

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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*“Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”*
(1 Cor. 11:25 RSV)

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BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

FOUNDED 1924

The Bible Study Monthly, published to promote knowledge of the Bible, sees the Scriptures as a true record of God's dealings with the human race, needing to be understood in our generation. It stands for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, and His reign of peace and justice on the earth.

“Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15 NRSV)

The Bible Study Monthly is sent free of charge on request to all who are genuinely interested. It should never be sold for money.
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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

“This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. ‘Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”
(1 Cor. 11:25 RSV)

There are only two outward symbols we are asked to carry out. The first is to symbolise our consecrated life to follow the Lord by water immersion. Another is to take the unleavened bread and “fruit of the vine” as a memorial to our Lord and his sacrificial death giving his life for us at this time of year.

There are other events that loom large in the British calendar that are given national and statutory bank holidays such as Christmas Day as well as Easter Monday because Easter Sunday falls on a Sunday not forgetting Good Friday. In the old days we used to keep Whitsun or White Sunday for Pentecost till it was changed to a fixed date on the last Monday in May like the Trooping of the Colour is fixed in June to celebrate the monarch's birthday even though King Charles' birthday is in November.

The disciples knew of the Passover, and it was important for everyone to be in Jerusalem for it. Hence “the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Where would you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?’” (Matt. 26:17 ESV) Therefore they “did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.” (v.19)

Institution of the Memorial of Jesus' death

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’” (vv.26-29 ESV)

This is the only time of year that Jesus told us to observe individually and collectively. Let us endeavour to prepare our hearts and minds.



The Angel of Gethsemane

'T WAS midnight, and the Man of Sorrows took His chosen three,
 And sought with weary step the shelter of Gethsemane
 To pray, His soul exceeding sorrowful, e'en unto death,
 And heavy laden with the sin and woe of all the world.
 In agony of bloody sweat He fell upon His face,
 And cried, with tears, “My God, My Father, if it be Thy will,
 Oh, let this cup of shame and numbering with transgressors pass,—
 If it be possible! Yet not My will, but Thine be done!”
 And then His thoughts turned to the sacrifice,—a fear bore down
 With agonizing weight upon His heart, lest to comply
 With every jot and tittle of the Law, He might have failed!
 He saw the priestly type, He knew eternal death awaited,
 Should He seek to pass the second veil unworthily.
 Eternal death! Oh, anguish inexpressible, to see

Dear Lord, oh, use me as the Angel in Gethsemane!
 Oh, fill me with Thy holy Spirit of Divinest love!
 Oh, make me sympathetic, wise, that every anguished heart
 May come, nor seek in vain for consolation from Thy Word,
 And strengthened, comforted, go forth to prison or to death,
 To suffer patiently the cruel mockings of the tongue;
 To bear the cross unto the bitter end, then calmly say,
 “Tis finished,” and with faith unwavering pass beneath “the veil!”

Poems of Dawn

“ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF” (ISAIAH 53:3)

Often, when the suffering and death of Jesus is considered, the theological aspect receives undue emphasis with consequent neglect of the practical viewpoint. Christian schools of thought tend unfortunately to centre their exposition around the cold legal doctrines concerning Christ’s ministry rather than the “perfecting experiences” through which our Master passed. The reactions of affliction and trial upon his character were such that his sacrifice not only expunged the death sentence on humanity but prepared him for the work of re-education and reconciliation of a future age. Meditation upon this side of the subject will enable us more clearly to see why we should follow closely in his steps, that we also might become sympathetic priests who will in due time assist the sin-stricken world back to health and life.

Had the religious and political Jewish leaders at the First Advent been familiar with all the prophecies relating to the Deliverer of Israel they would have perceived, and instructed the people in the knowledge that the Messiah, for whom they looked, was not to be born into a princely environment of luxury and ease, neither was he to be a mighty general, schooled in the arts of war. They would have realised that their Messiah was to be a humble, peaceful healer, brought into the world amid the poorest circumstances, reared in a peasant home, ministering to the needs of contrite souls. Comparatively few of these simple folk would have understood the more intellectual side of his doctrine, but they did know that Israel had been riven by the conflicts of great empires for many generations and now in their midst had appeared One who healed as many as lay within his contact. Jesus of Nazareth, the wonderful physician, trod the rough roads of Palestine, telling forth a message of good-will; preaching of love toward God and fellow man. It was a mission which was seldom undertaken without expense to personal comfort, and often He continued his labours while weary and foot sore. He stood out even above previous holy men who possessed the gifts of healing and prophecy, and yet for all the good that He did and said for over three years among God’s chosen people, his own people, they slew him as a traitor.

Rich and poor, pious and publican, young and old, had felt the effects of his work of curing the sick and making whole those who had hitherto not known the joys of vigorous life. Cripples who had begged out their miserable existence at the Temple Gate for decades were bidden to rise and walk: poor sightless eyes yet without vision of God’s universe were able to gaze into the face of the Master: deaf ears heard the voice of him who spake as yet no man had spoken and speechless tongues were loosed

to praise the Creator. Whether stricken by bodily disease or afflicted in mind, their distress was remedied, not by some freakish “cure-all” which lasted an hour or day, but set the captive at liberty to enjoy the freedom of health in physique and brain which the Life-giver had intended. Where He had obtained the superhuman power they knew not, nor did they see in him the One who had come from God to turn away ungodliness from Jacob and bind the broken hearts. They did not recognise the fulfilment of the words of God’s holy prophets and realise that of this One it had been said “*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;*” (Isa. 53:10) and they understood not that this was the “*Man of Sorrows*” (Isa. 53:3) who was despised and rejected of men. Blindness of eye was great, loss of spiritual vision was manifestly greater in them.

Sin had taken a severe toll of human life during the long ages, and despite man’s relentless effort to combat disease and pain, the struggle was mostly in vain. Therefore, it may seem strange to the casual observer that Jesus of Nazareth, one imbued with a living message and blessed with such curative power should be so wrongfully treated and put to death. There is more however in the story of the Saviour’s ministry than merely a wasted life and needless death,—very much more.

“*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone*” (John 12:24) were the words of the Master, sublimely expressing one of the principles of Creation. Thus, the loss of Jesus’ life will bring resurrection to all, including peace and health—and most of all promise of reconciliation to God, without which everlasting life would be impossible to man. Harmony with the Creator is an essential part of the happiness of humanity, and it is this work which is that of Jesus and his Church, for the age of Restitution. It is their blessed task to restore that condition which prevailed in Eden, of which it was written “*so God created man in his own image.*” (Gen. 1:27)

Within the scope of God’s redemptive purpose there lay even further beauties, for He planned that those who gave sufficient evidence of their love for himself should be changed into the likeness of their Lord. What a depth of goodness is here revealed in the Creator, that He should gather a family from among the sons of men, and that these brethren of Jesus should be associated in the work of restoration. Yet, Divine wisdom is again manifest, for who better could understand the weakness and hopelessness of sinful man than the Redeemer and those who have shared his thorny pathway while yet in the flesh? Who could more closely sympathise than those who have experienced the barrier between

themselves and their Maker?

Sometimes the way with Jesus is difficult and sorrow seems multiplied on every side. It is just at those times when we should lay aside our work awhile, leave the rush and bustle of the day's pressing duties, and enter into communion with One who trod this way before us. The great tomes of theological learning will not give us the comfort in such circumstances as will the simple gospel story of one who endured unto death amid the most heart-breaking experiences.

Recall the picture of the Master as He provided bread for a hungry audience after discoursing to them all day; see him as He tenderly spoke to the Samaritan woman concerning the Word of Life! (John 4) The centurion's servant was made whole by the Prince of Peace; the widow's son was raised from the dead. Was He ever too weary or too bitter to minister to even one poor soul? Were any too foreign or too humble or too young for his healing touch? Did He ever lose his temper with that stiff-necked generation of scoffers? No, indeed, his life was a sublime example of the wonderful precepts which He had enunciated on the mountain side in the early part of his ministry. (Matt. 5:1-12) His words and actions never became hasty even under the intense persecution of his latter days upon the earth. The nearer He came to death, the greater manifest was his love for his brethren and for the world.

