

102

Living Water

'Living Water' is published by the Stone Publishing Trust (Registered Charity 1034689)

'The Eagles', Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BU

If you know of any one who might be interested in receiving this magazine, please pass their name and address to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copies of the next few issues will be sent to them free of charge.

Correspondents in the UK are welcome to use the Freepost address:–

Stone Publishing Trust,
FREEPOST TN3448,
Staplehurst,
TONBRIDGE, Kent, TN12 0BR

Quotations from the Bible in 'Living Water' are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

The permission of the Editor should be obtained before reproducing material contained in this magazine. It is the policy of the Trustees to encourage the use of articles for the work of the Lord wherever this is possible so long as it does not infringe the rights of others.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended and for this the Editor takes full responsibility.

Editor: Mark Lemon

Cover Picture — Glasshouse, RHS garden, Wisley.

Printed by Lakeside Printing, London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1DL, UK

Living Water — Issue No 102

November – December 2010

Recent Ministry

- QUESTIONS FROM GOD TO US Piero Casavecchia 1
An address at Aberdeen, 8th August 2009
- LEARNING FROM JACOB'S HISTORY – Part 1 Gordon Sinclair 9
An address at St. Anne's, 15th May 2010

Reprint

- THE FATHER'S LOVE Raymond Stopforth 15
Continuing the series of reprints from the early issues of the magazine, this article is reprinted from "Living Water" No 2, published 17 years ago, and was selected by Gavin Simpson.

Poetry Selection

- LOVE'S SWEET STORY Mary Jane Bucknell 16
- THE PASCHAL LAMB Somerset Maxwell 17

Testimony Section

- MARTYRS OF THE MARIAN PERSECUTION —
- A BOLD CONFESSION LEADING TO A MARTYR'S CROWN 17
The story of Richard Woodman
Concluding the series of those persecuted 455 years ago

A voice from the past

- THE BLESSEDNESS OF
BEING WITH CHRIST – Part 1 C. A. Coates 20
The thief on the cross
Extracted from "Concerning them which are asleep"

A word for today

- GOD AS CREATOR AND REDEEMER Eric McPhail 22
Extract from an address at Defford, 24 April 2010

Recent Ministry

QUESTIONS FROM GOD TO US

I want to speak about some of the questions that God has addressed to us, so that our hearts may be stirred and challenged as to how we have answered such questions. Later, as we come to the New Testament, we will see how the disciples answered some of the questions that the Lord Jesus put to them.

"And Jehovah Elohim called to Man, and said to him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9).

We know very well that this question was asked in the garden of Eden. That garden had been a place of blessing but because Adam and Eve had disobeyed God it had become to them a place of fear where it was difficult for them to live. God asks this question straight to man's heart, "Where art thou?"

Suppose we were asked a question like this tonight: 'What have you done with the blessing that was put before you? Why has the fall come in? Why have difficulties arisen and why have you fled from My presence?' All these matters lay behind God's question to Adam. Imagine how much God must have felt the fall of man. In the Garden before the fall, the scene could not have been better; everything was perfect, yet man had forfeited his right to the blessing by disobedience, so God asked him this question. If we start with this question it reveals where we are with God and to answer the question we need to consider the cross of Jesus. I trust that each one may feel in his or her own soul the reality of being in relationship with a righteous God through trusting in the work of the Lord Jesus. In asking Adam the question, God only had blessing in mind and His purpose was to carry on with that blessing despite the fall. Indeed the fall of man allowed those true purposes of God to come to light, so that all would be secured for God's glory through Christ Himself. Whether we are older and more experienced, or younger and need experience with the Lord, it is good to ask ourselves where we are before God. What have we been doing; are we trying to hide from His presence? Adam had to think quickly and find an answer for God but it was not the right answer. His answer could not satisfy the question.

“And Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; and I will demand of thee, and inform thou me. Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who set the measures thereof—if thou knowest? or who stretched a line upon it? Whereupon were the foundations thereof sunken? or who laid its corner-stone,” (Job 38:1-6)

Chapters 38 and 40 of Job are very interesting. I commend the reading of them. God is asking Job a few questions and He starts with this: "Where wast thou when I founded the earth?" When we start with God we have to think of our past history. Each of us has a past history, even if we are quite young, for we have been under the influence of our sinful nature. So in our past history there is sin. Job had to think of what had gone before.

God is very gracious to him. He points out a few things that Job had said in his complaint. We may feel some sympathy for Job because he was suffering very severely. Yet God in His grace points out what Job had said and says, "Where wast thou when I founded the earth?" The foundation of the earth takes us back to God's purposes and counsels for they were to be worked out through the creation and all that followed. Job had to stand before God and think hard about all these questions that God asked him. This stream of questions that God asks is enough to overwhelm our human minds.

Where were we when God created the earth? I was engaged for my work in an examination board lately, and some of the pupils were questioned on science and I was just amazed, listening to some of them saying —repeating, of course, what they had been taught — that the start of the earth had happened with a Big Bang. I was amazed how these pupils just drank in what was presented to them, to the point that even my colleagues had to say to the pupils, 'Remember, this is only a theory'. It is God who laid the foundation of the earth. It is He who created the heavens and the earth. Let us forget all imaginative theories. It is what God has done and what God has done is enough for our knowledge.

