



the presbyterian banner

December 2012

*He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses*

Psalm 33:7

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
A Golden Text <i>Considering Romans 8:28</i>	3
The Past For Today <i>What kind of Millennial Kingdom?</i>	5
Missions in the Banner <i>Hanukkah: The victory of God</i>	8
The World in the Banner <i>News & Views</i>	10
Synodical Mission Funds <i>Trevor Leggott support</i>	11
Children under the Banner	12
Youth & Search Work	13
Life under the Banner <i>The Seventh Commandment</i>	14
Churches in the Banner <i>Australian Inland Mission</i>	16

ISSN 0729-3542

Editor:

Rev. Sjirk Bajema
44 Prospect Hill Road,
Narre Warren, VIC
AUSTRALIA 3805
Ph. (03) 9705 1505
Email: sjirkb@gmail.com

Subscriptions for 2011

11 Issues per year
Within Australia: \$35 [Bulk \$30]
Overseas : AU \$50 Airmail.

Direct Credit :

Bendigo (BSB) 633000
A/C No. 140124082

Editorial

When our Lord said to His disciples – and to us – that believers must take up their crosses every day and follow Him, He was clear that there is much pain and anguish before any of us get to wear a crown. As Jesus went through a life-time of suffering before He was taken up into glory, so must we also travel.

There can be no clearer indication of this than in our relationships with one another – especially that of marriage. When Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,” we recognise the clarion call for sacrificial love. How much didn’t those words challenge the selfishness of Christian men in the first century A.D. – and the same in so many so-called Christians in our day!

Indeed, hasn’t it been the huge selfishness in the last fifty years that has led to the present moral morass we drift around in? I well recall the perceptive words of a believer to her niece who had just come out of the ‘closet’. Proclaiming herself to have found her real self in homosexuality, the woman challenged the faith of her Aunt. But that older woman nailed it right on the head. She responded to her by saying, “What you have done is the selfish way. It is easy to have a relationship with someone of your own sex.” And she went on to tell of how a real relationship is the hard way – the committed way. That is exactly the way it is between two people from different sexes joined together. And yet it’s God’s way. How much isn’t it the foundation to everything that makes our world what it is today? Through such marriages, the Church of Christ is built up and kept up.

We certainly know that because of how much it is missed today. The increased unhappiness, insecurity, violence, and everything else that marks the breakdown in society today, comes out of the destruction of marriage. When a divinely ordained institution becomes just what one feels like at any particular point in time we have well and truly lost the plot! Now it is all about “Me, Me, Me,” not “We, We, We,” and definitely not “He, He, He!”

We are indeed reaping our own reward as a society. Why are they so surprised when those awful things happen? Haven’t they heard of ‘sin’? Because our society refuses to listen, those evil things compound all the more! Political correctness is what happens near the end of the road after having got it wrong with God for so long.

While so much of the community around us gets caught up in that despairing vortex of self-loathing shown through the veneer of self-esteem, let’s be sure we are looking up all the more. Indeed, let’s show that it’s by our looking beyond ourselves to God through His Son that we truly become properly connected.

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross,
scorning its shame,
and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Hebrews 12:2

Cover Photo: Tasmanian south-eastern coast

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. Articles written by the Editor may be reproduced without asking for permission, although with appropriate acknowledgement.

'A Golden Text'

Considering Romans 8: 28

This is one of the best known and best loved and most quoted verses in the Bible. It's one of the most comforting verses in the whole Bible. It's a golden text. It's a pillow to lay down your weary head at night and a rock to place your tired feet on in the morning. My approach (following Stott) is to try and parse it; to break it down phrase by phrase and word by word.

The verse reads, '**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.**' (ESV). (There is a slight difference in the translations – the question is whether the 'all things' or 'God' is the subject of the sentence).

There are many things we don't know. We don't know, for example, what we ought to pray for. We don't know what heaven will be like. We don't know what we will be like in heaven. There are secret things that belong to the Lord our God. But there are things that God has revealed in His word that we should know. There are things that we can know only because God has revealed it in His word - the Bible. Our text tells us what some of these things are.

1. We Know that God Works

The familiar AV rendering which states that, '**we know all things work together for good**', could be slightly misleading. It could give the impression that all

things automatically in themselves work out for good as though life is one lucky lottery. But things don't just happen. Someone must make it happen. We need to stress that God is the One who makes things work. Even though He made the world in six days and rested on the Sabbath; He has not stopped working. Jesus said, 'My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working' (John 5: 17). He is not like a heavenly clockmaker who made the clock, wound it up and

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

walked away from it. He is not an absentee landlord. Rather, He is involved in the work of His creation. He is a 'hands on' God. He continues to maintain the work of His creation. He governs everything. 'By Him all things consist.' 'It is in God that we live, and move and have our being'. He holds the whole world in His hands. Not a sparrow can fall to the ground (and die) apart from His will. This all points to an Almighty God who is 'ceaselessly, energetically and purposefully' at work on our behalf in this world.

George Ball

We don't therefore subscribe to the; 'Que Sera Sera' – 'what will be will be' approach to life. Paul is not saying that 'it's all good', nor is he saying, 'she'll be right mate!' Nor is he saying that it will all work out in the end, therefore don't worry. No! The doctrine of providence, which we are here taught, teaches us that we are not in the grip of blind forces – fortune, chance, luck or fate – but we have an Almighty God who is at work in the world and in our lives. 'He is working all things.'

2. We Know that God is at Work for our Good

Not only is God sovereign and almighty – He is also good. We may have difficulty reconciling these things in the face of personal tragedy and adversity or suffering and pain. Nevertheless we know – though we may not understand – that God is at work for our good – because the Bible tells us so. 'God is not a man that He should lie'. God is good: He is good to all in many ways; He is good to His redeemed in every way. Pause and read if you need a reminder **Psalm 145: 8-9, 17-18, 20.**

The Shorter Catechism asks: '**What is God?**' Answer: '**God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.**'

Please note your subscription renewal for 2013 is due

The prices are unchanged at \$30 per annum within a bulk order (5 or more),

\$35 per annum for an individual subscription within Australia,

and \$AU50 for individual overseas subscriptions.

