Articles by John Boyd

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The Messianic Psalms (May–June 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, May–June 1971.

Editor's note: This is the eighth article by Dr. John Boyd, Hollywood, Ireland, on the Messianic Psalms. We have always appreciated the Doctor's written ministry, and consider these articles an excellent contribution to an understanding of these prophecies concerning Christ.

(8) Psalm 41

Messiah - The Betrayed One

The historical setting of this Psalm seems to have been the time of Absalom's conspiracy, when David was grieved to learn that the chief counsellor, Ahithophel, had treacherously sided with his enemies. The title is the same as that of Psalm 40. Both Psalms seem to be closely linked together. Here it would seem that David had been afflicted with a serious illness, and as a result his judgment of Israel had become slack (2 Sam. 15: 2-3). This gave Absalom his chance to intrude into the work of judging the nation, and as a consequence he drew towards him the affections of the people. David, still a sick man, appeals to God amidst the false sympathy he was receiving from men whom he knew to be secretly hoping that he would never rise again. But the greatest blow he received was when he learned of Ahithophel's desertion.

Whilst Psalm 41 was David's expression of disappointment in a time of perplexity, it was written under the direction of the Holy Spirit with a definite

Messianic intention. The Lord Jesus Christ in John 13:18 applied the words of v. 9 to the action of Judas Iscariot in betraying Him to the chief priests (Luke 22:4). This was the portion of the Old Testament referred to in John 17:12 as being fulfilled in the person of Judas whom the Lord designated the son of perdition. This was the Scripture which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus (Acts 1:16).

The Psalm is divided into four stanzas, (1) vv. 1-3, Messiah's Confidence in God, (2) vv. 4-6, The Defamation of Messiah, (3) vv. 7-9, The Conspiracy against Messiah, (4) vv. 10-12, Messiah's Appeal to God. Verse 13 does not properly belong to the Psalm, but is rather the closing doxology to the First Book of the Psalms. Let us now examine the Psalm in more detail.

Stanza 1

Messiah's Confidence in God vv. 1-3

David gives us his impressions of God's regard for the man who looks with compassion on the needy. Poor means rather one who is weak and needing assistance (Judg. 6:15). The man who helps such will himself receive a seven-fold blessing from God, Deliverance from his enemies in an evil day. David was even then passing through such a time. Trouble (v.1) is the same word as evil (v.5); Preservation from harm; (3) Long life, instead of the premature death his opponents wished for (v.8); (4) Earthly happiness and prosperity; (5) No fear of being betrayed to his enemies; (6) Support and strength when weakness compels him to lie down on his couch;

(7) Comfort when ill. David in his present illness felt the need of all these blessings.

The Lord on the Cross, in the midst of His sufferings, and surrounded by enemies, expressed such confidence in His God; He had ever considered the poor. In Psalm 22 He confessed His dependence upon God; God was holy (v.3); He was the God of deliverance (v.5); God was His continual trust (vv. 9-10); God was his succourer (v. 19). Yet the blessings of vv. 1-3 had been withheld from Christ. The Lord realized that the fathers of Israel had been delivered, yet on the Cross He had been forsaken of God (v. 1). For Him there was no deliverance, no answer (v.2, R.V.), no strength (v.15), no rest (v.4, R.V., marg.). Such was God's dealing with His Son when carrying out the work of our redemption. God had laid on Him the iniquity of us all; He had made Him to be sin for us.

Stanza 2

The Defamation of Messiah vv. 4-6

This stanza finds David in his bed-chamber of suffering. His enemies came to visit him, but instead of sympathizing, they spoke words that distressed and worried him. David sought the mercies of God outlined in vv. 1-3, and in doing so confessed that his sin had been responsible for his illness. His enemies regarded his sickness as leading inevitably to death. That was their wish. They seemed to express it in his presence - not cheerful conversation with a sick man. But his enemy had visited him with ulterior motives, (a) speaking falsehood (R.V., marg.) - professing love, whilst there was enmity in his heart, (b) picking up information

to use against David, (c) misconstruing his words and actions, (d) going away and spreading false rumours about his condition. These all possibly had reference to Absalom himself.

In the first part of this stanza it is difficult to see Messiah. Never in His first sojourn on earth, to which this Psalm applies, did He confess sin. On the contrary He challenged men to convict Him of sin (John 8:46). But here it would seem that He asked for mercy; He sought for the healing of His soul for sorrow had overtaken Him, the Man of Sorrows. He acknowledged His sin; this sin was the sin of the world which He as the Lamb of God was bearing in His own body on the tree. So identified was He with our sin that He confessed it as His own. His only bed-chamber of suffering was Calvary. His experience there was due to sin - our sin. A similar expression to this, "I have sinned," is rendered in Genesis 43:9 "Let me bear the blame." Does this infer that the Lord on the Cross was making Himself answerable for our sins?

The enemies of Christ continually spoke evil of Him. They plotted His death, and from the Cross they saw no deliverance for Him. They hoped and expected that His name would perish for ever. False witnesses testified against Him at His trial. The Pharisees and Herodians and Sadducees united in visiting Him with the ulterior motive of entangling Him in His talk that they might encompass His death. They hypocritically questioned Him that they might have wherewith to accuse Him before Pilate (Matt. 22:15. Luke 20:20). The chief priests and scribes and elders mocked Him at Calvary. They challenged Him to come down from the Cross, and affirmed that God would not deliver Him finding no

delight in Him who had claimed to be the son of God (Matt. 27:41-43).

Stanza 3

The Conspiracy Against Messiah vv. 7-9

Here David passes from the sick-chamber to the secret gatherings of the conspirators. In verse 4 it would seem as though Absalom was chiefly present to his mind, but in v.9 it was Ahithophel. Away from his bed-chamber his enemies had made his absence an occasion to plot against him in secret. They whispered together their impressions of his illness, and their hopes concerning its outcome, but not publicly lest David should get to hear of them for they still feared him. They hoped that it was an incurable, evil disease, literally, a thing of Belial - worthlessness, that had been poured out on him (v.8, R.V., marg.). This they interpreted from his confession of sin (v.4). His depression as seen in the request for his soul to be healed, they interpreted as his approaching death.

To David the "most unkindest cut of all" was that Ahithophel had treacherously defected to his enemies. David gives us a three-fold presentation of Ahithophel, (1) A familiar friend, literally the man of his peace, the man with whom he had ever been on good terms, (2) A man in whom the king had trusted for advice, (3) One whom David honoured with the privilege of eating at his table, not merely as a guest, but as one subsisting on the bounty of his household (2 Sam. 9:11). Yet what saddened David was that one so intimate should desert him in his hour of trial when support and advice were most needed. Lifting up the heel is an allegorical

representation of a horse kicking his master. Thus did David depict Ahithophel's betrayal.

The picture presented in this stanza amply sets forth the experience of Messiah. The Lord taught that this Scripture had been fulfilled in His relationship with Judas (John 13:18). Jesus had been the victim of much secret plotting in the closing days of His first sojourn on earth (Matt. 26:4, John 11:47-53). Men regarded Him as one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted for blasphemous assertions (Mk. 14:64). Their wish for His death was father to the thought. But the Lord was greatly distressed over His betrayal by Judas (John 13:21), just as David had expressed his grief at Ahithophel's defection.

Ahithophel and Judas had much in common. Both had been treated well; both were in a position of trust; both treacherously deserted their benefactors; both lived to see their counsel despised, and to regret their actions; both came to a sinister end - suicide by hanging. Yet there are two points of contrast between Ahithophel and Judas. The Lord did not quote the whole of v.9 in designating His betrayer; He did not call Judas His "own familiar friend;" he was not the man of His peace; he was a devil (John 6:70). Nor did Jesus describe the son of Iscariot as one in whom He had trusted, for He knew what was in man, and did not trust Himself unto him (John 2:24-25); He knew whom He had chosen. He knew that Judas would betray Him (John 13:11, 18).

Stanza 4

Messiah's Appeal to God vv. 10-12

David continued his prayer of v.4, and asked for recovery from his illness for three reasons, (1) To deal with the conspiracy. This would dispel his enemies' hope that he had been appointed unto death (v.8). He desired to requite them in order that God's honour might be vindicated for God had set David in authority over them. (2) To be assured of God's favour. This he would appreciate if God did not permit his enemies to triumph over him. (3) To know that God had acknowledged his integrity in his claim to have ever considered the poor (v.1), and had set him before His face. The eyes of the Lord are ever towards the righteous (Ps. 34:15).

The Lord on the Cross prayed to be delivered, not from dying, but out of death, that is, in resurrection (Heb. 5:7, R.V.m.). This He did that He might thereafter vindicate God's honour, and bring to pass the righteous recompense that He had promised to those who had refused God's King on earth. The kingdom of God would be taken from them, and given to a people bringing forth the fruit thereof (Matt. 21:43). This was not calling for vengeance on those who had inflicted suffering on Him at Calvary. For those He had prayed forgiveness (Luke 23:34).

Messiah realized that if God raised Him from the dead it would express the Father's delight in Him and in His work on Calvary. The resurrection would be the greatest manifestation of triumph over His enemies - death (2 Tim. 1:10), and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). His opponents at Calvary said that God would express delight in His Son if He delivered

Him from the Cross (Matt. 27:43), but the Lord knew that if God allowed Him to experience death, and then raised Him from the dead, it would more effectively demonstrate the divine pleasure.

Christ's integrity was upheld when He ascended into glory, and was set down by God at the right hand of the Majesty on High - before the face of His Father's glory.

What a triumphant consummation of Messiah's work on Calvary! He has suffered for our sins, and has entered into His glory. On earth He was despised; He was rejected; He was forsaken; He was ignominiously betrayed by the hand of one of His disciples. Yet in Heaven He was received with glory, and given the seat of honour at God's right hand. There He is worshipped, the Great High Priest of His people, the centre of heavenly worship, and the constant admiration of His Father.

Verse 13 is separated from the Psalm, not being a part of it, but intended as a doxolgy at the end of the First Book of the Psalms (1-41). Yet it is a fitting anthem of praise in this Psalm which depicts the sorrow of the betrayed Messiah, and His complete acceptance by God in the seat of honour in Heaven.

"Jesus, in His heav'nly temple,

Sits with God upon the throne;

Now no more to be forsaken,

His humiliation gone."

The Messianic Psalms (July–August 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, July–August 1971.

Editor's note: Dr. John Boyd is a Specialist in Medicine. He practises in Belfast, Ireland. In spite of his many duties, he makes time for precise biblical studies. His present contribution is the result of his research in regard to the Messianic Psalms. This is the ninth in the series.

(9) Psalm 45

Messiah - The Coming Glorious King

In vain do we search the annals of history for such a king as is described in Psalm 45. The glory of Gentile world-rulers is far surpassed here. No monarch of Israel fits this picture. None save Christ, God's coming King, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, is portrayed in this poem. To Him the Holy Spirit applies it.

The Psalmist tells us that his heart had been inditing, a good matter. In effect he says, "The subject of my meditation is so thrilling that my heart is overflowing; it is bubbling over; it is bursting to express its delight. My poem, The things which I have made, is about the coming victorious King, the majestic sovereign Lord of the universe, and about His resplendent coronation. Because of this lofty theme my tongue seems to be running away with me."

In the title instructions are given to the Chief Musician to handle this important Psalm himself for the choral

service of the temple. 'Shoshannim' (lit., lilies) may mean the name of the tune to which it is set, or it may refer to a six-stringed instrument corresponding to the six leaves of the lily. This is one of eleven Psalms written by the sons of Korah. Maschil means "for teaching." It is described as a "song of loves," the plural of majesty, that is, a song of pure love.

This is the Psalmist's introduction. Between it and the epilogue (v. 17) we have seven stanzas, each presenting a different glory of Messiah the King. Let us examine these stanzas, that we, too, might praise the King.

Stanza 1 The Glory of Messiah's Person (v. 2)

Messiah is endowed with a beauty above all others. At His first advent men found nothing to admire in Him; He was despised by them; He was a Man of Sorrows; His visage was so marred more than any man. But when He comes the second time men will marvel at His beauty. Even kings shall shut their mouths in astonishment, for there will be none to compare with Him. He is the altogether lovely One, the chiefest among ten thousand.

His beauty is moral as well as physical. In Him there is no fault, no flaw, no sin. Only perfection is seen in Him.

Wonderful, wonderful Jesus!

Who can compare with Thee.

Fairer than all the fairest,

Jesus art Thou to me.

As an example of His surpassing beauty the Psalmist draws attention to His lips. His speech is grace, or graciousness. His words of grace that produced wonder at His first advent (Luke 4:22) will be much more in

evidence when He comes again. From His lips will drop the sweet smelling myrrh of fragrant words. From the excellence of His personal appearance the Psalmist expresses his assured conviction thus the eternal blessing of God is His portion.

Stanza 2 The Glory of Messiah's Conquest (vs. 3-5)

Here we see the conquering Messiah coming to deliver Israel in response to their cry (Ps. 44:26). The King is called upon to prepare for battle. The sword, the emblem of war, girded on His thigh indicates that Messiah has taken up the challenge of the nations. Then will be displayed His might, and His Glory, and His majesty. These were veiled at His first advent, but then, to the utter consternation of His enemies, they will be manifested in all their fulness. His might is the might of God (Isa. 9:6). With His sword He will smite the nations, and tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God (Rev. 19:15).

As He comes forth a scene of unparalleled majesty and splendour will burst upon an astounded universe; it will dazzle every eye; it will startle the nations; it will shut the mouths of kings; it will bring to nought the design of all His enemies; it will proclaim Him 'KING OF KINGS' (Rev. 19:16).

Thus arrayed in His majesty Messiah goes from triumph to triumph. None can withstand Him. He will be the Champion of those who have maintained the truth. He has come to vindicate the meek, and to reward the righteous. In this conquest His right hand, that is, His mighty power, will cause terror in the hearts of His enemies, who will call on the mountains and rocks to fall

upon them. The King is seen alone in His conquest. Though He will be accompanied by the armies of Heaven, His own arm will bring salvation. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:11).

In v. 5 the Psalmist describes in three short sentences, as in R.V., the terrible havoc wrought amongst the King's enemies. His arrows are sharp; they cause a mighty slaughter; they never fail in their deadly mission, for each one finds its man. Israel's foes are those of Israel's King; He will contend with the peoples gathered against Jerusalem to battle; He will utterly destroy those nations.

Stanza 3 The Glory of Messiah's Reign (vs. 6-7)

The character of Messiah's reign is now outlined its perpetuity and impartial justice. Messiah is addressed as God. The Holy Spirit cites these verses in Hebrews 1:8-9, and refers them to the Lord Jesus Christ. The everlasting duration of His kingdom also indicates that He is God. Some expositors take the first 'God' in v. 7 to be a vocative, a further affirmation of Messiah's Deity.

Here at last is God's ideal king, One whose rule takes its pattern from His character. He loves righteousness, and hates lawlessness in others. And so He rules with impartial justice - the same laws for all men. The Psalmist glories in this administration, in its superiority to that of any other king, and in its perpetuity. He rejoices because that which is perfect will be permanent.

On account of the King's love of righteousness, God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows, that is, above all other kings who had ruled in Israel

before Him. This is not the anointing of consecration to an office, but the anointing of honour, as seen in John 12:3. So God will honour Christ. The gladness emanating from Messiah's reign will mark Him out as being infinitely superior to all other kings. He is King of kings.