But what is all this to us and what does it mean to our hearts and lives? If the word of the Lord is deeply rooted in our minds and if the "first love" for our beloved Lord has been retained through the trial and stress of life's experiences, then slowly but surely the impression of his likeness is being made upon our characters. Beyond all intellectual knowledge, above the gifts of speech or pen, beside every Christian activity, must come this process of sanctification and development within the heart, of a fruitage of love which shall bring life to the nations and joy to all. It is the inward reaction to the buffeting and straining in life's battles that makes or mars Christian character. Troubles arise within the very church, to which the godly soul must respond submissively to the Father's will and with affection for our brethren. Intellects differ widely and cause the development of opposing viewpoints about certain doctrines; personalities, having been formed within contrasting environments, clash easily and cause friction among God's people. What is the result upon the church? Do such experiences draw us closer together by the very fact that we must learn to be patient and care for each other's limitations and weaknesses or does the reverse happen? Do the differences of opinion produce the fruit of the

Spirit within us, drawing us nearer to our God and to each other? What opportunities are ours to practise the qualities needed to attain the standard of association with the great High Priest? The privilege of thus serving each other now is that we might be fitted for the future work of serving together. But patience is not developed in a community where everything runs smoothly, where all think the same way upon all points of Christian teaching. Neither is love engendered when those who irritate each other part company, for that abolishes many opportunities to express the joy of “in honour preferring one another.” (Rom. 12:10)

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” was the identification which Jesus gave to his followers, *“if ye have love one to another.”* (John 13:35) Looking into the future of his church He saw this distinguishing feature from the world, and recognised that while it toiled amid a scornful world, their unity, their constraining love would shine forth as a wonderful witness. Has this been the experience of his Bride through the ages? Does this illustrate the path of the Narrow Way through the Gospel Era (Age)? We leave each one to answer that question, now, but it is sufficient that in looking back over the centuries we take note of the failings of others and endeavour not to stumble as they have done. The world is quick to criticise weaknesses in Christian communities, especially when internal strife is evident, and it is of no avail displaying leaflets and tracts, and becoming noisy about “world events” unless there is a *living witness* within our fellowship shining clearly and purely.

Thus, shall we be prepared to go forth into the world here and now ministering such blessings and assistance as lie within our scope. If we have wrought good works among our brethren we shall be in a better condition to help our fellow man in the daily routine. It is easy to talk about brotherly love and shut half of God’s children outside our walls in cold isolation. It is even easier to explain how we shall bless “all families of the earth,” (Gen. 12:3) and then fail to bless the few of those families which we have contact with every day now. It may not be our privilege to labour among men and women in any healing or social capacity, but every child of God has the opportunity during some part of his life to manifest those qualities which will enable them to share the Kingdom work. As we jostle in queues, we are in one of the environments in which God has placed us to show forth his glory. God is training men and women now to be tender, kind-hearted and patient with the human race. The qualities of mercy and wisdom will surely be required of those who have lived amid iniquity and unrighteousness for decades, as they restore to life and re-educate earth’s millions. Who better will be trained for such a work than

those who have manifested God's love while they have been under the burden of human imperfection and subjected to persecution? Do we rejoice in affliction and revile not again when troubled on every side? Do our workmates, our colleagues, those with whom we have to do, day by day, see the gentle, compassionate side of our nature or the impassioned, ill-tempered brutal aspect, which if allowed to spring up can easily spoil God's workmanship.

"Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5:16) wrote the great Apostle Paul to the Corinthians—"No man" includes the fellow passengers in the train in which we travel, the man or woman behind the store counter or the brother and sister in the home; most of all, our brother and sister in Christ. The way *we* act and speak is that which is covered by "after the flesh," for after we have given our all to God, we look through new eyes of love and behold *everything* from the standpoint of a "New Creature." *Everything* now is seen as Jesus would see it, and as a priest of God would see it. Any other attitude toward our associates in life's experience will lead us away from our calling.

So as another year of the Christian walk is ending, and we gather again in communion with our risen Lord, let us have in mind the grand outcome of sharing the bitter experience of "His cup." It is our privilege to come to the Master's table year by year and speak one to another concerning the suffering which He bore for us, and meditate upon the joys we have in following his steps. May we remember we are part of one large family, one large loaf composed of many grains of wheat. But unless the loaf is broken, unless the grapes are crushed, the labour is in vain. May the year before us give us fresh vitality to assist our brethren in the bonds of Christian love, that we may "*bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" (Gal. 6:2)

Suffering with Christ will deepen our union with our Lord and Head (Phil. 3:10) and it will also give a firmer basis of fellowship with our brethren. Sharing his cross will also bring the happy experience of sovereignty with him. What joys will be ours then, we can only meditate upon now. What was lost in Adam will be regained in that glad day. We shall have the privilege of spreading leaves of healing among the nations and teaching them the way of peace, health and life-everlasting. What little we suffer now will be more than outweighed by one glance at our beloved Lord's face, but we shall more than see him. If we co-labour with him now, if we commune with him, share his sorrows and joys *now*, we shall share his life, when we are beyond.

A NOTE ON THE DECREE OF CYRUS

The celebrated “*Decree of Cyrus*” in which the Persian king gave a mandate for the return of the Jews to their own land and so ended the “Babylonian Captivity” in the year 536 B.C. has often been quoted as an evidence that Cyrus recognised the hand of God in his advancement to world dominion. The decree as quoted in Ezra 1:2-3 certainly reads that way. “*The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up...*” There is no reason to suppose that the decree as thus stated is in any way fictitious; the Jews have always claimed that their restoration was due to Cyrus’ conviction that he was called of God to restore them to their own land and they point to the prophecy in Isaiah 45 where Cyrus is even mentioned by name, nearly two centuries before the event, as proof that he was foreordained to fulfil this task.

It does seem, however, that in actual practice Cyrus was a bit of a diplomat in his dealings with the gods of antiquity. Whatever his feelings may have been as to the God of Israel, he was able to express himself in very similar terms with respect to other gods of other nations. On bricks used in his day for the restoration of the Temple of Sin, the moon god, at Ur of the Chaldees, he had the following inscription impressed; some of the bricks remain to this day.

“Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, with his favourite sign delivered into my hand the four quarters of the world, and I returned the gods to their shrines. The great gods have delivered all the lands into my hands; the land have I caused to dwell in a peaceful habitation.”

It seems that Cyrus was not above giving the credit for his victories to each of the gods in turn, playing for safety, perhaps, on the principle that upon this basis he could hardly fail to be right. More likely there was a hint of political expediency. He had just conquered the empire of Babylon and added it to his own, any means of conciliating the varied races and peoples now under his rule would be useful. When dealing with Israel he gave the praise to the God of Israel. When dealing with the people of Ur he gave it to their own special god, Sin, the moon-god. In each case he gave orders for the rebuilding of the national Temple.

None the less Cyrus was definitely a tool in the hand of a higher power. God truly had given him all the kingdoms of the world. More than a cen-

ture before his birth the Lord through Isaiah had said of him *“he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid.”* And the Lord went on to say *“I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.”* (Isa. 44:28, 45:4). That passage in Isaiah is a noteworthy example of the prophetic foresight of God, but no more remarkable than his prediction through the prophet Jeremiah, who promised Israel that their captivity to Babylon would endure for seventy years and then they would be restored to their own land, all of which came to pass exactly as foretold. It is a fascinating conjecture, and a highly probable one, that Daniel showed Cyrus these prophecies and fired him with the ambition to play the part so foretold of him.

AOH

*“MAN of sorrows!” what a name
For the Son of God, who came,
Ruin’d sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

*Guilty, vile, and helpless, we;
Spotless Lamb of God was He.
“Full atonement!” can it be?
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

*Lifted up was He to die,
“It is finished,” was His cry.
Now in Heaven exalted high,
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

*When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we’ll sing:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!*

P.P. Bliss
Bible Students Hymnal

“WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS”

“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” (Isa. 53:5 and 11).

The great depth of our Redeemer’s love for mankind is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Too often do we take the surface meaning of the well-known words and content ourselves with the thought that Jesus has taken the sinner’s place and accepted in his own person the penalty of sin which should rightfully come upon guilty man. Too often do we sing:

*“Christ gave his life for me,
His precious blood He shed,
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.”*

and accept the matter as settled without need of any further realisation of what the death of Jesus really means to us.