Please send your subs in as soon as possible to ensure continued reception

If you send it via our Bank Account please put your name with the deposit

If that is what God is, then it is inconceivable – indeed impossible – that He should do anything evil. His works are an expression of His character. He is not evil or immoral or a-moral. He is holy, loving, kind, generous and merciful. Even when we are in the crucible of suffering and hardship God is still at work for our good.

What is He doing? It's defined for us in verse 29. **'To be conformed to the likeness of His Son that He (Christ) might be the first born among many brothers.'** He is like the master sculptor chipping away at us with his hammer and chisel because He has a pattern for us. God's ultimate purpose is the honour and glory of His Son Jesus Christ. He will be glorified when we will be like Him. That's what God is 'chipping' toward.

3. We Know God is Working for our Good in All Things

We know that some things work for our good. A good meal will do us good. Exercise will do us good. Rest will do us good. A holiday will do us good. A good book will do us good. Friends will do us good. Fellowship will do us good. A steady income and secure employment will do us good. Savings will do us good. A happy family will do us good. These are some of the things we know will do us good.

However the apostle says, 'we know that **in all things** God works for our good.' Not just some things – but **all things!** Every single thing that happens to us expresses God's love to us, and comes to us for the furthering of God's purpose for us. What does he mean by '**all things**?' It must at least include everything in the context of this chapter. E.g. 'Suffering; frustration; bondage; decay; groaning; trouble; hardship; persecution; famine; nakedness; danger; sword; death and God not sparing His own Son!' Most of these things don't seem too good to me! But that's the point. Paul is not saying that all things are good to believers. No! He is saying that God uses all things for the good of the believer – which includes the bad, cruel, nasty, painful, frustrat-

ing, heartbreaking things. Let's try and illustrate this.

Think of Joseph. Rejected and hated by his brothers! Was that good? They plotted to kill him. Was that good? They sold him. Was that good? In Egypt he is accused of rape. Was that good? He is thrown into prison. Was that good? The cupbearer forgot about him. Was that good? No! All these things were bad. Yet, years later Joseph is able to say to his brothers – 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives' (Gen. 50: 19-21). What can we say? God uses evil, and suffering, and sin and disaster to fulfil His good purpose.

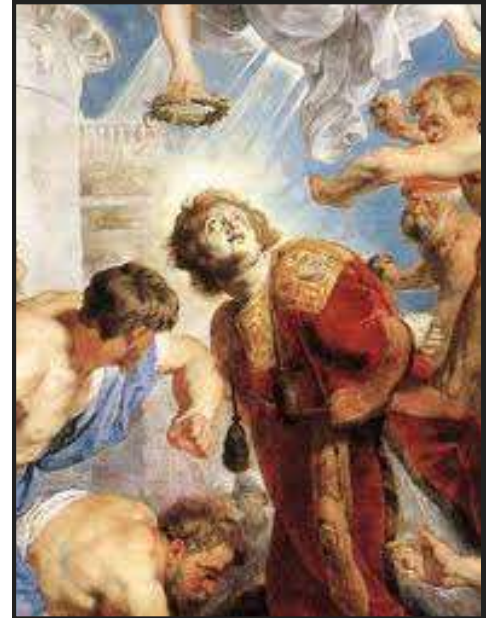
Think of the story of Naomi and Elimelech and their two boys. It was famine which drove them away from Bethlehem to Moab. Was that good? Within ten years a husband and two sons were all dead. Was that good? Naomi (Mara) returned penniless with her daughter-in-law Ruth to Bethlehem. Through the goodness of Boaz, Ruth is accepted into the community, married Boaz and became the great grandmother of David. It was through the circumstances of famine and tragic bereavement that God preserved the line of Christ. What do we learn? That God is working all things for our good to fulfil His good purpose.

The psalmist said, '**Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word... It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.**' (Ps. 119: 67, 71). Spurgeon comments, 'Often our trials act like a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pastures, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray.... A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs.' What do we learn? God uses affliction in the life of the believer for our good and for His purpose.

Remember what wicked men did to Jesus. He was hated. He was arrested. He was tried. He was condemned. He was beaten. He was mocked. He was spat upon. He was nailed to the cross. He died. Was that good? It was

wicked! Yet this was God's loving purpose for our good!

Think of Stephen: a man full of grace and the Spirit; a mighty man



'The Stoning of St Stephen,' by Rubens

in the scriptures. He was arrested, charged with blasphemy and stoned to death. Was that good? It was a tragic loss. A great persecution broke out against the church. Was that good? Yet, as a result many were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria and wherever they went they preached the Word; and the church grew! What do we learn? God uses even cruel persecution to fulfil His purpose.

Remember the man behind these words (v.28). Paul himself had a hard difficult life after his conversion. He was no armchair theologian who enjoyed the recluse of academia. He was a man who lost everything for the sake of the gospel – reputation, career, family, property. He was beaten, imprisoned, stoned, and shipwrecked. He was often disappointed in the churches he founded and in his converts. Yet he tells us, '*God works all things for the good.*'

It's not only the pleasant things that work for our good. It's the painful, nasty things too. An illness, a rebuke, a disappointment, unemployment, cancer, death, a natural calamity and any adversity

you can think of. God works all things together (Gk. *sunergeo*) for the good of His people. God mixes it all together – the good, the bad and the ugly – the end result – is good! It's like baking a cake. Some of the ingredients on their own taste good. Other ingredients like flour, margarine, and baking powder are yuck! Only after all the ingredients are mixed together by skilful hands, and then put into the oven, is the cake ready to be eaten. The 'all things' are like the ingredients. By themselves they may be yucky. But when God in His infinite skill blends them all together and cooks them properly in the oven of adversity, it turns out good every time.

God is working all things for our good. Spurgeon says; *'The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory: he knows it as a matter of fact. Everything has worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs mixed in fit proportions have worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the surgeon's knife have cleansed the proud flesh and facilitated healing... The believer can in the spirit of true resignation pray, 'send me what thou wilt, my God, so long as it comes from Thee; never came*

there an ill portion from Thy table to any of Thy children'.

