

# Editorial

**A**LCOHOL is the sacred-cow drug of the western world. Liquor is sold freely in supermarkets, and liquor stores are becoming more common in the suburbs than food stores.

Young unemployable wasters litter parks and roadways with empty alcohol cans or bottles. They swagger along holding a can of 'Bourbon and Cola' in a way that they believe demonstrates their manhood or womanhood. They are of the firm opinion that their association with this adult drug signals their arrival at adulthood; they really believe they have arrived. Fortunately, there are a lot of good people in the country who don't go along with that concept of manhood or womanhood.

More than ever before the Emergency Departments at hospitals are being swamped by young people with alcoholic poisoning. It seems we can't have an anniversary or celebration these days unless the young people drink themselves stupid. The most prominent feature of Saturday nights on main street is binge drinking with young people vomiting on the footpath. It's certainly not the place we would want to take our overseas visitors.

Where did the idea come from that the consumption of alcohol marks the transition from youth to adulthood? It grew out of the belief that if alcohol were an adult-only drug, then to drink alcohol would be an adult activity.

The liquor barons prep the youth for their 'adulthood' by offering them *alcopops*, soft drinks that contain the maximum legally allowable amount of alcohol. Even with this initiation these kids can't wait. It is not uncommon for groups of under-age youth to gather near bottle shops where they pester passing adults to take their money and buy alcohol for them.

What few people want to know is why restrictions were placed around the sale of alcohol in the first place, and why certain areas of the city had been designated dry zones where alcohol could not be purchased. They only saw these restrictions as a violation of their freedom of choice and voted against them. Politicians, ignoring the pleas of the police, lowered the drinking age in the expectation that it would win them votes. The result was a tsunami of new alcohol sales outlets from community liquor shops to supermarkets.

People got what they wanted but their so-called freedom has a sharp hook in it. Young people consider it their ultimate experience to indulge in binge drinking and get stoned. After an outdoor festival or rock-concert the venue and surrounding roads are littered with thousands of empty cans and bottles and defiled by the

revolting stench of vomit. And the nurses and doctors in the hospital emergency departments are run off their feet.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the pendulum is swinging back to the anti-alcohol side. Recent scientific studies refute the belief that even a small amount of alcohol is good for the body. And an increasing number of studies point to the toxic effects of alcohol that permanently disable the unborn and create a seedbed for cancer in adults.

Christians need to be in the forefront of the drive to reduce the availability of alcohol and to require liquor barons to put graphic pictures on their products (as was required of tobacco merchants) warning drinkers of the dangers of imbibing. After all, alcohol is a far worse drug than nicotine, so why should it get preferential treatment?

Would you prefer your child to be a heavy smoker or a heavy drinker? ❄



*Ritchie Way*

RITCHIE WAY

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### Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all meaning and direction in their lives through a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.



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# THEY BELIEVED A LIE



Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald

## DESMOND FORD

**T**HE FRENCH Algerian existentialist, Albert Camus, wrote: 'I shall tell you a great secret, my friend. Do not wait for the last judgement. It takes place every day'. His statement is profound and it has been illustrated in thousands of biographies.

Take, for example, the story of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. In an article entitled 'Our Generation', Scott Fitzgerald wrote: 'It is said that we were sceptics and cynics, but actually we were the great believers'. He is referring to the Jazz Age and the life of wild abandon lived by many young people in that era in prosperous America.

Scott and Zelda were the prince and princess of that decade, as Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were to be in the 1960s. All four in their social sets were indeed sceptics and cynics, despite Fitzgerald's disavowal. He writes truly when he affirms that they were believers also. But they believed a lie. They believed that one could take all from life and give nothing. They believed that life could be self-centred, and one could still win. They believed the philosophy of hedonism, though the millennia had exposed the falsity of that philosophy a trillion times.

They did not believe in Judgement Day, and they made of pleasure, alcohol and sex their cherished gods.

For the most part, those who met Scott and Zelda could not but be attracted to them. But thoughtful people were also afraid for them, for they lived recklessly. Scott himself uses the word reckless when he describes the sexual behaviour of Zelda particularly before their marriage, and he affirms that Zelda became, despite his Catholic background, his only god. She had been thoroughly spoiled and indulged as a child by her mother. She knew no fear, and she had no morals. She did what she liked, when she liked, as she liked, wherever she liked; but one could not help but be drawn toward her. She had a wild courage and what seemed a glorious freedom. And Scott looked like a Greek god.

Both drank heavily and smoked incessantly. There were whole days, weeks and months, and even years, when either one or both seemed to accomplish little or nothing. Many a time Scott passed out and was put in a taxi by his friends and sent to his lodging. Hemmingway was tempted to despise him because he could not hold his liquor. In his own diary Scott recorded increasing insomnia because of his alcoholic pattern of life.

A friend invited to lunch found the newly married couple in a characteristic state of wild array. The apartment was in

chaos and was characterised by clothes scattered freely everywhere, wine glasses and cigarette butts and absolute chaos. Zelda did not even know how to sew buttons on and frustrated Scott by never bothering to send clothes out to the laundry until faced by absolute necessity.

In early years it seemed that the angels smiled upon them, and the book, *This Side of Paradise*, Scott's first, by its title hinted at their way of life and ambitions. Many of their activities were completely senseless, as when, at a friend's home, Scott carelessly threw away one after another the beautiful goblets of host and hostess, though he was checked. Zelda would make perilous thirty-foot dives into dangerous waters without a thought.

It has been said that most moderns do not die—they kill themselves. Scott died at 44 of a heart attack, and Zelda was incinerated in a hospital fire at the age of 48, after many years of recurring bouts of insanity. Neither of them ever learned life's first lesson—reality is characterised by law. We never really break laws, they break us. Obedience to law is liberty; there is no other way to true freedom. Neither Zelda nor Scott ever suspected this. They thought they could sow without reaping.

Brilliant in his portrayal of the twenties, as represented in *The Great Gatsby*, Scott was an idiot as regards living, and Zelda even more so. It was a pity that they lived too early to hear Camus's great secret:

'Do not wait for the last judgement. It takes place every day.' They were not versed in the ancient philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, which told of the inevitable nexus between action and reaction. They lived as though what they had was their own, instead of a stewardship entrusted to them to be improved upon for the blessing of others. They had not learned the elementary lesson that lives that are self-centred are like grain that is eaten—fruitless and barren.

How strange it is that intelligent people—and both Scott and Zelda were very intelligent—can be so ignorant about vital truths of existence. When Scott was not drinking or recovering from a drunken bout, he worked his mind strenuously. He seemed not to know the elementary law that all strain on the nerves should be compensated for by strain on the muscles. He was not athletic, and Zelda often failed to persuade him to copy her own sometimes-fanatic physical sports. It must have occurred to him that anyone who purposely put something into their stomach to steal away their brains was an idiot, but he did it all his adult life until he became the hopeless slave of alcoholism. The same was true of Richard Burton.

Zelda did seem to learn. In her last years there were periods of lucidity and sanity that contrasted strangely with the early decades of her life. At such times she affirmed that the tragedies of her existence had proved worthwhile because at last she had come to reckon with and upon God. She had ordered her daughter Scottie not to follow her own example of her earlier years and insisted that life must be lived in harmony with what is right and good and pure and true.

When Camus affirmed that judgement day takes place every day, he was echoing the words of Holy Writ: 'Don't be fooled. God is not mocked. A man reaps what he sows.' Life is incredibly generous when it gives youth, health, strength, beauty, intelligence, friendship and endless opportunities. But life is also a stern creditor, demanding ultimate payment of all the bills we carelessly contract. 'Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy.' But those who are behind with the rent ultimately lead a fearful existence.

Only the Christian philosophy is sufficient to meet the glory and the terror of the world. At its heart lies the Cross—contradictory lines intersecting. It tells how Calvary reconciled the apparently diverse characteristics of God: justice and mercy. The wages of sin is death and God has paid the wages for us. Even God could not forgive us unless it was acknowledged before the universe that sin has no profit and brings only sorrow and pain. Every



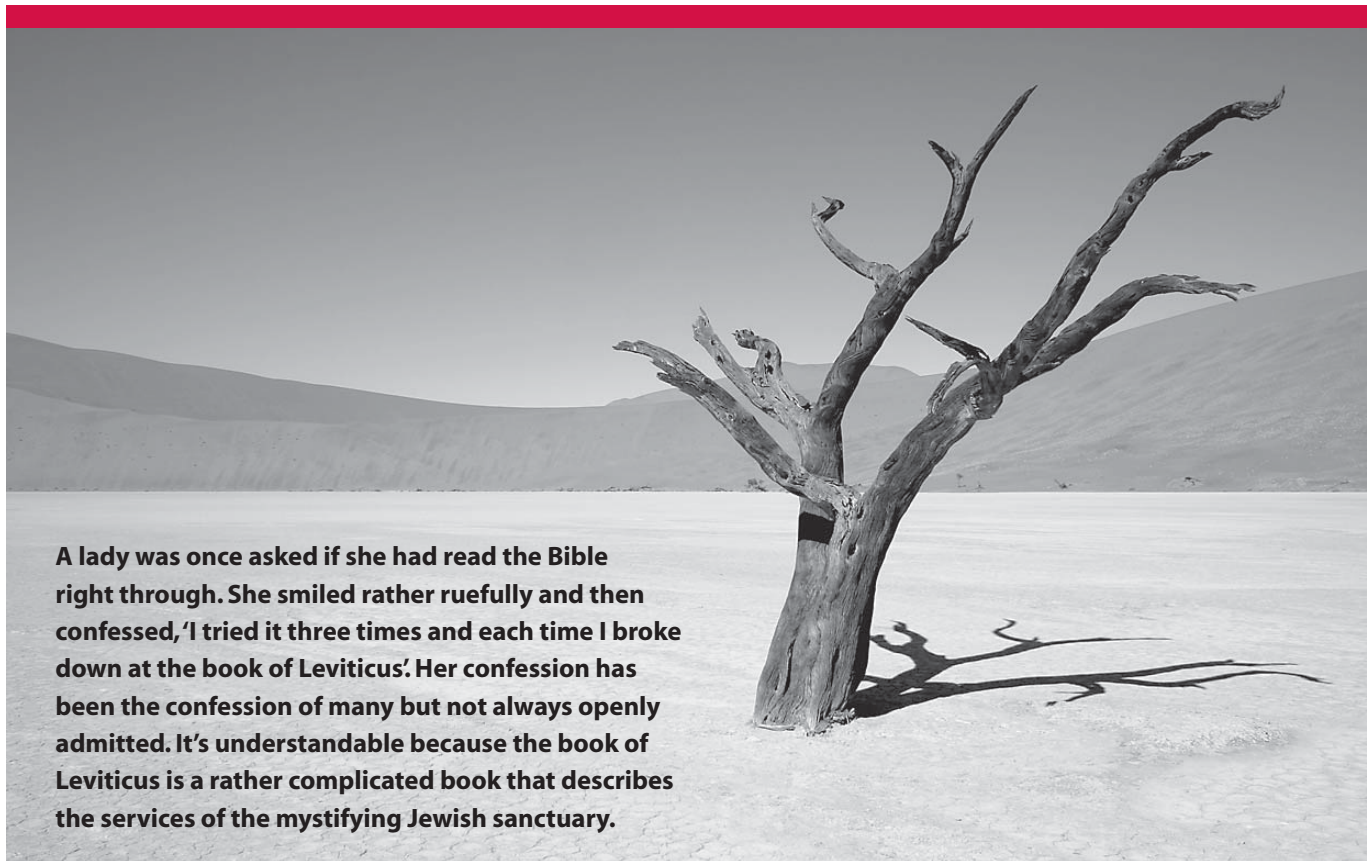
facet of the Christian gospel proclaims not only that God is love but also that God is holy. That reality is good but reality revolves around law, as well as grace. Blessed is the person who learns these truths early.

