

THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER

October, 2008

Produced by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a contribution to the Kingdom of God in Australia, and the World. This magazine is available as a pdf file on the Church Website - <http://pcea.org.au>.

Devotion: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear." *Isaiah 45:22-23.*

ISSN 0729-3542



Armidale Church

FEATURES

Blogging About

Bible Study

Caleb's Club

Church Life

From the Archives

Interaction

Mission Briefs

Presbyterian Agenda

Run For Glory

Sarah's Daughters

Search Work

Web Watch

Media Watch

ARTICLES

The
Benediction 5

Israel in the
Purpose of
God 7

DON'T FORGET
Our
Birthdate - 10th
October, 1846

RICH IN GOD

In a day of banking turmoil, business collapses, and constant talk of a "recession", and even "depression," it's time for Christians to remember the real situation they're in. And we find this in the words of Jesus in Luke 12: 22 - 40. A person has just asked Jesus to intervene in a family dispute involving an inheritance. Jesus refuses to become involved directly. But he responds indirectly in the story of "The Rich Fool" - the man who "stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God." He then goes on to tell us what it is to be rich towards God [or rich in God]. And in a nutshell, he tells us that it's the person who lives in the real world instead of a "make believe" world - who lives in the world where God is Lord, and where Jesus is king; who wants to enjoy the presence and rule of God in his life to the full, and who looks forward to the coming of the kingdom and its King, the Lord Jesus. Life in the real world consists of [1] Enjoying the Kingdom; [2] Seeking the Kingdom; [3] Treasuring the Kingdom; and [4] Being Ready for the King.

ENJOY THE KINGDOM.

First of all, Jesus tells his disciples to enjoy the Kingdom. Don't worry, he says about life. Trust in God to supply your needs. Most people worry. And many people worry about the thing Jesus mentions here - survival - what they shall eat or what they shall wear. Some people really do worry where their next meal is coming from. But with our freezers full, and our wardrobes bursting, we don't really worry about our food or clothes. But we do worry about our survival - our work; and being able to pay the mortgage, or the rent. Some worry about old age and retirement. Will their Superannuation last out? No matter how well off we might be in comparison with others, we still worry about these things. And behind all this worry is the thought that this is a very precarious world, and it only takes a few decisions to bring everything crashing down, and ourselves with it.

The Real World - Controlled by God

Some people think that the world I've just described is the real world. But Jesus tells us here that it's not. We need to live in the Real World - a world that's completely controlled by God and not man. And he gives us three examples of that control. [1] First, he tells us to look at the Birds. "Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them." God looks after them. [2] Then he tells us to look at the length of our lives. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" Sometimes linear measurements were applied to time - as in Psalm 39 - and that's the case here. We can't add a single hour to our life - even though to hear some talk today, we can! And why can't we do this "very little thing"? Because the length of our life is appointed by God, and no one can add one minute to that! [3] And lastly, he tells us to look at the lilies. "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed *like one of these*." Jesus is telling us here that this is God's world. He controls and governs it. And he looks after his creatures in it.

Most people don't seriously believe anything like that today. They believe in a make believe world - a world where everything happens by chance - or where everything is

controlled by that cruel mother – Nature. But before we criticise others, let us ask ourselves: Do we believe it? When we see the birds do we think instinctively of God looking after them? I'm afraid we've imbibed a lot of the world's way of looking at life. When Jesus looked at the birds he immediately thought of his father's world, his father's creatures, and his father's provision for them.

A World Without Worry

But not only are we reminded here of a world of worry, and the real world controlled by God. Jesus tells us that if we really believe in this real world, where God is in complete control, we, too, can have a world without worry! All we have to do, he says, is to apply a bit of logic to our Faith! God looks after the birds - how much more valuable we are than birds! God clothes the lilies of the field. Well then, "If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" The logic is irrefutable! The only time we have to start worrying about food and clothes is when we see a lot of birds dead from starvation lying about – and we don't see many of those! And if we believe in God's complete control of life – and his goodness towards us – and apply the right logic - we will have a foretaste now of the fulfilled Kingdom of God – because in that perfected Kingdom of God, no one will worry at all. Why? Because we'll know that our Father will look after us completely, and that he'll supply all our needs. We need to have more of that attitude now – that attitude of complete trust in our Father.

SEEK THE KINGDOM

The second thing that makes us "rich in God" is to seek the Kingdom. There's a difference between "worry" and "seeking". One relates to anxiety; the other relates to effort. Anxiety may energise us – but we may well be energised by ambition, or the sense of achievement. Jesus turns now to the question of motivation. What's to motivate us in life?

The Make – Believe World.

And once again we notice a contrast between those who live in a make believe world and those who knowingly live in God's world and under God rule. Those who live in a make believe world are motivated largely by economics – by the desire to have plenty of food and drink – and perhaps if Jesus was here today, he might add – and the best homes and holidays. And once again we must confess that this is the major motivation for a lot of people. They reduce life to a matter of economics. They work, and seek jobs, so they can "eat and drink". Binge drinking at the end of a working week, and the emphasis on entertainment is evidence of this. And even those who seem to have more noble concerns – academics and social activists – still have as their goal "eating and drinking". They don't raise their eyes – or the eyes of those they help – any higher than their physical welfare. Pagan Life Non – Christian life – says Jesus is motivated by these concerns. But that world - a world without God – will pass away. All their seeking, even of the most noble and selfless kind –

and all they seek after - will come to nothing.

The Real World.

What should motivate those who live in the real world - God's World? They're to rise above economics. They're to "seek the Kingdom" - to seek to advance God's rule in human life. And what is that? Is it to be always wondering whether you are a Christian or not? Is it to become missionaries or ministers? Is it to attend church and live a life of separation from normal life? No! It means to seek to bring every aspect of life – even eating and drinking - under the control of God. The answer to the first question in the Catechism puts it like this: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever". Not US – but GOD is the focus of our lives. We work, we study, we do good – but all for the glory of God. We are to bring every thought captive to Jesus.

A United Life

And Jesus says if we make the kingdom of God our main aim and motivation "then all these things shall be added to you". Try to take a short cut, forget about God – like the rich man did – and you'll end up with nothing. Be "rich in God" by putting him first, and seeking his rule in life, and you'll get all these things. That's why godly people and godly nations have often been very wealthy people and nations. They didn't think about wealth, they didn't reduce life to economics. They put God first, and sought his glory, and God has supplied their needs abundantly. Seeking the Kingdom doesn't mean a divorce from life in the world at all. If it was, he would never have added these words! Rather, it's to see this world as God's world – and want it to be God's world in every detail. And for those who want such a world, where God is Lord and Jesus is King, it shall certainly be theirs. They shall inherit the earth.

"Seeking the Kingdom doesn't mean a divorce from life in the world at all.. Rather, it's to see this world as God's world – and want it to be God's world in every detail. And for those who want such a world, where God is Lord and Jesus is King, it shall certainly be theirs. They shall inherit the earth."

TREASURE THE KINGDOM.

To be rich in God is to enjoy the Kingdom and to seek the Kingdom. It's also means to Treasure the Kingdom.

As A Gift of God

For example, *we ought to treasure the Kingdom as a Gift of God. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. [12:32] What touching words these are, not only in the way the Lord Jesus speaks about his disciples as a "little flock" but especially when he says to his disciples: "your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom" or – "it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* [AV] When someone thanks us for something, we sometimes say, "it was my pleasure. I was glad to do it"! So Jesus says here that it was the Father's pleasure to give his disciples the kingdom. He was pleased to do. It hasn't been forced out of him. He's freely and generously given it to us. And that, really, is the only way we can receive the Kingdom – or receive this entrance into the real world. It comes as a gift from the Father. We can't merit or earn this new life. It is a gift of God. And how does he give it to us? He gives it to us in the gift of his Son to us, and in drawing us to Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. God the Father translates us out of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son. [Colossians 1] And when was it given to us? It was the father's pleasure to give us the Kingdom in eternity; in

BLOGGING ABOUT...