At the end of all these questions Job had learnt the lesson. He said

to God, “Who is he that obscureth counsel without knowledge?” (Job 42:3). This is the lesson that Job had learnt. Then he said a very simple thing, that he had spoken and he would not speak again. He needed God to speak to him, he needed instruction from Him. When we are before God we realise our past history and how much need we have of His grace, of His love and the truth that comes from Him in order to remove what has gone before in our lives. God has prepared His purposes for us. They were hid there before we even were born. God had everything in His own hands in order to carry out and open up the plan of grace for us.

* * * * *

“And Jesus answering says to him, What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?” (Mark 10:51)

When we realise that we are sinners and how we have spoken without knowledge, as Job had experienced, we realise that we need God to intervene on our behalf. The intervention of God is available to us through the Lord Jesus. We have here, in this passage from the gospel, the Lord actually present on earth, and here was a man who needed to be healed and he needed to ask the Lord for healing. Have you asked? Have you asked the Lord what you want Him to do for you? Have you asked Him to intervene on your behalf? This man had a great impression of the power of the Lord but the Lord wanted him to be engaged personally with Himself in order that the healing might come in. That is why he had to ask.

As parents we wish all the best for our children, but particularly we wish them to know the Lord Jesus as their own personal Saviour. Have you come to Him? Have you asked Him to meet your need as a sinner? He is available to you. He is not physically here tonight, but He is available to meet the need of your heart — just tell Him what you want Him to do for you.

Let the questions of God search your heart; ‘Where are you?’ and, ‘Where were you when I did what I did?’ Now the Lord Jesus is asking you what intervention you require of Him? I did not read the rest of the passage because I was struck by the impression of how the Lord graciously asked this man what he wanted — what could be done for him? Imagine the Lord asking this. Of course, the Lord knew what this man wanted to be done. The Lord is God, He knows

everything, He knows the question that is in your heart but you have to ask it because He wants you to come into a living relationship with Himself. That is the important point.

Jesus says, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?" and the man answers simply, "Rabboni, that I may see". What do you want to see? I think the answer is that you want the word of God performed in your heart. He is going to save you from your sins. He is going to introduce you to eternal life, into everlasting blessing. This is what the Lord does. But are we going to ask Him to do this for us?

* * * * *

"And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus says to them, Do ye believe that I am able to do this?"
(Matthew 9:28)

When we ask the Lord for healing — I am not speaking of physical illness but of our need to tell the Lord of our need of salvation— when we do this we have to come to the point that not only is the Lord Jesus our Saviour but that He is God. Do you really believe that He is able to do what He says? Do you apprehend His power as God? He has power in creation; He has power over all things. He is our Lord, our Saviour, and our God. It is very important to come to this knowledge of the Lord as our God. It is so important because He does everything for us and we have to understand what it is to depend on Him for all things.

The Lord is able to do everything but we have to believe that. That is the responsible side on our part. We each have to ask Him for salvation and to believe that He can really provide it. It is wonderful in our experience to know the power of the Lord working in our souls. Some are older here and they could teach us a lot from their pathway, the experiences they have had with the Lord — His grace and the working of His divine power. It has entered into their souls. May this be the experience of us all, for we are to develop in our personal links with Him.

All these questions are addressed to persons in an individual way in order that each one may feel their link with the blessed Lord. So in this passage this man's answer was very quick and simple. He just says, "Yea, Lord" and then the Lord acted. The Lord's answer and the Lord's action are very prompt. He only needs to feel that your

heart is linked to His own and that you adore Him in a personal way.

* * * * *

“He says to them, But ye, who do ye say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

I thought of this question because while it is very good to know the Lord as our Saviour, as the One who can bring blessing and resolve our difficulties, it is also important to be in relation to Him and understand who He is in order to praise Him. This was a direct question from the Lord to the hearts of the twelve disciples. They had been with the Lord for several years, He was there amongst them, they had the evidences of His miracles, of His power, His grace, and His long-suffering and the Lord asked them: "Who do ye say that I am?"

Do you have an impression of who the Lord is? Do you have an impression of His power and the way in which He was related to His disciples as being the source of all divine communications? There are blessed revelations that come out of this question. The point is whether we have come to the understanding of His Person? I am not suggesting that we can get hold of all that the Lord is, I am just saying that we should be concerned to relate to Him in such a way that we are near enough to understand something of His power and of the revelation of God in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

So the question is straight to our hearts. It is a question that can only be answered in the light of our experiences with the Lord Jesus. We cannot answer such a question at the start of our Christian pathway. The disciples were not asked this question until they had been with the Lord long enough to have learned that there was with Him that which was in no other Man.

Some of the crowd around had various impressions of the Lord: some thought of Him as one of the old prophets but the point here was to see whether the disciples had understood who the Lord was as the image of the invisible God. What a blessed revelation comes into our hearts when we can each make Peter's answer our own.

Let us be encouraged! This particular question is to lead to our being linked to a living Lord. It is not a matter of Him on the cross or in the sepulchre: it is the Christ of God living in the company of His disciples. He was there available for them; He was there to

convey to them all the power that was towards them and is available to us. Indeed, the Lord has come so near that we can really relate to Him.