Of course, the experiences of Scott and Zelda are not a fitting paradigm for the experiences of all. The sufferings of multitudes do not have their primary origin in wilful or even careless follies. This is a world marked with a curse and sorrow, and tragedy in our world often



falls upon those who are comparatively innocent. In one such instance, our Lord commented: 'Neither this man has sinned nor his parents, but that the glory of God might be made manifest in him' (John 9: 1-2). What a staggering, yet wonderful assurance that unmerited evil can yet yield a harvest of glory! We are each responsible for what we can do, not for what we can't do. Only God, not man, can truly measure responsibility. The One is more willing to forgive than we are to be forgiven; the One is more willing to rescue the sinner than a mother her child from a burning home; this One longs that the sorrows and the pains of life might drive us to himself, as storm-tossed ships into a harbour.

To learn the truth about law, responsibility, sorrow and tragedy, grace and forgiveness is the very best way to meet the great Judgement Day unafraid, and even with a song. ✨



**A lady was once asked if she had read the Bible right through. She smiled rather ruefully and then confessed, 'I tried it three times and each time I broke down at the book of Leviticus'. Her confession has been the confession of many but not always openly admitted. It's understandable because the book of Leviticus is a rather complicated book that describes the services of the mystifying Jewish sanctuary.**

# God's Passion Play in the Desert

DR DESMOND FORD

**T**HIS SANCTUARY was actually a symbol of the plan of redemption. It has been rightly said that it was a dramatised parable of God's plan to save sinners. To study it is to think God's thoughts after Him. To understand its every detail is to fathom the depths of the riches of God's wisdom.

While the story of creation is told in just one chapter of eight hundred words, the subject of the Jewish tabernacle has more space than any other single topic of Scripture. About half of the book of Exodus, all of the book of Leviticus, a large section of Numbers, sections of Kings and Chronicles and Ezekiel and then most of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament is devoted to the subject of the sanctuary. This gives us some idea of its importance. It's important for you and for me for it tells the way of forgiveness, of mercy, of grace, of power and of eternal life.

Outwardly it just looked like a tent with two rooms surrounded by a courtyard. There were actually three main sections: the outer court, which was a large oblong rectangular structure about 100 by 50 cubits (i.e., 53 by 27 metres). Inside that courtyard was the sanctuary itself, composed of two apartments. The first one, known as the Holy Place, was twice the size of the second apartment, which was called the Most Holy Place. This Most Holy Place—the heart of the sanctuary—was a cube of 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits and thus a symbol of perfection. In there was the ark, a symbol of the throne of God.

What was the purpose of the tabernacle? We've already intimated it was to be a parable of how God gets rid of sin—how the just and holy God can forgive our sins. It was also a symbol of his first visible dwelling place on earth after the Fall. He had walked with Adam in Eden; he had spoken to the patriarchs; he had visibly visited Abraham; but now he came down to live with Israel after he had redeemed

them from Egypt. From this point forward, God had a dwelling on earth.

After the tabernacle came the wonderful temple of Solomon, the most famous architectural structure in the Old World. And after the temple, came the Son of God. The New Testament says 'The Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us' (John 1:14). Following Jesus came the church, a spiritual house, 'a holy temple', 'built ... to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit' (Eph. 2:21-22). That church is the home of all who trust in the merits of Jesus Christ. This is God's tabernacle in our age, his dwelling place on Earth.

The altar of burnt offering in the Courtyard pointed to the Cross, where the Lamb of God would be slain for the sins of the world. And the laver pictured how the Cross has the power to wash us not only from the guilt of sin, but from its defilement. In the first room of the tabernacle—called the Holy Place—the table for the bread of the Presence pointed to Christ the Bread of Life. Also

on that table there were libation offerings because Christ is also the Water of Life. And on the other side of the Holy Place was the lampstand with seven lamps that spoke of the perfection of Him who is the Light of the World. Just before the curtain to the Most Holy Place stood the golden altar of incense. Incense was burned on this altar at the time of morning and evening prayers. This incense represented the fragrance of the righteousness of Christ, which alone makes the prayers of guilty sinners acceptable to God.

Inside the second room—the Most Holy Place—was the ark of the covenant containing the Ten Commandments, revealing that our Lord is a holy Lord. The top of the ark was called the mercy seat or atonement cover, because on the Day of Atonement blood was sprinkled on this cover to atone for the sins of God's people. That, too, represents our Lord Jesus because it was the shedding of his blood that took away the condemnation of the Law. And so each item of furniture really tells us about Jesus.

This whole tabernacle sets forth the true Pilgrim's Progress. When one came to it and passed through the flap at the entrance of the court, he was immediately surrounded by white. One can come to Jesus ever so quietly, but once he enters in, he is clothed in the whiteness of the righteousness of Christ. The first thing that the pilgrim saw was the altar of burnt offering, the symbol of our justification, for Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And at Calvary your sin and mine was cancelled. And so the altar of burnt offering points to justification, as soon as we come to Christ, we are counted just or righteous, perfect, accepted in him.

We are not yet perfect in ourselves, but for Christ's sake, God counts us perfect. Justified means to be just-as if-I'd not sinned. God counts us that way for Christ's sake. Next the laver reminds us that there has to be a cleansing from the defilement of sin, not only its guilt. God gives his gifts with two hands; he does not justify any that he does not proceed to sanctify. When we enter the first apartment and see the table set with the sacred bread, we are reminded that as pilgrims we need food to sustain us so we must feed on Jesus, the Bread of Life. Opposite the table was the lamp stand. We need to be led by the light of Christ.

The altar of incense reminds us that we cannot be pilgrims without prayer; we cannot afford to pass a single conscious

hour without being in communion with our Heavenly Father. And we need continually to remember that our prayers are acceptable only because of that incense, the righteousness of Christ, which makes the prayers of guilty man fragrant to God.

The ark, inside the Most Holy Place, reminds us that we need the Law of God in our hearts. But when we fall we need God's forgiveness, for if one word above another sums up what true religion is about, it is forgiveness. This alone can break the hardened heart. This alone can energise the transgressor to new habits and new ways. This alone best reflects the loving character of God towards his erring children.



Let us now think about the priesthood. We've looked at the purpose of this tabernacle and its furniture, but it was nothing without the High Priest. Exodus 28 tells us that the High Priest was arrayed in garments that were to be for glory and beauty. He was dressed in fine linen. There were adornments of gold, flashing gems, purple and scarlet coverings. The ephod, a special outer waistcoat worn by the High Priest, had an onyx stone set in sockets of gold on each shoulder. The names of six tribes were inscribed on each stone. So the High Priest bore on his shoulders the names of all the tribes of Israel.

There was one special day for the High Priest and that was the Day of Atonement. It was the High Priest's day and yet it concerned all Israel. This day pointed to God's solution for the gap between the sinner and his God. On this day, and this day alone, the High Priest entered God's presence with the atoning blood.

The purpose of the Day of Atonement was to show how this great gap between sinners and God could be bridged—how sinners could be restored to God's presence without being condemned because they were sinners.

Let me tell you what happened on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement pointed forward to Calvary when Christ made atonement for our sins. Let me read to you what Scripture says about this great Day of Atonement. I'm reading from Leviticus 16:30: 'On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.' So this day of cleansing pointed forward to Calvary when Jesus was judged and condemned for our sins. All who accept Jesus' sacrifice are cleansed of their sins.

I want to touch briefly upon the work of the priest that day. The author of Hebrews says, 'The priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry but only the High Priest entered the inner room, that only once a year and never without blood' (Heb. 9:6-7). Now please notice verse 12: 'He [Christ] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.'

Once a year, a representative of the people went through the veil into the Most Holy Place. As he went in, the door (so to speak) was left open for the whole congregation in symbol to follow. That is what our Lord Jesus did on the cross. When he died, the veil of the earthly temple was rent to illustrate that the barrier between man and God had now gone. We now have free access to God because of what Christ has done (Heb. 10:19-22).

My friends, there is another important point with which we must conclude. Once in fifty years, the Day of Atonement ushered in the Jubilee. The Jubilee was the great year of rejoicing in which all slavery came to an end, and all property returned to its original owners. This Jubilee was ushered in by the Day of Atonement.

What a day of rejoicing that was. My friends, do you know what jubilation is? Are you filled with joy? If you know the meaning of the atonement at Calvary, you can be filled with jubilation. Christ and Christ only, my friends, can restore your original inheritance and give you lasting joy and everlasting life.

Receive him today and it will all be yours.





# CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

*'Wonderful little when all is said,  
Wonderful little our fathers knew.  
Half their remedies killed you dead –  
Most of their teaching was quite untrue.'*  
– Rudyard Kipling

**I**N 1948, STEVE CATERAN worked as a gardener on a private estate in South Taranaki, New Zealand. No matter how hot the weather Steve always wore a scarf that held a piece of raw steak against his neck. The conventional wisdom in those days was that if you fed a cancer with raw steak it wouldn't 'eat' your flesh. Steve, who used to smoke a lot, had throat cancer.

