know God, and to love Him; therefore the knowledge of grace is the true source of sanctification.

The triumph of grace is seen in this, that when man’s enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God’s love had brought in salvation by that very act. He came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the place of the fullest development of man’s sin, faith sees the fullest development of God’s grace. I have got away from grace if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God’s love. I shall then be saying, ‘I am unhappy because I am not what I should like to be’: that is not the question. The real question is, whether Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are — of what we find in ourselves, has any other effect than to increase our adoration, of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace.

It is better to be thinking of what God is than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, is really pride, a want of the thorough consciousness that we are good for nothing. Till we see this we never look quite away from self to God. In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all. I am too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is, to forget myself and to look to God, who is indeed worth all my thoughts.

Let us then think about Him who thought about us with thoughts of good and not evil, long before we had thoughts of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

*J. N. Darby*

## **NUMBERS**

In the book of Numbers our place “in the wilderness” is considered, as the opening verses show. In the book of Leviticus the Lord spoke “out of the tabernacle of the congregation”; His dwelling-place and approach to God is the subject. Here, in Numbers, the place “in the wilderness” is drawn attention to.

Numbers begins with the “second year” of Israel’s wilderness journey, which is typical of a new period of our spiritual history. Our first year, so to speak, is mainly occupied in learning the grace of God and how abundantly He has in every way provided for us with regard to our wilderness pathway. Our “Elims” of refreshment, the manna, the water from the rock, all speak of the rich supplies of grace. In telling us His special love to us in the new covenant God binds our hearts to Himself in bonds of precious relationship. He is our God and with delight we prepare Him an habitation. In the “second year” we are numbered in connection with God’s interests here. I wonder if each of us has reached this period in his soul history.

Chapters 1 to 10 of Numbers give us the wondrous details relating to the tabernacle of the testimony. We are to regard ourselves as responsible to be true to God’s testimony in this world, first individually and then as put together in different local christian companies. Our service, too, is in connection with the testimony — Christ’s interests, wherever they are. On the day the tabernacle was set up the “cloud” rested upon it, and from that moment the “tent of the testimony” was to determine the movements of the children of Israel. (See Numbers 11:15, etc.)

From chapter 11 to 20 we have a series of tests and failures by the people, which are full of instruction. The complaint of the people in connection with the movement in the wilderness, the “lusting “ (in chapter 11), the speaking against Moses (in chapter 12), despising the promised land (in chapter 13), and the rebellion of chapter 16 each has a voice to us. And on the other side we have God’s faithfulness shown in Aaron’s rod that budded, the water of purification and the water from the rock.

In the wilderness we learn the awful character of our hearts; the tests expose us. But there is provision for our needs. Our hearts need constant and repeated purification by the application of the death of Jesus. It is cleansing by water here, not by blood. It is not a question of our sins being put away by the work of Christ, but the bringing to mind of that fact and of much else that Jesus’ death accomplished. Then there is the grace of the Lord Jesus as our Priest, who refreshes our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. Hebrews 4:12-16 answers to these two types. At the end of this section Aaron dies and after chapter 20 we hear little of the tabernacle.

The brazen serpent comes before us in chapter 21, which is a type of Christ on the cross. Not now as bearing our sins and sheltering us from judgment, nor even as delivering us from the power of the world; but of Christ “made sin” and of God thus condemning sin. The New Testament equivalent is found in Romans 8:3 and John 3:14. It is interesting to note that in both Romans 8 and John 3 this

presentation of the death of Christ is followed by a reference to the Spirit as the power of life. (See Romans 8:4; John 4) This answers to the springing well of Numbers 21:16.

Here they pitch towards the “sun rising.” It speaks to us of how Christ is to be before us and not our failing selves. From this point, generally speaking, there is steady progress.

Balaam’s prophecies show how triumphantly God has brought His people through in spite of all their failure. They are a separate people, marked off from all others (chapter 23:7-10) — justified; for all that was worthy of condemnation had been condemned in the serpent of brass (verses 19-24); they are beautified and a blessing (chapter 24:3-9); and their path and end are marked by victory (verses 15-24). What a people — separate, justified, beautified and victorious. Yes, we are “more than conquerors” through Him that loved us! (Romans 8:37).

The people are renumbered now, for all who came out of Egypt had perished in the wilderness, Joshua and Caleb excepted. Paul writes, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” (Galatians 2:20) What deep joy and relief to our hearts to know this. To see that all that I am as a sinner is removed in the death of Jesus and then through the experiences of the wilderness pathway I learn to judge what I am after the flesh so that our existence before God is now what is of Christ morally. No wonder God numbers the people again!

There were other tests after this; for Satan our enemy will make every effort to keep us out of our real inheritance. The subtle wiles of Moab, which typify worldly associations, probably through means of those who are related to us naturally, lead us to unholy paths. How very separate we must be! Then the choice of the two and a half tribes to remain the wilderness side of Jordan suggests the way that after having judged our unfaithfulness, it may be we may settle down in our natural joys of family life, etc., and not going on to what is truly our portion.

What a comfort it is that God notes all our journeyings. (Chapter 33) What a history and journey that of the church will be! The end is the inheritance! (Chapters 34 - 36)

‘Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh  
That ends our pilgrim story  
In Thine eternal glory!’

*Malcolm Biggs*

*The next issue, God willing, will contain the final article in this series on “Deuteronomy”.*