There is so much more in the doctrine of the Ransom than the acceptance of Paul’s words regarding the *anti-lutron*—the purchase of all the human race by Jesus at the cost of his own human life. Isaiah 53 tells how intimately the story of the Ransom is bound up with the “suffering servant” of whom the prophet speaks so eloquently. From the twenty-second chapter, where the Lord’s “servant” is first mentioned, the theme is developed until it reaches its climax in the fifty-third chapter. Man can only be redeemed and reconciled to God by means of one who would be prepared to “suffer” in order that the compelling power of that suffering might lead people to the only course of life which can bring them happiness and the purging of their sins. The old law of Israel was “an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth.” (Lev. 24:20 CEV) That law is still the principle upon which nations and systems are founded today, and which leads to strife, violence, war and death. Isaiah was used by the Holy Spirit to introduce a new theme to humanity, a theme which must be put into practice amongst men before the troubles of this world can be solved. There must be one, whether man amongst men or nation amongst nations, willing to become a servant instead of an oppressor, seeking to do good to men by serving them instead of oppressing men by ruling over them; one willing to suffer in his service that others may be glad, rather than be an exactor of suffering from others in retribution for their faults; one that will eventually *win* men by love, instead of *compelling* by force. That is the ideal which God has planned the principle upon which the work of the

Kingdom Age will be carried on, the principle which accomplishes the work of the Good Shepherd amongst his own sheep during this Age, and the principle which Isaiah declared would be exemplified by “He that shall come.”

So Christ came as a “suffering servant.” He said so himself. “*I am among you as he (one) that serveth.*” (Luke 22:27) “*The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” (Mark 10:45). He “*gave himself a Ransom*” (1 Tim. 2:6), and he was also a “sin-offering”—an offering on account of sin. The blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin, yea, and neither does the blood of Christ remove sin, *unless* the sinner, passing through the successive stages of repentance, faith and justification, takes to himself the benefit of that offering made “once and for all” and in whole-hearted surrender to the saving power of Jesus becomes reconciled to God.

The power of the sin-offering, then, lies in its compelling force, drawing people first to an appreciation of what Christ has done for them, secondly to be remorseful for their sinful condition and repentance for their sin, thirdly to faith that the work and sacrifice of Christ can be efficacious on their behalf and upon their acceptance of him as their Saviour, and finally sincere acceptance of him and consecration to his service. Not until any one has accepted the Law of Love as the guiding principle in their life, is wholly devoted to the service of their fellows even at the cost of suffering were that necessary, is prepared to be servant of all if by any means he may save some, can they even commence in the way that culminates in eternal life.

Men in Isaiah’s day did not realise that to be the only way. Neither did they at the First Advent. Neither do they now. Because of their lack of understanding, it was necessary that there be a great Exemplar to show them the way by walking in it himself. So the prophet cries: “He was wounded *for* (on account of) our transgressions, He was bruised *for* (on account of) our iniquities: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many (on whose account); for He shall bear their iniquities.” (vv.5,11)

Rotherham says:

*“He was pierced for transgressions that were ours,
Was crushed for iniquities that were ours,—
The chastisement for our well-being, was upon him,
And, by his stripes, there is healing for us“ (v.5)*

and the Septuagint renders v.5 and 8:

“He was wounded on account of our sins, and was bruised because of our iniquities...because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death.”

Is it not true that Christ’s footstep followers, the Church of this Age, are associated with him in this great thing? Consecrated Christians now, buried with him by baptism into his death, suffering with him, are also “suffering servants,” seeking nothing better than to serve mankind in the good things of God which shall be for their salvation. This course in life brings suffering now, a suffering gladly borne, because it is pointing the whole world to the only way by which it will eventually attain its destiny. We suffer, not “for” the sins of the people in the ordinarily accepted sense of that word, but most certainly “on account of” the sins of the people—for were there no sin in the world there would be no suffering for righteousness’ sake, and no necessity for it. Thus we may rejoice, knowing that our suffering is working out, not only a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for us, but salvation for all the world, “in due time.”

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” (Isa. 53:11)

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

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CHRIST gave His life for me,
His precious blood He shed,
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
He gave, He gave his life for me;
How grateful I should be!

His Father’s house of light,
His glory-circled throne,
He left for earthly night,
For wand’rings sad and lone;
He left, He left it all for me,
Have I left all for Thee?

He suffered much for me,
More than I now can know,
Of bitterest agony;
He drained the cup of woe;
He bore, He bore it all for me,
What have I borne for Thee?

He now has brought to me,
Down from His home above,
Salvation full and free,
Pardon and life and love.
He brings, He brings rich gifts to me—
Lord, I give all to Thee.



*F.R. Havergal
Bible Students Hymnal*

“YE DO SHOW THE LORD’S DEATH” (1 COR. 11:26)

A memorial exhortation

In the ordering of the Lord’s providence the due time to remember in a special manner the death of our Lord draws near. This special act of remembrance we perform in compliance with our Lord’s direction. The story has been told so many times that every phase of truth associated therewith cannot but be well understood by all who see that our Lord was the true Passover Lamb on the higher plane of God’s purpose.

But the story will always bear repetition at this season, in order to stimulate to greater intensity our appreciation of that sacrifice, and what it did for us, and to prompt us with greater earnestness and sincerity to renew our own covenant with our God, to die with Christ Jesus our Lord.

Every year that goes brings us a step nearer “the year of My redeemed,” when the greatest and grandest deliverance in all the annals of time will be brought to pass. Each passing year should invest the act of remembrance with greater solemnity and beauty, enabling each participant to carry away a deeper sense of reverence and gratitude than from any preceding occasion. Another year’s crucial experiences and refinements should have prepared our hearts to receive the emblems of our slain Lamb with deeper appreciation and satisfaction than hitherto. The leadings of Divine providence should have created a keener appetite for the “true bread of God”—a sharper hungering and thirsting for the privileges spread out on the Lord’s table, and though we may eat and drink our daily portions to meet each day’s spiritual needs throughout the year, the very special and sacred meaning attached by our Lord to the simple annual service of Remembrance should cause us more ardently to approach the Christian’s festive board.

Carrying our minds back to that last eventful night when our Lord gathered the little company around the Paschal board, we find them following first the ancient order of procedure, established away back in the days of Moses, and revised and augmented as time went by. They had met privately in a room prepared for them, on the anniversary of the actual night during which their fathers had also gone behind closed blood-sprinkled doors to eat the flesh of a slain lamb, and to wait, fully robed and shod, for the Angel of God to pass through the land. Nothing that Jesus said or did in the early part of the night’s proceedings changed the order or sequence or the meaning of the great event they were keeping in memory. They ate the Passover together exactly as their fathers had done

down the centuries. Authorities tell us that the Jews in Jesus' day partook of the flesh of a lamb and unleavened bread to remind them of the hasty meal prepared and eaten in Egypt, of a blend of herbs and vegetables consisting of coriander and endive, lettuce and horehound, thistle leaves and succory, to remind them of the bitterness of the bondage their fathers endured, and crushed fruit and nuts brought to table in shape of a brick, to impress on their minds the arduous labours of the mud pits and the brick-kilns. They drank together the expressed juice of the vine, from a cup which from times long distant had been called "the Cup of the Covenant."

If this assortment of fruits, herbs, bread and flesh had become the established fare at the Paschal board, no valid reason exists for doubting that these were the ingredients that had been prepared by the owner of the room and set out in order by the two disciples (Mark 14:13), Peter and John (Luke 22:8) in readiness for the arrival later of Jesus and the rest of the band.

As they thus ate and drank and sang their way through the ancient feast they called to remembrance the slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of the doorposts the extraordinary postures of the participants, the angel's midnight flight, the morning's early commotion as prince and peasant rushed to Pharaoh, the royal audience accorded to Moses, and the imperative order to "be gone." They would remember that Israel's first-born sons had been "spared" as the angel, with flashing sword, "passed over" their huts or houses. They would not fail to be reminded that God had spared those firstborns for himself, and that He hallowed them to himself and his purposes in the dead of that eventful night. Then with the early flush of dawn the hosts of the Lord began their march of liberty and to life with God. The old, old story was enshrined in every drop and particle on the Paschal board, and every year, each generation drew forth the same meaning and purpose. It was a memorial—a looking back—a remembrance of the great things which God had done.

The usual procedure ended, Jesus took a piece of the remaining bread, and raising over it a special prayer, passed it to his disciples, saying "*Take this and eat—this represents my body.*" (26:26*) He took the cup, in which yet remained a quantity of the juice of the grape, and again giving thanks to God, passed it with the words "*Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*" (Matt. 26:27-28) This was a new procedure, and had an entirely new meaning. Yet it was superimposed on the old. It was still intended to be "the Passover." It was still intended to presage deliverance. It was like

going back to the night in Egypt to start it all over again, but on a higher plane. It still required a Lamb to be slain, it still required the sprinkling of the blood (1 Pet. 1:2); it still had special application to the firstborns among the families of Israel. It was still intended to be the prelude to the breaking of bonds, and to the start of a journey towards the land of promise and of life with God. For the firstborns it still meant salvation from the destroying angel's sword. For the remainder of the house of Israel it meant emancipation from a great and terrible taskmaster so that they could enter anew into covenant relationship with God.