4. We Know God is Working All Things for the Good of Those who Love Him

This is a specific promise. It's not for everyone. It's for Christians only. It's for those who love Him. It's emphatic in the Greek – it's at the beginning of the sentence. 'And we know to those who love God, all things work together for good.' If you are not a Christian – you cannot claim this promise. Indeed if you are not a Christian and keep up your resistance against God, then God has some things planned for you which are not good! (This is good reason why you need to make that change!)

Who are they who love God? The following verses tell us. God works everything for the good of those He predestined to be conformed to the likeness His Son, those He predestined and called and justified and glorified. In other words, those who love God are those who are first loved by God. As John says, 'We love Him because He first loved us' (1 John 4: 19).

The story is told of the famous 18th century Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon, that on one occasion he gave a young couple a weather vane as a wedding gift – with the verse 'God is Love' on it. 'Does that mean that God's love is as changeable as the wind?' the young man asked. 'No', said Mr. Spurgeon, 'it means that God is love no matter which way the wind is blowing!'

Dear Christian, God loves you at all times and in all circumstances. He loves you in the warmth of the summer and in the chill of the winter. Do you love Him at all times and in all circumstances – whether the wind is on your face or on your back? The promise of this verse is, 'we know to those who love God (i.e. and keep on loving Him) all things work together for good.' If you love Him you can sleep peacefully tonight knowing that God is at work in everything for my good. If you love Him you can get up in the morning and face the new day with the knowledge God is at work for my good and for His glory.

The Past for Today

What kind of Millennial Kingdom?

Rowland S. Ward

The pre-millennial position

At several periods of church history the view has been quite widely advocated that Christ returns to set up a millennial kingdom of 1,000 years based at Jerusalem, the end of which will be closed by an apostasy and the general resurrection and last judgement. The 1,000 years of Revelation 20 is identified with this earthly reign of Christ. This approach had some followers in the second century and later, in the 17th century (chiefly among the Fifth Monarchy men), and from about 1830 with the rise of the Brethren movement. Its roots lie in a literalistic approach to Scripture promises, and pessimism about the church in its present form. The Old Testament promises seem to have

had inadequate fulfilment, and a future millennium is projected during which they will be fully and literally fulfilled. Generally the promises to Israel in the Old Testament are interpreted as involving a restoration of the nation of Israel, and Israel and the Church are quite sharply distinguished.

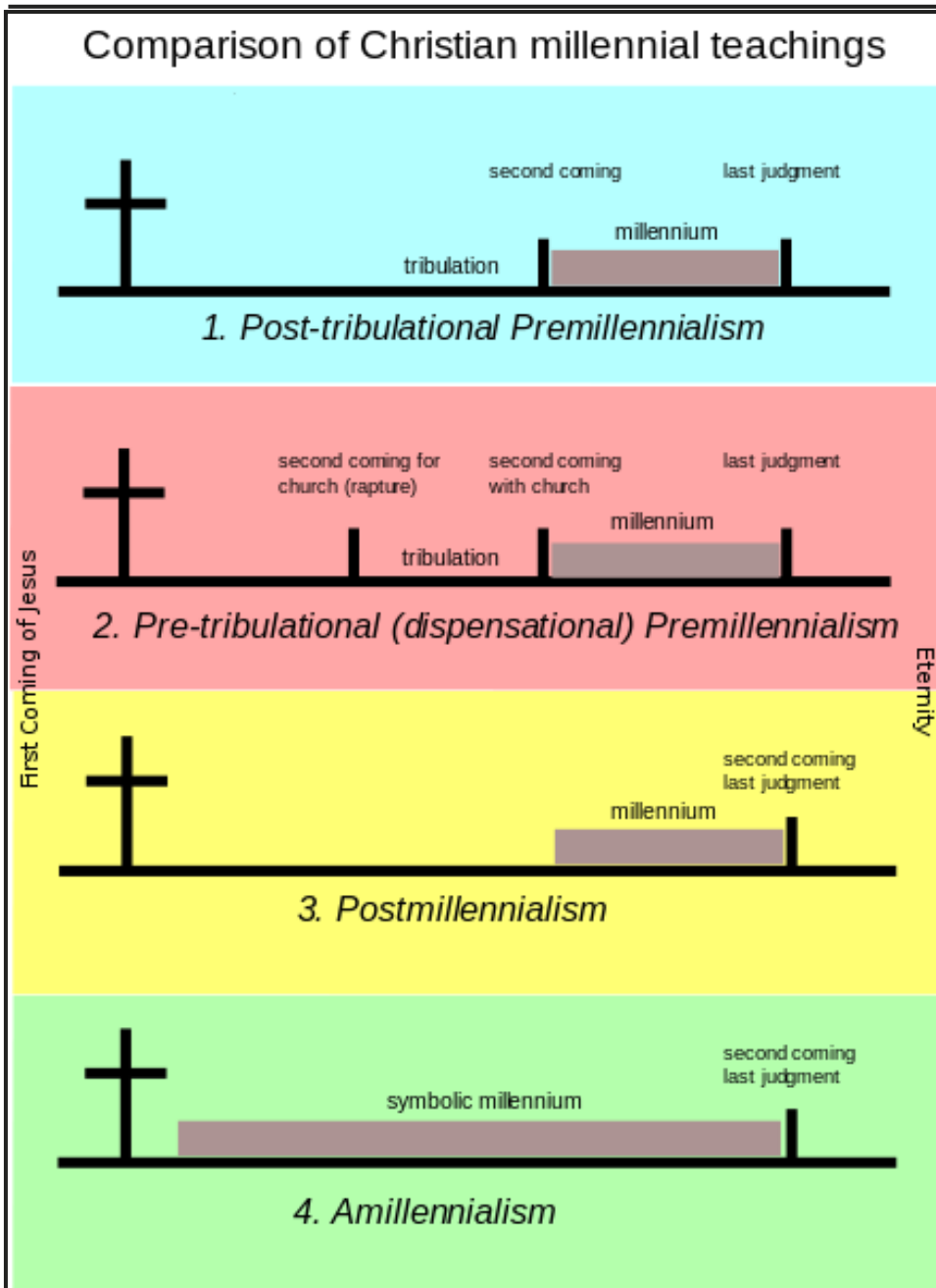
Difficulties

Difficulties in the pre-millennial approach include:

(1) A failure to grasp that the Old Testament kingdom of Israel was a prefiguring of the realities to come in Christ, just as were the sacrifices of the Mosaic law. The New Testament is emphatic that Jesus has

succeeded to the true throne of David (Acts 2:30ff) which is in heaven and that a rebuilding of earthly Jerusalem as the centre of Jesus' reign is not to be thought of, nor a restoration of the temple and sacrificial system. Rather, all believers form the royal priesthood and holy nation that is God's possession (1 Peter 2:9), the New Jerusalem.