TALEEM CENTRES - INDIA

Recent reports of bombings in Delhi and other parts of India reminded me of what Dr Rahmat said with regard to Muslims in India, a population of over 100million. Despite such a population it is still a minority and often neglected by the system. Children do not get educated or if they do it is in madrassa, some of which train them to be militants and terrorists. Dr Rahmat is establishing Taleem centres (non-formal school) to teach poor children and at the same time help them physically and spiritually. He has two centres operating in Dehra Dun where he lives. He has recently started another centre outside the city of Patna in the state of Bihar, the place of his birth. He writes

'We have already identified a few secret believers who would be teachers and evangelists there in particular Taleem centres. Now we will give an intensive discipling course covering basic doctrinal matters (TULIP) plus teaching methods and handling of small children plus first aid and health issues. This will be a comprehensive course of three weeks which will be followed by on field follow up when we visit nearly every two months for fellowship and discipling.

We will survey the area taking into consideration the problems of the people (encountering the reality of Muslim life

with the compassion, love and grace of Jesus), their economic and health situations. During this survey we will also take into consideration the influences of the hardline orthodox and Jehadi Islamists Maulvis (militants and terrorist influences). This step is very crucial in minimising the risk factors. We have to identify the Sufi Muslim areas who are philosophical in nature, love music, songs and Urdu devotional and spiritual poetry (with them we share Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Psalms, Song of Songs).

The security situation is quite satisfactory according to Indian standards since we have a good responsible central government (but we cannot give any guarantee about militants, terrorists, islamists and jehadi elements who have a very wide deep seated network and can attack anyone anywhere in the world).

As mentioned before we will use all our wisdom which the Lord has given us and rent the Taleem base centre in the safest area where Sufi Muslims stay (Sufi are quite liberal and they don't support the militant orthodox islamist elements).

The local Muslim reaction is positive and will be positive since many of the Muslims are fed up with madrassa education and want to get their children empowered. So whenever we talk about English they are very excited since in India, English language is associated with the rich and powerful. So it is human nature that every parent wants their child to have a bright future and learn good things.

[Cont. from p2] Christ; and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Father has chosen us in Christ, given us to Christ, united us to Christ, meets with us in Christ, and makes us heirs in Christ – heirs of God, and joint heirs with Him.

As the Essence of all Good.

And that means that if we possess the Kingdom as a gift of God in Christ *we possess all that is good and worthwhile in heaven and on earth.* People sometimes talk about man's "summum bonum" – man's greatest Good. The Kingdom of God is man's greatest good – because if you belong to the Kingdom you have everything. You have all that pertains to life and godliness and everything else as well. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 2:21, "*All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.*"

As the Motivation for Generosity.

And if the Kingdom is a Gift of the Father, and contains all that's good, you see why the Lord Jesus says: "*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" (Luke 12:33-34) If you possess everything in Christ - you can afford to be generous. You can be care-less to wealth and riches because not only will your Father supply all you need, but you'll fall heir to everything he possesses! You'll be rich, not apart from God, like the rich fool, but "rich in God" – you will have spiritual purses, a treasure in heaven, not in the sense of earning your salvation but in the sense of finding your comfort, glory and strength in God alone. To have your treasure in heaven is to have God and his Son and His Kingdom as

your treasure. And if you're rich in God you can afford to be generous because everything is yours! God is your God, and you are his child.

Does this mean, then, that we literally have to sell everything and give everything away. Some people read these words like this: "Sell *all* your possessions and give the entire proceeds to the poor." It doesn't say that - and nowhere in the Bible is that interpretation put on those words, as we see clearly from Peter's words in Acts 5:4. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira is that they pretended to give everything away – and kept some for themselves – a salutary reminder to those who advocate giving everything away! Jesus himself gives the true explanation here when he adds – "and give alms". The selling is in order to help the poor! Jesus is simply saying that in the light of all the blessings we have in the kingdom we can afford to be generous. The wealth of the Kingdom ought to inspire us to be so.

BE READY FOR THE KING

And finally, to be rich in God *we must be ready and waiting for the King.* The kingdom cannot be separated from the King – the Lord Jesus. And so there's an easy transition from talking about enjoying the kingdom, seeking the kingdom, and treasuring the Kingdom, to the thought of expecting the return of the King. The real world, where God is Lord, Jesus is King, His Word is law, His Laws are obeyed, and where He controls all things *is here now.* But He's not physically present. But he will be soon. And when he returns the unreal world – the make-believe world that many live in now will disappear. We must be ready and waiting for Him. We're not to slacken off or go to sleep. [Ray Murray]

Since we are running two centres in Dehradun we have had very encouraging responses and when we shared about the Marifat Taleem Centre we were overwhelmed with the response and encouragement. Local Muslims are very enthusiastic about the centre."

- **Dennis Muldoon**

THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE

As the economic crisis deepens in the United States, and in the world, many people are rightly concerned about the future. The situation was summed up by Henry Paulson when he said that this is a very humbling experience for the United States to have to go through. Perhaps he inadvertently put his finger on why this crisis is happening in the USA and in the world: To be humbled under the Almighty hand of God, and taught that our safety and security doesn't lie in things but in God in whose hand our breath is.

But while all eyes are focused on the financial situation, there are other, more subtle, spiritual developments taking place that may, in the long run, have a far greater impact on life than the rise or fall of the Wall Street Stock Exchange. According to a report published first in "Christian Today" and reproduced in the "Australian Presbyterian Life" for September, most American Presbyterian Churchgoers are indifferent to whether a Congregation has a male or female minister. Here's part of what it says:

"Most American Presbyterians have been part of a congregation that was led by a woman in some capacity and most have no preference over whether the person preaching in the pulpit is a man or a woman, a survey has found. At least 87% of members, elders and ministers of Presbyterian churches from the PCUSA indicated they

have "no opinion" on whether they prefer a man or a woman for most congregational roles, such as a deacon, an elder or a committee chair. But when asked about the gender of their pastor, a smaller majority, at least 63%, said they have no preference." The results were based on a questionnaire distributed in November 2007 to "a representative sample of 5,000 Presbyterians."

With these attitudes prevalent among Presbyterians and people in many other denominations, it indicates how the authority of God's Word is being replaced with the authority of humankind. People in Church no longer ask: What does God want - but, What do we want, or What will be acceptable. Human autonomy has taken up residence in the very church of God! Surely the need of the moment is a strong Church absolutely committed to God's Word. When someone called out to Jesus on one occasion and said, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." [Luke 11:27-28]. And that hearing must come down to practicalities.

PROFESSOR CRACKS CHARLES WESLEY CODE.

An Anglican Professor, the Rev. Professor Kenneth Newport, has finally cracked the code Methodist co-founder Charles Wesley used when writing about sensitive matters in his diary some 250 years ago. More than 1000 handwritten pages dating from 1736 to 1756 have been deciphered. The transcribed pages reveal the extent of Charles' anger with his brother, fellow Methodist founder John Wesley, over the latter's plans to marry and disagreements over a split from the Church of England. The transcribed diary pages will be published together with 9,000 never-before-seen poems and hymns.

- Christian Today/APL Sept.

NEW VENTURES AT DUMISANI

Jenny Wilson writes: "We have introduced a few developments this term. The first has been to provide soup at lunch-time for the students (and staff). We have been conscious recently that many of our students are struggling to find enough money for food. They have been given a small daily amount of money for food for some years, but we realised that it often wasn't sufficient to provide food for all the students. Now Elizabeth and I take turns in cooking large pots of soup each day. The students are very appreciative of it and I often get emails from them saying thank you and telling me what a good mother I am to them!



Another development has been in starting a small second hand clothes shop called the 'boutique' for the staff and students. Again the students have appreciated being able to get clothes at very cheap prices. The money we make goes offsetting the costs of the soup and other social issues.

Probably the biggest development has been to start a bookshop. For a long time, we have been conscious that people in King William's Town don't have much access to Christian books, and the Christian books that are available in East London are generally expensive and often not particularly sound.