The ultimate purpose of the Covenants was to constitute Israel a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, that through them the outcast families of the earth may be regathered to God and blessed with eternal life. That great objective was and still is God's great purpose. But it needed a better Lamb than Israel's paschal lamb. It needed a better firstborn to be brought forth on a higher plane, and to a higher ministry. Jesus came to earth to be that Paschal Lamb. Jesus went back to Heaven the firstborn among many brethren who are "the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23 NIV) In that quiet, upper room, a great change began. The old order, observed by Jesus to the very letter, came to its end. The new order began. Jesus' act and claim to put himself in place of the Paschal Lamb, and his invitation to his followers to eat the bread in lieu of eating him, carried the Paschal idea and the Paschal work to a higher plane. His death that very day provided the slain Lamb for Israel's "Redemption" feast. His surrendered life provided the Redemption blood. From that upper room on that eventful night influences went forth which yet will change the world. Already they have changed the lives of those disciples, and of others who believed on Jesus through their word. And they will do much more as they constrain Israel and the nations into the way of God.

But here and now it is not this wider field of blessing and blessedness we seek to contemplate, but that one central fact on which the whole redemptive plan reposed. It required the death of our beloved Lord. There was no other way to effect release. Jesus, the Lamb of God, must die. No one in heaven or earth could meet the great need. All depended upon him—upon him alone! Jesus knew this. He knew the seriousness of all He said and did. He faced the greatest issue of all time. But no cost to him was too great to ensure the success of the Father's plan. His death would make redemption sure, so He went to his death with open eyes and an understanding heart. He offered himself without spot or stain, a sacrifice of noblest worth. He poured out his soul to death.

For one night in the yearly round it is the Christian's privilege and delight to show forth the Lord's death, to think and speak of his voluntary surrender to the will of God, and commemorate the greatest sacrifice of all time. Each child of God knows and understands that every gracious privilege he or she enjoys flows from that sacrifice. Reconciliation and redemption, hope and expectation all spring from that unique surrender. The resounding hosannas of a world restored trace back to that unblemished offering. (Rev. 5:12-13). That is the one event in the whole range of time which is inevitable and indispensable. It is the one thing needed—the one thing all-essential to make God's "yea" YEA! God's promises, though immutable, were all made with this in view. Jesus was accounted "slain" from the dawn of time.

It is no light thing which we do. It stands related to eternal things. Once for all the holy Lamb of God died. It can never occur again. In showing the Lord's death we make contact with the "imperatives" and "absolutes" of God's universal plan. We need to be humble and sincere in our approach to the table of the Lord. We need to purge out the least trace of the leaven of sin. We need to be hungry and athirst for him, as the panting hart over the water brook. No matter how much the Cup may symbolise to each and all, apart from him there could be no "bread," there could be no cup.

Let all remember that that which they do shall be done by countless thousands when the story of his deathless love shall be made known to all, and that it is an honour beyond compare to have a place among them in these dark days, to know their Lord and God, and walk in the footsteps of His worthy Son. Our opportunity to do this thing is nearly run. The outlook shows us that the Church's race is almost at an end. The last days should be the best, and to each and all, this commemoration should be the most solemn and encouraging of all. May the blessing of God be with each soul, as we turn our eyes and hearts to him who died for us that we might live with him.

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Endive, a plant of the chicory family grown as a hardy annual and yielding a profusion of leaves, is generally used for salad.

Pears Encyclopaedia



RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:20 NIV)

Why is a Resurrection Necessary?

The Apostle Paul explains why a resurrection is necessary through stating a precious promise in vv.21-22 “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. *For as in Adam ALL die*, even so in Christ shall *ALL* be made alive.” The resurrection is made necessary because of the fall, and God is to recover the fallen human race.

The Greek word in the Bible used for “resurrection” is “anastasis.” “Ana” means “again,” and “stasis” means “a standing.” It has the meaning to be lifted up back to full and perfect manhood...back to perfection.

The Old Testament does not state this word “resurrection”; it is only found in the New Testament. So can we find this term expressed in any way in the Old Testament? Let’s take a look at some Old Testament scriptures:

“You *turn people back to dust*, saying, ‘*Return to dust, you mortals.*’” (Psalm 90:3 NIV)

“The ransomed of the LORD *shall return*, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isaiah 35:10)

These verses from the Old Testament balance each other out. The Lord tells us that they will return to dust, but also provided a promise that they will have an opportunity to return. And in Isaiah 51:11 we read:

“Therefore the redeemed of the LORD *shall return*, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

What a joyous and wonderful occasion this will be when all mankind will return, as compared to all the hard experiences of man in the present evil world. God doesn’t just want a blinded obedient creation, but one that will actually *rejoice* after returning from death! So the Old Testament does teach about our return from death.

Let us take a look at a few more verses in the Old Testament about being raised back to life from death.

In 1 Samuel 2:6-8 we read: “The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: *he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.* The LORD maketh poor,

and maketh rich: *he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust...*”

We also read in Daniel 12:2, “many of *them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake*, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

These are promises about those that go into the dust or death, coming up and awaking; so God had promised that He will raise all mankind from the dust.

Job confirmed this expectation of a resurrection in Job 14:13-15, “O that thou wouldest *hide me in the grave*, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and *remember me! If a man die, shall he live again?...Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee*: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” Job expected to be remembered and restored. He believed he would be awakened, so much that he asked God to put him in the grave until all his trouble would pass! So, in the Old Testament there was the understanding of the concept of being re-awakened from the sleep of death.

When people die, their lifeless bodies go into the grave, which is a prison-like condition, one they cannot come out until they are called out from the grave. When you are in prison you cannot get out. The whole purpose of the prison is to keep you in. Until the door of death is unlocked, there is no coming out. In Job 3:18 we read, “*There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.*” Also in Psalm 146:7 we also read, “*The LORD looseth the prisoners.*” The word “*looseth*” here means to be set free. Here we have the Lord’s wonderful promise that men (who are the prisoners) will be made free from the prison, which is the grave.

In Isa. 49:8-9 we read, “I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for *a covenant of the people*, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; *that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves...*”

We see a glimpse of how this will be accomplished through Christ and his “body,” the “elect.” Through them the *New Covenant* will begin once they are complete. God will then unlock the prison house of the grave.

Continuing in the Old Testament although we do not see the term

“resurrection” we see the promise of it over and over again. In Hosea 13:14 (RV): “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. *O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?*” Here we have this question, and the answer is given in 1 Cor. 15:54-57 “*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” In the days of Hosea, the question could not be fully understood and yet we see, in due time, God revealed the answer and the hope.

So, in order to unlock the hope of the resurrection we need to understand redemption, we need to understand that death will be defeated and in order to defeat death it required a ransom price. This thing was not understood in the Old Testament, but death will be destroyed. What a wonderful promise this is! Looking at the news and the things going around us, we realize this is not yet that time, but God has given us a beautiful promise that death will be destroyed.

Will Mankind be Resurrected with the Same Mind?

Yes, otherwise, those being resurrected would be a blank slate, like babies. There is a tremendous value in having the past experiences put back into the mind of the resurrected body. Only then can an individual have a personal knowledge of the effects of sin and compare it to the blessings of righteousness that they will experience in Christ’s earthly kingdom. Only God can accomplish this miraculous feat of restoring the mind for all of the billions who have ever lived.

In Ecclesiastes 11:3 (RV) it says: “If a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.” It is saying that when a tree falls over that is where it stays; the direction in which it fell is the direction in which it remains. This illustration provides an object lesson that the mind that goes into the grave is the mind that is restored in the resurrected body. Those who live righteously will have righteousness in their minds when they are resurrected. Those who die with corrupt minds will harbour corrupt thoughts when they are resurrected. This is the reason why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah rather than letting them slide further into sin and degradation. He stopped the degradation of their minds before they would be irrecoverable in Christ’s earthly kingdom.

The principle of sowing and reaping is used in the Scriptures to illustrate

the restoration of the mind in the resurrection. In Job 4:8 we read: “They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” The lesson is that what we sow, we will reap. In this present evil world, the wicked seem to prosper. But those who go into the grave with evil minds will have a lot more work to do to transform their characters into the likeness of God in Christ’s Kingdom when they are resurrected.

As the way they go down, so they will come up, it will catch up with them as they will have to unlearn the unrighteousness and to sanctify themselves. “For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good, or...evil.” (Eccl. 12:14 RSV) As “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, observing both the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3 ISV), so the character man goes down with, will be the character that follows in the resurrection.