Stanza 4 The Glory of Messiah's Court (vs. 8-9)

The Psalmist now approaches his main theme, the marriage of the all-conquering King. This he introduces by describing the glory and unparalleled splendour at Messiah's court the glory of His garments, of His palaces, of His music, of His attendants, and of His queen. Messiah's garments will be so fragrant as to appear to be woven wholly from costly spices - myrrh, aloes, cassia. Messiah's palaces will be built of ivory, suggesting solidity and beauty. Ivory was the material of choice for the houses of the rich. From these palaces, so resplendent in dazzling white, will drift the strains of the soft music of stringed instruments, enhancing the atmosphere of sweet contentment manifest everywhere, and gladdening the heart of the King. Messiah's attendants, His honourable women, who run to do His bidding, will be the elect of the earth, those of the Gentile nations who favoured Israel in the day of her rejection. They are the sheep of Matthew 25:33, here seen inheriting the kingdom.

In completing his description of the glories of this court scene, the Psalmist draws our attention to the queen - Israel - regathered, regenerated, restored. Her days of mourning are now ended, and, fully justified, she has finally inherited the Land of Promise. The queen stands at Messiah's right hand, the place of honour. There,

adorned with the gold of all the nations, she adds another to the accumulated glories of her Bridegroom, the great Millennial King. The whole scene resplendent and beautiful.

Everything with "Glory!"

Stanza 5 The Glory of Messiah's Bride (vs. 10-12)

Before describing the marriage in detail, the Psalmist directs an exhortation to the bride. He addresses her as "daughter," a title so often given to Israel in the Old Testament. He uses three words to compel her attention, Hearken, Consider, Incline thine ear. She is required to separate herself from all the past, to cease from glorying in her ancestors, and to forget her heritage the better to devote her energies and thoughts entirely to her new relationship. Israel, as the bride of Messiah, will in the day of her espousals cease to boast in "the fathers." Abraham will be forgotten, for Messiah has priority over him; Jacob will be forgotten, for the greater than Jacob has come; Moses will be forgotten, for the Son over the House is now present, and is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, the servant in the house. The memory of the greatest kings of Israel's palmy days will fade in the light of the splendour of the great Millennial King, for "great David's greater Son," the greater than Solomon is come to reign. Thus Israel will cease to glory in her traditions, being amazed by the surpassing greatness and excellencies of her glorious Bridegroom.

In that day the nations of the earth will pay their respects to Israel. The term 'daughter of Tyre' is used of the nations who will honour Israel because of her alliance with the great King, and because of the position

of blessing into which He will bring her. Even the richest of the nations will entreat her favour. What a change for Israel! Instead of being a despised and hated people, her friendly regard will be courted by all.

The Messianic Psalms (September–October 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, September–October 1971.

Editor's note: This is the concluding stanza of Psalm 45 in the expository articles covering the Messianic Psalms by Dr. John Boyd, Hollywood, Ireland. What a preview of Messiah's eventual glory! The next article deals with Psalm OD [?].

Stanza 6 The Glory of Messiah's Marriage (vs. 13-15)

The Psalmist goes on to describe the wedding. The bride is first seen preparing for the marriage in her own apartments, in the inner part of the palace (R.V. [?] marg.). She is called "the King's daughter" to denote her relationship to God, and the dignity of her election. As she stands there ready, her glory shines forth. Words worthy of the Bridegroom's description are applied to the bride, "all glorious." As an indication of this glory one item is particularized her clothing. This is gorgeous and resplendent with threads of gold interwoven in it, marking the position of honour to which she has been raised by virtue of her union to Messiah.

In v. 14 we see the bridal procession. The queen is at the head, going forward to meet the King. Again her apparel is described as broidered work, suggesting a rich display of colour, worked with infinite patience. Does this refer to the Tribulation through which Israel has just passed, having produced in her those beauties which only oppression and chastening can yield?

Following the queen in the retinue come "the virgins her companions" - those Gentile nations who, having heeded the Gospel of the Kingdom, are now to share the blessings of that Kingdom. These nations are called her companions for they had helped Israel in her distress. Now in her train they are being brought to the King for they are bidden to the marriage feast.

As the procession moves on, winding its way into the shining ivory palaces, the Psalmist paints a picture of great delight, of gladness and rejoicing. There Israel and the faithful nations will dwell with Christ, and enjoy Millennial bliss.

Stanza 7 The Glory of Messiah's Offspring (v. 16)

One result of the marriage will be the glory of the offspring. In the past the kings of Israel could only boast in their fathers. They rejoiced to look back on the prosperous and glorious days of David and Solomon. But how their children would turn out they knew not. So often these brought shame and disgrace upon the father's fair name. In contradiction the fruit of the union of Messiah and Israel will be a princely and spiritual progeny. With them will Messiah rule over the nations; they will rejoice in Christ their King; they will shew forth His excellencies; they will bring everlasting glory to His name.

In the epilogue (v. 17) the Psalmist tells us of his purpose in writing the Psalm - to keep continually before future generations the name and fame of this all-glorious King. He has set down for a permanent record the overflowing of his heart's contemplation of the great King. It will evoke an outburst of praise, admiration and

thanksgiving from the peoples of the earth to the long-expected Messiah of the Jews. This has been the portion of myriads who have found great joy in meditating upon this Psalm. They have oft expressed their delight in its sentiments as they look forward in joyful anticipation to that grand day when the King of kings will come into His own.

Shall not we who have been redeemed by sovereign grace join our tribute of praise to His wonderful name? The coming coronation of Messiah will be a sight of matchless splendour. Let us for a little while turn our hearts and minds away from ourselves, from our privileged position, from our blessings, from even our prospects, bright though they may be, and fix them upon the coming glory of God's great King, upon that day when

"The beauty of the Saviour shall dazzle every eye,

In the crowning day that's coming, by-and-by."

This is a theme most worthy of our meditation. It rejoices our hearts to know that our Saviour and Lord will one day reign in glorious majesty over the whole earth, with a magnificence unparalleled in the history of mankind. He who had been rejected and despised will then take supreme control - His rightful place at last. May we be enabled by faith to anticipate that day! May we hear something of the praises that will ascend to Him as He is "worshipped, glorified, adored" by a wondering universe!

"Hark! those loud triumphant chords.

Jesus takes the highest station.

Oh what joy the sight affords!

Crown Him, Crown Him,

King of kings, and Lord of lords."

The Messianic Psalms: Psalm 69 – Messiah, the Reproached One (November–December 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, November–December 1971.

Editor's note: Dr. John Boyd, Hollywood, Ireland, continues his meditations on the Messianic Psalms. Here in Psalm 69 he indicates the sufferings of Christ and the glory that eventually will be revealed.

Psalm 69: Messiah - The Reproached One

The superscription of this Psalm is like that of Psalm 45. The Chief Musician must conduct it publicly. Shoshannim (lit., lilies) was possibly the name of a tune to which it was set, or it may be that Shoshannim was a lily-like instrument.

Psalm 69 may fairly be classified as Messianic. It was written by David, and while some refer it to his trials when hunted by Saul, the historical books record no comparable experience in David's life. It would seem rather to be one of those portions described by Peter as a prior testimony of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (I Pet. 1:10-12). Three of the five citations from the Psalm in the New Testament refer directly to the Lord in the days of His flesh, viz. verse 4a in John 15:25, verse 9a in John 2:17, verse 9b in Romans 15:3. The other two citations refer to those who opposed Jesus on earth, verse 22 in Romans 11:9, v. 25 in Acts 1:20.

Despite these undoubted Messianic references some find difficulty in applying to Christ a Psalm that contains

so many imprecations. These passages in the Psalms present a real problem. Let us bear in mind that they were written prophetically under the guidance of the Holy Spirit concerning the future doom of impenitent ones, and denote the final and irrevocable wrath of God whose mercy and love have been despised. We ought reverently to adore the justice of God as well as His love and mercy. Viewed in this light, imprecations should not prevent us from seeing Christ in the Psalm.

Nor should verse 5 be a stumbling-block. It is not a confession of sins so much as an expression of confidence in God who knows all about Him, despite what others may lay to His charge.

This Psalm was fulfilled at Calvary. Many things on that occasion correspond with what is written here, e.g., verse 7 - reproach and shame (Luke 23:35), verse 20 - desertion (Mt. 26:56), verse 21 - the offering of gall (Mt. 27:34) and vinegar (Mt. 27:48).

The Psalm is divided into seven stanzas, I Messiah's Suffering (vs. 1-6), II Messiah's Reproach (vs. 7-12), III Messiah's Prayer (vs. 13-18), IV Messiah's Plight (vs. 19-21), V Messiah's Vindication (vs. 22-28), VI Messiah's Thanksgiving (vs. 29-33), VII Messiah's Inheritance (vs. 34-36). Let us examine these.

Stanza 1: Messiah's Suffering (vs. 1-6)

Verses 1-3 describe the experience of a soul going into death. It is like being overwhelmed in a flood; finding no sure foundation for the feet; the body moisture drying up; the eyes growing dim. Such was Messiah's experience on Calvary.

Messiah then thinks of His enemies; they were numerous and powerful; they had no reason to hate Him for He had ever blessed them; they wrongfully sought to destroy Him (Mk. 14:56). At Calvary the Lord restored what He had not taken away; He made satisfaction for wrongs He had never done. What Adam by his sin forfeited, Christ restored. Adam forfeited the right to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24); Christ restored that privilege (Rev. 2:27). Because of Adam's sin, death had passed on all men (Rom. 5:12); through Christ grace reigns unto eternal life (Rom. 5:21). Through Adam came the condemnation of death; through Christ came justification of life (Rom. 5:18). It may be that Messiah here also refers to the restoration of creation (Acts 3:21), and to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

In verse 5 Messiah calls on God to witness His causeless sufferings from His enemies. Nothing is hidden from God who would know if by reason of folly or sins He had given men cause to afflict Him. It may be that here the Lord reminds God that sins He bore were those of man laid upon Him, and confessed as His own. He prays that His experience of groundless suffering may not discourage or deter those faithful ones who like Him seek God and wait on Him.

Stanza 2: Messiah's Reproach (vs. 7-12)

The reproach that men heaped upon Messiah is now detailed. Reproach is exposure to open shame, a stripping, either literal or metaphorical - the taking away of one's character in taunts and railings. In the words of verse 7, "For Thy sake I have borne reproach," we find the real reason for the shame endured by Christ. Whilst fully appreciating the work He did for us on

Calvary, we must never lose sight of the fact that primarily it was for God. God purposed that His servant should bear reproach and shame. As the perfect Servant He experienced obedience (Heb. 5:8). His work for God included the shame of the Cross, but this did not deter Christ from the full accomplishment of His Father's will.

The source of His reproach is seen in verse 9. Those from whom Christ thus suffered are described as "them that reproached Thee." Those who had despised God despised God's Christ. Israel, His "brethren," treated Him as a stranger. He came unto His own, but they received Him not. Even Mary's children turned against Him. They did not believe in Him (John 7:5). They said that He was out of His mind (Mk. 3:21); and this, after He had done some of His mighty works. How like Israel of old! Israel who "forgat God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt" (Ps. 106:21).

Jesus was reproached by those who desecrated the temple of God. They had turned what should have been a place of prayer into a house of merchandise. Zeal for the honour of God's House burned like fire in His bones. He drove out the money-changers, and secured their undying opposition. They did not forget His censure, but reproached Him with those very words on the Cross (Mk. 27:40). Those who disparaged God's House despised Gods Son.

Verses 10-12 present another reproach. Weeping, fasting, wearing sackcloth betoken lamentation for the people's condition. Their only response was reproach. To the people He was a proverb, an object of contempt. They pitied His simplicity. Their leaders spoke against

Him and planned to get rid of Him. Drunkards found His actions the subject for ribald songs.

The Lord entered into the sorrows of Israel. He was called "the Man of Sorrows." Yet they despised Him. He wept at the grave of Lazarus sharing the sisters' grief, but some of the by-standers found fault (John 11:37). Jesus wept over Jerusalem; He lamented because Israel had missed her day of visitation; He confessed the nation's sins and mourned for them. In response, the leaders questioned His authority to teach them and sought His death. "They that sit in the gate speak against Me."

Stanza 3: Messiah's Prayer (vs. 13-18)

Following Israel's treatment, Messiah prays to Jehovah the eternal "I AM," to God the omnipotent One. In this short prayer He makes fourteen petitions beseeching God's help. Three times He prays "Answer Me" (R.V., vs. 13, 16, 17). In each case a different plea is put forward. In verse 13: ANSWER ME because Thy truth is pledged to salvation - deliverance from His plight already mentioned - the mire (v. 2), His enemies (v. 4), the deep waters (v. 2), the overwhelming flood (v. 2), the yawning pit (v. 2). II verse 16: ANSWER ME because of Thy lovingkindness, Thy tender mercies, Thy benevolent countenance. III verse 17: ANSWER ME because of My plight - I am in distress; I need companionship; I am in the midst of enemies.

Stanza 4: Messiah's Plight (vs. 19-21)

Messiah describes the effect of His reproach in the words of verse 20, "I am full of heaviness," lit., I am sore sick (R.V. marg.).

In Gethsemane He was full of heaviness; His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; He knew full well the shame and reproach He was about to suffer. Then He called His three favoured disciples apart and asked them to watch with Him. Was He seeking their sympathy and moral support? Was He looking for pity? Was He desiring comfort from them? One can sense His disappointment in the words He spoke to them, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?"

Events now move faster. Judas came and kissed Him - not the kiss of friendship but of betrayal. All the disciples forsook Him. He stood alone in the High Priest's house. Peter, following afar off, slinked away after his denial. Jesus was left alone to bear all the reproach, the shame, the spitting, the false accusations. No one stood with Him.

At Calvary it was the same. His reproach was publicly displayed; His adversaries openly attacked Him before God. God knew His reproach. God had delivered Him up to it all. The Lord Himself knew of it, yet He had not turned back. He could say in truth, "I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50:6). What grace! He who was so rich in honours from the angelic host in Heaven became so poor in the reproach men heaped upon Him on earth.

The Lord was put to an open shame. Crucifixion was the most humiliating of all forms of capital punishment. Jesus, stripped by the soldiers, hung in nakedness before a jeering crowd. What dishonour! What shame!

Great multitudes came to see the sight; the rulers scoffed at Him; the passers-by railed on Him; the robbers also reproached Him. Did Pilate intend insult in

his superscription on the cross, as though to say, "This is what we do with kings?"

In verse 21 the Lord's reproach reached its climax. It is heart-breaking to find no support amidst such opposition; to seek and to find none to pity, to give a glance of sympathy, to comfort in distress. When in agony He cried, "I thirst," they only aggravated it by giving Him vinegar to drink. No comforter; no sympathizer; no helper. He was doing a work for His God and none could share its responsibility. Such loneliness amidst reproach produces heaviness like an incurable malady.

Stanza 5: Messiah's Vindication (vs. 22-28)

The imprecations that follow seem not to fit in with the Lord's first prayer on the Cross. But they may be viewed rather as predictions, or as a call on God to vindicate the righteousness of His throne. These imprecations were used by One consumed with a zeal for God's House, and whose desire was that the violated majesty of God's law should not pass unpunished. His enemies had given Him gall and vinegar; their table, richly spread, would become to them a snare. Their banquets would be their ruin.

Note the Revised Version of verse 22b, "When they are in peace, let it become a trap." This is a picture of Israel today. Paul applies this verse to them in Romans 11:8-9. It will be more in evidence just before Messiah's second advent (I Thess. 5:3). The eyes with which they looked on the suffering Messiah will be darkened - spiritually blinded till the day when they shall look upon Him whom they had pierced (Rev. 1:7). Their loins, strong to inflict suffering, will then shake in their powerlessness. They

will then experience God's indignation and anger (I Thess. 2:16). Their habitation, lit., - their encampment, will be desolate, as if a typhoon had struck it. The reason for this coming wrath is their persecution of Messiah, smitten by God for our sins. These will experience one iniquity after another. They will not enjoy the justifying grace of God, but will have their names erased from the book of life - final exclusion from the eternal blessing of the righteous (Rev. 20:15).