So we have set up a small bookshop in one of our larger rooms in one of our buildings. We have also put out a couple of tables, a coffee machine, etc., so that people can have a coffee while browsing through the books. Although we are running this in a low key way, we hope that this will take off.... We hope it will encourage people to read good Christian literature.

THE BENEDICTION

The Rev. George Ball concludes his study in “Ministry Matters” from 2 Corinthians 13:14

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

There is a lady who attends our church and I never get to speak to her. It's not that we've had words. It's simply that she arrives after the first psalm and leaves during the last psalm. I remember Dr. Blair once making a passing comment about a member who was also habitually late for services, but remarked on the fact that at least he (unlike my friend) was there for the best part – ie. the benediction! It may have been said tongue in cheek, and it was a modest statement for him to make, but he was making a valid point. The benediction is not the signal to gather your coat and pack your things. It's not some kind of pious way of signalling the end of the service. It's not a sanctimonious way of indicating, “wake up, it's over – you can go now”. Rather the benediction (as we call it) is a vital part of the worship service, and if you only manage to be present for the benediction (God forbid) then it should still be worth your while to be there. So let's think about the benediction - words that we probably hear every week and very likely never take time even to think about.

A Declaration

The benediction, from the Latin benedicto, means “blessing”. It's a pronouncement of God's blessing upon his people. It's not a prayer – though a number of translations make it a prayer – and many of we ministers make it a prayer. It is not addressed to God but “you” (plural. ie. his readers). It's not asking the Lord to give something to His people that they don't already have. It's making a declaration, and reminding God's people of their current covenant relationship with the triune God.

God's Name Placed on His People

This is not the only benediction in the Bible. We see examples in Gen. 14:18-20 – Melchizedek blessing Abraham; Gen. 27:26-29 – Isaac blessing Jacob; Gen.48-49; Jacob blessing his sons. The best known benediction in the Old Testament is the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6: 22-27. At the conclusion of this blessing the Lord gives Moses a reason for this benediction, “So shall they (ie the priests) put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” In other words in the exercise of the benediction the Lord is placing His name upon His people and His people have the awesome responsibility to bear that precious name as they leave the place of worship to go to take up their various responsibilities.

The Name of the Triune God

What is the name of the Lord? The New Testament makes it explicit. Our God is a Trinity. The one true God

exists eternally in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person is divine, each one is equally God, but there is only one God. It's interesting to note the order of the names in the Trinity. In the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18-20) the new believer is to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In 1 Cor. 12:4-6, the order is different, “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God” ie. the order is, Spirit, Son, Father. In our text the order is Jesus, God, Holy Spirit. Even this mixing up the order of the persons indicates to us, albeit indirectly, the equality of all three persons. The Larger Catechism states, “the Scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works and worship, as are proper to God only.” So when the benediction is pronounced we receive the Name of the triune God and a reminder of the blessings we have in Him – grace, love and communion.



Open Eyes, Arms Up!

Because it is a blessing received and not a prayer we may (and should) receive it with eyes (and hearts) wide open! In the benediction as it has evolved in the Reformed Churches it is not only a verbal exercise but also visual. Traditionally the minister has given the benediction with arms raised. Precedent for this is in the action of Aaron when, “Aaron lifted up his hands and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and burnt offering.” (Lev. 9:22). It would seem that this was the normal posture in giving the blessing. In the New Testament Christ, as our faithful High Priest, after He had offered up Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, and fulfilled the Levitical priesthood, “Led them (ie. His disciples) out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands He blessed them.” (Luke 24: 50). This was why the Reformers believed that the sign accompanying the blessing was not to be the sign of the Cross but the lifting up of hands. So the minister when he raises his hands at the end of the service and pronounces the benediction, is not performing anything magical or mysterious, but as Christ's representative is pronouncing the blessing of Christ upon His people.

Bookends for God's Word

We should also note the context of the benediction. It occurs at the end of his letters as well as at the beginning. The blessings at the beginning of Paul's letters say something like, “Grace be to you and peace from God,” while the blessing at the end of the letters generally say something like “the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.” In other words the benediction functions like bookends in his letters. The implication seems to be that as the Scriptures



are received, read, preached, heeded, and believed upon - there God pronounces the blessing. This is also the clear pattern, which the apostle John followed, in the closing book of the Bible (Rev. 1:3 and 22:21).

Interpretations

There have been various theories advanced to explain the particular form of the benediction here. To quote Gerald Bray (The Doctrine of God. P. 144), "Probably the best explanation is the one which says that the trinitarian shape of this blessing is secondary, perhaps even incidental to its main purpose. Paul adopts a trinitarian framework not in order to teach a doctrine of the trinity, but in order to express the pattern of God's active involvement with his people." Indeed Bray goes further and suggests that the primary emphasis of this verse is Christological. He cites ancient literary style when it was customary for the second and third elements in triads of this kind to be governed by the first element. In other words "the love of God" would be a reference to Christ - the manifestation of God's love. "The communion of the Holy Spirit" would be a reference to union and communion with Christ - which is the Spirit's task to foster. Looked at this way it illustrates how all three persons participate in the work of each one - in this case the work of Christ. According to this interpretation in the believer's experience, grace, love and communion focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. (I can't resist the obvious temptation and ask why he and others don't interpret the triad in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 likewise?).

Beautiful Triplets

Grace, Love and Communion are beautiful triplets - given to all believers without distinction by our glorious triune God. Grace is the wonderful favour that Christ heaps

upon us guilty sinners. He graciously forgives all our sins. He graciously sustains us through all our trials. He graciously protects us from all evil. He graciously saves us from A - Z. God is Love and that love has overflowed from heaven to earth and manifested in Christ Jesus. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn. 4:10). That's what God is toward His people - He is altogether love - at all times and in all circumstances. It is told of Spurgeon who on one occasion presented the gift of a weather vane to a young couple with the words "God is Love" on it. 'Does that mean the love of God is as changeable as the wind' he was asked. "No", he replied, "It means that whatever direction the wind is blowing, God is love." The communion or fellowship of the Holy Spirit denotes our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1: 3) which the Holy Spirit fosters. This is at the heart of what being a Christian is - it is a living, vital dynamic union with Christ - we are "in Him".

This is the name and the blessing that we receive. If we had space we could develop how then we ought to manifest that name to others. The point is that once the benediction is pronounced it may be the end of the worship service but it ought also to mark the beginning of rededicated service in our various callings and places. So - don't switch off before the benediction. Don't leave before the end. Even if the sermon was a poor one - it's a great benediction! It's good to be reminded that for those who belong to Him, we are not under His wrath, but the objects of his love and grace. It's the divine announcement that we bear His name and are covered by His grace.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

[Continued From Page 7] upon the narrower and more imperfect relations amid which they were written, and thence judge of what is still to come. Thus, as the David of the promise is Christ, so the covenant-people are no longer the Jews distinctively, but the faithful in Christ; and the territory of blessing no longer Canaan, but the region of. which Christ is king and lord. What was spoken immediately of the one class of personages and relations, may most fully be applied to the other; and by such a method of interpretation alone do we get a uniform and consistent principle to carry us through the whole. While those, on the other hand, who would find a literal Israel and a non-literal David, or a literal restoration in Christian times and a non-literal tabernacle and ritual of worship, arbitrarily confound together things dissimilar and incongruous, and render certainty of interpretation absolutely impossible.

6. Sixthly, the view thus given is confirmed by the reproduction of some of these prophecies in the field of the New Testament Church, set free, as was to be expected, from the outward distinctions and limits of the Old. Thus, in particular, the resurrection scene of this 37th chapter substantially recurs in the 20th chapter of Revelation, and is followed precisely as here by the attack from the embattled forces of Gog and Magog; while not a word is said which would confine Magog the things spoken to the land of Canaan or the literal Israel: it is the Church and people

of Christ at large that are discoursed of. We say nothing respecting the probable time and nature of the events there referred to, but simply point to the identity in character of what is written with the prophecies before us. In those visions of the Apocalypse the inspired Evangelist stretches out the hand to Ezekiel, and shows how the word spoken so long before by that servant of God, freed from the peculiarities of its Jewish form, is to find its application to the Christian Church. The shell has gone, but the substance remains.