* * * * *

“... ye shall say to the master of the house, The Teacher says to thee, Where is the guest-chamber where I may eat the passover with my disciples?” (Luke 22:11)

This question of the Lord is not a direct one to the person to whom it was asked but it passed through the disciples. It is a question that arises once we know the Lord and really desire to answer to Him. This is very much a question to our hearts: ‘Where is the chamber where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’ We know well that it was not only a matter of the Passover. The Passover was celebrated but the Lord introduced, in His grace, on that occasion the remembrance of Himself, a remembrance that we seek to carry on week after week in the Lord’s Supper.

Now, the Passover leads to the Lord’s Supper. The Passover was eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs — which speak to us of self-judgment, with regard to the things of the flesh, such as pride and self-importance that so easily mark us. The Passover was to promote self-judgment. It was not of course a challenge for the Lord, but it was for the disciples. They were to ask this question: “Where is the guest-chamber where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” Do you know where the place is where you can respond to the Lord? I am not referring to a special company or to a particular room. I am asking if you have got such a link with the Lord that you have found a place where you can respond to the Lord. Is that a question that has been put into your heart? The Lord Jesus put it in the hearts of His disciples when He sent them into the city. Are you ready to be sent to ask this question? It is very important to be ready to respond to a living Lord who is so worthy of a response from us.

Consider what a moral distance there is between this scene and the Garden of Eden; Adam, fallen through disobedience, and these disciples at the table with the Lord Jesus to keep the Passover and then to be introduced into the ordinance which was going to be carried on through the centuries in the remembrance of Him. Have

you found your place with the Lord Jesus? Is He so dear to your heart that you are going to answer to Him for the satisfaction of His heart?

So it is a question of what is in our hearts through the week in order that we come to the Lord's Supper morally suited to remember Him and answer to Him. This is a question for our hearts today; oh that we may answer it and respond for the glory of the Lord.

The man to whom the question was addressed was ready. He did not have a moment of doubt. He showed them the room, furnished and ready. The challenge for us is that we may be ready, suited in every way to be able to respond to the Lord. The Holy Spirit will help us.

He will take even the smallest impression of Christ and expand it for the Lord's satisfaction. May we be really encouraged in order that we may be ready, if the Lord leaves us, to answer to Him tomorrow morning with fulness of praise from our hearts.

* * * * *

Now, finally, this is not a question but a quotation from John's first epistle, because I believe the beloved apostle's impressions of Christ will help us believers to answer the questions that we have considered. Where else can we find help if not in the Lord?

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life; (and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us:) that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:1-4)

The Word (the Lord Jesus) is expressed here in a living way; as you read these verses you feel that John was expressing what was of the Word, not as something written on paper but as something that existed in his heart, something that he had felt. He says "heard", "seen", "handled"; it was real to him. The only way to find the answer to the questions that we have considered is to have the

Word living in our hearts. Let this ministry of John help us at this particular moment. We feel the need of the Spirit's help in order to be engaged with the Lord Jesus in a living way. It is not a matter of finding a special place or a special company, it is a matter of going to the Lord and finding the answer to the questions that God and the Lord Jesus Himself would raise with us. John speaks from the experience that he himself had as being a disciple who knew the Lord's presence in a very real way.

I wish I could speak like this. I wish I could preach in such a way. These words by John are so real they convey the power that was held in that Word. He says, "we have heard". This is a particular privilege of John. He had heard it from the Lord and, blessed be the Lord, what John had heard has been written down in order that we may have it. Think of the grace of God through the ages, even in the dark ages, to have kept the word for us. We have it in our hands. It is wonderful to be able to know what the disciples heard and what they saw with their own eyes.

John and Peter were both impressed as having been eye witnesses. Imagine John being faced with the questions we have read; do you think he would have had any doubt how to answer them? He had been lying on the bosom of Jesus. Then about his past history, he knew that he had been called as a disciple and he had been with the Lord ever since. John could have answered all the questions we have considered in relation to his personal experience with the Lord. Then he says, "that which we have contemplated". It was not only that he had "seen", "heard" and "listened", but also what he had "contemplated". That means that he had appreciated and meditated on the things of the Lord. Peter says something similar when he writes: "if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:3). Peter and John in this way reveal the living link they had with the Lord. We have to find the answer too through our link and experience with the Lord and know who He is. Through our link with Him we can know things which we would not know otherwise. John continues, "our hands handled". He had been engaged and committed in such a way that it left a living impression in his heart, which he was able to convey. He says, "we report to you". How thankful we are to have this report. He explains that eternal life has been manifested and, there again, he insists that, "we have seen,

and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us". What a blessing this is. Here was the expression of something that was completely new, eternal life manifested in the Lord Jesus. So we as linked to a living Lord can draw from Him such impressions as John conveys here to us.

John adds, "which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us". I want to close on this note of fellowship because it is important to understand that once we have resolved our situation with God in a new and living way then we are to have fellowship. Fellowship is one with the other. It is also, as stated here, with the Lord Jesus and with the Father, but it is one with the other. Are we attracted by the Lord in such a way, each one of us, that we may find that the next brother or sister is attracted to the Lord and the next one as well, and the next one as well, so that we can have fellowship together in a practical way? This is to be real in our hearts.