Such will also be the portion of those who at Messiah's second advent will be found opposing Him and His people. God will vindicate His Son and set Him up as King in Jerusalem. He will conquer and rule with a rod of iron.

Stanza 6: Messiah's Thanksgiving (vs. 29-33)

In contrast with the wicked of verse 28 who are excluded from God's salvation, Messiah, who was reproached amidst suffering at Calvary, is confident that He will be set on high by God's deliverance - referring to His resurrection and ascension. For this salvation He will praise God with thanksgiving (Ps. 22:22-26). This thankful praise is more acceptable to God than animal sacrifices, even the best of them, e.g., the mature bullock brought as a sin offering at the consecration of the priest (Num. 29:1). In this praise Messiah will be joined gladly by the meek and poor who seek after God (v. 6), and whose cry Jehovah hears.

Stanza 7: Messiah's Inheritance (vs. 34-36)

The Psalmist with prophetic outlook describes Messiah's eventual deliverance of Israel following their experience of God's wrath (vs. 22-28).

Well might all creation join in the chorus of praise to God as Messiah comes into His inheritance. God will restore Israel (Isa. 44:3), and set His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2:6). Israel will then show their love for Messiah's name, as He reigns in their midst.

Thus in Psalm 69 we see Messiah, reproached and despised by Israel, but finally vindicated by Jehovah. Israel regathered, forgiven, restored, will sing the praises of Him in whom before they had seen no beauty. Let us then rejoice in this perfection of God's work. He never departed from His plan to bless Israel, and through them eventually to magnify His Son, who manifested such grace to the chosen people, and endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself (Heb. 12:3). What a glorious finale - worshipped, glorified, adored!

Sinners in derision crowned Him,

Mocking thus the Saviour's claim,

Saints and angels crowd around Him,

Own His title, praise His name:

Crown Him! Crown Him

Spread abroad the Victor's fame.

The Messianic Psalms (January–February 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, January–February 1972.

Editor's note: Dr. John Boyd, Ireland, continues his studies in the Messianic Psalms. These ancient Hebrew Poems witness in a particular way to the glories of the Lord Jesus. The Doctor expounds these for us.

II. Psalm 72

Messiah - His Righteous Reign

The title of Psalm 72 reads, "A Psalm for Solomon," or as in the Revised Version, "A Psalm of Solomon." It is difficult to decide whether it was written by David about Solomon (v. 20), or by Solomon himself. The style is more like Solomon's than David's. Some think it was written by Solomon at the beginning of his reign, and sets out David's last prayer for the new king - a prayer he was too ill to put into writing. It depicts what David taught Solomon should be the characteristics of a righteous reign (2 Sam. 23:1-7). Solomon sought to maintain these standards, but never fully realized them. Verse 8 was not fulfilled even in the palmy days of Solomon's extensive rule. It remains for a future day. The King of Psalm 72 is Messiah in all the glorious splendour of His Millennial reign. His dominion will far outstrip that which pertained to Solomon.

Three Messianic Psalms deal with the Kingdom of Messiah, and present three different aspects of it. Psalm two deals with its Conquest - the martial character, and rule with a rod of iron; Psalm 45 displays its King - in all

His manifold glories; Psalm 72 describes the Reign - bringing peace and prosperity. Psalm two presents the early part of Messiah's reign, as set forth in David's conquests, while Psalm 72 shows Messiah's kingdom established in righteousness, as typified by the peace and glory of Solomon's reign.

The Psalm is divided into five stanzas, followed by the closing doxology to the Second Book of the Psalms (42-72), and a descriptive postcript. The stanzas are as follows, (1) vs. 1-4; Messiah's Righteous Judgment, (2) vs. 5-7: Messiah's Continuing Blessings, (3) vs. 8-11: Messiah's Worldwide Dominion, (4) vs. 12-14: Messiah's Tender Care, (5) vs. 15-17: Messiah's Perpetual Prosperity. Let us consider these themes.

Stanza 1: Messiah's Righteous Judgment, vs. 1-4

Note in the verses the association of righteousness and peace. Peace is the consequence of the righteous reign, prophesied of the Messiah in Isaiah 9:7. Melchizedek, the type of Christ in Hebrews 7:1-2, is there designated as King of Righteousness, and King of Peace. The Psalmist realized that judgment based on righteousness was indispensable to a perfect reign. He asks that the King, great David's greater Son, be given God's judgments, that is, the ability to judge in righteousness, as God does. This request is rather in the nature of a prediction, knowing full well that God will so endow Messiah.

In the rest of the Psalm the future tenses indicate the blessings that will follow a reign of righteousness. The margin of the Revised Version everywhere renders these futures by the words, "Let Him," as though to continue

the idea of a prayer. Messiah's righteous judgments would react favourably on the people, especially on the poor. The mountains, the most easily seen parts, put by a figure of speech (synecdoche) for the whole land, make evident to the people in general that peace reigns everywhere. To the poor and needy the righteous reign will bring justice, so often previously denied them. Messiah will summarily deal with their oppressors.

Stanza 2: Messiah's Continuing Blessings, vs. 5-7

Another result of Messiah's just rule will be the reverence for God found amongst the people. This reverence will not fade with the years, but will last as long as the sun and moon, throughout the many generations of the Millennial kingdom.

The blessings of Messiah's kingdom are likened by the Psalmist to rain coming down on a newly-mown meadow. The rain does not fall on the grass just cut, but on the place whence the grass had been removed to produce a good second growth (Amos 7:1). This is a prophetic picture of Israel, restored after her former glory had been taken away. The word 'showers' points to a heavy rainfall, bountiful blessings. The righteous rule will cause righteous men to flourish, and a state marked by an abundant, stable peace, enduring even after the moon will have ceased her variations.

Stanza 3: Messiah's Worldwide Dominion, vs. 8-11

This ideally peaceful reign will extend throughout the whole earth. Whilst Solomon's kingdom stretched from the Red Sea to the Euphrates (Ex. 23:31), the extent of

Messiah's dominion will be much greater - indicating that "a Greater than Solomon is here." The expression 'sea to sea' is different from that in Exodus 23:31, where specific seas are mentioned, thus limiting the boundaries. But here the more general term means rather from any sea that can be considered as a starting-point to any other sea as a terminus. This is a term of widest significance, even as 'the ends of the earth' indicate the universal scope of Messiah's dominion. The mention of 'the river' here would suggest that Messiah will push His boundaries beyond those promised to Israel in Moses' day, and reach to the ends of the earth. The prophet Zechariah applies v. 8 to Messiah's dominion, and to its magnitude (Zech. 9:9-10). Compare also Psalm 28, where His inheritance is similarly described as including the uttermost parts of the earth. This, too, is implied when the peoples subject to Him are described as wilderness dwellers - the hitherto unconquered desert tribes. All His enemies will be subdued, as already set forth in Psalm 2, preliminary to the setting up of the Millennial kingdom.

Far-off kings will bring presents, that is, render tribute to Messiah (R.V. marg.), or, as some think, make religious offerings. The Hebrew word translated 'presents' in v. 10 is the usual word for Meal Offerings (Lev. 2:4). Does this suggest a recognition of Messiah's Deity? The kings who present these gifts come from widely-spread parts of the world. Tarshish was a town in Spain, the most westerly place in their knowledge. 'The isles', put for the Gentile nations (Isa. 42:4, Matt. 12:21), were the places in and around the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. Sheba was in Arabia, whence in type the Queen has already come to Solomon. Sheba was

probably Ethiopia. These were very rich countries in Solomon's day, and represent the wealth that will be laid at Messiah's feet, as their rulers come to seek His favour. All kings, and all nations will do homage to God's King, and will serve Him. King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16).

Stanza 4: Messiah's Tender Care, vs. 12-14

Another characteristic of this reign will be Messiah's regard for the poor and needy. The poor are the afflicted ones who require help; the needy are the destitute. The King will deliver all such; He will show them pity when they cry to Him; He will not despise their cause, nor leave them out of His reckoning, as too often had been their plight in the past; He will save their souls (lit., their lives); He will redeem them from those who oppress by fraud and violence; He will regard them too dearly to allow them to perish.

Stanza 5: Messiah's Perpetual Prosperity, vs. 15-17

The 'He' of v. 15 is Messiah. Some suggest that the first two lines of this verse refer to the poor of v. 12, but it is better to apply the whole verse to Messiah. He will live forever; He will receive the gold that the nations will bring (v. 10); He will be prayed for continually, as David in this Psalm - that His kingdom will flourish; He will be praised daily because of His beneficent regard for the people.

God, too, will bless the kingdom with prosperity. Extraordinary fruitfulness will characterize the land, such that corn will be harvested even from places where before none could grow. A mere handful of corn sown on

an unpromising soil will produce a harvest. But the word 'handful' is in the Revised Version rendered 'abundance' - indicating a plentiful crop. This reminds us of the parable of the Mustard Seed in Matthew 13:31-32. Another indication of this plenteous crop will be its waving in the breeze, after the manner of the trees of Lebanon. The peoples of the cities will also increase, mature and prosper like the unnumbered blades of grass in the field.

Other great beneficent kings of Israel, even Solomon himself, lived a long time, but they all died. Unlike those, the name - the fame of Messiah shall endure for ever. As long as the sun endures His name will continue, and like the sun, will evermore send forth fresh glories. In His reign the blessings promised long before to Abraham (Gen. 12:3) will be fulfilled. All nations will speak of Messiah's happiness, in which they all will share.

The Doxology vs. 18-19

This doxology closes the second Book of Psalms. Note the different titles used of God in the doxologies of Psalm 41 and Psalm 72. In Psalm 41 He is called Jehovah, the Elohim of Israel; here He is called Jehovah Elohim, the Elohim of Israel. This is possibly due to the fact that most of the Psalms of the second Book are Elohistic Psalms, emphasizing the might of Israel's God. Elohim occurs more frequently in it than in the first Book, whilst Jehovah occurs ten times more in the first than in the second. This is a fuller doxology than that of Psalm 41:13. It will find its glorious consummation in the Messianic fulfilment of the Psalm. Jehovah the Mighty One will do wondrous things for Messiah, who will bring

glory to God's name forever, and will cause the whole earth to appreciate that glory.

The Postcript v. 20

This would indicate that Psalms are largely prayers... It does not mean that David wrote no Psalms after this one. Rather the suggestion is that now he has expressed himself thus in Psalm 72 concerning the glory of the Coming Messiah, he has nothing to pray for or to wish beyond it. It may be that this was the prayer with which David intended to close his reign ere he handed over the throne to Solomon, who was the type of the One in whom the Psalm will find its realization - the Messiah.

The Messianic Psalms (March–April 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, March–April 1972.

Editor's note: Dr. John Boyd's articles on the Messianic Psalms continue to interest the Bible student. They provide much excellent material, helpful to the student of these inspired Hebrew poems.

(12) Psalm 88 — Messiah the Object of God's Wrath

Note the title of this Psalm. It is called a song, which usually denotes praise, but this is a song of sorrow. The sweetest music is often born out of great tribulation, and so it is here. The theme is of such importance that the Chief Musician himself must direct its singing. The words "Mahalath Leannoth" imply that it should be sung accompanied by a pipe upon which mournful dirges were usually played. "Maschil" indicates that it was intended for instruction - possibly to teach others how to suffer. Or, does it point forward to Christ - to teach His sufferings to future generations?

The whole Psalm exudes sorrow and gloom - the gloom of a soul in distress. It is relieved by only one shaft of light, the description of Jehovah in the first verse - "the God of my salvation." So wrapped up is the sufferer in his sorrows that no order is readily discernible. There is constant re-iteration of the same themes as might be expected from one in "sore amaze." The sufferings are those of one who feels himself bereft of all help, and sees the hand of God in all his afflictions.

The intensity of the agonies endured is extreme. They seem to be a prophetical foreshadowing of the incomprehensible, incomparable sufferings of Christ on the Cross, for none other suffered as He did.

This Psalm bears some striking resemblance to two other Psalms of suffering, both regarded as Messianic, Psalms 22 and 69. In Psalm 22 the Psalmist foretells of Christ crying day and night, verse 2 (88:1); trouble is near Him, verse 11 (88:3); He was brought into the dust of death, verse 15 (88:6). In Psalm 69 mention is made of the deep waters and the floods, verse 2 (88:7, 17); the failing eyes, verse 3 (88:9); the deeps and the pit, verse 15 (88:6).

Here is portrayed the passion of Christ. In verse one the day and night seasons would indicate the two divisions of time on the cross - three hours of blazing noonday sun and three hours of midnight darkness. Verse 3 finds its expression in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-39). John 19:31 depicts Christ as one 'counted with them that go down into the pit' (v. 4). The chief priests considered Christ "as a man that hath no help" (v. 4 R.V.) when they said of Him, 'He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him' (Matt. 27:43). When the Psalmist complains that God has put his acquaintance far from him (v. 8), we are reminded of Luke 23:49 where those of Christ's acquaintance are seen standing afar off.

The only discernible order in the Psalm is that of three sections each commencing with a call to God. In each case there is a different word used for the call. I. Verses 1-9a, "I have cried" (v. 1) implies a call for help. He cried because His soul was full of troubles; He felt as though death was near (v. 3). Others also counted Him as soon

to die (v. 4). He felt helpless - like one cast away by God among the dead from whom God's hand had been withdrawn (v. 5, R.V.). II. Verses 9b-12, "I have called" (v. 9) is a call for attention. He called as He felt death impending. The Psalmist reckoned that when dead, men ceased to praise God for His wonders (v. 10). III. Verses 13-18, "I have cried" (v. 13) is a call for release from the terrors and wrath that penned Him in.

Two things stand out in the Psalm. I. Darkness - mentioned in each of the three sections (vv. 6, 12, 18). II. God's treatment of the Sufferer. Thus we may refer the Psalm to the experience of Christ during the three hours of darkness when His soul was drawing nigh to the grave, enduring the wrath of God against sin.

Concerning this three-hour season the gospels are relatively silent. Man saw nothing of Christ then. Psalm 88 lifts the veil a little, and shows us something of the Redeemer's fearful experiences. In this Psalm Christ is speaking to His Father. He reveals the reactions of His sinless soul to the wrath of a holy and just God.

The Darkness

Note the references to darkness in the Psalm; from these we learn what it meant to Christ:

It was the Darkness of Sorrow (v. 6)

The contemplation of the sorrow of Calvary had troubled Messiah's holy soul the previous night in Gethsemane. Now the deep waters were going over Him. This was the 'lowest pit', worse than the fardaI [?] trial, the reproaches of men, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the nails in His hands and feet. The darkness was much worse than the three hours of exposure to the scorching

noonday sun. It was the worst experience of all. He was enduring the wrath of God which was lying heavily upon Him. The waves of God's affliction were sweeping over Him.

It was the Darkness of Death (v. 12)

The Psalmist suggests that death is a sphere in which there are not seen the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the wonderful deliverances, the righteousness of God, for which men usually praise Him (vv. 10-12). On the cross Christ was not conscious of these characteristic attributes of God; He was tasting death; He knew none of God's wonders in deliverance, in salvation, in help. 'His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree' (I Pet. 2:24).