(2) Sundry disharmonious elements exist, including placing a cluster of events as chronological indicators near the end; the necessity of a resurrection of some believers at the beginning of the millennium and others at the close, thus breaking up the general resurrection; the mingling on earth of glorified saints and unglorified



value and function of the church. The a-millennial position is nowadays commonly somewhat pessimistic and does not expect a general conversion of mankind, and is also commonly futurist in orientation like the pre-mills: the apostasy, tribulation, and man of sin are placed just before the end rather than being seen as operative throughout Christian history as is the classic Reformation position.

Revelation 20

The Book of Revelation involves a series of recapitulations from different viewpoints of the period between the advents. Chapter 20 begins by showing the binding of Satan for 1000 years and his release for a little time. As 20:4 shows, the believers who have died live and reign with Christ for 1000 years, so it seems the millennium must be the period between physical death and resurrection. Satan has no power over them but they live and reign with Christ. But this does not exclude the idea that the millennium is also the whole inter-advent period on earth during which Satan cannot prevent the Gospel going to the nations. But if we have Satan described as bound, it is only in this respect: he is still active on earth.

In order to have Satan out of the picture completely we have to have him back on the scene and then eliminated. I think this is what is meant by him being released 'for a short time' (v4) so as to deceive the nations and marshall opposition. But the last great battle is one sided: 'fire came from heaven and devoured them' (20:9). No Somme-like last battle of popular thinking here!

There remain questions about the interpretation of the passage which I cannot answer, but the final victory is sure.

Presbyterian positions

In the Westminster period the a- and post-millennial positions were

rified persons; the problem of what actually is achieved during the millennium, given evil is not yet eliminated; and the nature and basis of salvation during the millennium.

(3) In the form of dispensationalism, which had significant impact on American evangelicals from 1870 to the present, many additional complications arise of which it is not necessary to speak here.

Other views

Two other approaches are known as post-millennialism and a-millennialism. Post millennialism means Christ comes after a future period (not necessary a literal 1,000 years) during which the church will

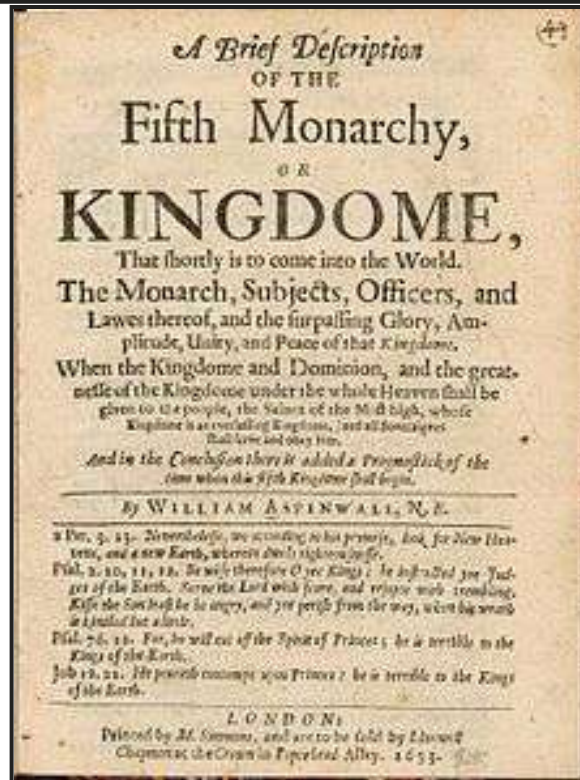
know considerable blessing and revival. A-millennialism accepts the passage in Revelation 20, but interprets it as the period between the ascension and the return of Christ when Satan is bound sufficiently so as to ensure the spread of the gospel among the nations. The tribulation is co-extensive with this period.

Many amillennialists and all post- and pre-millennialists agree that the optimistic expectation of the Old Testament is fulfilled, all except most pre-mills saying in and through the church by the ministry of the word and the power of God's Spirit in the conversion of multitudes, and most pre-mills by positing an earthly kingdom of outward splendour, and having some pessimism about the

common, and in the form that optimism for the ultimate success of the gospel was dominant (cf. Larger Catechism 191). A few in the Westminster Assembly, such as Dr Twisse and Thomas Goodwin, influenced by the writings of J.H. Alsted and Joseph Mede, taught that the power of Papal antichrist would soon collapse and a literal millennium begin marked by a glorious but not personal appearance of Christ for the resurrection of the martyrs and the conversion of the Jews. This is not classic pre-millennialism. Something nearer the classic position was advocated by an Independent pastor, John Archer, who published *The Personal Reign of Christ Upon Earth* in 1642. He thought Christ would appear briefly but then withdraw to heaven from where he would rule the Fifth Monarchy through resurrected believers who had died prior to the beginning of the millennium, that he thought would commence about 1700. The Confession is very careful on eschatology. It does not explicitly allow for the pre-millennial position, which was not only rejected by mainstream Puritans but was also discredited for the next 150 years by the excesses of the Fifth Monarchy Men (1649-61) who sought to bring about an earthly kingdom in succession to the four kingdoms of the Book of Daniel.

Scotland

I have not located any Scottish



Presbyterian minister who was pre-millennial in the period 1560-1700; and the subscription required in Scotland might be held to exclude even the most limited pre-millennial approach, given that the message of salvation seems to require modification in the millennial period. Nevertheless, in the first part of the 19th century a few saintly Scottish ministers, such as Rev Thomas Chalmers and the Bonar brothers, adopted pre-millennial views, but did not have them as the focus of their preaching. In America the situation was rather different, and a stream of pre-millennial opinion remains in some parts of American Presbyterianism. It was often combined with a dispensational approach, which certainly does undermine the Re-

formed and covenant theology of the Confession.