7. We may add, lastly, that the common interpretation, which understands Christ by David, and takes all the rest literally, must inevitably tend to justify the Jew in his unbelief. For he naturally says, Your Messiah has not done the thing you yourselves hold must be done, to fulfil the prophecy : he has not set up his throne in Canaan, and gathered Israel there, and re-established the old worship in its purity ; this was the very purpose for which he was to appear, and we must wait till he comes to do it. On the basis of the literal interpretation, there seems no satisfactory answer to this ; and it is well-known that since it has become prevalent, many Jews believe that Christians are coming over to their view of the matter. We are not surprised to hear, as we have heard, of converted Jews declaring, that such a mode of interpretation would carry them back to Judaism.

ISRAEL IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

The following is an extract from Patrick Fairbairn's Commentary on Ezekiel [pp 411-414]. In the light of the strident criticism of "Replacement Theology" in some quarters today, Professor Fairbairn offers a solid alternative point of view.

It was the peerless glory of Israel as a nation to give to the world the new David, who was to be for humanity the one child of hope, and to furnish to his hand the first builders of that spiritual house which was to be formed of renewed souls, and reared on the foundation of his perfected redemption. But there their distinctive honour ceases, not as if their real privileges and blessings were lost, but because these must henceforth be shared in common, by the household of faith. The very mother that bore Jesus, and his, nearest kindred, could attain to no peculiar place in his kingdom by reason of their earthly connection with him: not these, he said, but every one that heareth the word, and doeth the will of my Father in heaven, is my mother and sister and brother.

Thus the fleshly bond was broken at the centre, and it must vanish to the farthest circumference; everything founded on natural relationships and genealogical descent was, with the handwriting of ordinances, nailed to the cross of Christ and buried in his grave, as a part of that bondage to the elements of the world from which the Church had at length escaped, and which should never more be heard of in her borders. The one relationship to be accounted of is union to Christ, which renders all who possess it children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise; heirs, that is, of all that was given to Abraham in promise; more even, if more could be, for they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ himself.

Therefore it is folly to speak of robbing the Jew by putting him on a level with the believer in Christ; for to put him there is to raise him to the highest standing that a child of humanity can enjoy, and give him a share in that which, being large enough for all, is not diminished, but rather enhanced by the numbers who partake in it. And for the Church herself, seeing that her exalted Head is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with power and authority to make the whole earth his possession, instead of seeking to revive the old distinctions, which have served their day, or hanging her hopes on effete outward arrangements, it is alike her wisdom and her duty to press forward the spiritual conquest of the world plying with unwearied diligence the means of its regeneration, and withal waiting and praying for the time when, nature itself being regenerated, the earth shall become the fit abode of manifested Deity, and all shall be full of the knowledge, and resplendent with the glory, of the Lord. Then in the fullest sense shall the vision of our prophet be realized; for then the entire territory of the new covenant shall be reclaimed for righteousness, and the tabernacle of the Lord most truly be with men.

In closing this section, we present a brief outline of the view that has been taken of the prophecies contained in

the three closely related chapters, 34, 36, 37; and which in substance applies equally to many other portions of the prophetic Scriptures.

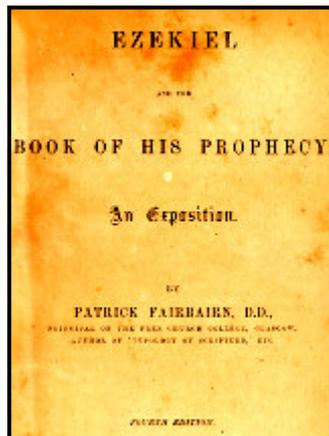
1. They were originally given to revive and animate the hearts of God's covenant people, by holding out to them the assured prospect of a reversion from the present evil, and their still certain destination in God's purpose to the highest and most honourable place on the earth.

2. It was the duty of those to whom such prophecies were delivered, at once to believe the word spoken to them, and apply themselves in earnest to do what was needed to secure its accomplishment; and had they only done this, a far larger measure of the promised good would have been reaped than they actually experienced: this later prospect of blessing, like the earlier, given before entering Canaan, greatly failed through their own sinful unbelief.

3. But there being manifestly ideal features introduced into the delineation, especially the good spoken of being so peculiarly connected with the rule and presidency of David, clearly betokens a kind and degree of blessing which could not have been completely fulfilled under the old covenant, nor intended to be altogether fulfilled altogether anytime later according to the letter. It shows the prophecies in question to be, like several of an earlier kind in Ezekiel, descriptions of the future under the form and image of the past not as if the past were actually to return again, but that its general spirit and character were to revive.

4. The new things thus to be looked for in the future could only meet with their full and adequate accomplishment in Christ, who is certainly the David of the promise. They are consequently of a higher and more comprehensive nature than any that could be enjoyed under the old covenant, when the kingdom of God was so straitened in its dimensions and so outward and earthly in its visible constitution. But still, they were of necessity described under the hue and aspect of the things belonging to the old covenant as if it were these only returning again, or these with certain alterations and improvements, such as might give the future a pre-eminence in glory over the past. For only by means of what belonged to existing or previous dispensations of God could the prophet have given any detailed exhibition of what might be expected under another and higher dispensation. The details of the future *must* have been cast into the mould of things already perceived or known.

5. Therefore in forming one's conceptions now of the real import of such prophecies, now that the transition has been made into the new and higher dispensation, we must throw ourselves back **[Continued on Page 6]**



Run For Glory

THE KING WHO LOST HIS CHAINS — JEHOIACHIN

It's very easy to get confused with the last four Kings of Judah - Jehoahaz [609 BC]; Jehoiakim [609– 598], and Jehoiachin[598], followed by Zedekiah! In this study we come to the last "J" – Jehoiachin: The Man Who Lost His Chains. [598]

An Outline of His Life

Jehoiachin's reign was very short – "three months and ten days." Very soon after he became King, Nebuchadnezzar himself appeared a second time on the soil of Palestine (2 Kings 24:11), besieged the city, and it surrendered to him. The result is described in 2 Kings 24: 12-14. "He took Jehoiachin prisoner. As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD. He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left."

Why this happened so quickly and why his uncle [Zedekiah] was then put on the throne is a matter of speculation. It could have been a punishment for the rebellion that took place under his father, Jehoiakim. Or perhaps it was because he, too, was pro Egyptian in his politics. That wouldn't be surprising. His mother was the daughter of Elnathan who had been sent to Egypt by Je-

hoiakim to bring Uriah the prophet back! And from the pointed references to the King and his mother – it would seem she wielded quite a bit of power. In Jeremiah 13:18 God says through Jeremiah: "Say to the king and to the queen mother, Come down from your thrones, for your glorious crowns will fall from your heads." At any rate, Nebuchadnezzar was quite ruthless. They were all taken off into captivity – and Jehoiachin was to spend the next 37 years of his life in prison.

The Quality of his Life

What was Jehoiachin like as a person? Here it is: "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord." And the consequence of that is brought out by Jeremiah in chapter 22. Speaking about Coniah – another name for Jehoiachin – the Lord says: "As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "even if you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you was born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to return to. Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know? O land, land, land, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the LORD says: "Record this man as if childless, a



"Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"

He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil -

this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar."

Isaiah 33:14-17

man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.” [Jeremiah 22: 24-30]

The Restoration of his Life

That was the end of Jehoiachin as far as ruling in Jerusalem was concerned. But it wasn't quite the end of Jehoiachin himself. The Books of the Kings ends on this note: “In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin from prison on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.” [2 Kings 24:27-28].

They've actually found a Babylonian Administrative Tablet from this period recording the payment of rations in oil and barley to prisoners held in Babylon – and it specifically mentions Jehoiachin king of Judah! After 37 years in a Babylonian prison he was released and honoured!

For Jehoiachin it must have felt like life from the dead! I wonder was it! 37 years is a long time. He had plenty of time to think! Did he think about God; about his grandfather, Josiah, or Manasseh? Did he ever hear of Daniel's activities, or Ezekiel's preaching to the exiles? We don't know. We don't even know what moved Evil – Merodach [562-561] to offer such a generous reprieve to Jehoiachin. But we do know that God's merciful and gracious hand was in it all preserving the royal seed. Satan had done his utmost to destroy it, but he was not able to.