Back in the 1970s, people who had damaged the fibrocartilage in their spine were strapped for a considerable period of time to a firm flat surface to ensure their spine healed straight. These days people who have damaged a disk in their backs are encouraged to get back onto their feet as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, 'creative destruction'<sup>1</sup> eliminated both of the above false beliefs in favour of better beliefs based on the preponderance of scientific evidence. The false beliefs were destroyed so that they could be replaced by new and better beliefs that had been created.

## The East-West Railroad

There are few people today who are aware of tremendous cost of the 'creative destruction' that was necessary for the establishment of the United States Transcontinental Railway that went all the

## RITCHIE WAY

way from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific in the late 1860s. Once the line went through, many hundreds of people—from those who operated ships that sailed around the Horn to California, to those whose business it was to transport people and cargo by horse-drawn wagons and stage coaches from one side of the continent to the other, plus all the ancillary personnel such as horse breeders, horse trainers, mail riders, saddle and harness makers, chaff producers, coach and wagon manufacturers, inn keepers, stable keepers, blacksmiths and veterinarians, etc.—all went out of business. It was hard on most of them and a tragedy for many. But who would want to turn the clock back to those horse-and-buggy days? The old way was replaced by a new and better way.

## The Printing Press

We laud the advantages brought to our world by the invention of the printing press. No other invention has done as much to make education and

knowledge universal. But few consider the tremendous cost, in terms of creative destruction, that the printing press had on tens of thousands of professional scribes who made their living by hand-copying books. Who, however, would want to return to the days when all our literature and documents were hand written? The reality is, there can be no advancement in life without 'creative destruction'; the old inferior way is rejected in favour of the superior way.

## Fear of Creative Destruction

History has multitudes of examples of change that has benefited mankind. Those who were prepared to leave the old ways for the new were those who prospered while those who refused to change were relegated to life's backwater. Regardless of the benefits of change, however, most people fear it because they are so comfortable with the old ways they are not willing to exchange them for the new.

People who fear change, fear 'creative destruction'. The handweavers who stood to lose because of John Kay's invention of the 'flying shuttle'—instead of wanting to be in on the new method, defended their old way by burning his house down in 1733.

The people who spun thread from cotton by hand were angry because James Hargreaves' 'spinning jenny', which did the same job much more quickly and effectively, had lowered the price of thread. Instead of wanting to be a part of the new method, they vigorously defended their old way by breaking into Hargreaves' house in 1768, smashing his machines and forcing him to flee.

### Religious Creative Destruction

Religious people, unfortunately, are no better than business people in managing change that requires the death of a false or inadequate belief or way, in favour of a better belief or way.

The Jews, for example, were looking for the promised 'son of David' who would come, restore their monarchy and cast the Roman occupiers out of their country. The kingdom that the Messiah, Jesus, came to establish, however, was as far above their image of the kingdom of God as the heavens are above the Earth. Jesus' kingdom would extend over the whole Earth, not just over the territory of Israel. His kingdom would not be just for the circumcised sons of Abraham but for people of all nations who were born of the Spirit through faith in him. And his kingdom would be inaugurated by his personal sacrifice on the cross, not by the sacrifice of Roman legions.

Those who were unwilling to accept the 'creative destruction' of their old kingdom paradigm were forced to endure its destruction and all its associated pain anyway, while at the same time missing out on the glories of the new kingdom that replaced it.

Similarly, the restoration of the gospel by Protestantism, 500 years ago, came about only after the 'creative destruction' of a works-based salvation, which was the core of the Roman Catholic religion at that time. History records many examples of the fiery resistance to the gospel of God's free grace by upholders of the works-based salvation.

The creeds of many churches today are locked into the 'horse-and-buggy' era simply because their guardians refuse to endorse 'creative destruction' as a necessary component of theological progress. Because truth is infinite it is also dynamic. Doctrines that are static, doctrines that do not change or develop, signify a belief that truth is finite and limited rather than infinite and limitless. They also signify that we have accorded a correct understanding of truth to the spiritual forefathers who provided us with these doctrines, while denying the same giftedness to the current generation that wants to correct or improve them.

I know what it is like to come to the realisation that a cherished doctrine had been built on a foundation of sand. When that enlightenment first came to me, I descended into inconsolable grief and did not come out of it for almost two years. I felt that the so-called spiritual leaders of my denomination, who should have known better, had betrayed me.

It is not easy to forsake the old way for the new, but the future is bleak for those who refuse to do so. One thing we need to be reminded of over and over again is that no denomination has a creed that is 100 percent complete and correct. The Catholics haven't, the Protestants haven't, the Orthodox haven't, and the evangelicals haven't. No one has! To have truth that is both infinite and infallible we would have to be God. One perceptive writer, whose words have been assiduously ignored by the leaders of her own denomination, wrote: 'There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not proof that our ideas are infallible.'<sup>2</sup>

Think of the tragic consequences had Jesus' disciples clung to their traditional belief that salvation was only for the Jews. To their credit they creatively destroyed that false belief so that it could be replaced by Christ's wider commission to take the gospel 'to every nation, tribe, language and people.'

### Personal 'Creative Destruction'

Part of the cost of following Jesus is our willingness to crucify [destroy] everything that is contrary to his will. Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whosoever loses his life for me will find it' (Matt. 16:24-25).

If I cherish a false practice or belief more than I cherish Jesus and if I seek to 'save' that anti-Christ part of my life, I shall eventually lose it anyway, along with the rest of my life. If anger simmers in my soul waiting for an opportunity to burst forth with destructive power, and I refuse to crucify it, it will eventually destroy me. If unforgiveness towards another person or group of people seethes in my breast, and I refuse to hand it over to Jesus, I, too, will be unforgiven. Jesus made it clear that if I refuse to crucify the evil in my life, I cannot be his disciple (Luke 14:27). As long as any element of evil reigns in my life it takes the place of the good that the Lord wants replace it with.

A major change is coming to our world and to its inhabitants. This old world, which is perishing like a garment, will soon be replaced by a new world—the home of righteousness!

On that day our dying, sin-afflicted bodies will be replaced by bodies that are both eternal and spiritual. The old will be destroyed so that the new can take its place. Those who are willing to endure changes for the better in their lives today will be chosen to have a part in that glorious mega-change when Jesus returns.



# David's Defeat

## Part 5

RITCHIE WAY

### David was the one who extended the boundaries of the Promised Land

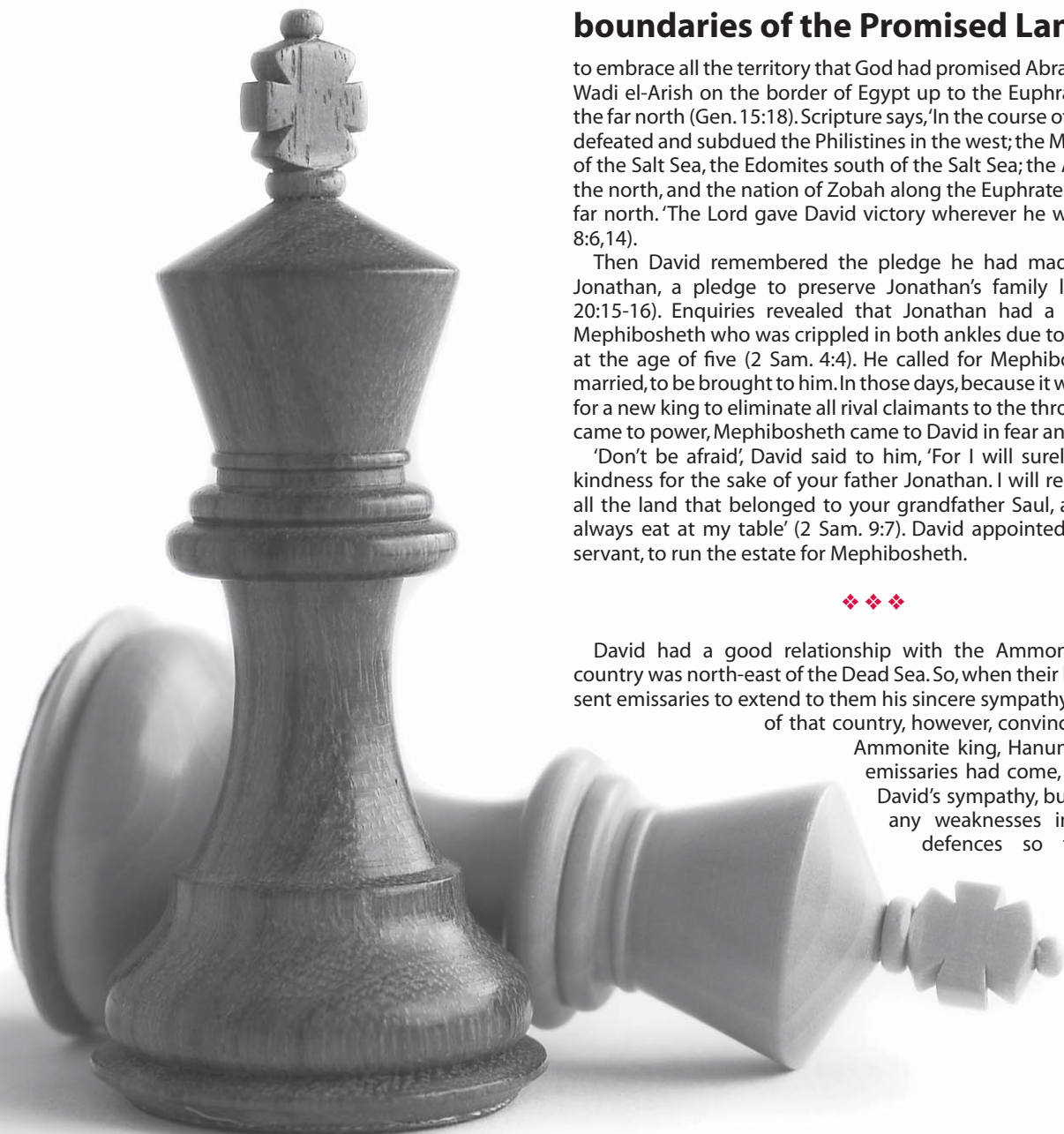
to embrace all the territory that God had promised Abraham—from Wadi el-Arish on the border of Egypt up to the Euphrates River in the far north (Gen. 15:18). Scripture says, 'In the course of time, David defeated and subdued the Philistines in the west; the Moabites east of the Salt Sea, the Edomites south of the Salt Sea; the Arameans in the north, and the nation of Zobah along the Euphrates river in the far north. 'The Lord gave David victory wherever he went' (2 Sam. 8:6,14).