Australia

In Australia in the 19th century there were a number of significant Presbyterian leaders holding forms of pre-millennialism such as the redoubtable Rev Dr John Dunmore Lang of Sydney and the prominent Rev Dr Adam Cairns of Melbourne. The godly Rev James Benny of the Free Church in South Australia and those influenced by him were also sympathisers. Our tradition has generally been optimistic a-millennial or post-millennial, believing in significant gospel blessing to come, although there were several ministers who advocated a pre-mill approach down to the 1930s which contributed to some tension with those rejecting that position.

Conclusion

Scripture gives us every cause to be optimistic about the future of the Gospel in the world. While Scripture gives no clear chronological indicators that enable us to calculate even roughly when Christ shall come, its message to believers is clear: have confidence in God's Word and Spirit, and be faithful in a hostile environment as you look forward to the return of Christ not to begin his reign but to bring it to its completion.

Was this space for your church news and photographs?

Ask your minister or elder how your congregation can be part of this positive promotion of the denomination, as well as keeping the rest of us up with what's happening!

Camps, special events, youth news, seniors, engagements, marriages, *births, anniversaries, obituaries... the list goes on and on!*

Perhaps you could volunteer to send in some news and photos?

Missions in the Banner

Hanukkah: The victory of God

Hanukkah occurs every year in December, around the time of Christmas. It is only a minor festival in Judaism, but has become a sort of Jewish substitute Christmas and so is important now in the Jewish calendar.

The story of Hanukkah comes from the Old Testament apocrypha – written between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's a good story and worth reading; you'll find it in 1 Maccabees (and a bit in 2 Maccabees).

Historical background

First, I want to go over some historical background to help us understand the story.

The story occurs in the 2nd century BC, when the Greeks were the major power of the day. God's people were under foreign powers from the exile onwards. After the Babylonians came the Persians. After the Persians came the Greeks. Alexander the Great had an enormous empire, and after his death in 324 BC his kingdom was split into four parts.

150 years later, the Syrian King Antiochus IV, in 168 BC, began to oppress the non-Greek peoples under his rule. His rule included the promised land and God's people. Antiochus wanted all his subjects to give up their religions and to become Greeks, following Greek ways and customs. Some of the Jews happily did so. Just like today, they were happy to assimilate into normal, 'modern', society and to fit in with everyone else. But many Jews rejected Antiochus' plan.

Antiochus in the 160s BC stopped the Jews performing circumcision; stopped them from keeping Jewish festivals and laws; and he stopped the sacrifices at the Temple. So, Antiochus brought an end to God's own religion, forcing God's people to stop obeying him.

A priest called Mattathias rebelled against this. And lots of Jews gradually joined him in the rebellion. They

hid in the countryside from the Greek army, fighting against them.

When Mattathias died, his son Judah took his place. He is known as Judah the Maccabee – or Judah the hammer. Judah formed an army to fight against the Greeks. He fought and won many battles against them. He saw himself as being like the saviours of old in the OT – like the OT judges. They were outnumbered by a superior enemy, but if they trusted in God, he would give them the victory.

And they were victorious. In 165 BC the Maccabees defeated the Greeks and retook the Temple. They rededicated it to God.

The festival appears in the Bible only



in John chapter 10, where it is called the Feast of Dedication. That is what "Hanukkah" means. It celebrates the Maccabees rededicating the Temple to God after the Greeks had desecrated it. God's religion had been suppressed temporarily and Hanukkah celebrates the restart of God's true religion.

Two months before the Temple was retaken it was the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasts for 8 days. Because of the Greek oppression, they were unable to celebrate the Feast of

Martin Pakula

Tabernacles at the Temple. So when the Maccabees retook the Temple about 2 months later, they had a late celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles for 8 days. And from then on, the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, was celebrated for 8 days every year, celebrating the victory of God over those who oppressed his people.

The story doesn't quite end there, however. God's people had a period of independence for the first time since Josiah, for about the next 100 years. However, the Romans came next and conquered the Jews. During this time Jesus came and died on the cross to pay the penalty of sin for his people.

Many Jews believed in Jesus, and many more did not.

In 66 AD war broke out between the Romans and the Jews. The Zealots were great fans of the Maccabees. They believed that if they trusted in God and fought against the Romans, they would be successful again.

But in 70 AD the Romans won the war. Jerusalem was taken, and the Temple destroyed. Of course that is no surprise to us, and Jesus even predicted it. It's no surprise that the Jews lost, because they did not in fact trust God. If they trusted in God, they would have put their trust in Jesus. And although many did, those who did followed Jesus' advice and had already left the city of Jerusalem. Those who were left fighting the Romans were unbelieving Jews. And so they were defeated by the Romans.

A made-up story

In the aftermath of the Roman-Jewish war, the rabbis were concerned about the festival of Hanukkah. Hanukkah celebrated the victory of the Jews over their pagan enemies. It had encouraged the Zealots to see themselves as being like the Maccabees, and had led them to fight against the Romans.

The focus of the festival of Hanukkah, on a small Jewish force defeating their super-power oppressor, had led then to spectacular defeat and slaughter. And so the rabbis changed the Hanukkah story. This is freely admitted in Jewish sources. In the Talmud, the made up legend is recorded: that when the Maccabees retook the Temple, they found oil in the Temple that would only last for one day. But God did a miracle, it is said, and the oil lasted for 8 days. You won't find this story in 1 or 2 Maccabees because it didn't happen! It's made up! But the rabbis wanted to take the focus away from the Jews defeating their enemies, to focus instead on God doing a miracle. That way perhaps, there wouldn't be another war and slaughter.

And so, Hanukah, although a real story historically, is, as the modern festival, a made-up story. Jewish people keep the festival for 8 days, and light an 8-branched candelabra/ hanukiah to remember the great miracle God did, allowing the oil for the lights in the Temple to last for 8 days. The Hebrew words "Nes Gadol Hayah Sham" mean: "A great miracle happened there". Well, actually, it didn't! But that is what Jewish people celebrate today.