It was the Darkness of Loneliness (v. 18)

The literal rendering of the last clause of this verse is, "Mine acquaintance is darkness." The darkness that surrounded Christ was His only acquaintance. His lovers and friends had stood afar off (Matt. 27:55), but the darkness separated them even more. He was left solitary. He was bearing the wrath of God against sin, and He must needs bear it alone.

"Alone upon the Cross He hung,

That others He might save.

Forsaken there by God and man,

Alone His life He gave."

To be continued

The Messianic Psalms — Psalm 88 (continued) (May–June 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, May–June 1972.

(2) God's Wrath upon Christ (v. 7)

At Calvary the Lord endured the wrath of God. The word in this Psalm translated "wrath" comes from a root meaning to be hot. It implies God's hot displeasure with sin. In Romans 2:5 wrath is defined as the righteous judgment of God. Christ, Who had been made sin for us, experienced the fury of God's indignation against sin. It lay hard upon Him as something pressing with all its weight, and not easing up at any time. Successive waves of wrath bowed Him down. He had scarcely recovered from one wave when another overtook Him. He endured all God's waves. He missed nothing. God spared Him not. The first clause in verse 7 suggests continuous wrath, the second repeated attacks.

In verse 16 Christ describes the wrath as fierce, emphasizing the intensity of the wrath of God's righteous anger against sin. The Redeemer was overwhelmed by it. Well might believers find cause for thanksgiving in all this. Their sins had brought all this upon the Lord Jesus Christ,

"See the waves and billows roll

O'er His sinless, spotless soul.

Oh, my soul, it was for thee,

Praise Him, praise Him, cheerfully."

(3) God's Isolation of Christ (vv. 8, 18)

God put Christ's acquaintance far from Him at Calvary. He was made to feel a sense of loneliness. The twelve disciples had forsaken Him. It was God's will, and Christ's that they should go their way (John 18:8). Even those who had followed Him all the way from Galilee then stood afar off (Luke 23:49).

Christ had become an abomination to His friends. Peter would not acknowledge relationship with Him lest He be arrested also. He abhorred being associated with Christ in His reproach.

At Calvary Christ was shut up. It was like solitary confinement. He was imprisoned, not by the nails that bound Him to the cross, but by the will of God and by love to guilty, fallen man. As a result His eyes wasted away (v. 9, R.V.) due to His constant weeping. His prayers were mingled with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7).

The darkness made His isolation absolute (v. 8). With its descent He was separated from everyone; from lovers - those who had a deep affection for Him; from friends - those who rejoiced in His company; from His acquaintance - those who had known Him only by sight. The darkness came between Him and them all.

This loneliness had been foreshadowed in Gethsemane. There the sorrows of what He was to endure on the morrow filled His holy soul. He must needs speak to His Father in prayer. Yet He desired human companionship and took His three favourite disciples apart to watch and pray with Him. We can sense His disappointment when, on coming back, He found them asleep, and said, "Could

ye not watch with Me one hour?" On Calvary He suffered this dreadful loneliness to the full. He was

"Left alone, Lord, there to languish,

None to share Thy parting sigh.

All forsaken,

Left alone, O Lord, to die."

All this was because God had made to meet upon Christ the iniquity of us all. Alone He bore the punishment for our sins. Alone He did the work of salvation. God would have us appreciate our absolute dependence upon Christ. None could help Him; none else could redeem us; none else is accepted by God.

(4) God's Abandonment of Christ (v. 14)

The Lord on the cross felt as if God had ceased to remember Him: as if the supporting and protecting hand of God had been withdrawn (v. 5, R.V.). For One so closely united to His Father in His walk amongst men, Christ felt this abandonment so keenly.

His soul was cast off as though He had been an object of offence to God. And so He was, for He had been made sin - so detestable in the sight of God. At Calvary Christ was learning what this meant.

God hid His face from Christ, suffering on the Cross. It was a strange experience for the Son of God. Because of sin God hides His face from man (Deut. 31:17). But Christ knew no sin, and from eternity He had been made sin. There was no look of response as He sought the face of God. He was forgotten; He was in sore trouble; He found no sympathy; His cry was unanswered; He was forsaken by God. This was mental suffering of the worst

kind. "Forsaken there by God and man, alone His life He gave."

God was making no compromise with sin. Herein we see the justice of God. Sin was fully punished in Christ. In righteousness God could not come to His aid; He could not mitigate the punishment. But "Jesus bore it, bore in love unbounded, what none can know."

(5) God's Terrors for Christ (vv. 15-17)

Christ, as He suffered, was made to fear God, to dread meeting a holy God rising up in judgment. It was a very real experience, and an awful one too. He was made to feel what God's judgment meant. The more we look into the sufferings of Christ on the Cross the more we feel unable to fathom what He endured.

The terrors of God left Him distracted, bewildered, perplexed (v. 15). In Gethsemane we find the Lord using a similar word concerning His state of mind, "sore amazed" (Mark 14:33). No doubt this previous contemplation had produced a similar distraction.

So dreadful were these terrors that to the Lord they seemed like the walls of a prison cell, isolating Him from all other considerations (v. 16). Or to change the metaphor He felt like one caught in a whirling flood - the waters surrounding Him on every hand (v. 17). The terrors of God poured in and struck Him with unprecedented violence; they so encompassed Him that He could not free Himself.

This is something of what Calvary meant to Christ; something of what He endured during the hours of darkness; something of what He experienced when He was "dying, crushed beneath the load of the wrath and

curse of God." How it ought to humble us! Our sins brought Him there. How grateful we should feel, for "Whatever curse was mine He bore!"

May this meditation cause us to praise Him and worship Him, who thus endured the wrath of God to provide salvation for guilty man! May we ever be conscious of the depths of sorrow that He plumbed for us! May we be found continually near the Cross!

"On Thy pale and suffering brow,

Mystery of love and woe;

On Thy grief and sore amaze,

Saviour, I would fix my gaze."

The Messianic Psalms: (14) Psalm 118 - Messiah, the Exalted One (September–October 1972)

From Ministry in Focus, September–October 1972.

Editor's note: We regret that this is the last of Dr. John Boyd's (Ireland) articles on the Messianic Psalms. These have been enlightening and most helpful.

(14) Psalm 118: Messiah - The Exalted One

THE evidence for the Messianic application of Psalm 118 is based on two passages, (a) verses 22-23 are cited in Matthew 21:42, being used by the Lord Himself to refer to His rejection by the chief priests and elders of Israel. Other New Testament writers also apply them to the Lord's rejection (Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:7). (b) verses 25-26 are quoted by the crowd that went before the Lord at His royal entrance into Jerusalem prophesied in Zechariah 9:9, and fulfilled in Matthew 21:9. Verse 28 is also referred by the Lord to that occasion in a future day when He will lead Israel into millennial blessing (Matt. 23:39).

This is the last of six Hallel psalms (113-118), usually sung by companies approaching the temple on festive occasions. At the Passover Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the emptying of the second cup, and the other four (115-118) at the end of the feast, after the fourth cup. This was possibly the hymn sung by the Lord and His disciples after the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:30).

The original historical setting of the psalm and its writer are difficult to determine. Some expositors think that David wrote it, but the majority see in the psalm an occasion after Israel's return from Babylon. Four post-captivity events are suggested for its compilation:

(1) Ezra 3:1-4, the Feast of Tabernacles (compare vv. 15 and 24).

(2) Ezra 3:10-11, the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Temple (compare vv. 1 and 22).

(3) Ezra 6:15-18, the Dedication of the Temple (compare vv. 19 and 26).

(4) Neh. 6:14-18, the Feast of Tabernacles after the completion of the walls of Jerusalem. In support of this last suggestion is the fact that the language of the psalm is reminiscent of Nehemiah's. Note the recurring "I," "me," "my." Compare also (a) Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 1:11) with verse 25; (b) the nations (Neh. 2:19, 4:7) with verses 10-12 of the psalm; (c) the note of gladness (v. 24) with Nehemiah 8:17.

The structure of the psalm suggests that it was written as a choral piece, to be sung going up to the temple. Two antiphonal choirs are seen in action in verses 2-4, 8-9, 15-16, 23-25. The psalm is divided into two parts: (a) verse 1-18 - the journey towards the temple; (b) verses 19-29 the reception of the procession by the priests into the temple. The main speaker in the psalm is the leader, possibly Nehemiah, at the head of the procession. Using the first person singular he deals largely with his personal experiences.

Each of these sections is composed of two stanzas.

Verses 1-4 - The Continuing Mercy of Jehovah.

Verses 5-18 - The Evidence of God's Mercy, in three circumstances, (a) in distress (vv. 5-9); (b) in the midst of enemies (vv. 10-16); (c) in chastening (vv. 17-18).

Verses 19-20 - Admission to the Temple.

Verses 21-29 - Thanksgiving to God in the Temple. Let us examine these stanzas in detail.

Stanza 1: The Continuing Mercy of Jehovah (vv. 1-4)

Verse 1 seems to be a prologue, sung by the whole company, giving thanks to God for His enduring mercy. This was a frequently used expression of thanksgiving to God for mercy, being first ordained for this purpose by David on the occasion of his setting up the ark in Mt. Zion (1 Chron. 16:34). Note also 2 Chronicles 5:13, where the same words were used at the dedication of Solomon's temple. Mercy is God's pity in action towards men, as its first occurence indicates (Gen. 19:19).

Now follow (vv. 2-4) two antiphonal choirs taking up the same strain. The first choir, in the first line of these verses, calls on the three divisions of the procession going up to the temple to witness to God's mercy. The three companies were: (a) Israel - the people (v. 2); (b) Priests (v. 3); (c) Proselytes (v. 4). Compare Psalm 115:9-11. In the second part of these verses the other choir joins in with its affirmation of the enduring nature of God's mercy.

Stanza 2: The Evidence of Jehovah's Mercy (vv. 5-18)

This stanza is taken up largely with the personal realization of the leader of the procession. Note the "I,"

"my," "me," though possibly he may have been speaking on behalf of Israel. In the first instance this was likely Nehemiah. He mentions three evidences of Jehovah's mercy:

(1) He speaks in verses 5-7 of his distress (lit., being in a narrow place or bound in by trouble). In this dilemma he cried to God, who in mercy answered by setting him in a wide open place of freedom. Is Nehemiah here referring to his and Israel's deliverance from captivity? Twice in verses 6-7 (R.V.) he asserts that the Lord is on his side. As a result (a) he has no fear of man, or of his machinations; (b) he is assured of God's help. Nehemiah may be repeating the words of David in Psalm 56:11 and Psalm 54:4. Now follow the two choirs singing one to the other of dependence upon God, infinitely better than trusting in man, even in the greatest of them. This may be a reference to the fact that the attitude of the kings of Persia towards Israel varied from encouragement and help to a definite opposition (Ezra 1:3; 4:21; 6:7.) They were unreliable. Israel realized that Jehovah Himself is the only One in whom unfailing confidence may be placed.

(2) Nehemiah (vv. 10-14) tells of his experience of God's mercy when encompassed by nations hindering his work. They came against Jerusalem (Neh. 4:7-8), surrounding it like a swarm of bees, but they were cut off as he prayed "in the name of Jehovah" (Neh. 4:9). They were like bees numerically, but were quenched by God like a fire of thorns, which burns with a great crackling, and soon all is over. Nehemiah, directing his words to the enemy (v. 13), reminds them of their determined effort to bring about his downfall had not God in mercy intervened. He compares the opposition of

the nations with that against Moses when pursued by Pharoah at the Red Sea. He quotes from Moses' song (Ex. 15:2). Jehovah is his strength - the object of his dependence; his song - the subject of his delight; his salvation - the effector of his deliverance. This is a Hebraism for "The Lord about whom I sing is my strong deliverer." Nehemiah is determined to give God all the glory for his deliverance.

In verses 15-16 we get the choirs taking up the theme expressed in verse 14. They sing of the joy produced by the manifestation of God's power. The first choir sings of the rejoicing and salvation in the tents of righteous men (v. 15a), and the exaltation of Jehovah's right hand - the exhibition of His strength (v. 16a), to which the second choir (vv. 15b & 16b) replies by indicating the valour of God's right hand. The first part of verse 15 would suggest that the Feast of Tabernacles was the occasion of this celebration (Neh. 8:14).

(3) Nehemiah indicates another evidence of Jehovah's mercy (vv. 17-18). He had known the chastening hand of God, yet the discipline had not been unto death, for he still lived to praise Jehovah for His quickening mercy. It may be that here again Nehemiah is speaking of Israel's chastening by God in delivering them to capitivity, out of which He had revived them, not having made a final end of them.

This threefold evidence of God's mercy as experienced by Nehemiah is but a picture of what Messiah endured during His first sojourn on earth, specially seen on Calvary. There He was in distress (Ps. 22:11); there He was compassed about with foes (Ps. 22:12); there He was chastened sore (Isa. 53:5): Yet in all this He was

conscious of His Father's mercy (Ps. 22:24). He knew, too, that "Death could not keep its prey"; His soul would not be left in Sheol (Ps. 16:10, R.V.); He had power to take His life again (John 10:18), thereafter to sing the praises of God in the great congregation (Ps. 22:25).

Stanza 3: Admission to the Temple (vv. 19-20)

The procession has now reached Mt. Zion, and Nehemiah requests admission to the temple that therein he might give thanks to God for His bounteous mercy (R.S.V.). He designates the entrance to the temple as "the gates of righteousness," conscious that only the righteous might enter therein. To this request the Levites within the temple reply, "This is the gate of the Lord" (R.V.), that is, this is the way to God, and through it indeed only the righteous may enter (Heb. 12:14). On a similar mission (Ps. 24:3) David had enquired who was fit to stand in this place hallowed by the presence of Jehovah, to be answered by the keepers of the gate that such an one must be characterized, positively, by pure actions and pure motives, and negatively, with no inward desires after idolatry nor be given to false swearing. This is righteousness.

These two verses remind us that "Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1) has the right to call on the gates of the heavenly temple to admit Him, that he might lead the praise of the celestial choirs in thanksgiving to the God of His salvation. All acknowledged His righteousness: His Father, who found perfect delight in Him; His disciples, who recorded that He went about everywhere doing good; His enemies, for their lost testimony was, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47).

Stanza 4: Thanksgiving to God in the Temple (vv. 21-29)

In this stanza Nehemiah expresses thanks to God for answering his cry (v. 5), and for saving him from his enemies (v. 14). In this contemplation his mind turns to the head corner stone of the temple, for therein he finds an apt illustration of God's dealings with him. It is said that during the building of the second temple a certain stone was often taken up, and as often set down again as being unsuitable, until finally it was found that it alone was fitted to be used as the head corner stone from which the building took its shape and derived its support. Thus Nehemiah realized that he who had been despised at first as leader was now the national hero. Or is he thinking of Israel, once despised as the tail of the nations, now made by God to be the head (Deut. 28:13)? This is how the Lord represented Himself to the Pharisees in His first advent to earth - His rejection by them as the husbandmen treated the son of the lord of the vineyard (Matt. 21:33-42). Thus did Peter preach Jesus after His resurrection. Israel had crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, but God had raised Him from the dead to become the One in whom alone salvation would be found (Acts 4:10-12). Paul saw in this Scripture Christ Jesus as the foundation, the chief corner stone of the holy temple, the Church, where God dwells (Eph. 2:20-22). Peter in his epistle cites this verse. He uses the stone as referring to Christ, and as such indicates how precious the Saviour has become to believers (1 Pet. 2:7).