Can God Restore a Mind?

Yes! In Job 33:29-30 “Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit (sheol, grave) to *be enlightened with the light of the living.*”

The *light of the living* concerns the mind, the intellect. Resurrected humanity on earth will “be enlightened” again with the light of life. Their resurrection from the dead will be clear and convincing evidence to them of God’s wonderful blessing on their behalf. This itself will provide an opportunity for them to begin anew on a better footing than before, with faith in God and appreciation for His lovingkindness.

This favourable new beginning for mankind, each one individually, being raised again on earth during the Millennium, will come through the reign of Christ with his “Bride,” comprising of 144,000 members. (Revelation 7 & 14). Then evil will be restrained, rather than allowed to proceed, as at present. The Spirit of understanding from God will be poured out upon the hearts of humanity, starting with the nation of Israel. (Zechariah 12:10).

The spirit of understanding will bring joy to mankind in doing what is pleasing to the Heavenly Father. They will seek after righteousness when they recognize the blessings that shall be gained in doing so. In Prov. 21:21 (ESV) it says, “whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honour.”

In Jeremiah 31 we read about the Spirit of understanding coming to Israel when they finally recognize Jesus as the Messiah. “Behold, days come,

saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Darby)...This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (ESV) (Jer. 31:31-34).

After Israel has been inducted into this "new covenant," at the beginning of Christ's Millennial Reign, they will be used by God to extend the same blessings outward to the remainder of the world. Then all will be able to receive the spirit of understanding from God. "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." (Heb. 8:11)

At the outset of the Millennial Age, the ransom will be applied for the world in order to remove the curse. The removal of the curse is the first necessary step in order to proceed with the resurrection. However, that does not mean the resurrected individuals are justified. They will be sinful people still because they will return back with the same thoughts. Many of those raised will be without faith, and far short of good works. Teaching people about God and the standards of righteousness will take time. Individually, the blessed influences of the Kingdom will bring people to repentance, faith, and obedience. Ultimately they will be righteous and holy. As this process continues, they will be blessed also by physical blessings of health and vitality, returning to the perfection of being that Adam enjoyed in the garden before his sin.

God has the power of resurrection and there are examples of temporary awakenings to illustrate that. Here are the examples:

- a. Elijah awakens the widow's son.
- b. Elisha awakens Shunammite woman's son
- c. Elisha's bones awaken a dead man
- d. Jesus awakens the widow of Nain's son
- e. Jesus awakens Jarius's daughter
- f. Jesus awakens Lazarus
- g. Peter awakens Tabitha (Dorcas)
- h. Paul awakens Eutychus

These were just temporary re-standings to show the principle and to illustrate that there will be a permanent resurrection of all those in the grave.

The Resurrection of the Overcomers

The overcomers in the First Resurrection are the members of the Church. They have been begotten to a new life which is a spiritual life now and they are on trial in the present time.

The Apostle Paul states in 1 Cor. 15:51-52 (RVIC): “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall *all fall asleep, but we shall not all be changed in a moment*, in the twinkling of an eye, in the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Unlike the world of mankind our resurrection will be in a moment and instantaneous. If we are faithful unto death now, we will be changed at the moment of our death.

When is the Resurrection Complete?

The resurrection will be complete when all who have died are raised again. The curse will be lifted at the beginning of the age, by the application of the Ransom for the world, in order to allow the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection is the only hope for the dead. In conclusion John 11:23-26 NKJV “Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to Him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

How thankful we are to our Heavenly Father for such a perfect Plan that will result in *eternal life* for all. To Him be the glory and honour now and forever. Amen!



Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.
(Psa. 30:5 NLT)

CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY—A HYMN

CHRIST, the Lord, is risen to-day,	Vain the watch, the seal, the stone;
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Sons of men and angels say;	Christ as conqueror is known;
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Raise your joys and triumphs high;	Death in vain forbids His rise;
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Sing, ye heav'ns—and earth, reply.	Soon He'll open paradise.
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Love's redeeming work is done;	Lives again our glorious King;
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Fought the battle; vict'ry won;	Where, O Death, is now thy sting?
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
Lo! He's risen conqueror,	Once He died our souls to save;
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!
And shall sink in death no more,	Where's thy victory, boasting Grave?
Hallelujah!	Hallelujah!

Bible Students Hymnal

This most beautiful Easter Hymn, was written by Charles Wesley originally in eleven verses. Most hymn books have no more than six and words vary. Wesley did not have the Hallelujahs which were added later. It is probably the most popular hymn for Easter Sunday in Britain.

The tune named “Easter Hymn” is often attributed to Henry Carey. However, it is now deemed to come from a hymnbook in 1708 where it appears anonymously.

Here are some Bible verses which are believed to have inspired the writer:

Matt. 28:1-10 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was...the angel of the Lord...His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there

shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Matt. 27:63-66 We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Matt. 28:2 Behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

1 Cor. 15:20-23 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Rom. 6:9-10 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

1 Cor. 15:55-57 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

NAC

THOUGHT ON ISAIAH 46:4

“Even to hoar hairs will I carry you.” (Isa. 46:4).

Old age could be called one of the tragedies of life. The beauty of youth, the vigour and action of mature years, fade and fall as the petals of the fairest flower. Inevitably time steals both strength and treasure. Friends depart, household ranks are thinned, many cherished hopes remain unrealised and the rushing torrent of new thought sweeps away old landmarks, with long cherished customs.

Enthusiasm sinks as the sap falls in the tree, shedding daily the autumn gold. A sober look at the problems of these last decades of life could be disquieting were it not for the caring, carrying power of Omnipotence. Days were when we ran and jumped and danced and sang with the best, when the glory of life irradiated every fibre of our being with a seemingly quenchless flame. But the days come when tired feet no longer run and tired eyes no longer see the road or the faces about them as once they saw.

Even the heart grows tired after its long labours, scarred maybe with sorrow, with well-fought battles and the pain of unshed tears. How good it is then to be lifted in the eternal Arms and carried over the last few laps of the road. This carrying power of God is the tender expression of love. It is God taking the load, bearing between his shoulders these who have grown old and grey in his service, fending for them when they are no longer able to fend for themselves.

Those who have fought a good fight have no reason to fear the tedium, the solitariness, the weakness which often attends the time when the frosts of many winters whiten and thin the once luxurious locks. He has said “I will carry you.” As a father picks up a tired child, carrying it home in triumph upon his shoulders, so will watchful love provide for saints going home, for God never yet forsook the heart which trusted him.

*“I read from the past, that the future shall be
Far better than all my fears.”
(Streams in the Desert)*

AOH

Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

PARADISE ON EARTH

2. "The World passeth away"

The promised establishment of Paradise on earth demands that the present world order, based on selfishness and ignorance, productive of injustice, cruelty, disease and death, be brought to an end. If the Lord Jesus Christ is to assume the rulership of the world and bring about peace, happiness and life where at present there is only war, misery and death then it follows that earth's present rulers will vacate their positions. It is probable that at the end they will do so thankfully. Despite the enmity and bitter feelings which now exist between the great Powers, it is only logical to suppose that most at least of earth's politicians desire only peace and security within their own borders. If the new order to be instituted by Christ can show them a better prospect of attaining that desired object they may well, after some initial resistance, hail it as the solution they have been seeking. Zech. 8:20-22 gives a very vivid picture of the leaders of the nations coming together to seek and consult with the new rulership. "*We will go with you.*" they are depicted as saying "*for we have heard that God is with you.*" (v.23)

The world will be in a sorry state, the result of human selfishness down the ages, a selfishness which has been accentuated by the modern drift away from God. It is already in a sorry state, politically, commercially, socially and from the ecological standpoint. One wonders if it could possibly get much worse and few there are who see any hope of it getting any better. Human society is disintegrating into lawlessness. The Apostle Paul foresaw this when, writing to Timothy, he told him "*in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*" (2 Tim. 3:1-4) It is a terrible indictment, but who can dispute its truth in the world of today.

During this present century man has advanced immeasurably in scientific knowledge and mastery over the elements but that advance has been at the expense of his knowledge of, and his faith in, God. In the past all believed, and were the better for their belief. Today only the few really believe, and the rest are the poorer for their lack. Hugh Miller, the Christian geologist of more than a century ago, pointed to the evidence that to the extent a community or a generation rejects God, to that extent they relapse into barbarism and eventually die out and become extinct, just because the natural instinct inherent in man to strive for better things

and rise to greater heights, has become stultified so that at last there is nothing left that lives. That process is going on today in the world and there is no power or influence capable of calling a halt. The present generations, raised on superficialities and bereft of any real purpose in life, proceed on the path of degeneration and slow suicide. Man sorely needs salvation from himself and that salvation can only come from God. It is time for a great change.