It hasn't been the practice of this festival to give presents, but in the last 100 years or so, that has been the practice, as Hanukah has become a Christmas substitute for Jewish children.

Hanukah for today

So, what can we say about Hanukah? It's not in the Bible and the modern meaning of the festival is made up! But there is a real history behind this festival, and an important one. *God gave his people victory over their enemies.* It was indeed another Judges type episode. God's people trusted in him and were saved.

But in the Roman war of 66-70 AD it didn't work. Why? Because Jesus had come and the Jews fighting the Romans had rejected God's salvation. They didn't trust in God and so they were defeated.

But in Jesus' death, God has con-

quered sin, death and the devil. Flesh and blood enemies, like the Greeks or Romans, or any other persecutor of God's people, are not the ultimate enemy in the Bible. The ultimate enemies are the principalities and powers that stand behind flesh and blood enemies and use them for their evil purposes. But Jesus' death and resurrection, have defeated the devil, and sin and death. When Jesus returns we will be raised from the dead, and sin, death, enemies and all evil will be no more.

The ultimate victory of God took place at the cross and the resurrection, and will be consummated at Jesus' return. The ultimate victory,



which the victories of the Judges and the Maccabees looks ahead to, is the victory achieved by Jesus in his death and resurrection.

Hanukah then, and all other festivals and OT passages, point us to Jesus. And if you trust in Jesus then you have the *fulfilment* of Hanukah. This is very important to understand! Paul says in Colossians 2:16-17 -

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to *a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.*¹⁷ These are a *shadow* of the things that were to come; *the reality, however, is found in Christ.*"

The true story

The festivals, like Hanukah, each tell their own story. But they are a shadow of the things that were to

come. The reality, however, is found in Christ. If you trust in Jesus, you have the reality to which this festival and all others point.

So there is no need to keep such festivals any more. Christians, whether Jewish or Gentile, are not required to keep Hanukah or any other festival.

Of course that doesn't mean you *can't* keep such festivals. Freedom from the Law doesn't mean: "Thou shall not keep the Law". If you want to keep Hanukah you could. It's just neither here nor there – it doesn't really matter. What matters is trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Some Jewish believers think that we Jews *should* keep such festivals. But they are misunderstanding the fulfillment of the festivals in Jesus. The Old Testament and the festivals are a bit like an ambassador, who is preparing you to meet the coming king. The ambassador does everything he can to prepare you for the king's arrival. Once the king arrives, the ambassador's job is done. You could still then speak to the ambassador, but if you kept talking to the ambassador and ignored the king, the ambassador would wonder whether you had listened to him at all. If you listened to the ambassador you would leave him and speak to the king.

What should believing Jews do then? We should be spending our time learning the Bible, trusting in Jesus and becoming more like him. Keeping Jewish festivals isn't wrong. It's just of very little importance.

Of course, keeping Christmas is similar! Christmas isn't in the Bible either and is also a man-made holiday. There's nothing *wrong* with keeping Christmas. But it's neither here nor there. Trusting in Jesus is what counts.

CWI is on about exactly that: the gospel – trusting in Jesus. We want Jewish people to hear the good news of Jesus and to trust in

him. We're not concerned about whether Jewish people keep modern rabbinic Jewish festivals. We want Jewish people to hear about Jesus and to trust in him.

I hope you get an opportunity, if you know Jewish people, to wish them a Happy Hanukah, and to talk to them about the meaning of Hanukah and what it means to trust in God. And let me encourage you, that sharing



the gospel with Jewish people is not much different usually to sharing the gospel with anyone else. Just tell it straight. I share the gospel with Jew-

ish people in exactly the same way I share it with anyone else. I'm happy to use the festivals, like Hanukah to point people to Jesus.

And I use Christmas and Easter to point people to Jesus too. But what I want to be on about, and what CWI is on about, is the gospel – taking the good news of Jesus to the Jewish people.

The Rev. Martin Pakula was brought up Jewish, becoming a Christian while studying at University. This is adapted from a CWI Newsletter.

The World in the Banner

Indonesia, Central Suawesi: Terror Returns

Indonesian Military (TNI) troops have been deployed to the Christian-majority regency of Poso, Central Sulawesi, following several terrorist attacks that included bombings and the murder of police officers. There are concerns the presence of the TNI might actually be counter-productive; many are anxious. Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) extremist group in Poso is believed to be behind the recent terror. On Monday 22 October at 2 am, unidentified people spread gasoline over the Pantekosta di Indonesia church in Madale village, on the outskirts of Poso, and set it on fire, possibly in the hope of triggering a sectarian clash. However, local Muslims and Christians worked together to fight the flames until the fire brigade arrived. The re-emergence of terrorism in Central Sulawesi is of great concern, for as the Jakarta Post notes: 'A re-emergence of the conflict would also serve to fire up Muslim extremists across the country to wage war against Christians.'

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 183 | Wed 31 Oct 2012*

Tyson's attitudes not role model material

Unlike Australia, New Zealand refused a visa to the former world heavy weight boxing champion Mike Tyson because of his previous conviction for rape. This article comes out of debate into the pros and cons of that decision by the New Zealand government.

Willie Jackson argues that Mike Tyson would "motivate our youth to stay out of trouble and find positive ways of using their talents", and that rather than focus on his "imprisonment for rape and subsequent misfortunes", we should open our borders to a "reformed man". Comments on the *Herald* website last week argued that "forgiveness is divine", and to let "he who is without sin can cast the first stone."

That is all very true. Grace and forgiveness are wonderful gifts – both to the receiver and to the giver. But Jesus also said: "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him."

So what has happened in the 20 years since Tyson's rape conviction? Has he redeemed himself?

Well, to start with, Tyson continues to deny his awful crime. Only last year, on ESPN Radio, Tyson made grotesque and lewd comments about former US vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. As recently as two months ago, Tyson was publicly referring to women, including women he had harmed [with very nasty names], including the teenager he was convicted of raping – women he claims have victimised him. He jokes about a former wife's accusations of domestic violence...

I'm a husband and father of two daughters. As I read those comments, my stomach curdles. I completely reject them. I feel sick that people would talk like that and would hold such views.