And the proof of this is found in Matthew 1 where we read the genealogy of Jesus: “After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel...” [Matthew 1:13]. Truly we may say with the Apostle Paul: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” From the depth of the exile, and in a Babylonian prison, God preserves the royal seed from which our Saviour was born! Even before the exile, while Jehoiachin was in prison, there were those in Jerusalem who hoped for his restoration to Kingship and agitated for it. But it would not happen. Judah had to bear its discipline. But yet in the ashes, and out of the ashes God would raise up those from whom the Saviour, according to the flesh, would come to redeem the world!

SEARCH WORK - OCTOBER

SENIOR 12+ yrs; INTERMEDIATE 10-11 yrs; JUNIOR 9 and under.

October, 2008

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8

1 KINGS 9

1. When the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, on what condition did he say he would establish Solomon's kingdom for ever? (2 verses only)
2. What did Solomon's navy bring him from Ophir?

Chapter 10

3. What did the queen of Sheba say when she had seen all Solomon's wisdom and prosperity? (4 verses)
4. Why did all the earth seek to Solomon?

Chapter 11

5. What sin did Solomon commit when he was old? (1 verse only)
6. When God would rend [tear away] the kingdom from Solomon, what two things did he promise, for David's sake, not to do? (2 verses)
7. (x) What did the prophet Ahijah do to Jeroboam's garment, when he met him in the field? What did he say to Jeroboam? (2 verses only)
8. (x) What was Solomon's reaction to that?

JUNIOR

GENESIS 42

1. How did Joseph treat his brothers when they came and bowed themselves down before him?
2. What did they say to each other when they found their money in their sacks?

Chapter 43

3. What did Jacob pray that God Almighty would do for his sons when they went to Egypt the second time?
4. With what words did Joseph bless Benjamin when he saw him? What did Joseph do then? (2 verses)

SEARCH WORK TO: MRS I. STEEL, PO Box 942, EPPING 1710.
E-mail: iesteel@gmail.com

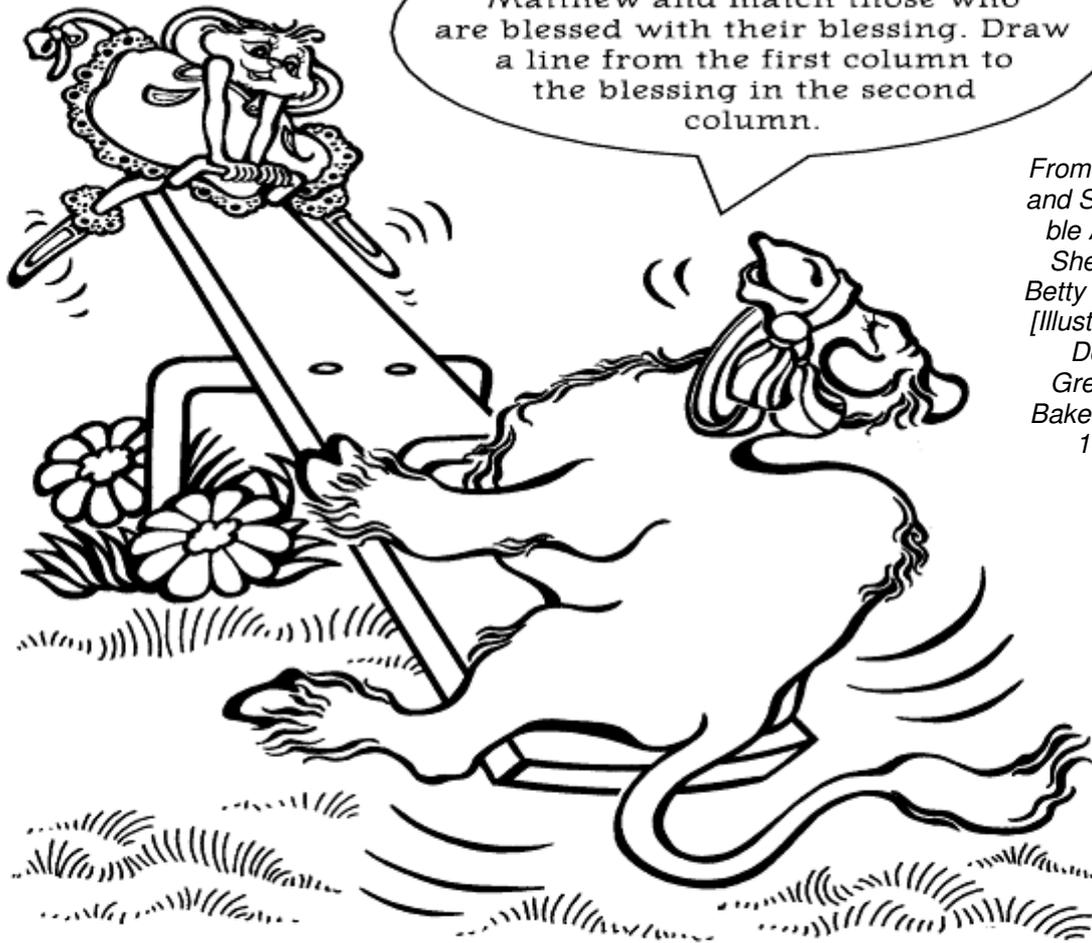


“..the strongest things and the loveliest things grow silently. All these beautiful flowers, and all these ripe fruits - so lovely, so useful, they have all grown in silence. It is just so with our lives. You tender plants in the garden of God, your lives ought to grow with all the lovely flowers of virtues, and with all the useful fruits, quietly and silently.....” - T.T. Shore.

ACTIVITY PAGE.....

Beatitudes

Read chapter five of Matthew and match those who are blessed with their blessing. Draw a line from the first column to the blessing in the second column.



From: Search and Solve: Bible Activity Sheets by Betty De Vries [Illustrated by Donna Greenlee] Baker Books, 1998.

Blessed are

poor in spirit
persecuted because of righteousness
merciful
meek
pure in heart
those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
those who mourn
peacemakers

for they (theirs is)

will be filled
the kingdom of heaven
will be called sons of God
the kingdom of heaven
will inherit the earth
will be comforted
will be shown mercy
will see God

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

"There was once a nobleman living in Scotland who was very rich. But his covetousness, or love of money, was very great. Whenever he received any money he turned it into gold and silver, and stowed it away in a great chest which he kept ...in the cellar. One day a farmer, a tenant, came in to pay his rent. But when he had counted out the money he found that it was just one farthing short; yet this rich lord was such a miser that he refused the farmer a receipt for the money until the other farthing was paid. His home was five miles distant. He went there and came back with the farthing. He settled his bill and got his receipt. Then he said, "My lord, I'll give you a shilling if you'll let me go down into your vault and look at your money". His lordship consented, thinking that was an easy way to make a shilling! So he led the farmer down into the cellar and opened his big chest, and showed him the great piles of gold and silver that were there. The farmer gazed at them for a while, and then said: "Now, my lord, I am as well off as you are." "How can that be?" asked his lordship. "Why, sir," said the farmer, "you never use any of this money. All that you do with it is to look at it. I have looked at it too, and so I'm just as rich as you are." That was true. The love of that selfish lord for his money made him think of it day and night, and the fear lest some robber should steal away all his comfort and happiness, and made him perfectly miserable." [R.Newton]

SPORE

I have a confession to make. I have run out of particular websites to visit! Considering there are estimated to be more than 108 million websites (in February 2007 - www.boutell.com/newfaq/misc/sizeofweb.html) this might sound strange. So I guess it might be more accurate to say I have run out of websites which I visit and which I think others might be interested in.