It was real to John. We read here, "that ye also may have fellowship with us" and then he points out "our fellowship is indeed with the Father". Can we say that? It is a sobering matter. Let us remember that we have a link with the Lord and that link involves others because the Lord has worked for many. There are, of course, matters that come in that may limit the practical expression of fellowship, but the link of fellowship with other persons and with the Father is something that is to bring encouragement to our hearts.

May these simple impressions be of encouragement to us. The questions we have considered highlight points to reach in the history of our souls. May the reality of John's testimony here come into our hearts and cause a response to divine Persons.

Piero Casavecchia,

An address at Aberdeen, 8 August 2009

LEARNING FROM JACOB'S HISTORY — PART 1

I have read what might be described as landmarks in Jacob's history — the times in his life when he particularly had to do with God. In the epistle to Philippians, we read, "he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (Philippians

1:6), and we see the principle of that worked out in the life of Jacob. We can learn from Jacob's history. It was a history that had a good deal of failure in it; we know something of that in our own histories but God is faithful and how thankful we are for that. So what we see in Jacob's history is to be for our encouragement.

Landmark 1 — Coming to the House of God (Genesis 28:10-22)

In chapter 28 Jacob sets out for Padan-Aram. His history up to this point was marked by deception and he had to suffer as a result of that. Yet God had in mind to bless Jacob. So we can say with certainty that God has blessing in mind for each one of us here today.

Esau, Jacob's brother, was a profane man (see Hebrews 12:16). God pronounces very definitely on their histories. He says, "I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau" (Romans 9:13). The profane line, the line of Esau who despised his birthright, was hated of God, but there was that which was lovable in Jacob. There is what is lovable in every believer and God works to bring that into increased expression.

Well, we see Jacob starting out on this journey: "And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went towards Haran. And he lighted on a certain place, and lodged there, because the sun had set". These are difficult circumstances for Jacob; he had to leave home because of his deception and the sun has set and Jacob is requiring rest. So "he took one of the stones of the place, and made it his pillow, and lay down in that place". Little did he know that God was going to come into his dream that night. Think of God looking on this young man, seeing the uncongenial circumstances in which he lies down to rest. Sometimes it is these kinds of circumstances that give God the opportunity to speak to us. It was when Jacob was asleep, when his will was not working, that God intervenes to speak to him.

It is a remarkable dream Jacob has. He sees a ladder set up from earth to heaven and "angels of God ascended and descended upon it. And behold, Jehovah stood above it". Think of that, in the sense of the encouragement it would give to him. Yet too, he was terrified by it for he was not in accord with God's mind at that point. In our histories we know what that is. The fear of God was upon Jacob,

**Think of the
commitment
that God was
making to
Jacob**

yet God was showing His interest in him. God loves to show His interest in us and that is the point I want to stress from this Scripture.

God's interest is evident, for we read, "behold, Jehovah stood above it. And he said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land on which thou liest, to thee will I give it". Think of the commitment that God was making to Jacob. God says,

"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all the places to which thou goest..." We can bring this forward to the New Testament, for the Lord says at the end of the gospel, "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We can be assured that the Lord will be with us, in whatever circumstance; He will support us until the completion of the age.

"...I will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done what I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awoke from his sleep, and said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had made his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it."

It is interesting that he takes his pillow and sets it up as a pillar — it becomes a visible testimony that he had had to do with God. What God gives us to rest upon is to become a visible testimony. Is each one of us here resting on the finished work of Christ and does it shine as a testimony to others? Each one of us here as believers has had to do with God and we need to raise a pillar in that sense, have a visible testimony of what we are resting on.

Jacob pours oil on the pillar. Oil speaks to us of the Holy Spirit. If there is going to be anything for God in our service it must be by the Spirit of God. "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

Then we see the first evidence of spiritual intelligence with Jacob in that he changes the name of the place to Bethel — the house of

God. The “name of that city was Luz at the first” but Jacob is calling it according to his experience with God. It is wonderful to arrive at a landmark in our souls as having had to do with God in a distinctive way.

Jacob makes a vow: “If God will be with me, and keep me... and will give me bread to eat... and I come again to my father’s house in peace — then shall Jehovah be my God”. It was full of conditions but it was a commitment. We are nothing as Christians if we do not commit ourselves. The remembrance of the Lord Jesus is a commitment. Each time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper we are committing ourselves afresh during the time of His absence to be here for Him and to hold His interests. The Lord Himself was here totally committed to God's will.

So as we remember Him in the breaking of bread we are committed to what God would have in mind for us to do in the places in which we are set.

This is Jacob’s commitment: “And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou wilt give me I will without fail give the tenth to thee.” That is Jacob’s first landmark.

Landmark 2 — Wrestling with God (Genesis 32:1-2, 9-12, 24-32)

Chapter 32 shows us Jacob moving according to the divine mind and he is getting support in it. The angels of God meet him. Think of the encouragement that God is giving to Jacob now in his return journey. We can count upon God's support in bringing us back to the divine standard and to the place where God had appeared to us at the first.