Mike Tyson is not a motivational speaker or role model that some would paint him to be or would like him to be. Tyson himself admitted in media interviews relating to his visit that he is just an entertainer. I struggle to affirm that.

Jackson is right to highlight Vic Tamati from the "It's Not OK" campaign and compare him to Tyson, because their backgrounds are similar. But there the similarity ends. We know what Tyson now says and thinks. Tamati, on the other hand, speaks in schools and the community renouncing his past and challenging others to also reject violence. It's a no-brainer to support calls by groups like Stop Demand and Rape Crisis. Mike Tyson should be denied a visa.

His comments above show that he still has a long way to go in his rehabilitation – part of which is admitting and renouncing the crime he was convicted for, and changing his attitudes towards women. And even if he was white, Willie, he still wouldn't qualify.

Maybe one day, Tyson will repent and accept that he committed a crime. Maybe one day he will prove to us that he respects women, and that his words to at-risk young people will be words and attitudes that show respect and value – that reject sexual violence and the objectification and denigration of women. Hopefully that day will be soon. Then, and only then, will he have the potential to be a role model and

worthy of speaking in to peoples' lives.

The Government is right to reject his visa application, and groups like the Manukau Urban Maori Authority should have done their research better before trying to convince us that Tyson would be of benefit talking to at-risk young people. If Willie Jackson wants a motivational speaker, he should give Vic a call. But we certainly don't need Tyson's kind of attitude being given a red carpet welcome in New Zealand.

+ by Bob McCoskrie in NZ Herald (Abridged)

Syria: Is the Church facing Genocide?

Aleppo: government forces are fighting to regain control of two Christian districts recently seized by rebel fight-

ers. Kurds are also fighting to retake their territory back from rebel forces. Unlike Arabs, who emanate from the Arabian Peninsula, Christians are indigenous to Syria and the wider region. Despite this, rebel Abu Mahar, who claims to control 200 fighters, says he does not regard Christians as true Syrians at all: 'Christians have no connection with the country,' he told AFP.

Deir Ezzor: On Saturday 27 October a car bomb exploded outside the only Syrian Orthodox Church in the town of Deir Ezzor [or Deir el-Zour] in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq, damaging it severely and killing five local residents. In September, the same church was desecrated and vandalised by Salafi groups reported to be operating freely. Deir Ezzor is currently under the control of the Free Syrian Army.

Damascus: Pastor Tortured To Death.

On 19 October kidnappers seized Father Fadi Jamil Haddad, pastor of the Greek Orthodox church of St Elias in Qatana, Damascus, demanding his family and church pay a ransom of 50 million Syrian pounds (over 550 thousand euro). On 23 October kidnappers (possibly the same ones) kidnapped and killed the brother and cousin of another pastor, Father Salameh Salameh, of the Greek Catholic congregation in Damascus. On 24 October, the body of Fr Fadi Jamil Haddad was found not far from where he had been taken. An associate of the pastor reports: 'His body was horribly tortured and his eyes gouged out. It is a purely terrorist act. Fr Haddad is a martyr of our church.'

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin | RLPB 183 | Wed 31 Oct 2012*

Synod Missions Funds

The main need at present continues to be the provision of stipend and superannuation for the Rev Trevor Leggott, General Director of the Australian Indigenous Ministries.

The net balance of the three Missions Funds (Missions General, Missions DA Anderson Bequest and Missions Support of TI Leggott) as at 31st October was \$11,500 (was \$20,700 30th June).

It is estimated that, provided the same level of donations are received from congregations during the next six months (to 30/4/13) then it will be possible to continue payments to Rev Leggott at the current level until then. However, it appears it will not be possible to continue payments at this rate beyond next Synod (May 2013) as the generous bequest of the late DA Anderson will have been exhausted by then.

Congregations are therefore encouraged to give this matter their prayerful support and continue to contribute to this ministry of taking the gospel to Australia's indigenous people."

"He that is a blessing, shall be blessed; the Lord God shall bless him with an increase of his substance, who has most emptied himself for Him and His." - Thomas Gouge."

Alex Steel – Synodical Treasurer

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

FAMILY CAMP

at

**The Tops Conference Centre,
Stanwell Tops, NSW**

**3 pm Tuesday 8th January to
1 pm Friday 11th January 2013 (DV)**

Main Speaker: Rev Rudi Swartz

Topic: "The Acts of God in Salvation"