The philosophy of the Bible displays not only the certainty but also the nature of that change. Putting it perhaps a little more crudely and yet just as reasonably, it foresees the end of this Age and describes what it will be like. The twelve disciples, sitting with Jesus on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem and listening to him talking about all this, asked him “*Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming (presence), and of the end of the world (Age)?*” (Matt. 24:3) In answer He told them not to expect this very desirable climax at once; there was to be a long catalogue of wars and rumours of wars, nation fighting against nation, famines, pestilences, all manner of calamities “*but the end is not yet.*” (v.6) Nevertheless it would come eventually, and those then living would, if they properly understood these Bible foreviews, recognise the significance of the “signs of the times,” and begin to expect the coming of the new order accordingly. The Gospel must first “*be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*” (Matt. 24:14) Not until the middle of the 19th century could it justly be claimed that the gospel had been preached to “earth’s remotest bound” but by then, or very soon after, the combined labours of churches and missionaries could be shown—and have been shown—to have fulfilled this element of Jesus’ words.

Our Lord was not the only one to see in prospect this cataclysmic ending of the present world order in preparation for the Advent of Christ. Many of the Hebrew prophets, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, did the same. Joel, and Isaiah, and Zechariah, to name but three, in the 8th to 5th centuries before Christ, waxed eloquent with their pen-pictures of this condition of the world with which men are faced today and the coming of Christ to restore order out of chaos. The prophet Daniel, for example, five centuries before Christ, speaking of this time, predicted that “*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*” (Dan. 12:4) The celebrated scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, in the year 1670, writing about this, ventured the opinion that in some future day human achievement would make it possible “to travel at the tremendous speed of forty miles an hour,” for which he was derided. At a time when the most rapid rate of

travel possible was by stagecoach at about ten miles an hour that was natural enough. Within two centuries the advent of steam railways fulfilled the prediction. But not even Sir Isaac dreamed that only one more century would see Concorde crossing the Atlantic at a thousand miles an hour and man travelling the quarter of a million miles to the moon in a few days. As for knowledge being increased, the rapidity of one discovery following another, and one invention superseding its predecessor—there seems to be no end to the inventive genius of the human mind.

But most of this is misused and turned to base ends. The marvels of surgery have lengthened and made more tolerable many blighted lives, but world pollution and commercial food manufacture is shortening many more. Research into the atom has made possible the manufacture of many useful chemical substances, the production of increasingly useful food plants and the treatment of baffling diseases: but it has also given us nuclear fission and the nuclear bomb, with all the horrifying possibilities inherent in that creation. The benefits of the one are more than overshadowed by the menace of the other. It was in foreseeing this that the Lord Jesus, knowing that such a day would surely come, described it in words burning in their intensity. *“There shall be signs...upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity;...men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth:...and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved but...those days shall be shortened.”* (Luke 21:25-26; Matt. 24:22) But as though to assure those who in the end of the Age find themselves face to face with these dark events, He went on to say *“and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption (deliverance) draweth nigh.”* (Luke 21:27-28) It is the recognition that the state of society and the nature of the events of which Jesus and the prophets spoke are those existing today which gives confidence that the great deliverance which they foresaw is in absolute fact imminent. The Day is at hand.

The nature and magnitude of world conditions and recent world events is such that Christian observers familiar with the Divine purposes no longer doubt that the time of the transition from human rule to Divine rule on earth is upon us. Our Lord characterised the principal features of this transition time as comprising universal war, famine and pestilence. Elaborated to a global scale this is just the situation confronting mankind. Since the first world war of 1914-18 the world has never been free from war in one place or another. The destructiveness of military

weaponry has increased a million-fold. For the first time in human history the human race has it within its power to wipe itself off the face of the earth and this not only at the behest of a few politicians ensconced at the top, but almost in the power of every terrorist and, perhaps, experimenting student. Also there are terrorist groups seeking to bring about their own systems of control by force. Individuals with their home computers are already finding it possible to “muscle in” on the sophisticated defensive and offensive systems of the nations, and who knows, could perhaps “trigger off” a cataclysm of nuclear attack which could not be stopped. The final irony of the long history of human invention and achievement could be the destruction of it all by someone irresponsible—if the Lord allowed it. But he will not. That is why He said that except those days be shortened—cut short—there should no flesh be saved. But “*those days shall be shortened.*”

It is possible that the nuclear threat is not the most serious one in the modern world. Increasing alarm is being voiced at the progressive increase in the pollution of the environment. Over half a million different types of pesticides, detergents and poisons, all inimical (harmful) to animal and vegetable life, have been identified in the world’s rivers and seas, all put there by modern man. These substances are steadily destroying marine life and so upsetting the balance of Nature. Acid rain, rainfall contaminated with sulphur dioxide and other toxic chemicals emitted by power stations and large industrial plants, affected farm crops and destroyed buildings in the late 20th century. The steady deforestation of the world at the behest of powerful financial interests, greedy for the timber, and the minerals lying below the forests, has its adverse effect in rainfall and world climate and leads to the creation of vast deserts where life is impossible. The last of the world’s great rain forests, that of the Amazon region in northern Brazil, is now being systemically decimated and few in authority or power cares. Two thousand years ago there was no great desert in northern Africa; there were forests and grasslands teeming with life. The Romans commenced the destruction of the forests and the process has gone on ever since, resulting in the present vast Sahara desert which is already as large as the United States is increasing in size.

Now there is another threat: the climate emergency. The climate has warmed and continues to warm since pre-industrial times. During this century we have noticed milder winters and hotter summers with more flooding caused by heavy rainfall and wind damaging buildings as well as fires and rising sea levels affecting coastal areas. The Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2016 was to keep temperature increases under 2

degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and preferably under 1.5 degrees. This increase is partly driven by increasing carbon emissions which have a central role in how the planet warms and cools according to research by St. Andrews University. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says, “we’ll need to drastically reduce fossil fuel emissions while also removing up to 12 billion metric tons of carbon a year from the atmosphere by mid-century.” At COP29 in Baku in 2024 an executive said “We are a long way off course.”

Another problem is that of over-population. From the beginning of the Christian era to the year AD 1700 it is estimated that the world’s population increased from one hundred million to five hundred millions. In the next two centuries, to AD 1900, it trebled to some 1700 millions. Since then, in just over a century, it has shot up to over eight thousand millions, of whom 10 percent today do not get enough to eat and 30 percent are moderately or severely food insecure according to the WHO. The fault does not lie in the land; there is enough potential food-growing land in the earth to feed a great many more than this present population. The fault lies in the present economic system under which food is grown for private profit and those who cannot pay cannot eat. That leads to the existing immoral system in which Europe and other productive lands build up huge stocks of foodstuffs which cannot be sold and are ultimately destroyed whilst in Africa sporadic famines occur and millions starve to death. Nothing can or will change this system until the coming of Christ to organise earth’s resources on a right and just basis.

So, after the first factor in our Lord’s prediction, war, this fulfils the second, famine. All these things mean famine on a world-wide scale; famine, a sign of the End.

There is a third factor—pestilence. The word usually conjures up visions of typhoid, yellow fever, bubonic plague, raging unchecked through whole communities and carrying many of them away. In past times and among primitive peoples destitute of medical knowledge, that was a fairly frequent occurrence. Modern medicine prides itself on having eliminated many of these scourges. But there is a greater menace which modern medicine is finding increasingly unable to combat, and that is the progressive physical and mental degeneration of the human race. Seven million people died from COVID-19. It took one year for scientists to find some vaccines and longer before vulnerable adults could be fully vaccinated. That may seem a strange thing to say in this day of advanced scientific knowledge and the wonders that doctors and surgeons can do in

combating the ills of humanity. But the odds are against them. Men and women, in the so-called civilised lands anyway, are living longer, but they are becoming increasingly susceptible to ill-health and disease. National health services are being stretched as never before. New and alarming “killer” diseases are making their appearance, diseases not heard of in former times, and the doctors have no antidote. And the reason is becoming apparent. God ordained that food grown in the unpolluted earth should be sustenance for humans, to maintain strength and vigour and life. But the land is no longer unpolluted, and the food it does grow is passed through a long series of manufacturing processes in which it is converted into “convenience foods” or “processed foods” involving little or no labour for its presentation to the table but no one really knows what harm is done by the additives and preservatives and colourings which have been added to it in the process. Now, perhaps too late, official investigation and action is being instituted to decide upon and rectify these demerits, but even so the complexities of the modern competitive system and the sheer magnitude of the problem would seem to offer little hope of righting the situation whilst humans rule themselves. With men and women finding themselves less and less able to cope, relying more and more upon the never-ending stream of drugs which are proffered to cure or alleviate human ills, it may no longer be unthinkable that unless intervention comes from above the prospect before humanity on the score of physical vitality alone is a slow decline from civilisation to barbarism and finally extinction.