When Jacob saw the angels he said, “This is the camp of God. And he called the name of that place Mahanaim”. Jacob is showing his ability to name things according to God. First of all he was able to rename Luz as Bethel and now he is naming this place, Mahanaim: two camps. Two camps of angels. Think of the power that was available in these angels. We know what one angel can do; 185,000 were destroyed in one day in Hezekiah’s reign by one angel (2 Kings 19:35). What power is available to Jacob!

We should take comfort in the power that is available to us as believers: “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). The Holy Spirit is resident in the believer; He is a

greater power than is in the entire world around us today. We have that support: the Holy Spirit indwells in view of our moving in the pathway of God's will.

Then we find Jacob praying. It is the prayer of a humble man. We read elsewhere, "To this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). Jacob says, "I am too small for all the loving-kindness and all the faithfulness that thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two troops". Then he says, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me". In these circumstances Jacob casts himself on God: "And thou saidst, I will certainly deal well with thee, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." He is reminding God of His faithful promise to him. It is fine, that we can remind God of His faithful promise to us. "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5). How wonderful to have a God on whom we can rely.

God is always true to His promises: "in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20). "Amen" means that He is committed, unmovable, and unshakeable. The promises of God in Christ are not to be changed in any way: God is true to all that He has committed Himself to.

We find then in verse 24 that "Jacob remained alone; and a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn. And when he saw that he did not prevail ..." Think of this, that God is appearing now as a man and Jacob has to do with Him in close quarters. Right through that night he wrestles with God. It produces substance; it produces depth in our souls when we have to do with God in this way, wrestling with Him.

"And when he saw that he did not prevail against him, he touched the joint of his thigh; and the joint of Jacob's thigh was dislocated as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the dawn ariseth. And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said to him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast wrestled with God, and with men, and hast prevailed." Think of Jacob in that way, think of the substance that was in

**We are not to feed
on the disabilities
that may follow
God's ways in
government**

Jacob at this point. As a result of it he gets his name changed from Jacob (meaning supplanter) to Israel (meaning Prince of God). The true dignity of Jacob is coming to light.

God blessed Jacob and Jacob "called the name of the place Peniel—For I have seen God face to face, and my life has been preserved." It was a wonderful thing for

Jacob to take account of God in that way. We know that we can see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It has been said it is the loveliest spot in the universe of God—the face of Jesus with all God's glory centred there. The only way that it can be seen is in the face of a blessed Man, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

The night season is the season of trial but the dawn speaks of God shining upon us in Christ. As Jacob passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him". God is shining upon him; he has come through something in his soul. It is another landmark in the life of Jacob. Then Jacob "limped upon his hip". It was a mark of the government of God. I do not think that there is any one of us that has not had something in our lives in the ways of God's government that has not left us with a disability, but grace goes with government. Paul had to learn in relation to the thorn in the flesh that God's grace was sufficient for him. If God has to deal with us governmentally His grace supports us in going through these circumstances.

It is striking that it says, "Therefore the children of Israel do not eat of the sinew that is over the joint of the thigh, to this day; because he touched the joint of Jacob's thigh—the sinew". We are not to feed on the disabilities that may follow God's ways in government but we are to feed on Christ and what He has done in each one of us. Surely we can see formation after Christ in those with whom God has worked.

Gordon Sinclair

An address at St Anne's, 15 May 2010

God willing, two more landmarks from Jacob's history will be covered in the next issue.

Reprint

THE FATHER'S LOVE

John 16:26 - 27

In John 16 it says, "the Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me". I love Christ and because of that the Father has affection for me. The word used in the Greek original is "phileo" which is the love of friendship; it is intimate and intense. There is something real, solid and deep about it; not a general love, but intensity of affection is implied in it.

What amazes me as to this Scripture is not just the fact that the Father Himself has affection for us but also that the Lord Jesus said, 'None can come to Me except the Father draw him'. How is it that we come to love Jesus? It is because the Father drew us, so that we might be blessed and that the Father might have the satisfaction of pouring out His love upon us. Who can measure the wonderful ways of divine love! I just want to leave that simple impression with you.

Our minds may go to that precious message that was given to Mary when Jesus said, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17). It is amazing that God should so plan that Jesus' Father should be our Father. Jesus went to prepare a place for us — the Father's house!

Think of the perfection of Christ, such a contrast to all our failings and weaknesses, but the Father wants us too for Himself. The same love with which He loves the Son has reached out to us; "the Father himself has affection for you". There is a wonder about it that should fill our souls with worship as we think of what the Father has done, and still does in His present love towards us. He loved the Son; how much He loved the Son, and delivered Him up for us all; how shall He not with Him freely give us all things.

It is wonderful that we should be brought to the sphere of such blessing, blessing that belongs to Christ — "that where I am ye may be also". It has in view the myriads of those brought into eternal blessing, and that for God's pleasure, for His own satisfaction, His own praise and His own glory.

*Father, Thy love the source of all,
Sweeter than all it gives,*

*Shines on us now without recall,
And lasts while Jesus lives.*

Raymond Stopforth

Extract from an Address at Chippenham , 24th April 1993

This article was selected for re-printing from Living Water No 2 by Gavin Simpson. In the next issue, God willing, there will be a reprint from "Living Water" No 3, selected by Peter Wallach.