Then, in verses 23-25, we have the two choirs that accompanied Nehemiah into the temple again singing in chorus. The first choir acknowledges the miracle of

verse 22 to be the work of Jehovah, and the second joins in expressing its great delight. In verse 24 the first choir asserts that the Feast of Tabernacles they were celebrating was also the ordinance of Jehovah, while the second expresses the joy and gladness suitable to that occasion. In verse 25a the first choir pleads for the further salvation of Jehovah, and the second choir antiphonally seeks prosperity from Him. These three verses seem to have been in the mind of Matthew as he recorded the happenings of the memorable day of the Lord's ride into Jerusalem on the ass. The first verse (v. 23) is appended to the Lord's challenge to the Pharisees (Matt. 21:42); the next verse describes the joyful occasion as described in Matthew 21:8, the third verse is transliterated by the crowd accompanying the Lord into the city. The Hebrew of verse 25 is "Hossanah," here translated into English, "Save, we pray," as though the psalm was often used thus at feasts of gladness such as the Feast of Tabernacles.

In verse 26 we have the priests speaking from inside the temple. They welcome Nehemiah, blessing him in the name of Jehovah. They blessed also his companions out of the house of the Lord, and they praised the mighty Jehovah who had shown Israel light in leading them to His house. The second part of verse 27 possibly refers to the sacrifice which those in the procession had brought with them, and the priests call for its offering.

The first part of verse 26 is quoted in Matthew 21:9 after the "Hosannah" of verse 25, with this difference that in the psalm the blessing was spoken by the priests in the temple as a welcome, whereas in the gospel account the words were spoken by the crowds accompanying the Lord. Jesus, in Matthew 23:29, would

remind Israel that these would be their words of greeting when at His Second Advent He would come to their aid, and they would acknowledge Him as their Deliverer (Rom. 11:28).

Finally, Nehemiah (v. 28) expresses his thanks to God. Note the twofold personal acknowledgment of Jehovah as his God. It may be, though, that like Moses at the Red Sea he is speaking for his people Israel (Ex. 15:2).

As an epilogue the whole company finishes off the psalm by using the same words with which they began - an acknowledgment of the continuing mercy of Jehovah. All God's dealings with His people are characterized by unfailing mercy and lovingkindness.

Father of mercies! in Thy Word

What endless glory shines!

For ever be Thy Name adored

For these celestial lines.

The Glory of the Cross (Jan 1956)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 2 No. 1, Jan 1956.

John Boyd. M.D., D.A.

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”—Galatians 6:14.

Paul had been warning the Galatians about the teaching of those who wanted to have them circumcised, to glory in the fact that they had submitted to a fleshly ordinance. By this the Judaiers hoped to avoid persecution from Pharisaic Jews, as Gentiles accepting circumcision were regarded as proselytes to Judaism.

Paul did not glory in fleshly advantages. His only boast was in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; not merely in the death, but in the cross of Christ. This is an amazing statement when we appreciate what the cross implied.

To the One hung on the cross it meant shame (Heb. 12:2). The Lord did not allow this shame to turn Him from His set purpose. It was the most ignominious of deaths, usually reserved for the lowest of felons. The victim was transfixed naked on a stake, near to the city, whence a multitude of people came to see (Luke 23:48).

“Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

In my place condemned He stood;

Sealed my pardon with His blood:

Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

It also meant reproach (Psa. 69:20). None of the passers-by gave him a word of comfort. Instead we hear their

railings, the mockery of the chief priests, and the taunts of the soldiers.

To be crucified was to experience the curse of God. The law said that the victim must “not remain all night upon the tree, for he that is hanged is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23). Christ bore this curse for us (Gal. 3:13).

The cross was the last of a series of steps in the path of humiliation for the Lord. To the depths of this valley He went in response to the will of God. “Wondrous Thy humiliation to accomplish our salvation.”

The cross was to Christ an object of horror, the contemplation of which produced the agony, sorrow, and sweat of Gethsemane.

To those who preached the cross there came persecution (Gal. 6:12). The Jew disliked its mention, for it brought home to him the sin of rejecting the Messiah, and the felony of crucifying the Innocent One (Acts 5:28). To Corinth Paul came preaching nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. As was inevitable the Corinthian Jews “opposed themselves and blasphemed” (Acts 18:6).

To the Jews it was a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23). They had asked for a sign that Jesus was the Messiah. The only sign given them was the sign of Jonah, pointing to the shameful death of Christ on the cross. Their idea of a Messiah was One coming in glory to deliver them and to set up His Kingdom. As one from whom men hide their faces they esteemed not the lowly Nazarene. His shame and suffering stumbled them.

To the Greeks the preaching of the cross was foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23). The Corinthians sought for oratory, the wisdom of words (1 Cor. 1:17); and for philosophy, the

wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:29). Paul omitted both from his preaching; rather did he present the cross that their faith should stand in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men. To the Greeks the cross seemed foolishness, a man crucified in weakness was not their idea of greatness.

Looking at the cross from these standpoints it was an inglorious failure. Paul, nevertheless, said it was the only thing he gloried in. His statement seems paradoxical, glorying in what is inglorious. What is his reason for such a strange outlook? A study of the references to the cross in his epistles will give us the answer.

To Paul Christ crucified was the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). God's power had been manifested before; in creation, as by His spoken word the worlds stood fast; in delivering Israel from Pharaoh's bondage; in subduing their enemies; in healing their sicknesses through the Son of God; but salvation, His greatest work, necessitated the death of Christ, even the death of the cross. By this came into being the new creation; by this He defeated His own and man's inveterate enemy, the devil; by this He delivered man from death; and by this He gave the believer life. What a mighty work was done on Calvary, as the power of God was displayed.

The wisdom of God was also manifested. Man by his wisdom sought to find out God, but failed (1 Cor. 1:21). Yet at Calvary God displayed so many of His attributes. We see His holiness, for there the sword of Jehovah's justice smote the Lord; His grace, providing redemption for guilty man. There God commended His own love

toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8; R,V.).

At Calvary God showed man the way back to Himself. It was the only way for all classes; rich or poor, good or bad, young or old. There were revealed the determinate counsels of God in a past Eternity. What other plan could have included all men?

Paul also tells us that through the blood of His cross Christ made peace, and reconciled all things unto God (Col. 1:29). We who had been enemies of God in our minds by our evil works have been reconciled, one day to be presented holy and without blemish and without reproof. Through the cross we have this peace with God.

To Paul the cross meant the crucifixion of the old man (Gal. 2:20). The old, law-keeping, sin-serving, Paul had been by God put to death with Christ on the cross. He had been justified from sin (Rom. 6:7, R.V.), that is, through having died he was beyond the pale of justice. For Paul the cross was more than substitution. It meant also identification with Christ. Not only did Christ die instead of Paul, but he (his old man) also died with Christ. Thus, God has judicially dealt with our old man on the cross. We should regard our old nature in this light. No longer need we fear God's judgment against it.

In Gal. 6:14, Paul gives further reasons why he gloried in the cross. It was "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Note the full title given to the Lord. In using this Paul would emphasize the supreme dignity of the One Who suffered there; Our Lord Jesus was on the cross.

"Blest cross! Blest sacrifice!

Blest rather be the One

Who there was put to death for me!

The cross was Paul's great boast, because through it he stood in a new relationship to the world. The world is that order of things opposed to God and headed by Satan (John 14:30). It delights in the works of the flesh, in pleasure, and in fame (1 John 2:16). Paul once belonged to that world (Eph. 2:3), but the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross had changed all this. It had crucified the world. To be crucified meant to be ignominiously put away as detestable. Paul had put away from him, ignominiously and for ever, that system that had put his Lord on the cross. Henceforth, he could have no dealings with it.

"When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of Glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride."

The world did not want Paul; it had no time for him who made much of the cross. It regarded the preaching of the cross with disfavour, for the crucifixion had exposed the hatred in man's heart towards the Son of God. It ignominiously set aside, any who sided with the Christ of the cross. To Paul this was not loss but gain, not shame but glory, not a matter for sorrow but for joy.

No wonder, then, Paul gloried in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The pronoun "our" suggests that we believers should also share in this boasting. We would glory in it more could we but see it with Paul's eyes. Let us not be ashamed of it. Let us make our boast in it, for it means so much to us. It has brought us salvation from

sin; it reveals our identification with Christ; it will guarantee our separation from the world.

Fellowship (Feb 1957)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 3 No. 2, Feb 1957.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:41-47

The term ‘fellowship’ is often used by believers without fully comprehending its meaning, its privileges, and its responsibilities. In Acts 2 we are shown the inception of this fellowship, and therein we find God’s mind as to its pattern—a pattern suitable for all time.

The Greek word translated “fellowship” comes from a root meaning “common”. It simply means having all things common. This is taught, too, in the various other renderings of the word in the New Testament. In 2 Cor. 6:14 it is rendered “communion”, where light is seen as having nothing in common with darkness. In Rom. 15:26 it is translated “contribution”. The Macedonian believers reckoned that their possessions were for the common use of themselves and the needy saints at Jerusalem. In Philemon 6 by the word “communication” Paul refers to Philemon having faith in common with other believers.

The Composition of the Fellowship

Those who compose the fellowship are clearly indicated in these verses. They had received the word of the gospel that Peter preached (v.41); they had repented; they had been baptized as an acknowledgement of faith in Christ; they had remission of sins; they had received the Holy Spirit (v.38); they had believed in Christ (v.44).

Fellowship is essentially being linked with God in eternal life. It is with the Father (1 John 1:3), with the Son (1 Cor. 1:9), with the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). All those so

linked together are in fellowship one with another. Only these are in the fellowship.

The Character of the Fellowship

Fellowship is defined in v. 44 as having two main characteristics an “all being together,” and an all having things common. Let us see how these were manifested in the early church.

All Being Together

The believers were all together as far as bodily presence was concerned. In v.42 the Revisers omit the word ‘and’ after ‘fellowship’, thus implying that the fellowship consisted in their being together for the Breaking of Bread and the Prayers. Note, too, that the Breaking of Bread and the Prayers (the Prayer Meeting) are intimately linked together. Both meetings are important. The early disciples seem to have attached as much importance to the latter as to the former. For us to-day fellowship means attendance at all assembly functions, the Breaking of Bread, the Prayer Meeting, the Ministry Meeting, the Gospel Meeting. Each demands our presence, if at all possible.

The disciples were all together in one spirit, “of one heart and of one soul” (4:32). Compare 1 Cor.1:10, “perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.” Thus fellowship requires all believers pulling together for the common good. This makes for assembly prosperity.

Fellowship implies being together in separation from the world. When Peter and John were released from prison they went “to their own company” (4:23). The believers formed a distinct company, known to each other, and

preferred above all others. The fellowship of our brethren should be valued more highly than the companionship of the world, for the believer has little in common with the unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:15).

Having All Things Common

To the early disciples fellowship meant sharing all things. They shared each other's joy, as with gladness and singleness of heart they praised God (v. 46). Does this characterize our fellowship? Are we glad at the success of a fellow-believer, or is there jealousy? Love envieth not, but rejoiceth with them that rejoice.

They shared their material possessions. In the first days of Christianity, to acknowledge Christ as Saviour meant destitution for some who had been disowned by their kith and kin.

Under these circumstances others, well supplied with the things of the world sold them and helped their less fortunate brethren. They did not reckon what they possessed to be their own, but "they had all things common" (4:32). We still have the poor with us, even amongst the saints. We do well to share with them our bounty, that there be no lack.

The members of the early Church shared each other's sufferings. When Peter was shut up in prison the Church prayed earnestly to God for him (12:5, R.V.). His trouble was their burden. In this fast-moving age there is sometimes a lack of sympathy. Do we feel as we ought for our brother's sorrows? Do we help to ease his load? Do we remember him at the throne of grace?

Things spiritual were also shared. The apostles, commissioned by the Lord to teach the disciples, sought

to fulfil their obligation (6:4). Priscilla and Aquila, appreciating Apollos' lack of instruction, took him to their home, and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfect" (18:26). It is the bounden duty of all to whom God has given the ability to study His Word, to impart instruction to others, and to seek their edification.

Thus we learn that fellowship brings responsibilites. May we appreciate these, and seek to fulfil them. Let us always be present at the various gatherings of the assembly, unless unavoidably detained. Let us share with others in the fellowship, joys, blessings, sorrows, and the knowledge of the Word of God. If we neglect these things we are not truly "in fellowship".

The Continuation of the Fellowship

Those in fellowship continued steadfastly, in the apostles' teaching, and in fellowship (v. 42), and in worship (v. 46).

Their continuance in the doctrine implied an eager appetite for the things the Lord had communicated to the apostles. The maintenance of fellowship today demands a close attention to the Word of God, taking it as our sole guide for faith and conduct. The assembly Ministry Meeting should be well attended.

But the disciples continued also in fellowship. They made much of it. They kept together, rejoicing in the company of those with whom they had been linked in the bonds of eternal life. So should we value more highly the fellowship of saints, meeting together as often as possible, for we have little in common with the world.

The early disciples continued in the worship of God daily in the temple. Worship was spontaneous with them. Their hearts were full of gratitude to God for all He had done for them. At first the temple was the accepted place of worship, but God gradually weaned them from Judaism. Later in the Acts (20:7) the gathering together to remember the Lord was the recognized medium of worship. The continuity of the fellowship is enhanced by the continuing desire to worship.

The Consequences of the Fellowship

Note the results that followed this happy state of fellowship. Great wonders and signs were done by the apostles, and fear came upon all men (v. 43). A sense of the presence of God produced reverence and godly fear. God added daily to their number (v. 47).

If we regarded the fellowship of saints in the same light as the early church we could expect like blessing today. Instead of unbelievers despising our petty bickerings they would respect us and our gatherings. God would work wonders through us. Souls would be saved, and the name of Christ magnified.

Let us then seek to maintain this fellowship; being together in all things; having all things common; sharing each other's joys, sorrows, and trials. Let us appreciate the greatness of the fellowship into which we have been called, rejoice in its privileges, and accept its responsibilities.

"Blest be the tie that binds

Our hearts in christian love;

The fellowship of kindred minds

Is like to that above.”

The Deity of the Lord Jesus (Jan 1959)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 5 No. 1, Jan 1959.

By the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ we mean that He was God, that He was equal with God the Father — in being, in power, and in glory.

Deity is different from divinity. Divinity is being like God. All believers have this in a greater or less degree (2 Pet. 1:4). Deity is being God — this word can only be used of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Proofs of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ abound. They depend not only upon the scriptural passages which assert it, but also on His entire impression on the world. A further evidence is in the believer's own inner experience of the transforming power of the Lord in his heart and life. Let us consider some of these proofs. First, note

The Claims Of The Lord Jesus Christ Himself

He claimed the attributes of God: omnipresence (Matt. 18:20), omnipotence (Matt. 28:18), omniscience (John 2:24), eternal pre-existence (John 8:58).

He claimed the power of God: the power to raise the dead (John 11:11), to forgive sins (Mk. 2:5-7), to do miracles (John 10:37).

He claimed the authority of God. Prefacing His remarks with "Verily I say unto you", He stamped His words with the authority that God alone could use (Matt. 5:18). He had authority to forgive sins (Luke 4:24). The men of Capernaum acknowledged His divine authority as they saw demons obey Him (Mk. 1:27).

He claimed equality with God. In John's Gospel the Lord affirmed that He was equal with God the Father in Power (5:18-19), Honour (5:23), Doctrine (7:16), Judgment (8:16), Essence (10:30), Glory (11:4), Dependability (14:1).

He claimed to be the Son of God.

He revealed Himself as such to the man to whom He had given sight (John 9:35-37). To Nicodemus He spoke of Himself as "the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

In all these claims the Lord during His sojourn on earth sought to impress on man the fact that He was God. How far He succeeded in so doing may be judged from the New Testament Scriptures, particularly from the books written by those who had known Him best. Of all His disciples possibly the closest were John and Peter. Let us hear their witness.