Plenty of Christian thinkers and students have known these things. Even in the days immediately after the Apostolic Church there was an eager looking for the promised Second Advent and the dawn of the Millennium—for the two were always associated in Christian minds and for four centuries there was general belief that the event would happen about the year AD 500. Then the Council of Rome under Pope Damasus in AD 382 denounced belief in the coming Millennium as heresy and it was not until the 16th / 17th centuries, following the Reformation, that it came to light again. But from then on, although never formally endorsed by the established Churches, Catholic or Protestant, it began to come into its own, and with that men began to look for those signs in the events of history which would herald its approach.

Those signs began to gather thick and fast. Men began to set dates for the predicted events, based on Bible records and allusions, dates which usually failed. Others, perhaps more far-seeing, drew attention to the historical events of the times and their relation to those predicted in

Scripture. It is a remarkable fact that as far back as the 17th century, expectations began to focus around the late 19th and the entire 20th century. Almost every well-known Christian minister and writer—and many others not so well known—had something to say on this subject. The result was the tremendous upsurge of Second Advent expectation of the 19th century, when on both sides of the Atlantic there were important conferences and the rise of movements devoted to the subject, books and periodicals innumerable. In the year 1880 it was found that in Britain alone seven hundred Church of England ministers were consistently preaching the imminence of the Second Advent from their pulpits. Three at least of these heralds of the coming event had their expectations fulfilled to the year: Dr. Grattan Guinness in 1888 declared (“*Light for the Last Days*”) that the years 1917 and 1923 would be marked by important developments respecting the return of Israel to the Holy Land in fulfillment of prophecy. He did not live to see the day in 1917 when General Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Turks and the Balfour Declaration of the same year promising Palestine as a Homeland for the Jews, nor the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 which ended Turkish sovereignty over Palestine and opened the door to Jewish immigration. Pastor Charles Russell in 1890 in “*Thy Kingdom Come*” pointed to 1914 as the commencement of world disruption preliminary to the coming of the Kingdom of God upon Earth, beginning with a world-wide war which would engulf and weaken the nations. He lived long enough to witness the realisation of his foreview. Earlier in time than either of these was the London minister Robert Fleming, who in his work on Bible Prophecy (“*The Rise and Fall of the Papacy*” 1699) predicted, based on certain Biblical allusions which nowadays may or may not be considered valid methods of interpretation, that there were three significant dates, then still far future, which would prove to be vital marking-points of events associated with the end of this Age and the coming of the Millennium. To begin with, he considered that the year 1794, then still a century future, would mark the commencement of the progressive destruction of the secular and political power of the Papal dominion which ruled Europe for over a thousand years, and 1848 a further step in the process. No one took much notice of that until in the year 1793 the French Revolution broke upon an unsuspecting world, Pope Pius VI was taken captive to France where he died, and the sovereignty of the Popes over Europe outside Italy virtually ended. Political turmoil between France and the Italian States continued until 1848, when an Italian revolution drove Pope Pius IX from Rome and began a series of secessions of the various “Papal States” until by 1870 nothing was left to the Pope but the city of Rome. In that year the forces of King Victor Immanuel captured Rome and made it the capital of

the new united Italy. In the short space of seventy years the Papacy had lost the whole of its thousand-year old empire. The fulfilment of this prediction created profound impressions at the relevant times but the force of that has long since died away.

But in his book Fleming also predicted that *“the Millennium starts immediately after the total and final destruction of Papal Rome in the year 2000.”* It is a fact that although, following the events of 1870, the Lateran Treaty of 1929 between Italy and the Pope gave the latter an area half-a-mile square inside the city of Rome, to be known as Vatican City, so that within this restricted space he could claim the status of a temporal sovereign, by a superseding agreement in 1985 this concession was abrogated. Vatican City is now itself part of the Italian Republic, Rome no longer to be designated the “Holy City,” and there is no longer any claim of Papal sovereignty. He was not right.

Thus all the evidence of Christian students over the past three centuries is that this 20th century was part of the time of the end. That such an end, and such a change for the better in all the affairs of men must and will come, is stressed in the Scriptures. The outward evidence that the world condition foreseen so many centuries ago by the Bible writers is at this present time a reality gives reasonable grounds for certainty that “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” It could burst upon the world at any time.

Perhaps one of the most telling descriptions of that coming day is that penned by the prophet Isaiah in his 32nd chapter. He speaks of Christ reigning as king over a restored and renovated earth in which the twin keynotes are righteousness and peace. *“Behold,”* he says *“a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice. Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest...then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will hearken. The mind of the rash will have good judgment, and the tongue of the stammerers will speak readily and distinctly. The fool will no more be called noble, nor the knave said to be honourable...the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”* (vv.1-5,15-20 RSV) For God has declared *“As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with [my] glory.”* (Num. 14:21)

*To be continued
AOH updated 2025*

SARAI—PRINCESS WITH GOD

She was born and brought up with a family devoted to the worship of the Moon-god. Her name, Sarai, or Sarratu in her native tongue, was a title of the Moon-goddess, consort of the Moon-god to which her native city, Ur of the Chaldees, was dedicated. Her sister's name, Milcah, Malkatu in the native tongue, was a title of the goddess Ishtar, the planet Venus. Her grandfather's name, Tarakhu, which is Terah in Hebrew, means sacred to the Moon-god. Her uncle's name, Abu-ramu, in Hebrew Abram, whom she married, was a title of the Moon-god himself. When Joshua told Israel that Terah and his forebears dwelt on the other side of Euphrates in old time, and served other gods, (Josh. 24:2 RVIC), he had access to sources of knowledge no longer existing, but he spoke truth. Terah was an idolator; he worshipped and served the gods of the Sumerians and Akkadians, the apostate sons of Ham and of Shem in the land where still stood the Tower of Babel. The faith of his ancestors, of Shem and Eber and Peleg, meant nothing to him. So, his sons Haran and Nahor and Abram grew up to be idolators too, and when Haran died at an early age and his brothers married his two daughters, they continued in their devotions to Sin the Moon-god of Ur.

There came a time when Abram and his wife Sarai turned away from that idolatrous worship and found God. The circumstances of that finding we do not know. Jewish traditions speak of Abram looking first at the sun in the heavens, visible symbol of the sun-god Marduk, and watching it set, and realised there was no god there; then beholding the moon in the evening, visible symbol of the Moon-god Sin, seeing it also hastening to its setting, and knew that Sin was no god either. Then he began to realise that God was transcendently beyond all these visible things and yielded his adoration, and so God revealed himself to him. It may have been like that. Perhaps though he read in the ancient records of his family of men who long ages before had walked with God, of Enoch, of Noah, of Shem, and so accepted the faith his own father and grandfather had rejected. However, it came about, when Sarai appears upon the stage of Bible history, she is already a woman devoted to God, her past life of idolatry behind her, and only her name as a reminder—and in due time God changed that name.

Abram was probably about fifty years of age when God called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to a land that He would show him, and Sarai ten years younger. Her father Haran was already dead—he was seventy years old when she was born. But Terah her grandfather was still

alive, and it must have been under his direction that the family settled in the Syrian town of Haran some six hundred miles from Ur instead of continuing the remaining four hundred miles into Canaan. The reason is not difficult to perceive. Haran was the other great city of the far-flung empire of the sons of Shem which was also sacred to the Moon-god. Whatever it was that decided Terah to leave Ur with his family it was not dissatisfaction with his idolatry; he settled in another city where he could practise it still.

There was probably another reason. Certain indications point to the district of Haran as the original homeland of Abraham's ancestors. Four successive names in the family line, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Haran (Gen. 11:20-26) are those of ancient towns in that area; in fact, the town of Haran, where Abraham settled awhile, is still in existence today! It almost seems as if these men were named in memory of the homeland from which the family came, perhaps in the days of Eber or earlier. Terah may have felt he was coming back to his own.