Then David remembered the pledge he had made to Prince Jonathan, a pledge to preserve Jonathan's family line (1 Sam. 20:15-16). Enquiries revealed that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth who was crippled in both ankles due to an accident at the age of five (2 Sam. 4:4). He called for Mephibosheth, now married, to be brought to him. In those days, because it was common for a new king to eliminate all rival claimants to the throne when he came to power, Mephibosheth came to David in fear and trembling.

'Don't be afraid,' David said to him, 'For I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table' (2 Sam. 9:7). David appointed Ziba, Saul's servant, to run the estate for Mephibosheth.



David had a good relationship with the Ammonites, whose country was north-east of the Dead Sea. So, when their king died he sent emissaries to extend to them his sincere sympathy. The nobles of that country, however, convinced the new Ammonite king, Hanun, that these emissaries had come, not to offer David's sympathy, but to spy out any weaknesses in the city's defences so they could





## David's Defeat

more easily overthrow it. Had not David overrun all the other nations surrounding Israel?

So the inexperienced young king, eager to please his nobles, had the Israelite representatives seized. The Ammonites shaved off half of each man's beard and cut off his garments in the middle, thus partially exposing his buttocks and genitals. When David heard about this gross insult to his ambassadors, who were entitled to respect and diplomatic immunity, he was rotable.

Within a few days news got back to the Ammonites about David's reaction, and they realised that the very thing they had tried to avoid—war with Israel—had been ignited by their gross insults. They quickly hired several divisions of mercenaries from their allies to protect themselves from Israel's avenging army.

When Commander Joab and his troops arrived in Ammon they saw that they were confronted by two separate battlefronts. Joab divided his army into two and put his brother, Abishai, in command of the other half. At the signal the Israelites charged forward in unison, whacking their swords against their shields and yelling their fearsome battle cries.

The mercenaries hired by Hanun buckled before the fury of the Israelite troops and retreated into the fortified city. Joab's army, however, had not come prepared for a long siege and decided it would be futile to pursue the battle any further. They returned home.

The Ammonites, suspecting that the Israelites would return with a larger army and greater resources, hired even more mercenaries. This time David himself led the army across the Jordan, and routed the enemy, killing scores of foot soldiers, charioteers and the army commander, Shobach. After the battle the defeated nation of Ammon became subject to Israel. It was a terrible price to pay for misreading David's intentions and humiliating his ambassadors.



The following spring David sent the army off to the east on a mission, but he remained in Jerusalem. One evening, as he was walking around in the cool air on the flat roof of the palace, he noticed an incredibly beautiful woman bathing down below in her back yard. It seemed to David that she was deliberately trying to catch his eye. He asked one of his attendants who she was and was informed that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

That information alone should have been enough to cause David to turn his thoughts elsewhere, because Uriah was a distinguished officer in the army and had been one of David's 'thirty mighty men' since his days in Ziklag (1 Chr. 11:26, 41; 12:1). Out of loyalty to such a faithful warrior—a man who had turned his back on the gods of his own people to serve the God of Israel—David should have immediately gone off to do something else. But he didn't. Passion overruled reason. Instead he bade a servant to bring the woman to him, and he lay with her. That impulsive, self-centred act opened the door for moral rot to enter his household and blight his decisions, his relationships with his family and the nation of Israel. It was a choice that would have disastrous consequences.

It was thought that the whole matter would remain under wraps, but the chickens came home to roost when David received a message from Bathsheba to say she was pregnant with his child. After a moment of initial panic, David sent a message to General Joab out on the battlefield: 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.'

Uriah was glad for a break from the siege of Rabbah, but wondered why he in particular had been singled out to go and see the king. When he arrived at the palace in his chariot two days later, David invited him in for a debriefing on the Rabbah campaign. They talked for some time about the battle for the city, the morale and health of the soldiers, the provision of food and water for the troops, etc. David then thanked Uriah for the news and told him he was free to go home and spend the night there before returning to the battlefield the following day.



Next morning, much to David's chagrin, he discovered that Uriah had not gone to his home but had slept in the servants' quarters at the palace entrance instead. When David remonstrated with him, Uriah asked, 'How could I go home and sleep with my wife when my fellow officers are sleeping in tents in open fields?'

David swallowed and said, 'Look, stay here for one more day and tomorrow I'll send you back to the front. Come and have a meal with me tonight. I've been thinking about the siege of Rabbah and have some more questions to ask you.'

That evening, every time Uriah emptied his goblet, David's servants, on the king's prior instructions, filled it up again. It was David's hope that Uriah's inhibitions would give way and he would stagger home to sleep with his wife. But, as before, Uriah unrolled his sleeping mat and snored his head off in the servants' quarters.

David was really worried when he discovered that Uriah had, again, not gone home. After much troubled thought he sat down and wrote a note to Joab telling him to put Uriah in the front line where the fighting was the fiercest, then to withdraw from him leaving him to be killed by the enemy. He then made Uriah the deliverer of his own death sentence. The hole that David was digging for himself was getting deeper and deeper.

Joab did as he was ordered and reported back to David, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'

'When Bathsheba heard that her husband, Uriah, was dead, she mourned for him. After her week of mourning was over, David had her brought to his palace, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD. (2 Sam. 11:26-27)

A few days later, the prophet Nathan came to see David about a serious problem that had arisen in Israel. He came to David because in those days the king was also the Supreme Court Judge. Nathan told the King:

"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

*Continued page 12*

## David's Defeat

Continued from page 11

"Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan, looking David directly in the eye, said, "You are the man!"

David, as Israel's chief Judge, had just pronounced judgement on himself. Even though he had a harem of wives and concubines, he went and stole the only wife of his neighbour.

On hearing Nathan's words, David felt like the accused on whom the death sentence had just fallen. He was thunderstruck. After a moment of reflection he said quietly to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'.

Nathan graciously replied, 'The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because you have done this great evil the sword shall never depart from your house. In fact, out of your own family I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did this thing in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel!'



There are few sins as great as David's. He, the moral leader of God's people, committed adultery with the wife of a man who had served him faithfully for many years, and then he tried to cover his tracks by having the man murdered. But because David repented the Lord forgave him. The LORD himself would pay the penalty for David's sin.

That is why the prophet Isaiah speaks of 'the sure mercies of David' (Isa. 55:3). No matter how far we may have fallen into sin, God is always willing—and even anxious—to forgive those who are truly sorry for what they have done. If he can forgive the king of Israel for such heinous behaviour, he can forgive you. The 'sure mercies' he extended to David, he will extend to you when you repent. Just as the rising sun dissolves the morning mist, so the Lord will sweep away your offences so they are no more (Isa. 44:22).



Psalm 51 is David's prayer of penitence, his plea that the Lord would wash away his sin and create a new heart within him. 'Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin .... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within in me' (vv. 1-2, 10).

The prophet Nathan said, in response to David's penitence, 'The Lord has taken away your sin ... BUT ...' (2 Sam. 12:13-14). Because God forgives us freely when we repent, our sin will not keep us from enjoying the next life, but it will certainly keep us and other innocent people from enjoying this one.

Sin is awful because it casts the innocent ones who are sinned against into a prison of mental torture. Rivers of repentant tears will never change these facts. That is why God hates sin.

The alcoholic may repent of his wasted years, and the Lord will freely forgive him, but that will not heal the damage that he has done to his family or his liver. The drug dealer may repent and change his life, but that will not bring healing to the countless families whose lives were blighted by his evil trade. The gambler who steals from his employer to feed his addictive habit can be forgiven, but the cost of his addiction negatively impacts the lives of those whose money he has stolen and the self-worth of his own family.

As we shall see, David, although fully repentant, permanently undermined his own moral authority by his totally selfish and inconsiderate actions.



A few years later, when David's sons and daughters by his several foreign wives were in their teenage to adult years, his eldest son Amnon—the natural heir to

the throne—fell in love with his beautiful half-sister, Tamar. Now, there were strict rules in the palace about the segregation of the young men and young women, but Amnon circumvented these conventions by pretending to be sick. When David came in to see him, Amnon said he had no appetite at all, but he might be tempted to eat if his sister Tamar came and prepared some special bread in his presence. David, deceived by Amnon's apparent illness, agreed to this and arranged for Tamar to come and make some fancy bread for him. But when Tamar entered Amnon's room with the freshly-baked bread still in the pan he grabbed her, making clear his incestuous intentions.

"Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel!"

But Amnon refused to listen and raped her.

Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact he hated her more than he had loved her. With a curled lip he demanded that the distraught girl get up and get out.

Amnon may have suffered from a personality disorder, which is characterised by rapid and intense mood swings from love to hate. Be that as it may, it was no excuse for rape.

'When King David heard all this, he was furious'; but, because of his own past sexual failings, he felt he was in no position to chastise Amnon. Tamar's full brother, Absalom, seethed with anger towards his father, David, for not punishing Amnon for his terrible deed, but kept his feelings to himself.

Two years later Absalom put on a party at Baal Hazor to celebrate the conclusion of the shearing season. He invited his half-brothers to come and celebrate with him. In the midst of the festivities, when Amnon was in high spirits from drinking wine, Absalom had his servants kill him. In absolute shock the other half-brothers jumped on their mules and fled back to Jerusalem, but Absalom fled northeast across the border to spend three years in exile with his maternal grandfather, Talmai the king of Geshur (1 Chron. 3:2).

The seeds that David had sown, when he coveted another man's wife, were beginning to bear their baleful fruit. But, as the prophet Nathan foretold, there was worse to come—much worse. ❄

# WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

BOB AND DEBBY GASS

**W**ILLIAM WILBERFORCE grew up as a child of privilege, attending Cambridge University. Two weeks after his twenty-first birthday, he was elected to Parliament where he became a brilliant orator and politician.

Then he met John Newton, author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. A former slave ship captain, Newton had found Christ, repented of his old life and become a minister. Upon meeting Newton, seeds were sown in Wilberforce's heart that were destined to change history. In 1787, Wilberforce initiated a campaign to make Great Britain aware of the atrocities of slavery and vote for its abolition. It was a fierce fight. Besides politicians and industrialists, religious leaders who had their own slaves opposed him.

From his deathbed John Wesley wrote to Wilberforce:

If God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary in well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Wilberforce persevered because he knew what was at stake—the lives of millions of people.

Finally, in 1807, the Slave Trade Act outlawing traffic in slaves was passed in the House of Commons by a vote of 283 to 16. Twenty-six years later, near the end of Wilberforce's life, slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire. Shortly thereafter, it was abolished in the United States. How did it happen? Because one man decided to live by the principle, 'Through love serve one another' (Galatians 5:13 NKJV).