John's Witness To The Deity Of Christ

John wrote the fourth Gospel that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31).

He introduces us to the Person of the book under the title of 'The Word'—a title not used by any other of the New Testament writers. This term had been used by Greek philosophers in their search after God—in their desire to make God intelligible to man. John took the term which human reasoning had chanced upon, and fixed it by identifying it with Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, "The Word" is the expression of Deity.

In the first verse of his Gospel we get a three-fold proof of the Deity of Christ, (1) His eternal pre-existence, (2) His intimate association with, and personal distinction in

the Godhead, (3) His essential being—God. John was in no doubt about the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter's Witness To The Deity Of Christ

Peter, the outspoken disciple, expressed with deep conviction the impression the Lord had made on him. At Caesarea Philippi, in reply to the Lord's query, "Whom say ye that I am?", he stated categorically, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Speaking of the Lord after His ascension Peter declared Him to be the Prince (R.V., the Author) of life—an attribute belonging to God alone.

In his second Epistle Peter gave to the Lord Jesus Christ the title of "God and Saviour" (1:1, R.V.). He describes for us in the first chapter the impressions received on the Mount of Transfiguration. He never forgot the voice of God, that said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son." Peter firmly believed in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Witness To The Deity Of Christ

Paul met the Lord on the Damascus road, and was immediately convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead. To him the resurrection of Christ was a declaration of His Deity (Rom. 1:4). In his Epistles he constantly affirms the Deity of Christ. In Phil. 2:6 we are shown Christ as One Who had the form of God, Whose essential nature was God, Who thought Deity not something to be grasped at as a prize, for He was God. In Col. 1:15 Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God. God hitherto unseen is made visible in the person of Christ. In the same Epistle (2:9) we are told that in Christ dwells all the fulness of the

Godhead bodily. In the incarnate Christ was all that could be known or seen of God. In 1 Tim. 3:16 Paul calls it all a great mystery—but nevertheless a fact—that God was manifest in flesh.

The Holy Spirit's Witness To The Deity Of Christ

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is not named, possibly that we might regard the Holy Spirit as its author.

In chapter one we are told that God's last message to man was in His Son. Then the Son is described by seven statements that can only be applied to One Who is God. He is (1) Heir of all things, (2) Maker of the ages, (3) Reflector of God's glory, (4) Replica of God's essential being, (5) Upholder of all things, (6) Purifier of the sinful creation, (7) Occupant of the seat of majesty on high.

The Old Testament Witness To The Deity Of Christ

After His seven-fold description of the Son of God the Holy Spirit, in Heb. 1:5-13, cities seven Old Testament passages that teach the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1) His manifestation as Son of God (v.5a, Ps. 2:7), (2) His relationship to God (v. 5b, 2 Sam. 7:14), (3) His worship by angels. These only worship God (v. 6, Deut. 32:43, LXX). (4) His servants (v. 7, Ps. 104:4), (5) His reign (vv. 8-9, Ps. 45:6-7). Here He is designated as God in the glory of His millenial reign. (6) His eternity (vv. 10-12, Ps. 102:25-27). (7) His exaltation (v. 13, Ps. 110:1).

The Evil Spirits' Witness To The Deity Of Christ

The demons whom the Lord cast out of men bore witness to His Deity. They appreciated His authority over them (Matt. 8:29); they knew His identity; they called Him the Son of God (Luke 4:41), the Holy One of God (Mk. 1:24).

Thus the Lord's claims to be God are fully attested. God the Father opened Heaven and spoke of Him as His Son. God the Holy Spirit witnessed to His Deity after He had risen from the dead, and had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on High. Those who companied with Him on earth were convinced beyond doubt that He was God. Paul, who saw Him glorified, and knew Him as Lord and Master, was fully persuaded of His Deity, and constantly wrote of it.

With such a cloud of witnesses we are left in no doubt whatever. Christ is God — supreme, eternal, majestic, all-powerful.

Let us praise and adore Him, for He, of Whose Deity we are assured, is none other than our Saviour and our Redeemer. Let us prostrate ourselves before Him, that we might worship Him—for He is worthy.

In Thee most perfectly expressed,

The Father's glories shine,

Of the full Deity possessed,

Eternally Divine!

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,

That every knee to Thee should bow!

Our Lord’s Humanity (Apr 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 4, Apr 1960.

The Lord Jesus Christ, although He was God, was in every respect a real man, sin apart. He became man, and dwelt amongst men, being in the likeness and fashion of man.

The coming into the world of One who would be at the same time God and man was foreshown in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 7:14-15 we are shown (a) the nature of His birth —He would be born of a virgin, (b) the meaning of His name — Immanuel, God with us, telling of His Deity, (c) the means of His sustenance — butter and honey, the food of an ordinary man. Two chapters later the prophet reveals that the Child, who would be born naturally, would be the Almighty God. He describes the attributes implied in His name, and shows the greatness of His reign (9:6-7). A contemporary prophet, Micah, showed from what tribe amongst men He would come — He who was the eternal God (Mic. 5:2). It was necessary for the Son of God to become man ere He could provide salvation for men. As God He could not die. Thus He became man to die man’s death, and by that death to discharge the debt his sin had accumulated, to destroy the devil who had the power of death, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:9, 14-15). As the Son of God He had not experienced man’s temptations. To become a merciful and faithful High Priest, and to be able to succour us, He took our humanity that He Himself might experience being tempted (Heb. 2:17-18).

By taking our humanity the Lord manifested God's love to men, for He came to do the will of God. By this will believers have been sanctified (Heb. 10:7-10). He is the one Mediator between God and men, Himself man (1 Tim. 2:5, R.V.). He was manifested to take away sin, and to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:5, 8). This He did by the sacrifice of Himself. To bring many sons unto glory He must needs partake of flesh and blood in which to experience perfectly man's sufferings (Heb. 2:10-13).

The coming into manhood of the Son of God was an event of paramount interest to all. God the Father found delight in it. He had found no pleasure in the sacrifices of the Law, but twice opened the heavens to testify to the pleasure He had found in His beloved Son, now become Man. The devil saw in the coming the beginning of his doom as told to Eve. Here was the seed of the woman that would bruise his head. And so Satan set about to destroy this seed — through Herod's decree that all male children under two years of age should be put to death. The Incarnation of the Son of God was heralded by the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem as good tidings of great joy to all people. It evoked the praise of a multitude of the heavenly host as they said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). The shepherds were so interested in what the angel had announced that they rose the same hour of the night, and went to Bethlehem to ratify the fact.

The stars of heaven heralded the Incarnation, and led Wise Men from the east to seek the young child, to worship Him, and to present gifts. He who from eternity was the Word, in time became flesh. Full of grace and truth He dwelt amongst men, revealing all the while His

glory as the only-begotten One. Thus all heaven and earth took cognisance of the advent of the Son of God as Man.

How the Lord became man must always remain to us a mystery. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

In thinking of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ we do well not to refer to Him as the God-man. Scripture does not so designate Him, nor should we. He is God, and He is man. The Man Christ Jesus is identical with the eternal Word. In taking manhood He still continued one and the same person, changing only the manner of His subsisting. Before He was in the form of God alone; He became also, and now is, in the form of man. Now is He both God and Man.

In His person the two natures are inseparably combined. Let us avoid ascribing this or that action to His Deity, or to His manhood. In speaking of the person of Christ we do well always to use the words of Scripture. God did not send His Son into the body of a man; Christ did not come into flesh; He became flesh (John 1:14); He came in flesh (1 John 4:2).

Note how Philippians 2:6-8 describes the Incarnation. Christ Jesus ever was, and always remained in the form (the manner of existence) of God. He was equal with God the Father in power, in glory, and in dignity, and so did not need to grasp after equality with God, for He had possessed it eternally. But He “made Himself of no reputation” in taking the form (the manner of existence) of the Servant of God. His service led Him to be made in the likeness of men. He was found by men in the fashion (the outward presentation) of a man. This was what men

looked upon. Those who really knew Him knew His form — God and Man.

The Lord possessed man's tripartite nature. He had a body (Matt. 26:26); He had a soul (Matt. 26:38); He had a spirit (Luke 23:46). But whilst truly Man His manhood was unique, for He alone was sinless. He had a human name — Jesus of Nazareth. He constantly called Himself the Son of Man — a term that implied that He was the ideal Man, Man as God intended. Other men witnessed to His manhood. The unfriendly Jewish mob said of Him, "Thou being a man" (John 10:33). Pilate presented Him to the chief priests and officers with the words, "Behold the man". None of these doubted His real humanity.

That the Lord was really man is proven by the fact that His life was so normal.

His was a normal birth. After a fulltime gestation He was born by natural processes, and wrapped as other new-born babes in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:6-7).

His was a normal babyhood. Like other Jewish firstborn sons He was circumcised the eighth day, named, and presented to Jehovah.

His was a normal boyhood. This is the time of transition from childhood to manhood. Four verbs are used to describe this change in Jesus, (1) He was growing up, (2) He was becoming physically stronger, (3) He was becoming full of wisdom (Luke 2:40), (4) He was making progress—mentally, physically and spiritually (Luke 2:52).

His was a normal manhood. His life was lived as other men, in that (a) He performed the normal functions of a man — eating, drinking (Matt. 11:19), talking (John

4:27), hearing (Matt. 8:10), walking (Matt. 4:18), sleeping (Luke 8:23). (b) He experienced the normal feelings of a man — hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), sorrow (Matt. 26:38), suffering (Matt. 16:21), weariness (John 4:6). (c) He showed the normal reactions of a man — compassion (Matt. 9:26), gratitude (Matt. 26:10), Loneliness (Matt. 26:38), grief and anger (Mark 3:5), amazement (Mark 6:6).

As a result of the Lord's Incarnation the Father has been revealed to men (John 1:8). God having thus sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, cleared man from sin's dominion, and has justified many. These Christ is not ashamed to call His brethren, amongst whom He is first — in time, in dignity and in power. He is their file-leader — the One, who going before, is leading many sons to glory. Through His manhood also comes to us the hope of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). He has risen from the dead, to die no more, and so shall we rise.

The Lord will carry His humanity into eternity. He is the highly exalted Man of God's right hand. "This Man…sat down" (Heb. 10:12). As Man, Jesus the Son of God, is the Great High Priest who feels for our weaknesses, for He Himself, when Man, was tempted. John in a vision saw Him walking in the midst of the churches like the Son of Man. He is coming in flesh (2 John 7, R. V.). This same Jesus shall so come as He went — a Man. In the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, is Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. What a comfort it is for us that amidst all that awe-inspiring spectacle we shall see Him! The Man whose blood is sprinkled there, and who is Himself there, will make the believer feel at

home in the midst of such glory. Verily, “This Man … continueth ever” (Heb. 7:24).

What a theme is this! The great God of eternity, infinite in power, in wisdom and in love, became Man. He passed by the angels, and took hold of our humanity to die for our offences, to rise again for our justification, and to live for our present succour and our eternal hope. Let us praise Him for thus humbling Himself. Let us worship Him as the glorified, exalted Man, for whose coming we wait.

The Virgin Birth of Christ (Oct 1960)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 6 No. 10, Oct 1960.

The author of this article submitted it for publication while attending a Medical Congress at Toronto University, Canada. We appreciate that one so well qualified should present such an excellent paper on this important subject. This is a good example of doctrinal ministry, a rare ministry in this day.

By the Virgin Birth of Christ we mean that the Lord Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Ghost, that He was born before she and her betrothed husband had come together.

The Virgin Birth must be emphasised for three reasons:

(1) It was essential for the Incarnation of Diety. As Christ was God, nothing short of such a miracle as His conception by the Holy Spirit could account for the Incarnation. (2) It marks off the Lord Jesus Christ as distinct from all other men. He alone was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He is on a far higher plane than we are. (3) It affects our whole estimate of Christ—His sinlessness, His claims as the One sent from the Father, His miracles, His resurrection.

With the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is closely bound up the Inspiration of the Scriptures. It does not admit of a scientific explanation. Nor does the Scripture explain it. But Inspiration gives to faith the satisfaction demanded. The Bible states the nature of Christ’s birth. This is God’s revelation, and we unhesitatingly accept it without seeking to understand how it was brought about.

The mode by which our Lord chose to come into humanity was announced beforehand in the Old Testament. In that ‘germ of all prophecies’, Genesis 3:15, we have it suggested. The future Overcomer of Satan would be the seed of the woman, not of the man. The man would play no part in His advent into the world. In Isaiah 7:14 God gave a sign to Ahaz concerning the destruction of Syria and Israel. Two prophetic indications of the Messiah there given are shown by Matthew (1:22) as having been fulfilled at the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, namely, (a) His Conception —supernatural — “a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son”. (b) His Diety — implied in His name — “Immanuel, God with us”.

The Virgin Birth is attested in the New Testament by two accounts, one in Matthew 1:18-25 from Joseph, and one in Luke 1:26-56 from Mary. These are two separate and distinct witnesses to the truth of the matter, by the two people best qualified to know. They are supplementary the one to the other, and establish the truth of the saying of Deuteronomy 19:15, “at the mouth of two witnesses shall the matter be established”.

Many things are common to both accounts. Both indicate the consternation caused by the occurrence, as well it may; both state emphatically that though betrothed they had not yet come together; both record the name to be given to the child when born — Jesus; both reveal that an angel came to make the pronouncement; both dwell on the fact that the conception was the work of the Holy Spirit; both emphasise the unhesitating acceptance of the information by the two recipients, and their

acquiescence with the will of God. Let us examine these two records in more detail.

Matthew gives us Joseph's account. We see his character, his perplexity and his proposed action. His relations with Mary are emphasised. They had been betrothed, but had not yet come together, v. 18. Then came the discovery — Mary found with child. Note Joseph's reaction to this discovery. He wanted to put Mary away, for He was a righteous man, and thought her an adulteress. But he wanted to put her away privily, not publicly, because of love for his betrothed.

In his dilemma an angel appeared to him, assuaged his fears, and told him to take Mary as his wife, for she was not an adulteress, but had conceived by the Holy Spirit. In confirmation the angel told Joseph the sex of the child (something man cannot determine), the name of the child, and the greatness of His person and work — the whole being a fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Joseph accepted the explanation, and acted on the angel's instructions.

Luke records Mary's account, and her inmost thoughts on the subject, even before the conception took place. He deals first with her anxiety over Gabriel's message. The angelic visitor had saluted her as one highly favoured of God, in that she would conceive, and bring forth a son, a great One, the Son of God, the Messiah for whom all Israel looked. Mary questioned the biological possibility seeing that she had never had carnal knowledge of a man. Gabriel settled all her doubts with an explanation. The conception would be entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. For this reason her child would be called holy —sinless — the Son of God, the direct

outcome of the overshadowing power of the Most High God. How this was brought about we know not, nor must we pry into such a mystery. It is one of the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29).

Mary had this angelic announcement confirmed by her kinswoman, Elizabeth, whose experience Gabriel had given as a sign to Mary. The confirmation was two-fold, (1) Elizabeth's own conception in old age —contrary to nature, (2) Elizabeth's prophecy, when filled with the Holy Spirit — calling Mary the mother of her Lord.

Then follows Mary's hymn of praise — the Magnificat — in which she acknowledges God's overruling providence, and rejoiced because He had condescended to use her, a humble vessel, as the means of bringing blessing to Israel, and to the seed of Abraham.

In Luke 2:1-7 we have a description of the Lord's birth, in every way a perfectly natural birth into a humble family, but following a supernatural conception.