Poetry Selection

LOVE'S SWEET STORY

*Sweet is the old, old story,
That wondrous tale of love,
How Christ, the Lord of glory
Descended from above.
He left the glory's brightness
To be a sufferer here,
To be the Man of Sorrows,
Our sins and guilt to bear.
Well might the herald angels
His wondrous birth proclaim,
Telling the joyful tidings –
Salvation through His name.
We love to trace His pathway
Amid earth's sin and woe,
Lonely and weary often,
A stranger here below.
Hated, despised, rejected,
Yet still His love flowed on –
Flowed like a mighty river
To us, by sin undone.*

*He met the claims of justice,
He bowed beneath sin's load.
God's sword of judgment smote Him,
His blood beneath it flowed.
His mighty work accomplished,
He bowed His head and died,
But from the dead God raised Him –
His justice satisfied.
And now in brightest glory
He sits upon the throne,
Soon with a shout descending,
He comes to claim His own
To dwell with Him in glory,
His Father's house above,
To sing the same sweet story
Of all His matchless love.
Like Him! Oh thought transcendent!
With Him for ever there
We'll gaze on His great glory,
And all He won we'll share.*

Mary Jane Bucknell (Mrs J. A. Povey)

Taken to be with the Lord 9th March 1949

THE PASCHAL LAMB

*The Paschal Lamb is slain;
Its blood marks every door;
And Israel, with this token given,
Dwells consciously secure.
The precious blood applied
Arrests God's searching eye.
Lintels and door posts red therewith,
Death's angel passes by.
The question now is not –
Is Israel free from sin?
But rather – Does the blood without
Meet all demands within?*

*Jesus, the sinner's Friend,
We hide ourselves in Thee!
God looks upon Thy sprinkled blood,
It is our only plea.
He hears Thy precious name;
We claim it as our own;
The Father will accept and bless
His well-beloved Son.
Thou hast met all God's claims,
And we are justified;
Ours is the blessing, Thine the curse,
We live, for Thou hast died.*

Somerset Maxwell (1803 – 1884)

Testimony Section

A BOLD CONFESSION LEADING TO A MARTYR'S CROWN

On the 18th December 1555 (455 years ago) Richard Woodman was brought from the Kings Bench Prison in Southwark, London and allowed to go home to Warbleton in Sussex where he owned an iron smelting business and farm and employed about one hundred people. He had been held in prison because in June 1554 he had objected to the Rector of Warbleton saying that salvation was by means of sacraments, i.e, such things as baptism and taking the mass, rather than through faith in Christ. Woodman had boldly denounced this and publicly rebuked him. The Rector, a man named George Fairbanke, had him arrested and three local Justices sent Woodman to be examined in London, where he was put in the Kings Bench Prison.

While he was there various martyrs were brought to the prison. He would have seen Rowland Taylor, who was martyred in February 1555, Robert Ferrer, former Bishop of St Davids, martyred in March and John Bradford taken from the prison to be burned on 1st July

1555. Then the following December Woodman and the other remaining protestant, Philpot, were brought out — Philpot to be burned and Woodman to be released. As Richard Woodman went home he probably did not realise that the most exciting and dangerous part of his life lay ahead.

Once he was back home he began preaching in Warbleton and the surrounding villages. When this got to the notice of the authorities, constables were sent to arrest him. He was ploughing one of his fields when they arrived and he refused to go with them unless they could show him a warrant. As they did not have a warrant with them, they went away to get one and while they were gone, Woodman left the house and hid in the nearby woods. Only his wife knew where he was and she brought him food regularly.

Suspecting, correctly, that all the nearby ports would be watched, he remained in hiding for six weeks, then made his way to Flanders and then to France. However he wanted to be at home with his family and after only a short time abroad he returned. It only took the 'priests of Baal', as he termed them, three weeks to find out that he had returned and they sent constables to search his house. Over a short period the house was searched twenty times without finding Woodman for he had constructed a clever hiding place among the beams in the roof space. Sadly the house which stood on the site of what is now the churchyard extension, has long disappeared, so it is not possible to see the place where Woodman hid so successfully

On the night of his arrest twelve constables suddenly approached the house. Woodman dashed to his hiding place but, alas, the secret had been given away by his brother who did not approve of Richard's preaching. Hearing the approach of the Sheriff's officers, Woodman smashed through the roof of his house, jumped from the roof and fled. He might well have got away but as he had no shoes on, his feet were cut when running down a cinder track; this slowed him down and he was caught.

Richard Woodman was taken to Chichester and examined by the Bishop of Chichester and a lawyer called Dr. John Story. There were to be six examinations before Woodman was condemned but an extract from the first shows something of the character of them all.

Woodman You have said you will give me spiritual counsel; are you sure you have the Spirit of God?

Chichester No, I am not sure of that.

Woodman No! Be ye not sure of that?

Chichester No, by St Mary, I dare not be so bold as to say so: I doubt that.

Woodman Then you be like the waves of the sea, as saith James...and can look for no good thing from the Lord's hand.

Story What a perverse fellow is this? He hath the devil within him...

Woodman God forbid that I should learn of him who hath confessed that he hath not the Spirit of God.