William Wilberforce's biographer, Eric Metaxas, points out that the abolition of the British slave trade had even greater implications:

We had suddenly entered a world in which we would never again ask whether it was our responsibility as a society to help the poor and suffering. We would only quibble about how. ... Once this idea was loosed upon the world, the world changed. Slavery and the slave trade would soon be largely abolished, but many lesser social evils would be abolished too. For the first time in history, groups sprang up for every possible social cause.

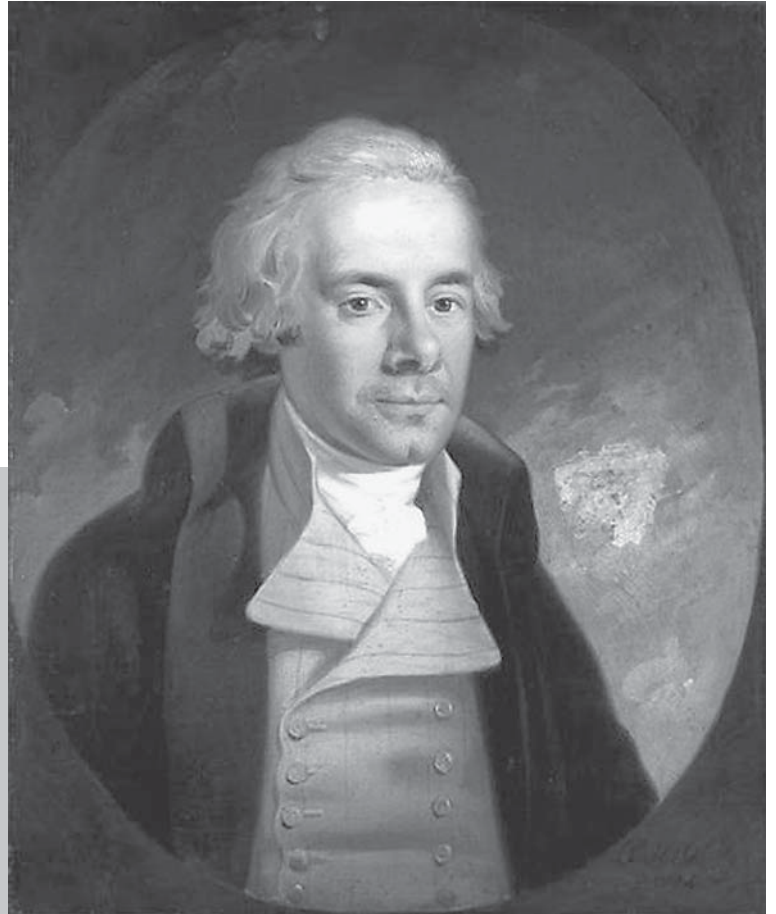
That's why Metaxas calls Wilberforce 'The greatest social reformer in the history of the world'. Metaxas goes on to say:

The world he was born into in 1759 and the world he departed from in 1833 were as different as lead and gold. Wilberforce

presided over a social earthquake that rearranged the continents, and whose magnitude we are only now beginning to fully appreciate.

During his first years in Parliament, Wilberforce wined and dined each night and was touted as the 'wittiest man in all of England'. Looking back on it he wrote, 'For the first years I was in Parliament I did nothing—nothing of any purpose'. But, in committing to Christ, he discovered his life's purpose. It was not about achieving personal greatness, but about serving others.

Today, go out of your way to help, bless and serve someone. If you do, when you get to the end of the day, you'll feel good about yourself, knowing you have served God and His people. ❄️



# LAODICEA, ARMAGEDDON AND THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.

SANTO CALARCO

**R**IGHT IN THE heat of the battle of Armageddon we find Jesus admonishing his people to be faithful and hold onto their 'garments'. These words come in the midst of the end-time crisis that will separate the wheat from the chaff (Rev. 16:12-16).

Please note the following parallels between Jesus' counsel to Laodicea (Rev. 3:18) and the counsel he gives in Revelation 16:15:

**Laodicea:** "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white **garments**, that you may be clothed, that the **shame** of your **nakedness** may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18, NKJV).

**Armageddon:** "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his **garments**, lest he walk **naked** and they see his **shame**" (Rev. 16:15).

These two verses are the only place in the whole book of Revelation where the words 'garments', 'naked' and 'shame' appear together. The parallels seem to be deliberate. This suggests that the message to Laodicea is somehow relevant to believers during the battle of Armageddon.

In what way are both of these passages related? Let us first consider the message of Jesus to Laodicea. The church at Laodicea was facing a dangerous spiritual crisis. As believers, they had faith in Jesus, but there was something seriously wrong. They had become lukewarm in their Christian walk, and Jesus warned them that he was about to spew them out of his mouth as a result. What had they done to become lukewarm? Jesus exposes their spiritual problem. 'You say I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing' (Rev. 3:17).

We need to remember that these folk in Laodicea were true believers, but somewhere down the track their



faith had become lukewarm as a result of their growing trust in their religious heritage. Instead of looking to Jesus as their 'treasure', they had made a treasure of their beliefs and practices. This heritage was what they had 'acquired'.

In the beginning the Laodiceans put their emphasis on Christ; he was the object of their faith. But now they were putting their emphasis on their faith in Christ; their beliefs were what counted now. They concluded that they were spiritually clothed and did not need a thing, not realising that in deserting Christ they had become naked (see Mark 14:51-52). Through their focus on their beliefs, rather than their focus on Christ, they had effectively expelled Christ from their assembly, which was why Christ was outside the door of their church, knocking to regain entry (Rev. 3:20). It is not possible to have Jesus and something more important than him.

Jesus denounced their spiritual condition with the most severe words we find in the messages to all seven churches. He tells these Laodiceans that they are ignorant of their true spiritual state; they think they are grandly clothed whereas in reality they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind

and naked. So Jesus counsels them to buy white clothes so that their spiritual shame may be covered (Rev. 3:17-18). White clothes in this context means abandoning self-effort and self-reliance and accepting the free gift of Christ's righteousness (see Matt. 22:8-14; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus promised the church at Laodicea that, if they bought white clothes from him, they would join him on the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21). This promise comes to fulfilment in Revelation 7:9-15, where thrones and white clothes are mentioned together once again. This passage is significant because it is set at a time after the great end-time tribulation, Armageddon!

John tells us that after the great tribulation, that is *after* Armageddon, a great crowd appears before the throne and with the Lamb. An elder asks:

"Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know". So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God" (Rev. 7:13-15).

It is only because this great crowd has appropriated the blood of the Lamb that they are dressed in white robes and are able to stand before the throne as a result! Spiritual nakedness is the result of adding self-reliance and self-effort to faith in the shed blood of Jesus. White clothes, on the other hand, are directly connected to sole reliance on the blood of the Lamb—even in the face of death if necessary (Rev. 12:11). It is only because of sole reliance on the blood of the Lamb that believers will be dressed in white clothes and so will make it through the great tribulation, Armageddon.

Jesus gives the same message to believers facing Armageddon that he gave to the church in Laodicea. The only difference is that Laodicea had not yet received the clothes but end-time believers had, and were admonished to hold onto them.

The similarity between what Jesus said to the church members in Laodicea and what he said to believers who would fight for their lives in the battle of Armageddon, suggests that the same spiritual crisis that faced believers in Laodicea will confront the worldwide church in the Endtime.

We need to remember that Jesus' words in Revelation 16:15 are given to counter the deceptive yet powerful words that come from the mouths of the three unclean spirits. Jesus' words do not appear in a vacuum; they appear in a specific setting in direct response to the messages of the three unclean spirits. For Jesus to call believers to hold onto their clothes immediately after the false message has gone out can only mean that this false message is somehow tempting them to abandon their clothes—their reliance on the blood of Jesus!

The three unclean spirits are presented as counterfeits and counterparts of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. In Revelation 14, we read of three angels (from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who proclaim the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language and people, after which Jesus returns to Earth (Rev 14:6-14). On the other hand, Revelation 16 describes three unclean spirits that come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet and culminates in Armageddon just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus (Rev. 16:13-21 cf. 17:14; and 19:11-21). The three unclean spirits and the three angels have the same target in mind: the whole world. Just as angels are ministering spirits of God sent to save God's people (Heb. 1:14), so the three unclean spirits are sent as messengers of Satan with the purpose of destroying God's people.

We are presented then with two groups appearing at the same time in history doing similar work, using similar means, having the same target group in mind, but they are on opposite sides. Both groups are portrayed with competing messages and try to win the loyalty of the people groups of the whole world.

All that follows in these verses comes as a consequence of rejecting this message (Rev. 14:6-12). Since this is the case and since the three unclean spirits are clear counterparts and counterfeits of the three angels, this means that the message they proclaim from the 'mouths' of the false trinity is a competing 'gospel'. For Jesus to have to intervene and call believers to hold

onto their blood-washed clothes means that the false message is a deceptive attack that subtly seeks to undermine the gospel.

Jesus has made the promise that if we cling to his blood as the only means of gaining and maintaining relationship with God then he will keep us from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10). Those who hold onto their blood-washed clothes will survive the battle of Armageddon and will stand before God's throne (Rev. 7:9-15). 'Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city' (Rev. 22:14). ❄

## From the Pastor

**'He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"' (Acts 9:4)**

**N**OT CONTENT to prosecute his violent work at Jerusalem, Saul sought authorisation from the Sanhedrin to stamp out the Jesus sect in Damascus.

On nearing the city, he was dazzled by a blinding light and a voice questioned him: 'Why do you persecute me?' In shock and confusion, he responded: 'Who are you Lord?' 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting', was the reply.

The critical moment of Saul's life had come. Within a short space of time, several things became crystal clear to him. One, the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, was alive. Two, this same Jesus was God's Son and closely allied with those whom Saul had been pursuing. Three, his zeal to extinguish the movement that had begun in Jesus' name was terribly wrong.

The question: 'Why do you persecute me?' lanced open Saul's soul. His very being was interrogated by the Son of God. His 'righteous' enthusiasm, his anger, his comprehension of truth, his opinion of what was evil and what was good in the world—all were laid bare and turned upside down. The error and futility of his crusade was exposed. Apparently those whom he had tried so hard to destroy enjoyed mysterious communion with the crucified One;

apparently the pain served on them was felt by the now living Lord. The whole effort of his life, which had seemed to him so noble, had been a campaign against God.