Twenty-five years later Terah died and Abram, now free to please himself, immediately set out for Canaan. Thus Sarai, who all her life had been accustomed to the amenities and refinements of the civilisation in which she had been born—for Haran, today little more than a village, was at that time, like Ur, a wealthy and highly civilised city with all the luxuries that heart could desire—had now to face the life of a nomadic cattle breeder's wife. Henceforth for the rest of her hundred and twenty-seven years she was for the most part to dwell in tents.

It says much for Sarai's character that she thus embraced a life which must have been irksome in the extreme. From now on she must follow her husband wherever he went, wandering through Canaan from Sichem (Gen. 12:6 aka Shechem) to Moreh and from Moreh to Bethel and from Bethel to Beersheba and from Beersheba into Egypt and then all the way back again to Bethel and then to Hebron and then to Kadesh and Shur and Gerar on the way to Egypt once more and then back to Beersheba and finally to Hebron where she died. Abraham had his fixed faith in the promise of God to sustain him but what had Sarai? Not even the child of promise through whom all families of the earth were to be blessed, for as yet she was still barren and no real hope that a child could ever be born! There were times when even her husband, with all his reputed faith in God, failed her. Within five years of entering Canaan, they were driven by famine to emigrate to Egypt, and it was here, at seventy years of age, that her beauty attracted the attention of the royal court, and the ruling Pharaoh

of the time exercised the customary rights of ancient kings and took her into his harem on the strength of Abram's assertion that she was his sister. Abram had feared that the Egyptians would kill him to secure possession of Sarai had they known of the true relationship, but he need not have been apprehensive. As soon as the truth was known, Pharaoh restored him his wife with a well-deserved reproach for having deceived him. But it must have been a trying time for Sarai.

Another five years and Sarai gave up hope of a child. To what extent she shared her husband's faith in the Divine promise of an heir who would be the seed of the promise does not readily appear; perhaps her interest lay more in the direction of a son who would inherit Abram's now not inconsiderable estate. Her chagrin was probably not mitigated by the fact that her younger brother Lot had now become the father of two daughters. At any rate she decided to invoke the law of the land of her birth, one that was customary in such cases. She would give her husband one of her own slave-girls, and the fruit of that union would be counted as her own son and become Abram's legal heir. The girl selected was one they had acquired when in Egypt and brought back with them; although described in Genesis as an Egyptian, the name Hagar is a Hebrew one and it is very possible that Hagar was of Semitic birth and therefore racially akin to Abram and not true Egyptian, descended from Ham. Semitic infiltration into Egypt was very pronounced at the time and there is nothing improbable in this.

The plan miscarried. Hagar became the mother of a boy all right, much to Abram's delight and satisfaction, but, not unnaturally, Sarai became exceedingly jealous. Even before the child was born, she "took it out" on Hagar, who thereupon ran away and only returned after being urged by the angel of the Lord, who had found her lost in the wilderness. Another aspect of Sarai's character, and an unpleasant one, came to light; it is probable that for the next fourteen years the household was not a happy one and Abram must have been hard put to it at times to keep the peace.

But the longest road has its turning. At ninety years of age, long after Sarai had abandoned all hope, the unbelievable happened. She was to become a mother! A year previously, the angel of the Lord had appeared to them both and announced that the promise of the Lord, which never fails, was about to be fulfilled. As indication that a momentous happening was in prospect the Lord had already changed their names. Abram with its pagan association was gone, replaced by Abraham, which means father of many people. The Sumerian Sarai, goddess of the moon, was gone and

replaced by Sarah, which in Hebrew is Princess. So, God's Princess bore to the father of many peoples Isaac, the child of promise, through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed—for of Isaac according to the flesh came Christ the son of David. Sarah knew nothing of all this but to whatever extent she shared her husband's faith in the promises of God she must have been conscious of an abounding happiness that she had at last been brought within the sphere of the purposes of God.

Sadly, however, the old jealousy asserted itself. At the ceremonial feast associated with the weaning of Isaac, Sarah happened to see Ishmael, the fourteen-year-old son of Hagar "mocking" (Gen. 21:9). The word here used, "*tsachaq*," has the meaning of playing, sporting, jesting or laughing light-heartedly. Instances are Exod. 32:6 where the people "rose up to play." Judg. 16:25 where Samson "made sport" and Gen. 26:8 where Isaac was "sporting with" his wife. In this case it would seem that Ishmael was "larking about," as we would say, with the child Isaac. The sight reminded Sarah that the presence of Ishmael could be a threat to her own son's supremacy. By law, Isaac was the undisputed heir but knowing of her husband's fondness for his elder son, she may have feared the outcome. At any rate, she demanded of Abraham that he banish both Hagar and Ishmael from the family home, for, said she scornfully, "the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." (Gen. 21:10) Abraham was reluctant, but in the end, he gave in, and the pair were expelled—probably only to some distant part of Abraham's far-flung estate, for when Abraham died Ishmael and Isaac joined together in the burial ceremonies. It seems that the antagonism was only on the part of Sarah, and it is a sad reflection on her character.

So far as is known, Sarah had no more children. Something like fifteen years after Isaac's birth came news of her sister Milcah (Gen. 22:20) who since they had separated back in Ur some sixty-five years earlier had given birth to eight sons—one of whom was father of Rebekah, one day to be Isaac's bride. That news did nothing to improve her obviously jealous nature. It would be about this time that Abraham took the concubines mentioned in Gen. 25:6. Later on, after Sarah's death, he married Keturah—probably a young woman of his household—and by her had another six sons. He must have been about 160 years of age when he fathered the last one. (vv.1-2)

Sarah died at Hebron at a hundred and twenty-seven years of age. The account in Gen. 23:2 says, "*Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.*" One wonders if that phrase infers that they were no longer

NOTICES

For those who wish to keep the memorial of our Lord's death at the time nearest the anniversary, it is suggested that this year **Friday 11 April 2025 (14 Nisan) after 6 p.m.** is the appropriate date and time.

Warrington Class Convention
Easter Sunday 20 April 2025
Crick Village Hall,
 Bucknills Lane, Crick, Nr. Rugby NN6 7SX

Bible Students Seminar Day
 Saturday 24 May 2025
 Tring area

Bible Students Fellowship Conference 2025

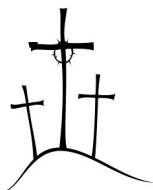
High Leigh Conference Centre,
 Lord Street, Hoddesdon
 EN11 8SG, U.K.

Wednesday 13–Sunday 17 August 2025

living together, or merely that possible ill-health confined her to her tent in Hebron whilst Abraham toured the land seeing to his many interests. It was, anyway, a quiet and inconspicuous ending. A complex character, capable of great endurance and faithfulness on the one hand but fiercely intolerant and jealous of any threat to her own interests. As with all of us, Sarah had qualities to admire and faults to deprecate. The writer to the Hebrews says that Sarah received strength to conceive seed by the power of faith and because she trusted in the verity of God's promise. That does not show up so well in the Old Testament account, but it could well be true. When the angel told Abraham of the coming child Sarah "laughed" in the tent behind him, and when taxed denied that she had laughed "*because she was afraid.*" (Gen. 18:12-15 AMP) But that "laugh," like Ishmael "mocking" is *tsachaq* and could mean that she laughed light heartedly and only semi-disbelievingly. Perhaps the realisation of faith in the promise came a few hours later when she had time to think about it a little.

Sarah commenced life an idolator, amid all the luxury and glitter of a pagan civilisation which offered all the good things of this life, without God. She ended her life in a nomad's tent after long years of hardship, disappointment and frustration, but immeasurably richer in her possession of the Divine favour and the honour of being a channel through whom the seed of blessing all families of the earth will come. The proud city of Ur has long since crumbled to dust, Sarah the princess lives in the gallery of faith for ever. (Heb. 11:11)

AOH



Lord, think through me!

Lord, think through me! My thoughts, like slaves,
Are trapped in treadmills of unrest;
Your thoughts rise freely heavenwards
As homing pigeons to their nest.

Lord, speak through me! My words, like barbs,
Destroy and wound with spikes of thorn;
Your words with penetrating power
Alone can soften hearts of stone.

Lord, pray through me! My prayers, like moles,
Go burrowing blindly in the dark;
Your prayers fly straight and target-true
And swift as arrows to their mark.

Lord, love through me! This feeble flame
Now brightly flickers, then it dies;
Your burning love must melt my heart
To incandescent sacrifice.

Lord, live through me! For I have died,
Died with my Saviour on the Tree;
And now the only life I know
Is Your new life lived out in me.



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