A colleague at work who is really into gaming has been raving about his latest purchase – SPORE. We've had a few discussions over the last couple of years about creation and evolution. And SPORE presents another opportunity to discuss these issues. According to the creators of SPORE, "Spore is your own personal universe in a box. In this universe you can create and evolve life, establish tribes, build civilizations and even sculpt entire worlds"

As part of the marketing campaign several newspapers gave away a copy of "SPORE – Creature Creator" and it is great fun for the kids as they use their imagination to build creatures of all shapes and sizes. A free version with – I think – not as many options, is still available for download on the SPORE website – www.spore.com. This game also gives an opportunity to talk about creation and evolution with kids.

The most interesting aspect as I see it is the case at least for Intelligent Design (ID) - the argument going something like. The game is a demonstration of ID because:

[1] The game itself did not just "happen"; it took many people to come up with the ideas, programmers to code the game, artists to create the graphics, musicians to write the music, etc.

[2] If I sit with the game in front of me, nothing particularly will happen. I need to use my creativity and knowledge and make choices for my creatures to live and "evolve" into "higher life forms". Without my input the creatures will not change and grow.

While ID is not the same as creationism and I'm sure there are many people in the ID camp who are quite happy with "evolution" happening because there is some higher power guiding it. But I do think it offers a good opportunity to have family discussions about evolution/creation/intelligent design.

There must be some caution, however, because the people who did create this game obviously do not believe in a biblical creator. You only need to look at the special Galactic Edition which includes a National Geographic "50-minute evolution documentary ". As well - within the game where there is "Evolutionary Gameplay: Lead your species through stages of evolution from pond-scum to galactic god in Spore's campaign mode."

Reviews talk about evolution and the "scientific concept of panspermia", though interestingly also mention creation and the creativity of player – which is truly ironic. For a review by "Answers in Genesis" – www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2008/09/13/news-to-

Fiji Update

Leone Tupua [Junior] writes (August) - we are all fine here in Fiji. We are healthy and happy in our farm. I am returning to office work today after being away on a work trip. I have reports to write and submit.

Epaia my younger sister has graduated from our local teacher training college and been posted on Vanuabalavu, an island in the eastern island group of Fiji. We communicate with her by phone but will not see her until the Christmas holidays. This is her first time away from home.

Maika (younger brother) is enrolled in a Diploma of Business Management – a two year course. I am so thankful he is finally able to pursue tertiary studies. Ilisapeci (youngest sister) is now in form five (year 11) high school. Jona my older brother is currently living on Vanualevu (the second largest island) and is finally settling down with his wife and two kids. Ruci the eldest is here at home with her three children who are doing well at school. Her husband still lives in PNG and supports them well.

Eliki and his family are all OK too and we remember one another in our prayers.

Dumisani - 30th Anniversary

2009 will be the 30th anniversary of the founding of Dumisani Theological Institute. It opened its doors, as the Dimbaza Reformed Bible School, in 1979 under the direction of Rev Bill Graham. We plan to mark this significant anniversary in various ways and we hope to say more about that in future newsletters, but for now let me mention a 2009 Calendar which John Ross has produced and which will, we hope, be printed and available for purchase in Scotland within the next few weeks.... Please do look out for this calendar and consider purchasing it for yourself and for others. If friends in other parts of the world would be interested in making these calendars available locally, we can supply the file for local printing and discuss the practical issues involved

note-09132008#three, is useful.

You can find more information about SPORE on Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spore_\(game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spore_(game))

Some addition resources found while research SPORE: creationwiki.org/Main_Page
www.evolutionnews.org
www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/09/12/04spore.h28.html
www.ronrhodes.org/Manuscript.html (quite off-topic but...)
www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0807/S00053.htm#chapter1

New Web Site for Dumisani

Dr John Ross, together with a friend from Scotland, has put together an excellent new web site for Dumisani. If you haven't visited it already, please take a moment to look at some of the information and images which you will find there at www.dumisani.org. We continue to appreciate the kind support of friends in Canada who pay for our web host.

THE CHURCH

Boys' Brigade's First Church Parade at Armidale PCEA

Jonathan Skinner, Armidale

On Sunday the 7th of September (Fathers day) 2008, the boys of the 75th NSW Armidale Company of the Boys' Brigade Australia held their first ever church parade at the Armidale Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The boys who attended come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are sons of ministers; others have no church background at all.

Church parades are an integral part of the Boys' Brigade program. They are used for a number of functions. Firstly they are often the first introduction to church for boys and often their parents. Secondly, they promote the work of the Boys' Brigade in the community and churches alike. Thirdly they are often the forum for giving promotions to boys and officers, which was the case at this church parade. One of our regular attendees, Jonathan Skinner, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant after completing his training during the recent June long weekend.



The boys from the 75th NSW Armidale Company of the Boys' Brigade at the PCEA church in Armidale. September 7th 2008

The Purpose of the Boys' Brigade is revealed in its Object...

The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness.

This is achieved through the integration into the program of activities such as devotional time, physical activities and development of life skills such as basic cooking and setting the table for the junior boys, and camping activities such as caving for the senior boys. The high school boys have since the parade been caving and had a great time marvelling at the majesty of Christ's creation.

A Bit about the Brigade...

The Boys' Brigade is an interdenominational and international youth organisation preceding the founding of other similar youth organisations by more than 25 years. The 4th October this year marks the 125th year of Boys' Brigade worldwide. One of its most famous members was Baden Powell founder of the Scouts. Baden trained under the Boys' Brigade founder, William Alexander Smith, before starting the Scouts.

Christ remains the focus of the brigade and although not all boys leave brigade with a saving knowledge of Christ, we work with and train each boy to bring glory to Christ, the Father and the Spirit.

Pan Australia Camps are national camps and are held every three years. This year was one of those years and the camp was held on Philip Island VIC. Boys from all over Australia and The Cook Islands came together and had fun times with outdoor activities and heard the word of God taught. They were given the challenge to 'live as agents of Christ's Kingdom'.

The next Pan Australia Camp will be in January 2011 and will be held at Ulverstone, Tasmania. See link below for more info.

If you would like to know more about Boys' Brigade in Australia, you can visit <http://boys.brigadeaustralia.org> or you can call toll free on 1800 819 704.

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Brisbane Congregation

ALL AGE "CAMP DREWE" CAMP @ LENNOX HEAD 28 - 30 November - 2008

Speaker: Rev. Ray Murray, Northern Rivers PCEA

COST: Adults, tertiary and secondary students - \$65.00; Primary students \$50.00
Pre-school children \$25.00; Children under three years -Free; Family - \$220.00

[This cost includes all meals from Friday night supper to Sunday lunch]

ACCOMMODATION: Campers will sleep in dormitories, with 6 beds per dorm. [Total - 112 people.]

WHAT TO BRING: Sheets, blankets (or sleeping bag), and pillows; towels and toiletries; hat, sun-screen, insect repellent, swimmers; Bibles!!

REGISTRATION: Please obtain, complete and return a registration form to:

Mr. Stewart Carswell, 85 Barmore Street, TARRAGINDI, QLD 4121

Forms should arrive no later than 17th November, 2008. If payment is being made by cheque, make it out to: Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, Brisbane Congregation. It should accompany the registration form. Further Info: Contact: (07) 3397 1138; stewart_carswell@health.qld.gov.au



WEATHERING HEIGHTS

In this issue we're focusing attention on Armidale! Although we've already published a photograph of the Armidale Church before, we do so again to give perspective to the repair of the turret. Peter Smith, the minister, writes:

"I'm just sending some photos of the new copper adorning the turret. It really gleams in the sun! You might be able to use one of the photos for the Banner. We are still waiting for the roof tiles (around 50), capping and a few slates to be replaced. Once that is done, the foyer will be able to be repainted, as well as a bedroom in the manse due to water damage. It is taking an awfully long time, seeing that the hail storm occurred on the 21st of December 2006!"

Two years is a long time. On the other hand, I suppose it's not everyday that you get the job of covering a turret with copper!

TEMPORARY CHANGE OF ADDRESS

John and Elizabeth Cromarty will be in Geelong from the 1st October until the end of January 2009. John and Elizabeth can be contacted by:
 Mobile: 0423 044 111.
 E-mail: johncromarty@bigpond.com
 Post: P.O. Box 7490,
 Geelong West, Victoria. 3218.