The grace of God was shown to Saul that day on the Damascus road. Saul saw what Stephen had glimpsed on the day that he was stoned to death. He was seized by the realisation that God had showed himself in the suffering One. Not the one who lord's it over his fellows; not the one that hunts them down, extracting allegiance through intimidation; not he who brandishes rulings, menacing mankind with denunciations—he is not the One.

Saul saw that God is known through the One who gives himself to humanity no matter what its shape or texture; to Samaritans, lepers, tax men, harlots and heretics. The One who values the degenerate, the weak, the foolish, the ignorant more than orthodoxy—he is God's Man!

So Saul—champion of Judaism—became Paul, servant of Jesus Christ. Now, instead of harassing people with frights and coercions, he became their servant. Instead of being a man to avoid, to hide from, he became a brother (9:17) to all mankind. It was a potent transformation, and it changed the world. ❄

# The Good Samaritan

**The parable for this month is the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus said:**

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. So, too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came to where he was; and when he saw him he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the inn keeper. "look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have."

There is more than one way to understand this parable. It is commonly believed that the Good Samaritan represents Jesus. He is the despised one who takes care of the unfortunates in society—the ones that the religious authorities will have nothing to do with. He leaves these in the care of his Church, which he will reward for its ministry when he returns.



On the other hand, Jesus is also be represented by the man who is beaten and robbed by his fellow Jews and left for dead. Those who profess to serve God are aware of his plight, but none come to his aid. The only one who cares for him is a despised person, someone like Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus—people who were prepared to step outside the man-made confines of their religion to accept Jesus. This despised person bandages and

anoints his body and, at his own expense, puts it in a safe place where life may return.

In the first application of this parable, Jesus gives us an example of how he would treat someone who had been ripped off and passed over by the worst elements in society. Even though the battered person had despised him, Jesus would refuse to let that rejection overrule his compassion or influence his actions. Instead, he would have sympathy on the unfortunate man; he would take him into his care and minister to his needs. Jesus would do this because, unlike the devil, who comes to destroy and to kill, Jesus came to give life and life more abundant.

The second application reveals how we should respond when we see someone who despised us in dire distress, someone who had been abused by the worst elements in society and cast aside. Our ministry to that despised person would reveal how we would treat Jesus himself who identifies with such people (Matt. 25:40).

Such a person could be a desperately ill, homosexual or a prostitute. Or it could be one of our own, socially rejected by others and at the end of their tether? Would we cross the road to help them? Would we, like Jesus, go and minister God's grace to them?

Those who do are the ones who will receive a warm welcome into the coming kingdom (Matt. 25:34).

## Introduction to the Book of Romans

**EUGENE H. PETERSON**

**T**HE EVENT that split history into 'before' and 'after' and changed the world took place about thirty years before Paul wrote this letter. The event—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—took place in a remote corner of the extensive Roman Empire: the province of Judea in Palestine. Hardly anyone noticed, certainly no one in busy and powerful Rome.

And when this letter arrived in Rome, hardly anyone read it, certainly no one of influence. There was much to read in Rome—imperial decrees, exquisite poetry and finely crafted moral philosophy—and much of it world-class. And yet in no time,

as such things go, this letter left all those other writings in the dust. Paul's letter to the Romans has had a far larger impact on its readers than the volumes of all those Roman writers put together.

The quick rise of this letter to a peak of influence is extraordinary, written as it was by an obscure Roman citizen without connections. But when we read it for ourselves, we begin to realize that it is the letter itself that is truly extraordinary, and that no obscurity in writer or readers could have kept it obscure for long.

The letter to the Romans is a piece of exuberant and passionate thinking. This is the glorious life of the mind enlisted in the service of God. Paul takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed fact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its

implications. How does it happen that in the death and resurrection of Jesus, world history took a new direction, and at the same moment the life of every man, woman and child on the planet was eternally affected? What is God up to? What does it mean that Jesus "saves"? What's behind all this, and where is it going?

These are the questions that drive Paul's thinking. Paul's mind is supple and capacious. He takes logic and argument, poetry and imagination, Scripture and prayer, creation and history and experience, and weaves them into this letter that has become the premier document of Christian theology.

From *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (NavPress, 2002)

# It's the Little Things That Get To You

PASTOR IAN

IT'S AMAZING how fifteen minor frustrations at work can add up to one big bad attitude by the time you head for home. Frustrations come in three varieties:

**Interruptions**—unexpected visitors or phone calls. You've got a deadline to meet, and something requires your time. Our best plans are often interrupted.

**Inconveniences**—while interruptions are usually people, inconveniences are more frequently situations involving things. The copy machine breaks down, traffic jams up, or you can't find what you need when you need it.

**Irritations**—delays, unreliable people, having to play telephone tag, catching a cold, obnoxious clients, and, so on.

You cannot eliminate these. I guarantee you'll face all three types this week. But you **can** learn to keep them from making you stressed-out.

## What's the secret of managing frustrations?

1. Don't resist it—Don't overreact or blow up.
2. Don't resent it—Don't internalize your anger.
3. Don't resign to it—Don't have a pity-party.
4. Reduce it! Treat it as insignificant. Put the frustration into proper perspective. It's just a minor setback, a part of living. It's no big deal! It's certainly not worth a heart attack.

## Here are two rules for stress management:

- Rule #1: Don't sweat the small stuff.  
Rule #2: Realize it's *all* small stuff!

The Bible says, 'A man's wisdom gives him patience.'

The only way we can see *all* stuff as small stuff is to view it from God's perspective. When I am in tune with God, I remember he has everything under control, even though I don't. So I don't have to sweat it.

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy ... peace.'

Pray this: 'Lord, help me to be filled with your love, joy and peace this week—so that when I'm squeezed and pressured that is what comes out of me.'

# Health Tips

## Excessive Sitting

The University of Leicester, after studying the sedentary habits of 800,000 people in 18 different studies, found that the average adult spends 50 or 70 percent of his or her time sitting. It was discovered that long periods of sitting are not as harmless as many people believe. In fact, long periods without muscle contraction increases blood glucose levels, reduces the levels of good cholesterol while increasing the levels of bad cholesterol—all changes that can lead to diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

It was also discovered that those who took 'activity breaks' every 20 minutes reduced their blood glucose and blood insulin by 20-25 percent compared to those who did not. Surprisingly, and encouragingly, they reaped this benefit whether they exercised moderately or vigorously in their 'activity breaks'.

One good simple exercise is to cross your arms and then stand and sit several times. Or just get up and go for a drink. When watching TV make it a habit to get to your feet and do something physical every advert break.

If you are working on a computer and would like a timely reminder to exercise, type 'Menubar Countdown' into Google, and set the length of your periods between 'activity breaks'.

## Excessive Exercise

While moderate exercise prolongs life, excessive exercise can shorten it. I knew a doctor who was a marathon runner. His wife told me that his running drained him so much that after every marathon he went down with a dose of the 'flu'.

It has now been shown that strenuous exercise such as is endured in repeated 'Ironman' events results in micro-tears in the heart muscle that can lead to fibrosis, abnormal rhythms and premature aging of the heart.

A study of runners who had completed at least 25 marathons over 25 years found a 60 percent increase in the amount of coronary plaque—fatty deposits in the heart muscles—compared with sedentary people. 'Running too fast, too far, and for too many years may speed one's progress towards the finish line of life,' say US heart specialists, Drs James O'Keefe and Carl Lavie.



## Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplements

Dr Shaun Holt, a pharmacist and medical researcher, and adjunct professor at the School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University, has written a book entitled: *Depression: Natural Remedies That Really Work*. This book provides an overview of the latest scientific evidence on the use of omega-3 fish oil supplements to treat depression.

Omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) cannot be made by the body and must be regularly supplied by diet for the development and functioning of our central nervous system. People with major depression have lower circulating levels of omega-3 essential fatty acids.

A 2008 study, reported in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, reveals that those taking 1gram (1000 mg) of fish oil daily had better recoveries than those taking fluoxetine (Prozac), while those taking a combination of Prozac and fish oil had by far the best reduction of depressive symptoms.

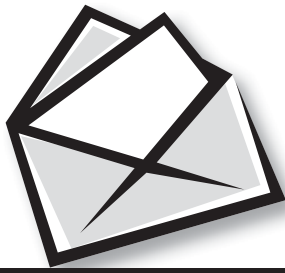
## Nuts in Your Diet

'Nuts are a rich source of healthy mono and polyunsaturated fatty acids, along with protein, dietary fibre, essential micronutrients such as folate, calcium, magnesium, copper and potassium, and a range of phytochemicals'.

Clinical trials have found that adding nuts to the diet for three months significantly reduces total cholesterol (TC) and so-called 'bad' LDL cholesterol levels.

Four large US studies revealed that people with the highest nut intake had 34 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). Similarly, the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition study, involving approximately 400,000 participants, found people with the highest nut intake had a 29 percent lower risk of CHD mortality than those with the lowest intake.

The recommended daily intake of unsalted mixed tree nuts (raw or dry roasted) is a small handful (around 30g). The best nuts are almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts.



# Letters from Readers

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.



## DID JESUS FIGHT AGAINST INNER TEMPTATION?

Dear Pastor Way,

I read with delight your GN4A magazines, and look forward to each issue. I'm currently reading through your series on the Millennium, and learning about a subject that I hadn't previously studied in any depth.

In your December 2012 issue, you write in your article, *The Inauguration of the Millennium*: 'How can God judge us for being sinners when we were born sinners?' This is a fair question and one that many would be asking. However, I believe the question is based on a common misunderstanding because of false teaching.

Texts such as Romans 3:23 and 5:12 teach quite clearly that everyone sins, but Scripture doesn't teach that we sin because we are born sinners. We choose to sin, utilising the God-gift of free choice, and with thousands of years of degenerated morals, I'm surprised there is not more sin in the world.

When Jesus was born, he too inherited four thousand years of spiritual and moral degeneration, but he managed to live a sinless life. He showed us, and Satan, that it could be done, and we thank God that he did. It was Satan's claim (I believe) that sinlessness was an impossible goal, and he well may have been right if we are born sinners, but we are not. The inspired writer of Hebrews wrote in chapter two and verse 17 that Jesus was made like us in every respect, and I'm sure that's not just talking about a torso with a head, arms, and legs. If Jesus was born a sinner, then we have no hope, and his sacrifice was for nothing. On the other hand, if he was not born a sinner, and we are, then Jesus has a distinct advantage over his brethren.

Having a propensity to sin, and being born a sinner, to me, are two separate issues; the former is fact; the latter isn't.

Kind regards, B. P.