Chichester Why do you think that you have the Spirit of God?

Woodman's response was that the Holy Spirit had worked in him to lead him to believe in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer and that **"he that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his"**. **"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"** (Romans 8:9, 16). Finally he quoted from John's epistle:

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15).

Such testimony was to no avail and Woodman was finally condemned as a heretic.

He was burned at Lewes, Sussex on 22nd June 1557, almost three years to the day from his original bold intervention in the church at Warbleton. Ten people were burned together on the same day. The others were: Mrs Ashden, Dennis Burgis, Mrs Grove, Alexander Hosman, William Mainard, James Morris, Marjorie Morris (Mother of James), George Stevens, and Thomasina Wood.

While John Foxe is recognised as the major source of information of the martyrs of Queen Mary's reign, others also kept lists of those burnt to death. One of these was Thomas Bryce. Month by month he was writing a poem including all the names of those martyred in the month. Each verse ended with the refrain, 'We wished for our Elizabeth'. Bryce, like many protestants, believed that a change of ruler would bring an end to the burnings.

The poem was kept secret, since to wish for another Sovereign

was considered treasonable. George Eagles, another martyr, was convicted of high treason for praying that God “would change the Queen’s heart”. If Bryce’s poem had become public before Elizabeth came to the throne he would probably have shared the same fate.

This is what he wrote about the martyrs that day at Lewes:

*When William Mainard, his maid and man,
Marjorie Morris and her son,
Denis Burgis, Stevens and Woodman,
Grove’s wife and Ashden’s to death were done,
When one fire at Lewes brought their death
We wished for our Elizabeth.*

{This series is now concluded.}

A Voice from the Past

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST

Part 1 — The thief on the cross

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” – Luke 23:43.

“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” was the word of Jesus to one who had only known and trusted him for a few minutes — one to whom infinite grace brought blessing in the last solemn hour of sinful history. In his case, at any rate, there could be no question of human merit. Whatever he got in those last wondrous moments of his life on earth — whatever happiness paradise itself could afford him — was brought to him by the Person near whom he hung upon the cross, and was secured to him in divine righteousness by the death of that blessed One.

Think of the One who was there! Think of Jesus, the blessed Vessel of divine grace, as the Holy Spirit presents Him to us in the gospel of Luke! He was God’s salvation for sinful men and women. He was the One: —

- anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor;
- who said that He came not to call the righteous but sinners to

repentance! He was indeed the Creditor, but here to pronounce frank forgiveness to all His debtors! The Samaritan freely expending divine wealth and resources in compassion upon the misery of those ruined by sin and Satan!

- who told of the great supper of grace, and of the blessed inviting and compelling of divine love! The Shepherd that would go after the sheep that was lost until He found it!
- who as the Vessel of all the grace of heaven told of the joy of God in receiving a repentant prodigal!
- who by the grace of God tasted death so that the river of that grace might flow forth for worldwide blessing through a channel of divine righteousness!

As we gather all this up in our thoughts — if we can speak of gathering up such infinite things in our feeble, feeble thoughts — does it not fill us with wonder to think of being with the One in whom such matchless grace shone forth, and in whom it all subsists as the risen and glorified One?

We may consider that the penitent thief of Calvary knew but little of the fulness of grace that resided in Jesus. And there are many indications in the gospels that the disciples, and even the apostles, failed to realise that grace in its proper character and glory. Yet it was all there in Him. No dullness of apprehension on their part, no want of capacity to take it in, could make that grace any less than it really was. It was God manifest in flesh, not imputing trespasses, but winning men's hearts by presenting to them all that He was in grace, and all that His grace delighted to do for them, without looking for one scrap of merit or goodness on their part as the condition of blessing. Would that our hearts understood better what He was, for what He was is what He is and will be eternally!

There are feeble believers today, but the question is, On whom do they believe? Is it Jesus, the blessed Son of God? Then their blessing is measured by what He is, and by the grace which He brought, and which He died to secure in righteousness for them — lost, guilty and ungodly as they were.

What a prospect opened up before that young convert on the cross! "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise". With the One in whom all the grace of God was! The guilty past left behind, cleansed

from every sin by the precious blood of Christ, no trace of evil remaining — with Jesus! What happiness!

And this is the portion of every departed believer in Jesus! How great He is — the Son of God, the Son of the Highest. How low He stooped in grace — even to the death of Calvary. What a great salvation began to be spoken by Him — how deep and dire the need which it meets, how glorious the favour of God into which it brings. And every believer who has fallen asleep is with Him! The scene of temptation and trial, of sorrow and suffering, is left behind forever. The spirit has passed altogether away from the flesh, the world and Satan's power. Now with Jesus the blessed Mediator who brought God in grace so near to us and did that glorious redemption work which enables Him to bring us in perfect justification and acceptance so near to God. If we think of Jesus, how perfect the grace that shone in Him, that told itself out in His words and His deeds, that wrought redemption, and that is now radiant with glory in His face at God's right hand! Departed saints are with Him. It is enough. We bless God for their happiness; and we pray that we may know better as a present living reality the Person with whom they are.