[Continued from page 15] This commandment requires us to promote truth, but it also requires us to promote our neighbour's good reputation! We should remember the admonitions of Scripture concerning the love that there should be between brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13, tells us that love "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth," but he also says that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." We have heard people who claimed that they were following the Scriptural injunction to "speak the truth in love", but my experience of the speaking of such people has usually been that, whatever truth there may have been in what they said to others (and about them) there was precious little love evident! Would we not be better to remember that it is "hatred [which] stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."

When we think of this commandment we tend to think of false witness as something which harms the other person. Possibly we think this way because of the words, "*against* your neighbour." We might be better to think of them as being "concerning your neighbour." It is just as much a breach of this commandment to give false testimony which sets a guilty person free as it is to give false testimony which condemns him or her. When we pervert the course of justice in this way we are giving false witness which harms others of our neighbours. Similarly, we are not to give false witness in favour of a friend in other situations. The glowing testimonial written to obtain a job for a friend is breaking this commandment if it contains false statements. Equally, the job application written for ourselves is in breach of the ninth commandment if it mis-

represents our experience or our abilities. However, a word of warning is necessary here! The false modesty that *underestimates* our abilities and *understates* what we can do may also be "false witness." Certainly, our forefathers who wrote the Larger Catechism considered it to be so! They said that the Ninth Commandment forbade, among other things, "thinking or speaking too highly or *too meanly* of ourselves and others."

Conclusion

Before I finish, I would like to return almost to the point at which we started. In my opening statements, I compared the Third and the Ninth Commandments – one relating to our relationship with God and our witness concerning Him, and the other relating to our witness concerning men and women. Is there not One Person in whom these two commandments meet? Do they not meet in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man? The witness that we bear concerning Him affects both. If we call ourselves Christians, we take His Name upon us, and if the witness that our lives bear is not consistent with that claim, we have broken the Third Commandment. However, we have also broken the Ninth, for our words and our behaviour are detracting from the good name in the earth of our Neighbour, the one who sacrificed so much for men and women, the One who is near to all who call on Him. Let us be sure that we bear a true witness concerning our brothers and sisters who are sons and daughters of Adam, but let us be even more careful to bear a true and faithful witness concerning our Elder Brother, who is the Son of God. Let us live our lives as a constant and truthful witness to His good name and to His reputation! It is our plain duty to do so!

The Ninth Commandment

Dr. W.J.W. Hanna, Brisbane, continues a study on the Ten Commandments. He deals now with the Ninth Commandment: Exodus 20:16 - "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."

Introduction

From the Eighth Commandment, which concerns the right to hold property, the Ten Commandments proceed to the right to have a good reputation, i.e., the right of every person to have the truth spoken about him or her. In some ways this Commandment resembles the Third. They both deal with the witness that we bear with our mouths. One deals with the witness that we bear concerning God and concerning our own relationship to Him, while the other concerns the witness that we bear concerning other men and women. The greatest difference between them is that we cannot hurt God by the witness that we bear concerning Him, either with our lips or with our actions, but we can hurt our fellow human beings. The words that we speak about them can be the cause of severe loss and injury to them, and this not only in lost reputation, for we can actually cause them physical loss, in some cases the loss of life itself, by the witness that we bear concerning them.

The Principle Involved

We have seen with regard to several of the previous commandments that the statement given deals with one particular case of a wider principle, and that, following the example given to us by our Lord, we need to ensure that we see the *principle* and follow it wherever it takes us, rather than assuming that we only need to look to that particular example. The same thing is true with respect to the Ninth Commandment. It speaks of one special case, that of bearing false witness, and has a very special bearing on the way in which we should approach the administration of justice in our courts, but its scope is not limited to that one aspect. The principle which leads to this particular application holds good for all other offences against truth between ourselves and others. It is not limited to what transpires in a court of justice under oath, but looks at the whole obligation to give a truthful account of ourselves and also of other people.

There is one point, too, in which this commandment may be considered to carry with it a more permanent obligation than some of the others which we have already studied. Truth comes from God Himself; it is part of His nature and is derived from Him. Psalm 31 calls Him "LORD God of truth." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, claimed to be "the Truth" itself, and we also know from the New Testament that God cannot lie (Titus 1: 2). Truth, then, is as permanent and unchanging as God Himself. Mankind was made in the image of God and truth is one of those attributes that form part of that image. Speaking truth is something that makes us like our God! Charles Hodge has

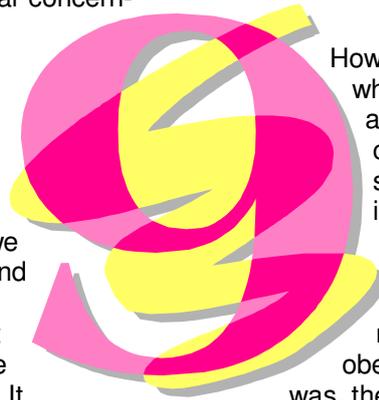
written, "The command to keep truth inviolate belongs to a different class from those relating to the Sabbath, to marriage or to property. These are established on the permanent relations of man in the present state of existence. They are not in their own nature immutable *unchangeable*). God may at any time suspend or modify them. But truth is at all times sacred, because it is one of the essential attributes of God, so that whatever militates against, or is hostile to the truth, is in opposition to the very nature of God." (C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*).

What Hodge is meaning is that we keep the Sabbath because God has appointed it in this existence; He could change it if He wished. We keep the marriage bond sacred because God has appointed it; He made the man and the woman for each other as one couple, but He could change that if He wished. We keep the right to property sacred because God has given it to us, but God could change that too. We keep these commandments sacred because God has appointed them. However, we keep truth sacred because God IS truth! God cannot change so He will never cease to be Truth, and therefore truth will never cease to be a sacred duty of every man, woman and child created in His image!

What is Truth?

However, what is truth? This is the question which Pilate asked, mockingly, of our Lord, and it is a question which has been asked countless times since the day that Adam started mankind off on the downward road into sin and falsehood. When God created mankind, we were like Him (not the *same* as Him, but *like* Him) in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Part of that likeness was truth. So long as mankind obeyed God, accepting His word as what it was, the word of truth, the first man and woman knew and spoke only the truth. We can see this in Eve's answers to the snake; they were straightforward, ingenuous answers, with no sign of deviousness or duplicity in them. However, the snake, motivated by the devil, started to insinuate doubts into her head that God Himself had actually spoken the truth.

It was the devil who taught her that it was possible to say something which was not, in fact, true! Before that time, the man and the woman had known only good: they did not even know what evil was! But, when they had disobeyed God, they soon found out! They found that they had accepted evil into their lives and into their very natures, and one of the first signs of this was an unwillingness to speak the truth. We can see how evasive the answers were which they gave to God when He spoke to them afterwards. They did not dare to lie *directly* to Him but they came as near it as they dared. Their descendants would progress along that road of untruthfulness and would dare more! Lying became so much part of the nature of humanity that they would even dare to lie to God! In the New Testament we find Ananias, who claimed to be a Christian, being told by Peter, "You have



not lied to men but to God.” No longer were men and women behaving as children of God but as children of the devil. Jesus told them, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8: 44)

It is little wonder, that, with this background of falsehood built into our very natures, mankind down the ages has had difficulty separating truth from untruth. It is little wonder that the question, “What is truth?” is asked so often. However, is the very question itself not often a form of lying? Surely it was so in the case of Pilate? He knew at least some of the truth. He knew that this Man in front of him had done no wrong: righteousness and truth radiated from Him. The fact was that Pilate did not want to face the truth and so he concealed the truth by sceptical mockery. Is it not the same with *us*? Do we not instinctively know that truth is what accords with the mind and nature of God? Anything we utter knowingly that does not fit in with His nature is a lie; anything that could not proceed from His mouth is falsehood. This sets before us a standard of perfection, and like all such standards, it is something that we will never attain in this life. Nevertheless, it is something toward which we should be striving always!