### Ritchie's Reply

Hi B.,

Here is my understanding of Original Sin:

1. When God created Adam he breathed his Spirit into him (Gen. 2:7; Job 32:8; cf. John 20:22). The indwelling Spirit kept Adam from sin.
2. Adam, by deliberate choice, rejected God's Spirit in Eden, which opened to him all the temptations of Satan (Gen. 3:6).
3. Jesus, 'the last Adam', was born of the Spirit as was the first Adam (Luke 1:34-35). Because he was born of the Spirit at his first birth (which none of us are), he had no propensities for sin. Jesus, like Adam, was tested with external temptations but, unlike Adam, he did not submit to them (Matt. 4:1-11; Heb. 4:15).
4. Jesus said the only way we can get back into his kingdom (Eden/Paradise/New Jerusalem) is to be born again of his Spirit (John 3:3, 5-6), which happens when we accept the fact that Jesus was 'lifted up' on the Cross for our sins, and was 'lifted up' from the grave to show that he had conquered death for us.
5. Because we were not born of God's Spirit at our first birth, the propensities for sin are developed in us before our second birth. This means that although the Spirit dwells within us, there is now a battle between the old nature we inherited through our first birth, and the new nature we inherited through our second birth (Rom. 8:5-9). The nature that reigns reveals our allegiance.
6. Like Peter, we may fall, but if we get up with our eyes still fixed on Jesus, we still belong to him.
7. In the resurrection from the dead the old nature will remain in the grave and in our new resurrected bodies we shall then be like Jesus' (1 Cor. 15:48-49; cf. Php. 3:20-21).  
Kind regards ...



## THE SEVEN PLAGUES ON JESUS

Dear Ritchie,

You have presented several studies over the last couple of years showing that Christ inaugurated those events related to his kingdom, events that are now being fulfilled, and which will be consummated when he comes back.

Do you see this same pattern in the Seven Last Plagues, or am I stretching things a bit by assuming that the Seven Last Plagues of Revelation 16 have anything to do with Christ's kingdom?

C.M.

### Ritchie's Reply

Dear C.,

The Book of Revelation presents the Seven Last Plagues as the final punishment for unrepentant sinners. They sum up the experience of being cut off from God and going into annihilation. That is the ultimate punishment for all sin. Either Christ endures that punishment for us, or we endure it ourselves. You ask in effect, 'In what way did Christ endure these plagues on our behalf?' Here is my preliminary imperfect interpretation:

Plague 1: Painful sores.

*Christ was beaten*

Plague 2: Sea becomes blood.

*Christ was flayed*

Plague 3: Rivers/springs become blood

*Christ was crucified*

Plague 4: Sun scorches.

*Jesus cried, 'I thirst'*

Plague 5: Darkness.

*Sun eclipsed*

Plague 6: Euphrates dried up.

*Christ forsaken by all, including God*

Plague 7: It is done/earthquake.

*It is done/earthquake.*

If we view the future through the window of the Cross, we may disagree on some details of the parallels, but I believe we will agree on the essence.





## APOSTASY?

**Dear Pastor Ritchie,**

How can you be sure that the four horsemen of the apocalypse (Revelation 6) depict the increasing apostasy in the Christian Church? (June 2012 *Good News for Adventists*, p.18).

Second, if apostasy is inevitable, does this mean that nothing can be done to counter it?

J.E.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear J.,**

If you compare Revelation 6:8 with Jeremiah 32:36 you will see that John borrowed the trilogy of sword (Rev. 6:4), famine (Rev. 6:5-6) and plague (Rev. 6:7-8) from Jeremiah because these judgements came upon God's people when they descended into terminal apostasy. Just as the Israelites, by rejecting the Lord, became Babylonians, so spiritual Jerusalem, by rejecting the Lord, becomes spiritual Babylon.

Is apostasy inevitable? In a sense, yes! Apostasy is the second law of thermodynamics in action in the spiritual world. That law reveals that everything that does not receive fresh and regular inputs of life eventually dies or becomes corrupted. The only way to avoid this spiritual degeneration is to remain connected to the Vine, Jesus, so that his life continually flows into you. It's when Churches move away from Jesus and put their trust in other things, such as creeds, human traditions or icons, etc., that they die spiritually.



## THE BREATH OF LIFE

**Dear Ritchie,**

I have two questions for you, both based on what you have written in the GNU magazines.

The first question is about your understanding of Genesis 2:7 where it says: 'The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.'

I was taught that the breath of life that God breathed into Adam was the air that started his lungs (and heart and everything else) working.

You seem to imply that the breath of life that God breathed into Adam was the Breath of spiritual rather than physical life. What is your justification for this rather unique interpretation of this text?

P.L.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear P.,**

My interpretation of Genesis 2:7 is not unique, and I never intended it to be a replacement for the old understanding. I see these views as two separate layers of meaning: the first about man receiving his physical life from God, and the second about man receiving his spiritual life also from God.

The word that is used for 'breath' in Genesis 2:7 is the same word that is used elsewhere for God's Spirit. For example, the parallel poetry in Job 32:8 says, 'It is the Spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding'. In this verse God's breath is the same as the Spirit of God. This is how Jesus intended it to be understood when he breathed on his disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22).

God, through Adam, intended to make a race of Spirit-indwelt people. When that failed he came again and breathed the Breath of life into his disciples. They would be the new Spirit-indwelt race that would go forth and fill the Earth with their spiritual offspring.



## THE GARDEN OF EDEN

**Dear Ritchie,**

My second question is about your interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapters two and three. What I would like to know is this: Do you believe that this story is literally true, or do you spiritualise it away as liberal Christians do?

I'd appreciate a straight answer from you.

P.L.

## Ritchie's Reply

**Dear P.,**

I would like to respond by asking you if you believe Jesus' story about the rich Jew and Lazarus down in Hades (Luke 16:19-31) is literally true.

If you answered saying that the essence of the story is not in whether it is true or not, but in the lessons it teaches, I would respond by saying that is how I see the story of Adam and Eve and their relationship to the Garden of Eden.

Professor John Goldingay wrote:

If Genesis had given us an account of the actual historical process whereby the world came into existence, few people apart from Stephen Hawking

would have understood it. It would have been useless to the average person reading the Bible in any age.

Instead, God inspired the author of Genesis to paint a picture that is a kind of a parable. ... The opening chapters of Genesis are a kind of historical parable.

(*Genesis for Everyone*, Vol. 1, pp. 27-29)

In the account of the Garden of Eden God could have described man's origin and fall in theological terms, or, alternatively, presented them in a simple illustration that would be understood by everyone. He chose the latter.

Gordon Wenham says,

In this, the first story in the Bible, Hebrew narrative art is seen at its highest. The exquisite charm with which the tale unfolds serves only to deepen the tragedy that is related, while the apparent naiveté of the style disguises a richness of theological reflection that philosophers and theologians have not exhausted. And perhaps this is the greatest tribute that can be paid to the writer: he communicates to all— young and old, the educated and the unsophisticated. He describes God's relations with men, not in high-flown abstract theological jargon that needs special linguistic aptitudes and a long training to acquire, but in a simple vocabulary drawn from peasant life. Yet the ideas he puts forward so clearly in story form have theological ramifications that have stretched the minds of the greatest thinkers down the ages.

(*Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 86-87)



## CLOTHED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Dear Editor,**

Your concept of Adam and Even being 'clothed' with the Holy Spirit after the LORD breathed His Spirit into Adam, and then being unclothed or left 'naked' when the Spirit departed from them, is very impressive, but is there any biblical support for such a notion? This is a concept I would like to present in a forthcoming sermon, but I well know that afterward some 'saints' will demand biblical validation for it, so it would be best if I gave it to them beforehand in the sermon.

Many thanks, P.R.

## Ritchie's Reply

Dear P.,

The concept of the Spirit's clothing a person is one that is common to the Old Testament. For example, in Judges 6:34 it says 'The Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon'. And in 2 Chronicles 24:20 it says, 'The Spirit of God clothed Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest'. These are literal translations of the Hebrew.

Adam, who was born of the Spirit, was clothed with the Spirit until, by a deliberate choice, he divested himself of the Spirit and thus became naked of God's presence in his life. He tried, by the works of his hands, to cover that nakedness, but his efforts were less successful than Bernie Madoff's attempt to cover his multi-billion dollar Ponzi scheme, and far more devastating. Hence Jesus' admonition to 'buy from me ... white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness' (Rev. 3:18). The only way to be reclothed with the Spirit is to be born again of the Spirit (John 3:5-7), through belief in Jesus.

Kind regards,



## IS MICHAEL JESUS?

Dear Ritchie,

Greetings! I was interested to read your answer to 'Who is Michael?' You claimed that he is Jesus! Is that right? (Sounds a bit like JW teaching!)

When I look in Daniel 10:13, Michael is 'one of the chief princes' and then he is 'the archangel'. Are these all different Michaels?

Regards, R. C.

## Ritchie's Reply

Hi R.,

Not everything the JWs teach is wrong. Assuming that the Michael of Daniel is the same person as the Michael of Revelation—which most scholars affirm—then Michael is Jesus, for only Jesus has the authority to cast Satan down. According to Revelation 12:7-12, Michael received his authority to cast Satan down by his death on the Cross (see also Php. 2:8-10; Matt. 28:18). It was at that time that Satan experienced his irreversible fall for his greatest weapon—death—had been conquered by Jesus.

That Jesus is referred to as an archangel is not unusual, for from Exodus forward he was referred to as 'the angel of the Lord'. For example, the 'angel of the Lord' who appeared to Moses in the burning bush is said to be 'God' (Exod. 3:2-5). In Judges 2:1-2 we are told that 'The angel of the LORD ... said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to

give to your forefathers". I said, "I will never break my covenant with you...." Everything the angel said and did was what God himself had said and done. So, according to the Hebrews, they were not contradicting themselves by describing the LORD as an angel of the highest rank.



## RADICAL FORGIVENESS

Dear Ritchie,

For decades I have been wrestling with Matthew 18:21-35 where Jesus tells the story of the servant who was forgiven 10,000 talents, but when that servant commits the one sin of not forgiving his fellow servant then the master withdrew the forgiveness he had previously given him. This scene is introduced by the statement that Peter should forgive infinitely, but then we find in the parable that the King would not do what Jesus was requiring Peter to do.

What are we to do with this parable? It seems as if the first servant was truly forgiven. The greater context of the whole chapter is about believers at odds with each other and sinning against each other. So does this mean that believers who have already received God's full forgiveness are going to have his forgiveness withdrawn because they refuse to forgive someone just once? That is what the Lord said: 'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart' (Matt. 18:35).