In the Epistles we find no direct reference to the Virgin Birth. It is not specifically mentioned, for it is not part of their teaching. There is a veiled reference in Galatians 4:4, where Christ's humanity is the point at issue, but God's special intervention is seen in that while Jesus was born of a woman He had been sent forth from God, possibly implying that He was conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Many objections have been raised to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ. Some say that it is contrary to normal biological experience. That is so, it cannot be explained on any scientific basis, but that must be expected concerning the birth of One who was both God

and man. His conception, His life, His death were all different from those of ordinary men.

Some point out that the Hebrew word translated ‘virgin’ in Isaiah 7:14, ALMAH, is one that implies merely a young woman, without reference to the fact that she still possessed the tokens of virginity. This latter thought, they say, would have been better conveyed by the use of BETHULAH. But the translators of the Septuagint used here the Greek word PARTHENOS, which indicates virginity, even though another word for young woman, NEANIS, would have been a more accurate rendering of the Original Hebrew. Besides both Gospels make the point that she was indeed a virgin.

Some suggest that the Virgin Birth is only a fable. This is a modern suggestion. It was not so regarded by the early Fathers of the Church. They accepted it as a fact.

Some refuse to accept the Virgin Birth because it finds no place in the writings of Mark, John or Paul. It was no part of their subjects. Mark deals with the service of Christ, and makes no mention of His childhood, or of His birth. Yet that He had been a child none denies. John in his Gospel deals with the things the other evangelists omit. He mentions Christ as “the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). That he was not ignorant of the facts of His conception and birth may be gathered from John 7:42 and Revelation 12:4. Paul in his epistles deals with the death, resurrection and coming glory of Christ rather than with His birth, but as we have seen he refers indirectly to the Virgin Birth in Galatians 4:4.

What should be the attitude of believers to this subject today? It is a fundamental doctrine of the faith, and must be firmly held. While others scoff at it God’s children

regard it just as Mary did. She could not understand it, nor can we today, with all our advances in human biology. Mary accepted it as the Word of God, and so should we — in simple faith. The Bible teaches it as a fact, and we say “Amen”. Like Mary, too, let us magnify and rejoice in God our Saviour.

Christ’s Vicarious Death (Oct 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 10, Oct 1962.

By the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ we mean that He, having no cause of death in Himself, voluntarily went into death on behalf of men, whose sin merited the righteous wrath of God.

The doctrine of the vicarious death is intimately associated with several of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, for example: (1) The perfect sinlessness of Christ, (2) The fact of sin in man, (3) The righteousness of God, who must punish sin, (4) The perfection of the man who avails himself of the finished work of Christ, (5) The resurrection of Christ.

Much is written in the Old Testament foreshadowing Christ’s vicarious death. It is set forth in many types. More particularly is it seen in the various lambs sacrificed, each presenting a different facet of the Lord’s atoning work, a different aspect of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Abel’s lamb shows the perfection of God’s Lamb — “of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof” (Gen. 4:4). Man’s salvation required that a perfect Lamb be slain for the sin of mankind. Only such would suffice. Abraham’s lamb (Gen. 22:13) depicts Christ as the Lamb of God’s providing. The Passover Lamb, offered and slain by the Israelites the night before leaving Egypt foreshadowed “Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). In it we see Christ the Lamb without blemish, whose perfections were displayed for three and a half years to Israel, the Lamb that was slain on Calvary, the Lamb whose death provides a shelter from

the coming storm of God's wrath, the Lamb whose atoning sacrifice must be personally appropriated by the sinner to ensure his salvation.

The many sacrifices of the Levitical economy find their antitype in the Lord Jesus Christ. His one sacrifice at Calvary covered all the requirements of those multitudinous offerings. Yea more, His sacrifice far exceeded those. It needed no repetition; it was once for all; it perfected them that were sanctified; it stands out in contrast to the continually recurring Levitical offerings, which, instead of removing sins, constantly reminded the Children of Israel of their exceeding sinfulness.

The Lord Jesus Christ is prophetically presented to us in Isaiah 53 as God's perfect Servant, suffering for sins not His own. There we see Him portrayed as the One who successfully did the work that God required as an offering for sin. In the performance of this task His visage was marred. He was misunderstood. His work was misinterpreted. Men saw Him as one suffering because of God's displeasure, whilst all the time He was being smitten for the sins of men. Of His own free will He suffered on the behalf of men; He bore the judgment due to man's iniquities; upon Him the Lord laid the iniquity of us all; He was stricken for the transgressions of men; He bare the sin of many. Yea, the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand. Through Him many are justified. With Him God will divide the eternal inheritance of His redeemed ones.

Many other Old Testament Scriptures hint at the vicarious work of Christ. Psalm 22 describes in prophetic language the experiences of Christ on the

Cross. There He suffered at the hands of men; He was the object of Satan's hostility; He was forsaken even by God. Psalm 40:6 indicates Christ's voluntary offering of Himself consequent on God's dissatisfaction with the Levitical offerings. Psalm 69:9 tells us of the reproach that the Lord Jesus Christ would bear on Calvary, in fulfilling the plans and purposes of God. It was from Israel, His "brethren" (v.8); it was from those who were reproaching God; it was from men who despised Him, for He became the song of the drunkard; it was associated with loneliness, and broke His heart. Daniel 9:24 foretells Calvary as the place "to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity." Zechariah 13:1 sets forth the work of the Cross as a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.

The vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the grand theme of the New Testament. In the Gospels, as might be expected. great prominence is given to the Lord's death. All the evangelists dwell at great length on His passion and resurrection. All mention that He dismissed His spirit. So different was His death from that of other men! His was a voluntary going into death — a death with a purpose. All mention His burial — to dispose of the theory that He merely swooned, and never really died. All mention His resurrection, so necessary to man's justification.

The Lord, in His teaching, often spoke of His death, and its vicarious nature. He spoke of His sinlessness—the great pre-requisite for One who would bear the sins of others. He was confident of ever having pleased the Father in His life (John 8:29); He could challenge men to accuse Him of sin (John 8:46); He knew that Satan could find no sin in Him (John 14:30).

Again, the Lord Jesus Christ reminded men of the purpose of His incarnation. He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28), to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:11).

The Lord taught that His death was a voluntary act. None took His life from Him; He laid it down of His own free will; He laid it down that He might take it again; He laid it down and took it again in harmony with the will of His Father (John 10:17-18).

The Saviour, too, indicated the benefits that would accrue from His death. By believing on Him men would not perish; instead they would have eternal life (John 3:14). He would draw all unto Him (John 12:32).

In commissioning His disciples ere He was taken into Heaven, Jesus told them that it had been necessary for Him to suffer, and to rise from the dead before repentance and remission of sins could be preached in His name. This is the grand message of the Gospel we have for the nations today.

Finally, the Lord would have us proclaim His vicarious death, when each recurring Lord's Day we seek to remember Him. For this purpose He instituted the Lord's Supper. He gave us the emblems to remind us of His body broken for us, and of His blood shed for many for the remission of sins. What a blessed privilege to engage our minds with such a lofty theme!

The apostles also made much of the value of the death of Christ. Peter preached of it as God's plan (Acts 5:23); as a result of it men could have forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). The Lord's death is a constantly re-curing theme in Peter's First Epistle. Through it men are redeemed

(1:18). In His death Christ suffered for us; He bare our sins in His own body upon the tree; He received the stripes that brought us healing, and enabled us to live unto righteousness (2:21-24). Christ's death in the flesh was all-sufficient; once was enough; He was the Just One, suffering for the unjust ones, to bring them to God (3:18).

John also appreciated the vicarious nature of Christ's death. He first introduces us to the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In his First Epistle the Apostle of love shows how much we owe to the Lord's death. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:7); "He is the propitiation for our sins: and … for the sins of the whole world" (2:2); "He laid down His life for us," that is, of His own free will (3:16). He came from Heaven at the Father's request to give His life, and to be the propitiation for our sins (4:9-10). In the Book of Revelation John again writes of what we owe to the death of Christ, describing Him as the One who "loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood" (1:5, R.V.). In Revelation 5:9 we have the song of the redeemed in Heaven worshipping the Lamb, because of the redemption His death has accomplished for men of all nations.

Paul, the Apostle born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:8), in all his epistles deals with the vicarious death of Christ. The Epistle to the Romans dwells especially on the theme. For this purpose God set Him forth as a propitiation (3:25); chapter 4:25 tells us that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; chapter 5:6-11 presents Him as One who died for us, sinners, ungodly, without strength, yet that

death brought justification, salvation and reconciliation; chapter 8:32 reveals that He had not been spared by God, but delivered up for us all.

One verse may be quoted from each of Paul's other epistles to show how constantly he mentioned this subject—1 Corinthians 15, "Christ died for our sins;" 2 Corinthians 5:21, God "made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us;" Galatians 1:4, He "gave Himself for us sins;" Ephesians 1:7,

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins;" Philippians 2:8, "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross;" Colossians 1:20, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross … and you … hath He reconciled;" 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come;" 1 Timothy 2:6, He "gave Himself a ransom for all;" 2 Timothy 1:10, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death;" Titus 2:14, He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity."

Thus Paul leaves us in no doubt as to the purpose and the value of the death of Christ. It was his great sheet-anchor from time to eternity. He rejoiced continually in its efficacy.

Whilst the value of the death of Christ is available for all, it is effective only in those who believe. This truth is emphasised when we compare the different Greek prepositions translated by our word 'for' in two similar, yet different, verses. In 1 Timothy 2:6 we read that Christ "gave Himself a ransom for (huper-on behalf of) all." But Matthew 20:28 tells us that He gave "His life a

ransom for (anti — in the stead of) many," that is, the many who believe on Him.

What an important subject is the vicarious death of Christ! How its understanding enhances our appreciation of Him, and of the work He accomplished on Calvary! May this study produce in our hearts more gratitude, and adoration, and worship!

Whatever curse was mine, He bore;

The wormwood and the gall,

There, in that lone mysterious hour,

My cup — He drained it all!

The Resurrection of Christ (Mar 1964)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 10 No. 3, Mar 1964.

The resurrection of the dead was ridiculed by the Greek philosophers to whom Paul preached at Athens (Acts 17:32). The Sadducees denied its possibility (Acts 23:8). King Agrippa thought it incredible (Acts 26:8). It was disbelieved by some Corinthian believers, the work of false teachers amongst them (1 Cor. 15:12). But, generally speaking, a belief in bodily resurrection was accepted by the Jewish people. It was one of the fundamentals of their faith (Heb. 6:2). David had sung about it (Ps. 16:10). Daniel had written plainly of a future resurrection, distinguishing two different outcomes (Dan. 12:2). There had been cases of the dead being brought to life again in the Old Testament (1 Kings 17:22, 2 Kings 4:34, 13:21), but these were examples of resuscitation rather than resurrection, for they all subsequently died again.

The Lord Jesus Christ set the seal of His approval on this doctrine, both in His teaching and by His miracles. He raised from the dead three persons in different stages of corruption. He taught a two-fold resurrection, issuing in eternal life for some, and eternal judgment for others (John 5:28-29); He promised to raise from the dead all who believed in Him (John 6:40); He refuted the teaching of the Sadducees who denied resurrection by referring them to the Pentateuch, which pointed to God as the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — a covenant to be made good not to dead, but to living ones. It included the promise of the city whose ‘builder and maker was God (Heb. 11:9-10, 16).

The Lord in His teaching mentioned so often specifically His own personal resurrection from the dead. He saw in Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale a picture of His sojourn in the heart of the earth, to be raised again on the third day. In three days He would raise up the temple of His body, destroyed by men on Calvary (John 2:19). Many times the Lord, referring to His passion, joined together the related themes of His betrayal, His suffering, His death and His resurrection. On the way to Gethsemane Jesus confidently promised to meet His disciples in Galilee after being raised from the dead (Matt. 26:32). He taught openly of His death and resurrection (Mark 8:32), to such effect that the Pharisees feared pits accomplishment (Matt. 27:63).

The proofs of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are irrefutable. This is the acknowledged verdict of all who have carefully examined the evidence. There was no doubt that He really died. The Roman soldier attested it. To be absolutely sure he thrust a spear into the Saviour's side on the Cross. The centurion in charge of the crucifixion duly certified His death (Mark 15:45). His body had been carefully taken down from the Cross, bound with linen cloths and spices, in full conformation to Jewish burial customs (John 19:40), and laid in the sepulchre. Then His enemies, fearing lest the disciples should steal His body, made the sepulchre doubly secure by sealing the stone, and setting a guard of soldiers all the while He lay there (Matt. 27:66, 28:11).

The finding of the open empty tomb was the first intimation of the resurrection, and that by frail women, who could not have removed the stone themselves. Immediately Mary Magdalene went to inform His disciples, two of whom ran to corroborate the facts. Not

only did they find the tomb empty, but the more observant one noticed particularly the arrangement of the body wrappings — the napkin that had been about His head not lying with the other clothes, but still shaped as it had been when enfolding the head. John realized what had happened. The Lord had risen from the dead, as He had foretold.

Jesus then appeared in person to Mary, who recognized the voice of her beloved Lord. As a definite proof of His resurrection the Lord appeared to His disciples, first to those gathered in the upper room. There He established His identity by showing the marks of the nails in His hands and His feet. Then for forty days He came and went amongst them. He manifested Himself, not in spirit form, but in a body of flesh and bones: a body that could be handled; a body capable of eating food. Apparently in His resurrection body He was able to pass through closed doors. It was the same body as before death, but now possessed with new power.

Many objections have been levelled against the resurrection of Christ by those who would belittle His work of redemption. Some suggest that He was never really dead, but that He had merely swooned, and revived when His body touched the cool earth. The evidence of the centurion, and the binding of the body with the linen cloths and a hundred pound weight of spices, are sufficient to disprove this idea. Some think the disciples were self-deceived, that because they would have liked the Lord to be with them again, they stole His body, and then foisted this strange story on the world. But against this supposition we must note that the disciples did not understand the resurrection, nor were they quick to believe it at the first. They

themselves needed to be convinced of it. To them the Lord appeared many times, and at different times of the day. So they were not deceived. Christ sat with them, talked with them, and performed a miracle to show that He had really risen from the dead. There were many witnesses of the resurrection, not just a few simple, easily deceived ones.

Some would describe the resurrection of Christ as legend and myth. But legend and myth take time to develop, yet in three days the disciples believed it, confidently affirmed it, and in fifty days were preaching it fearlessly. No objection to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is found to be valid.

The resurrection of the Lord had a profound effect on His disciples. Mary, the first to see Him, would have clung to Him in worship had He not given her a task to perform. When two of them realized that He had indeed risen from the dead they were so keen to inform the others that, late at night, they walked again the seven miles to Jerusalem. The disciples, gathered in the upper room in fear and trembling because of their previous association with Him, were glad to see Him amongst them again. They were terrified and frightened by His presence; they wondered if He were but a spirit; they disbelieved for very joy. The Lord, however, quietened their fears, and assured them of the reality of His physical resurrection (Luke 24:36-43).

The resurrection formed a vital part in the preaching of the early church. Peter expounded it in great detail in his Pentecostal sermon, showing its relevance to Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 2:24-36). Constantly he

insisted that they, the apostles, were witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 1:22, 2:32, 3:15, 4:33).

The fact that Christ was raised from the dead was the keystone of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 against those who denied resurrection. In that chapter Paul regarded the resurrection of Christ as an essential of the Gospel message (vv. 1-4). He adduces as proof of this event six post-resurrection appearances of Christ to men (vv. 5-11). The Apostle next shows the fallacy of not believing in resurrection (vv. 12-19). Then, starting from the confident assertion that Christ had risen from the dead, Paul goes on to present the certainty of the resurrection of believers, and its implications (vv. 20-34).