C. A. Coates

(In the next issue, God willing, Paul's "Desire to depart and to be with Christ")

GOD AS CREATOR AND REDEEMER

Job 38:31-38

Hebrews 9:12

I read these verses in Job 38 because in them God is speaking about creation. God would impress upon all those who trust in Christ and indeed on all men that He is in control of creation. There are many remarkable scriptures in the book of Job that speak of God's greatness, glory and distinction in creation.

There is much in the philosophy and learning of this world that would have us to think otherwise: that God is not the Creator. It is a lie, pure and simple. The believer understands that all things were

created by God. Indeed, John in the first chapter of his gospel reinforces it: - there is not one thing that was created but it had its being through our Lord Jesus Christ (see John 1:3). John starts his gospel with the words, "In the beginning was the Word" He goes back and back until you cannot go any further back, beyond our minds. Jesus, He who was the Word was there – the One of whom the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, is the effulgence of God's glory and the One by whom the worlds were made.

It is interesting to take account of the verses we read in Job. We can all look at creation and appreciate it. It is God's handiwork – marred alas by mankind and spoiled in many, many ways. It is growing old, too, as we are reminded in Hebrews, the world is growing old "as a garment" (Hebrews 1:11). Yet "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse showeth the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). God has a use for the present scene. He is going to cleanse it, He is going to display in it wonderful glory. And when it has all been used by Him for His purposes He will dispose of it. He will bring in a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth will have passed away "and the sea exists no more" (Revelation 21:1).

Now I just want to emphasise from this Scripture that there is abundant evidence that God is in control of creation. As far as the creation is concerned, God is unchanging. How faithful He is. "Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Creation is part of God's faithful testimony down through the centuries of time: how great He is! Romans 1 tells us that there is a testimony to God's eternal power and divinity in what may be seen in creation (Romans 1:20).

And so, tonight, if the sky is clear, you can take account of the Pleiades and Orion, the constellations of the heavens. The hymn writer says:–

*All heaven's constellations pale before,
The glory of the One who set them there!*

I believe that in these days God is showing through happenings in creation, the power that He has. It is far greater than anything men

have, and God would use it to show the power that He has not only in creation but also the power He has for blessing. He has shown this power in redemption through what Jesus has accomplished. It is striking that in Revelation 4 there is an ascription of praise because of creation and in chapter 5 because of redemption. God has rights over humanity in creation, but He has rights, too, in redemption. How great God is.

So we could go down the list of things that God mentions to Job: the ordinances of the heavens “dost thou determine their rule over the earth?” Then, “Dost thou send forth lightnings that they may go... who poureth out the bottles of the heavens?” We could go through each one. All these things belong to God and He uses them as He may judge according to His own mind and ways. He uses these things to speak to us.

One example that is not actually mentioned here is the way that God used an earthquake in Philippi to bring a jailor to faith and to bring blessing to his household (see Acts 16). God can use these things and we should pray, as we feel for humanity, especially those who are without God and without hope in the world, that the mighty power of God shown in creation may make persons realise that God is speaking to them. Then He is not only speaking in the testimony of creation but He is speaking in Jesus giving a testimony of His love and grace. We should pray fervently that others should come to see the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness to His wonderful light (see 1 Peter 2:9). May there be a greater testimony from us to God's wonderful blessings in the glad tidings.

Well, the things of creation, the ordinances in the heavens are fixed. It is wonderful to think of all that God has in respect of creation. Thank God He has certain things fixed, too, for our blessing in relation to redemption. Oh, the unchanging character of God towards humanity at the present time, in the grace of His heart. His word abides for, “the word of the Lord abides for eternity” (1 Peter 1:25). It is unchanging and we ought to appreciate the glory of what God has in His word.

Now, Hebrews 9 brings before us the permanence of what has been accomplished by way of redemption through the Lord Jesus

Christ. Hebrews shows us the value and the glory of the sacrifice of Jesus. All the thousands of sacrifices that went on in Old Testament times spoke to God in some way of the one blessed sacrifice of Christ. On the Day of Atonement once a year, the high priest went into the holy of holies, carrying in there the fragrance of incense and sprinkling the blood, upon and before the mercy seat. It looked forward to that better sacrifice, whereby Christ, "by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption". It was accomplished through suffering, suffering that none other could even contemplate or comprehend, for at Calvary, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The result is an eternal redemption. Are we not thankful to God that our blessing is based on an eternal redemption secured by Christ? Such is the blessed satisfaction of God in Christ's finished work and the preciousness of His shed blood! Its worth abides in the presence of God and will do eternally.

A countless host will yet praise God for His blessing obtained through redemption. Revelation speaks of "ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11). They are praising as a result of an appreciation of the worthiness of the Lamb whose precious blood was shed. Praises arise because of the unchanging glory of His person and His work, the Lamb that was slain but who is now exalted at the right hand of God.

How wonderful – there is an eternal redemption – great and unchanging.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse sheweth the work of his hands... In them hath He set a tent for the sun (Psalm 19:1, 4). It is really speaking to Him of Christ. In the creation in all its glory God had in mind the distinction in glory that would belong to Christ. He is also the One who is the centre of the world of bliss that He has brought to pass through the work of redemption. Let us celebrate His worthiness now and eternally.

Eric McPhail

Extract from an address at Defford, 24 April 2010