I can't get my head around this passage. I believe that a follower of Jesus can only be lost if he wilfully chooses to reject Jesus. I believe that the Christian has the verdict of the final judgement in advance provided he clings to Jesus as his only righteousness. But to have unforgiveness in the heart, even just once, means you lose your forgiveness? I have shelved this passage for a long time but it continues to bug me.

For example, a girl gets repeatedly raped by her step dad. Her dad repents and comes to Jesus and is saved. The girl accepts Jesus but has real problems with her step dad. So because she can't let this go she dies without God's forgiveness. It doesn't add up.

S. C.

## Ritchie's Reply

Hi S.,

I think there is problem with trying to be too theological with Matthew 18:21-35. It is, after all, a parable, and no parable should be made to stand on four legs. To me Jesus is teaching that God willingly forgives us no matter how great our debt to him, and the test of whether we have appropriated that forgiveness comes when we are asked to forgive someone who has sinned against us.

It is important to understand that it

is impossible to receive Jesus without receiving his universal gift of forgiveness because when he died on the Cross he gave everything he was and had to procure this gift for us. In other words, he elevated forgiveness to a level equal with himself. For us to deny his forgiveness to anyone is to deny Jesus' sacrifice; it is to turn our backs on the very essence of the gospel.

With regard to the girl who was unable to forgive her rapist step-father, a difference should be made between a decision made by your will and a decision ratified by your feelings. By an act of your will you can sell your much-loved and cherished home to pay off a crippling debt, even though your whole being revolts against that decision. No matter how opposed your feelings may be to the sale, the moment you sign the deed-of-sale the legal transaction is made. In the same way you can forgive someone for what they have done even though your whole being revolts against your decision to do so. The way you feel does not negate the decision of your will. That person is forgiven because Christ died for him, and all you are doing is channelling the Lord's forgiveness to him.

We are but channels for God's forgiveness—a radical forgiveness that is available for even our enemies. But when we block that channel, as the Dead Sea blocks the life-giving waters of the Jordan, that life-giving forgiveness is no longer available to us either.



## ANSWERS TO PRAYER

Dear Pastor Ritchie,

I have had many remarkable answers to prayer over the years, but the one thing I prayed for most, with heart and soul, has never been answered as I would have liked. Sometimes I'm tempted to think that God just ignores me about this matter that weighs so heavily on my heart, but then I remember the other wonderful answers to prayer that I have had, and know that he hears me. It would be so advantageous if God could let us know his will in regard to our prayers.

A 'Yes' or a 'No' would be helpful, don't you think?

W. P.

## Ritchie's Reply

Dear W.,

I wonder if God answered Jesus' prayers audibly. Perhaps he didn't need to as Jesus was so in tune with the Father's will that an audible answer wasn't necessary.

Come to think of it, all of Jesus' prayers were answered with a 'Yes', except the

one prayer he prayed with the greatest intensity of all—that God would not require him to drink the cup of our sins. Never before had Jesus prayed as he did that night in Gethsemane. Three times he petitioned the Father with strong cries for release from his mission, and three times the Father said, ‘No’.

If the Father had answered Jesus’ prayer by saving Jesus from the second death, we would have had to die that death ourselves. Aren’t you glad the Father said ‘No’ to him?

I guess the time will come when we also will be glad that the Father said ‘No’ to some of our prayers. Sometimes, however, what seems like a ‘No’ may only be a ‘Not yet’. So don’t give up.



### THE GOSPEL EXPERIENCE

Hi Ritchie,

I was recently sent the following description of ‘the gospel experience’. I don’t feel entirely comfortable about it and would appreciate your comment on it.

‘We are saved by Grace through Faith, which removes the separation between man and God, leading to the indwelling presence of the Divine Holy Spirit on an ongoing daily basis, finally manifesting itself in a radical outworking of a new character and lifestyle as Jesus lives His life within us, culminating finally in the physical Reconciliation with our God, face-to-face, at the second coming of Jesus when we will experience final redemption from both the environment of sin as well as our sinful nature, over which God’s Spirit has daily been giving us the victory’.

W.S.

### Ritchie’s Reply

Hi W.,

The author here is covering our total experience of salvation rather than just our justification, which he covers in the first seven words.

I expect that if he were focusing on how we are saved he would make a clear distinction between justification, by which we are saved, and sanctification, by which we demonstrate that we have been saved. The source of our justification is objective (outside of us), while the source for our sanctification is subjective (inside of us).

We are saved by what Jesus did for us on the Cross, and not by what the Holy Spirit does in us. The first is the root of our salvation; the second is the fruit of our salvation. The righteousness that Jesus credits to our account is 100 percent, because it is ‘the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor. 5:21). The righteousness

that the Holy Spirit generates in us is never 100 percent because our ‘machinery’ has been damaged by sin.

Anything short of ‘the righteousness of God’ falls short of providing us with an entrance to the Father’s presence. It is for this reason the assurance of our salvation is based in what Jesus did for us, rather than in what the Holy Spirit does in us.

As the repentant criminal, who was crucified with Jesus, was saved because he put his faith in the crucified Lord and not in his own experience, so are we.



### LETTER FROM UKRAINE

Dear Ritchie,

I am happy to inform you that all 6500 copies of *Jesus Only* have been collected from the printers today. Pastor Boyko’s son took 3120 copies to his village, and the rest I took for the Pastor in Burshtyn and for myself.

The manager of the printing shop said that he had started reading the book himself.

On the way from the printing shop I went to our regional cancer hospital to bring some money to a sister in Christ who had undergone surgery, so I gave her the first few copies to distribute among other patients and medical staff. So the seeds of Good News started to spread around. In my work place I gave the book to a few coworkers today.

We were late to get the book published by Christmas [the colour press, for printing the cover, broke down], but it’s ready before Passover, which is celebrated by most of the people here. Actually, *Jesus Only* has much more to say about Christ’s death and resurrection than about His birth.

Please pray that Holy Spirit will guide as to whom we give the book and touch the hearts of the readers.

So publishing is finished but distribution has just started.

In Christ,  
Volodymyr Stefanyk

P.S. As in the parable I can tell you the cost of printing came down to 5172 USD, so there is left 638 USD out of 5810 USD. So the ‘talents’ are multiplied.

What do I do with the leftover money? Please give me the address in Canada where to send the books and how many of them? Do I need to send any send to GNU in NZ or Australia?

### Ritchie’s Reply

Hi Volodymyr

That is very good news. Thank you for all you have done to make this possible. We are very grateful to you. THANK YOU very, very much!

Please post four copies of the Ukrainian *Jesus Only* to X in Canada [Address included].

We don’t need any books here in New Zealand, but it would be good to post a couple to GNU in Australia.

Please use the money you have left over for packaging and postage of the *Jesus Only* books to people elsewhere in Ukraine.

And what you don’t use for postage use for charitable work in Ukraine. If the pastor at Burshtyn is still working without a wage, give some of the money to him, perhaps \$US300.

God bless you, Luda, and your children.

Ritchie.

**Translations of the Romanian and Spanish editions of *Jesus Only* are ready for printing.**

We now need someone in Romania and Spanish-speaking South America to arrange for and oversee the printing of these books, and to care for their distribution afterwards.

We invite all our readers to make this a matter of prayer - that the Lord will open the way for this next and very important step of getting these gospel messages into the hands of the people.

Please join us in asking the Lord to open these doors for us.

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# 2013 SEMINARS

## PEACHESTER SEMINARS

Fellowship meetings are held at Mango Hill Farm  
159 Commissioners Flat Road, Peachester QLD 4519,  
on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month from  
2:30pm – 4:30pm, led by Dr Desmond Ford.

Our next series will be on New Testament Theology, in other words, what does the New Testament teach on all the chief doctrinal areas, such as soteriology (the study of salvation), ecclesiology (the study of the Church), Christology, etc. To watch them live, go to [www.desford.org.au](http://www.desford.org.au) and click on Des Ford Live.

If anyone is willing to help defray the expense of making the programs ADVERT FREE (\$50.00 per session), please contact Jayden Lawson at [jlawson@sidekick.com.au](mailto:jlawson@sidekick.com.au)

## TWEED HEADS BIBLE CLASS

Fellowship meetings are also held 9:30am (NSW time):  
GNU office at 2/54-60 Industry Drive, Tweed Heads South,  
NSW 2486 on selected Saturdays, led by Pastor Ron Allen.

6 April	7 and 21 September
1 and 15 June	19 October
6 and 20 July	16 November
3 August	7 December

## 2013 CITY SEMINARS

### Brisbane

20 April 2013, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

#### Venue:

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland  
237 Milton Road, Milton Qld 4064

*(Opp. Milton Railway station—use pedestrian tunnel under Milton Rd then walk towards XXXX Brewery. Venue is last building on left before brewery.)*

Limited free parking is available at St Francis Theological College, 233 Milton Rd, Brisbane. Parking nearby \$4 for the day is available for a limited number – book with GNU.

**First meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Giving up on Prayer—  
God and His Scoundrels*

**Second Meeting:** 11:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Final Antichrist: His Mark and  
Number—The Gospel in Eschatology.*

**Third Meeting** 2:00 pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Final Antichrist: His Mark and  
Number—The Gospel in Eschatology.*

### Cooranbong (Dora Creek)

15 June 2013

#### Venue:

Uniting Church Hall, cnr. Kahibah and Awaba Sts, Morisset

**First meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Speaker:** Dr. Milton Hook  
**Topic:** *The Gospel in the Sanctuary Service*

**Second Meeting:** 11:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel Key to Armageddon*

### Ballina

13 July 2013, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

#### Venue:

Ballina Island Motor Inn, Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478

**First meeting:** 10:00 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Doug Martin  
**Topic:** *The Crucifixion of Truth*

**Second Meeting:** 11:15 am  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Jonah: Man NOT on a mission:  
Bus drivers and their ilk.*

**Third Meeting:** 2:00 pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Ron Allen  
**Topic:** *Jonah: Man NOT on a mission:  
To hell and back*

### Brisbane

17 Aug 2013, 1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

#### Venue:

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland  
237 Milton Road, Milton Qld 4064 (opp Milton train station)

**First meeting:** 1.30pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Des Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel and Immortality—1*

**Second Meeting:** 3.00pm  
**Speaker:** Pastor Desmond Ford  
**Topic:** *The Gospel and Immortality—2*

### Ballina

2 Nov 2013, (provisional)

#### Venue:

Ballina Island Motor Inn, Pacific Highway, Ballina NSW 2478