Thus the resurrection of Christ meant much to the early disciples. It gave meaning to His death; it indicated the nature and purpose of that death; it showed its value. The resurrection vindicated the claims of Christ. He promised He would rise. His word could be trusted. It gave courage to the disciples. Men who cringed for fear of the Jews became bold open witnesses of this new faith. It gave a hope of His return to those who, passing through trials, remembered His promise to them. It gave promise of a coming righteous judgment for all men (Acts 17:31).

For believers today the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has many encouraging lessons. It teaches

1. That the sin question has been settled for us for ever. Christ has been raised to show that our justification is complete (Rom. 4:25). He has satisfied God.

2. That we have a living, not a dead, Saviour. In this respect Christianity is different from all other religious

systems. Their heads are dead. Ours lives to guarantee our present salvation. Alive, He is our Great High Priest, now interceding for us in Heaven. His resurrection confirms the hope of His second advent.

3. That the saints who have fallen asleep will also rise from the dead, to be clothed with new, spiritual bodies, like Christ's body of glory; to be rewarded for service done here for their Lord; to reign with Him. What an encouragement to endure suffering for His sake in this life (2 Tim. 2:12)!

4. That the Lord has triumphed gloriously. He has conquered Satan, sin, death, hell, the grave. He stands now the mighty Victor, who has overcome all His enemies. This triumph will be shared by His redeemed when they, too, will rise from their graves, for then will the Ward of God be fulfilled, "Death is swallowed up in victory," a victory accredited to us through Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

5. That our faith may be firmly placed in Christ whose resurrection claim was substantiated. He confidently asserted that He would rise from the dead, and He rose. He was the first to do so, never more to experience death. It proclaims Him Son of God (Rom. 1:4). Such an One is worthy of our implicit trust. The death of Christ was not a humiliating defeat. It was a glorious triumph. "He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. 13:4). Let us rejoice afresh today in the resurrection of Christ! Let us glory in its far-reaching implications! Let us praise the Lord for His great accomplishment!

"Up from the grave He arose

With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;

He arose a Victor from the dark domain,

And He lives for ever with His saints to reign;

He arose! He arose!

Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

The Ascension of Christ (June-July 1965)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 11 No. 6, June-July 1965.

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ was the termination of His sojourn on earth, when He was taken up bodily and visibly into a cloud, and so into Heaven, where He is at present seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The ascension had ever been the Lord's goal when on earth. Luke describes it as the culmination of the Lord's going up to Jersualem for the last time (Luke 9:51). Jesus had told the disciples of the possibility of their seeing Him ascend to where He had been before (John 6:62). He had come from the Father into the world; He would leave the world to go to the Father (John 16:28); (John 14:2). He told the disciples of His ascension before He died that they might rejoice in it, and believe when it came to pass (John 14:28-29). That the Lord was not referring to His death in these Scriptures He made clear by His statement to Mary on the resurrection morning, for then He spoke of His ascension as being still future (John 20:17). The ascension was the terminus of His witness on earth (Acts 1:22).

The fact of the ascension is amply documented in Scripture. Mark described the last act of the Lord on earth as "the Lord Jesus was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (16:19). Luke closed his Gospel record with a description of the scene over against Bethany, when in the process of blessing His disciples the Lord was parted from them, and

carried up into Heaven (Luke 24:50-51). The Lord possibly ascended from the Mount of Olives, which Zechariah informs us will be the place of His arrival at His second advent to earth, in power and great glory (Zech. 14:4). Luke began his second treatise with an account of the ascension (Acts 1:2-9). It happened forty days after the Lord's resurrection. During these forty days the Lord Jesus had appeared and disappeared suddenly many times. But the ascension was no sudden vanishing. It occurred after the Lord had outlined to His disciples the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and after He had commissioned them afresh in His service, telling them to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit. On this occasion they witnessed His physical ascent until a cloud received Him out of their sight. It happened as they were looking; they saw it with their eyes; they saw Him taken up; they saw Him as He went. Luke also records how Stephen when about to be martyred was permitted to look into Heaven, and see the glory of God. There he saw Jesus standing (Acts 7:55). Him whom the disciples had seen go into Heaven Stephen clearly identified there —Jesus, the Son of man.

There is a Man in Heaven. The disciples saw a man go up. Stephen recognized the Man in Heaven. The presence of Jesus there, amidst all the glory of that place, will give confidence to the believer when he comes to that awe-inspiring company. He will have come to Jesus (Heb. 12:24). As our forerunner Jesus has entered Heaven (Heb. 6:20).

The ascension of Christ was necessary to the fulfilment of Scripture. David had written of his Lord as seated at the right hand of Jehovah (Ps. 110:1). This Peter showed had come to pass in the Lord's exaltation by God at His

ascension (Acts 2:3334). His exaltation was the outcome of the Lord's work of purification at Calvary (Heb. 1:3). It was God's response to the Lord's voluntary humiliation and obedience to the death of the Cross. He who stooped so low is made so very high by God (Phil. 2:9).

"Every mark of dark dishonour

Heaped upon Thy thorn-crownd brow,

All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow

Told in answering glory now."

Christ's ascension was a glorious occasion in Heaven. He was received up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16, R.V.). This was a fitting climax to the Lord's manifestation in flesh. What a triumphant entry, as Heaven acclaims the Victor of Calvary! He has been made higher than the heavens (Heb. 7:26); He has been set at God's own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named (Eph. 1:20:21). Angels and authorities and powers are all subject unto Him (1 Pet. 3:22). How worthy He is of all the honour heaped upon Him!

"Behold the Lamb with glory crowned!

To Him all power is given;

No place too high for Him is found,

No place too high in Heaven."

On earth also the ascension made a profound impression on men. The disciples who beheld it rejoiced, for "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52). How different were the thoughts of the disciples on that occasion from their meditations

following the Cross. Then they were sad (v. 17), but now joy filled their hearts. Now they rejoiced because He had gone to the Father (John 14: 28). What confidence it gives to the believer to-day coming to the throne of grace to know that he has a Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens — Jesus, the Son of God! Our High Priest knows our weakness (Heb. 4:14-16). He is a merciful and faithful High Priest. He has Himself suffered being tempted, and is able to succour us in our temptations (Heb. 2:18). We rejoice that Christ has ascended.

What untold blessings the Lord's ascension has brought to man! It amplifies the finished work of Calvary. Being exalted by God He is a Prince and a Saviour, ready to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). It was therefore expedient for Christ to go to the Father, for only then could the Holy Spirit be sent into the world (John 16:7-10). This occurred ten days after the ascension. The Spirit's works of beneficence have been with us ever since — convicting the world, setting sinners apart for conversion, sealing and filling the believer. The risen, exalted, glorified Christ is the Head of the Church which is His Body (Eph. 1:22). As such He joins and knits together the Church with an ever rich supply, with the result that the members of the Body edify one another in love (Eph. 4:16). The ascended Lord has given gifts to each believer with a view to the perfecting of the saints, the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:7-12). Christ, having entered into Heaven itself, appears before God as our Great High Priest, and as our Advocate.

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ carries another reminder for us. His session at the right hand of God is a

waiting one. He is henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet (Heb. 10:13). As the angelic messengers announced after His ascension, He is coming back to earth as He went, visibly, and to the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11). Before that event He will have come for His own, to meet them in the air. His present activity is preparing a place for His people. When that is complete He will come again for them. What a prospect lies immediately ahead of us! What a glory — to be received where He was received — His Bride, His eternal praise!

The ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, in bodily form, into the glory of Heaven, is a fact well attested by Scripture, for many disciples saw it happen. It was the natural sequel to the Cross. God was so pleased with His self-abnegation, and His work of redemption that He exalted Him to His own right hand, and gave Him a name far above every name. The Lord is now in Heaven — the supreme One of the universe — “worshipped; glorified, adored.” As Head of the Church He gives gifts to men for its edification; as High Priest He is interceding even now for His own; as Advocate He is maintaining their cause with God.

What a glorious sequel to His life on earth — honoured by God, acclaimed by angels, adored by His waiting people!

“Thy holy head, once bound with thorns,

The crown of glory now adorns;

Thy seat, the Father’s throne.

Then thousand thousands sing Thy praise,

Their harps the eternal anthem raise,

Worthy the Lamb alone!”

The Suffering Servant (Aug-Sept 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1966.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 forms a separate, complete unit in the Prophecy. There should be no chapter division between 52:15 and 53:1. As is frequently his custom the Prophet gives the title of the new section at the start. With the words, “Behold My Servant,” he expresses so concisely the subject matter of this sublime foreshadowing of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Here God draws our attention to His appreciation of Christ as He carried out the work of man’s redemption.

These fifteen verses are divided into five portions of three verses each. The first and last of these subdivisions stand like two high mountains, each setting forth the exaltation of Christ because of the satisfactory execution of His work. Between these two mountain peaks lies the valley of humiliation into which God’s Servant must needs enter to accomplish His purpose.

The last subdivision of this chapter (vv. 10-12) presents to us the satisfaction that the work of Calvary gave to God. Jehovah was pleased to bruise Him, not that He took a sadistic delight in it, but rather He rejoiced to find in Christ One willing and able to accomplish the great work of redemption and reconciliation. Christ Himself finds satisfaction as many through Him are justified. Verse 12 indicates the reward that will belong to God’s Servant in a coming day — the reward for His perfect devotion to duty. The powers that were hostile to

Him will be subdued; they will be spoiled; the spoil will be given to Jehovah's satisfying Servant, who will share it with His own. His victories, His reward, His exaltation will all accrue to Him because of the successful accomplishment of His work on Calvary, the work outlined in 53:4-9. This accomplishment Jehovah epitomises in four brief but comprehensive sentences that set forth so definitely the experience of the suffering Servant. Concerning these four declarations one has commented, "Every word stands here as if written beneath the cross on Golgotha."

Let us concentrate our thoughts on the first of these sentences, "He hath poured out His soul unto death." As we do so our hearts should overflow in adoration and worship, for in these words there lies such a depth of meaning. The more one ponders them the more one wonders at the graphical description God gives of His suffering Servant entering into the realm of death. Three main lessons are presented for our adoring wonder.

(1) The Exposure of Christ's Soul to Death

The verb, "to pour out," implies a laying bare, an uncovering, an exposure. Thus the Lord exposed His life to death. He who was the Author of life went into death. He partook of man's 'blood and flesh' that He might die, that through death He might bring to nought him that wielded death's power, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Death had no claim upon Christ, for He had never sinned. But it was part of God's purposes of grace that the perfect Servant should experience death on behalf of all men, that He might lay a basis for the sanctification of all who would believe on Him (Heb. 2:9). This the

Lord Jesus Christ did once for all when He died on Calvary. This death the Prophet described earlier in the chapter. After an oppressive judgment the Saviour was taken out to be crucified. It was a judicial murder. He was cut off out of the land of the living, with few to give Him any consideration, for they would have buried Him in the grave with the wicked. To all this the Lord exposed His pure, unsinning soul.

(2) The Voluntary Nature of Christ's Death

The tense of the Hebrew verb translated 'hath poured out' suggests the Servant's own definite action in this going into death. He died of His own free will. It had ever been His desire. His delights being always with the sons of men He planned in the bygone ages to do all that was neccessary for their redemption. His coming into manhood was no afterthought, no expedient in time, but an eternal purpose of grace. He came to do the will of God (Heb. 10:7). He knew that meant death, even the death of the cross. God's will was His will. The perfect Servant submitted Himself fully to Jehovah.

To go into death was ever Christ's set purpose during His sojourn on earth. He often spoke of His death, and of its nature. "The Son of Man must be lifted up" (John 3:14): "He must go unto Jerusalem… and be killed" (Matt. 16:21); "The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him" (Matt. 17:22); "The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests… and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him" (Matt. 20:18). Yet He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. He wanted to lay down His life for His sheep. He alone of all men had

the power, the right to say whether or not He would go into death. None could have put Him to death against His wish. But on to Jerusalem He went willingly, knowing full well all that would befall Him there. This determined purpose of Christ gave great pleasure to his Father. “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10:17).

The Lord was silent throughout the travesty of justice that He experienced before the chief priests, and Herod and Pilate. Though oppressed and afflicted He opened not His mouth to protest against their injustice and irregular methods, or to assert His innocence. He was doing a work for God on behalf of sinful men, and He was determined to see it through.

This self-dedication to death was fully realized at Calvary, for there He put into effect His eternal plan, and the purpose He had outlined to His disciples since coming to earth. His death was not accomplished by man. Satan and men did their worst, but they could not take His life. The writers of the four Gospels all agree in their description of the final stage of His crucifixion. All report that He dismissed His spirit. He had a unique birth; He lived a unique life; He died a unique death. Ordinary men die because they must; they cannot stay; they must obey the summons when death commands. Christ alone chose to go into death in His own time, and in His own manner. It was His hour (John 13:1).

(3) The Perfect Accomplishment of Christ’s Death

The Lord took no short cuts in carrying out the will of God. That will meant the shedding of blood, and God’s perfect Servant was obedient unto death, even the death

of the cross. Not only did He expose His soul to death, but He poured it out unto death. He experienced the death of the cross in all its awfulness.

The Hebrew word translated ‘poured out’ carries also the idea of stripping, or emptying, or pouring clean out, even to the very last remnant (Delitsch). Thus the phrase expresses the fact that the Lord experienced the fulness of all that the death of the cross meant — the horror, the suffering, the reproach, the darkness, the loneliness. Not only did He taste death for every man, but He drank the bitter cup to its dark dregs. It was a bitter, bitter cup. “Not a mite was left unpaid, when He my judgment bore.”

The Psalmist described in the words of Psalm 69:2 the horror that Jesus felt when going into death, “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.” The Lord knew what it meant to become engulfed by death. It was like being overwhelmed in a morass, searching for, and finding no sure foundation for the feet.

The awful sufferings the Lord endured are graphically portrayed in the five-fold metaphorical description of His extreme weakness in Psalm 22:14-15. “I am poured out like water” — complete helplessness; “all My bones are out of joint” — absolute powerlessness; “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels” — total absence of inward security; “My strength is dried up like a potsherd” — utter physical exhaustion; “My tongue cleaveth to My jaws” — intense thirst.

The Lord experienced the totality of all that crucifixion entailed. The writer to the Hebrews in exhorting the believers to patience pointed to the example of Jesus, who endured the cross. The Greek word here rendered

‘endured’ means literally, remaining under. Jesus remained under the sufferings of the cross till all was accomplished (Heb. 12:2). This the Lord Himself expressed as at the end He shouted triumphantly, “It is finished.”

But over and above the physical sufferings and the shameful reproach the Lord experienced an unfathomable depth in being forsaken by God. As we see Him emerging from the three hours of darkness we hear His despairing, desolate cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me”? Who can understand this predicament? Who can appreciate its meaning? Never was there sorrow like unto His sorrow. Yet for our sakes Jesus had poured out His soul unto this death, for “the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

The Lord knew what it was to expose His soul to death, and voluntarily to pour out His soul completely thereto, in all its awful realities. He has drunk to the full the bitterness of that cup. In consequence there has been given to us who have believed in Him the cup of salvation, the cup of remembrance, the cup of blessing. Let us praise His great name! Let us fall down before Him in adoring wonder! Let us worship Him because He has fully accomplished the work of our redemption! “He hath poured out His soul unto death.”

“See from His head, His hands, His feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down;

Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”