When we look at this standard of perfection, however, we must be careful that we do not allow ourselves to be led astray into an extreme position which is not supported by Scripture. Not every statement which does not accord with exact truth is a lie and a breach of the ninth commandment. When we make a statement which we believe to be correct, but which is not, this does not constitute bearing false witness. Then there have been those who would condemn the writing of stories, works of fiction, because the matters stated in them are not true: they never happened. This is to carry things much too far. There is no intention in the mind of the writer of a fictional work to deceive anyone. He or she has not lied. If we were to condemn such people as liars we would also have to condemn Jesus Christ Himself! Did He not invent stories to illustrate the doctrines which He taught, or are we to suppose that every parable was a report of something that had actually happened? Our Lord told such beautiful parables as that of the Prodigal Son and the Loving Father to illustrate the truth, but those parables were, almost certainly, inventions. This sort of invention is a gift given to mankind by God; it is part of the ability to reason and to imagine various situations. To use it as it is given is not to “bear false witness.”

The Scope of the Prohibition

When we have seen that truthfulness requires such a very high standard, a standard based on the nature and perfections of God Himself, we can see that the scope of the commandment is going to cover a much wider field than that of speaking the truth under oath in court. Indeed, the

commandment does not actually mention a court of law. It simply says that “you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour”: the place, the time, the circumstances, are left undefined. Because of this we must understand it to apply to all times, to all places and to all circumstances. It has the widest possible application to every communication which we make with regard to either ourselves or another person. Yes, it also applies to what we say about ourselves! I will return to that later!

We would all expect to find that it forbids any sort of open lying concerning another person, but it forbids more than this. It includes anything that is, in any way, inconsistent with perfect truthfulness. Hypocrisy is forbidden, for example, the pretending to an opinion about someone when we do not actually hold that opinion. Also forbidden are doubtful or equivocal statements, breaking promises which have been made, and flattery. Especially forbidden are any statements which would be unjustly injurious to the good reputation of another person. I say here *unjustly* injurious, for it is *false* witness which is forbidden, not true witness about the wrong that another person has done. It is not in any way a breaking of this commandment if,

when we know of a crime committed, we report it and give such true evidence as we have to enable the authorities to arrest the perpetrator. Some people have a morbid distaste of ever “dobbing in” anyone. This cannot be based on this commandment. There are some people who *should* be dobbed in! One can think of drug-dealers, thieves, murderers, rapists, terrorists and many more. To bear witness against such is not wrong, provided that the witness is true. But, even in such cases, we must not let our prejudices control our testimony: we must speak only what we *know* to be the truth.

“Some people have a morbid distaste of ever “dobbing in” anyone. This cannot be based on this commandment. There are some people who should be dobbed in! One can think of drug-dealers, thieves, murderers, rapists, terrorists and many more.”

The Positive Aspects

The very fact that we are not to bear false witness against our neighbour must mean that we are to be very careful about the effect that our words and actions may have on the reputation of our neighbour. This means that, as with all the other commandments, there are positive aspects attached to it. It means that we have an obligation to come to an accurate estimate, if at all possible, concerning our fellow men and women, and, indeed, concerning ourselves. We have an obligation to present that estimate, when it is needed, as clearly as possible. It is bearing false witness to leave out important facts just as much as it is to put in things that are not true. However, we must be careful that we do this only when it is necessary. We are not to be gossips, going about spreading detractions concerning someone’s character, even if the things that we might say happen to be true. There is not one of us who has not done something wrong at some time, something of which we are ashamed. There would be few of us who do not do such things far more frequently than we would want. There is no necessity that all the world should know of *our* weaknesses. There is no necessity that all the world should know of our neighbours’ weaknesses either! Their sins of this sort are something between God and themselves. **[Continued on page 13]**

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

I would like to express my thanks to the Rev. George Ball for his excellent series on 2 Corinthians. He has persevered over many months, and we have reaped the benefit from that perseverance. Might I also say, he has been the kind of person who delights an editor's heart! Ever since I took over the magazine some two years ago, he has always had his articles ready and waiting. I was beginning to wonder what I would do when he/we finished 2 Corinthians. But he already has another article here for me! If only some others would be as supportive as George! The editor's fears would be gone! Thank you George for your hard work and faithfulness.

Some of you may have noticed the big "cover up" on the printed copies of the magazine last month - at least those for Congregational distribution. I'm sorry for the mistake. We had just brought the magazine back from the printer, and I heard this agonizing groan from my proof reader: "Oh what have we done." I thought I must have made a catastrophic theological error, and rushed over to see what I'd done. She was pointing to the front page—and I was looking, and still couldn't see anything amiss. And then she pointed to the word, "Passionate" - spelled on the front page in big bold capitals - "Passionate"! It was bad enough that we should have read that page many times and missed the most obvious and glaring mistake. It was even worse for me, because I had typed the article! There was not much room to move in blame shifting!

It was too late—and too costly - to get the page [or magazine] reprinted. We contemplated letting the magazine go as is - and see if any others picked up the mistake! But I decided on a "cover up". With a little bit of ingenuity I was able to type the word "Pass" on some labels, cut them out, and carefully stick them over the offending mistake!

We could draw a lot of spiritual lessons from this experience! C.S. Lewis once spoke about those who made no mistakes in embracing the "grand fallacy". We look for the "little" mistakes, and miss the most obvious, just like many who concentrate on the details of life, and completely miss the bigger picture. Or we could think of the sinner, seeking to cover up his or her sin in the sight of God. Like me, they think they've done a pretty good job. But when you look closely you can easily see the cover up—and even the printing underneath! Everything is open before the one with whom we have to do.

But perhaps - and this is the one I like best [!] - we may think of how God will "cover" all our sins. It's wonderful to think that through the Lord Jesus, and through faith in him, even though it is weak, all our sins will be covered from his eyes. In Christ he does a far better cover up job that we can ever do. He covers them completely and eternally through the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the terms of the New Covenant, ratified by His blood, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." [Hebrews 8:12] What a precious reality that is to enjoy.

Upcoming Event - 2009

FAMILY CAMP - Naamaroo Conference Centre, Lane Cove National Park, SYDNEY.

5pm Monday, 5th January - 3pm Friday 9th January, 2009 [DV]

Theme: Love and Obedience: Our Response to God's Grace

Main Speaker: Rev. George Ball, Manning River Congregation.

The camp commences at 6pm Monday 5th of January (arrival after 5pm) and concludes at 3pm on Friday 9th Jan. (God willing). The costs for full time attendance, including dinner on Monday and lunch on Friday, are as follows:

- Adults \$240
- Seniors \$200
- Student/Unemployed \$200
- Primary age children (K-6) \$175
- Preschool children 2 -5 \$60
- Children below the age of 2 free

Family Rate (subsidised) **\$820**

If you are only planning to attend for part of the camp (this is different to a day visitor) please contact the camp organiser on (02) 4626 8212 to check pricing.

Distance Subsidy will be paid by the Youth & Fellowship Committee. Long distance travellers are encouraged to pool vehicles to save costs. The amount of the rebate will be determined at the camp.

Hire of bed linen, blankets and towels is offered. Please indicate your requirements on the registration form.

A Limited Number of Ensuted Rooms are available, with bed linen, towel and blankets provided for an extra cost of \$30 per person for the week.

The Presbyterian Banner is the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The PCEA was established in 1846 and adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as its doctrinal standard.

Literary contributions are welcome. Submission by email is preferred. The opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the authors - not necessarily of the editor or the PCEA and may not be reproduced without permission.

Unsigned articles are from the Editor, and may be reproduced without asking for permission.

Editor:

Rev. Ray Murray,
33 Tallowood Street,
South Grafton,
NSW, 2460.
Tel/Fax 02 6643 4272.
Email: raymurray @ aapt.net.au.

Subscriptions [11 Issues per year]
Within Australia, \$25 [Bulk \$20]
Overseas : Aud \$40 Airmail.

Direct Credit:

Westpac 032-587 75 0105

CLOSING DATE FOR MATERIAL: 15th of Each Month. WEB PAGE ISSUE AVAILABLE: 1st of Each Month.