Enjoy Fellowship with other Christian families

Be seriously challenged in your thinking and lifestyle

Afternoons free to relax – games, bushwalks and pool

Missions night Psalmody Good food

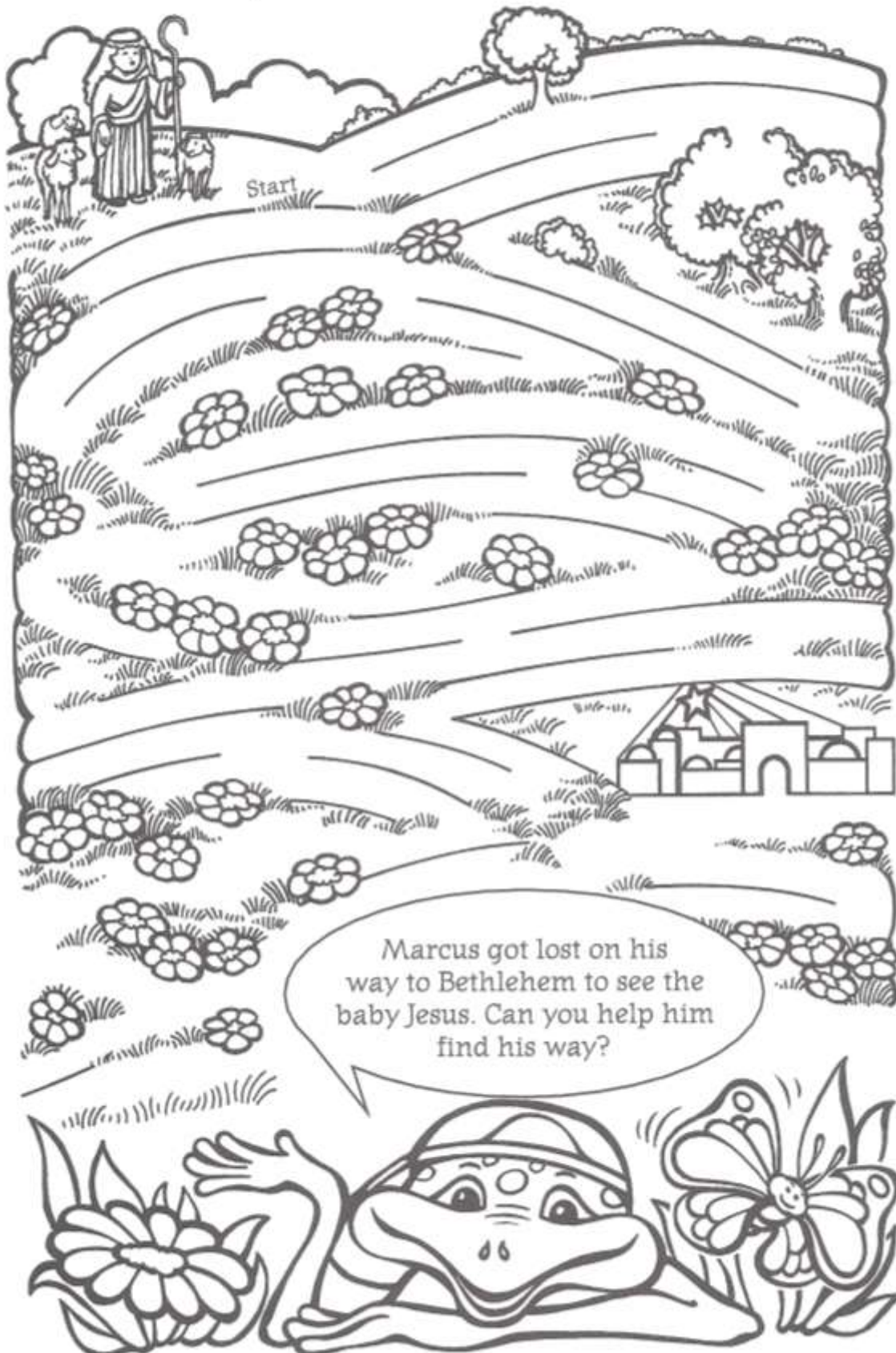
Peaceful surrounds Childrens programme

Brochures available now from your minister!

Children under the Banner

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

The Lost Shepherd



Prescribed Search / Youth Work

Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10—11 years; Junior 9 years and under

DECEMBER 2012

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 4 and 6)

HEBREWS chapter 12

1. To whom should we look as we run the race that is set before us?

2. Why are we not to despise the chastening of the Lord? (2 verses) From which Old Testament book is this quotation taken?

3. Though not joyful for the present, what fruit does chastening yield afterwards?

4. Instead of the mount that burned with fire, what other mount have we come to? (3 verses)

5. What should we do, seeing we have received a kingdom that cannot be moved? (2 verses)

chapter 13

6. What two quotations, one found in the book of Joshua and the other in the Psalms show that we should be content with such things as we have? (2 verses)

7. What should we do because Jesus suffered outside the gate? (2 verses)

8. What does the apostle pray the God of peace to do for the Hebrews? (2 verses)

JUNIOR

LUKE chapter 13

1. What did Jesus say would happen to his hearers unless they repented?

2. In what way is the kingdom of heaven like a grain of mustard seed?

3. What was Jesus's answer when one said to him, "Lord, are there few that are saved?" (2 verses)

4. What did Jesus say about Jerusalem which killed the prophets? (2 verses)

Please send the answers to:
 Mrs I Steel
 PO Box 942
 Epping NSW 1710
 Or email to: iesteel@gmail.com

Life under the Banner

The Seventh Commandment — Flee from Sexual Immorality Jim Klazinga

In the time when the New Testament was written, the city of Corinth was well known for sexual permissiveness. It was a centre for the worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sex. Night after night, the servants of Aphrodite would roam the streets as religious prostitutes.

It was not unusual in the Roman Empire of that day for pagans to seek after extravagant and uncontrolled perversions, satisfying their sexual lusts in a multitude of ways. Slaves would be kept for the purpose of being their owners' playthings. Temple prostitutes were common.

Some things never change. The western world of our day and age sounds so much like the western world of that time. Oh, we might not have temple prostitutes or designated concubines. Instead, we have mistresses and live-in lovers. Pornography is everywhere. Also, the advertising and television industries do their best to try to stretch the boundaries of decency. Sex and sexual innuendo is everywhere around us. We live in a culture that would have done the pagan Greeks and Romans proud.

Paul's Response to Sexual Immorality

The apostle Paul, infallibly inspired by God to write the Holy Scriptures, had something important to say about this subject. Paul knew that the immorality of the culture in his day and age was completely inconsistent with the Christian faith. He also knew that in light of such rampant perversion, he needed to make some very clear statements about what the Lord requires of us with regard to the whole matter of sexuality.

No doubt, we in our day and age need to hear what he had to say just as much as did his original readers.

Consider what he writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that

each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." The heathens will allow themselves to be controlled by their passionate lust. That is totally inappropriate for the Christian believer. The believer must not live in that sort of way, allowing his or her body to be desecrated with all sorts of immorality and perversion. In the face of such overwhelming immorality, the Christian must control his own body, seeking after sexual purity.

You shall not commit adultery.

Exodus 20:13

Are Our Bodies Not Ours to Do with As We Want?

Why is this so important? What's the big deal? Why can't we do what we want with our bodies? That's what the world argues for. Am a not free to express my sexuality in a manner of my own choosing? Why should Christians be any different in this matter?

We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." The Christian knows that he does not belong to himself, and he is not free to do with himself whatever he pleases. He belongs to someone who has authority over him and over his body. Jesus Christ offered the ultimate sacrifice for all His people. He gave up His life for them. He paid the price for their sins by dying on Calvary's hill. He paid for them with his blood. So, as people who have been chosen by God to be saved, we are not our own. Our bodies are not our own. They belong to God. They are completely and totally His.

And because we are His, because we belong to God, God sends his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts. Each and every Christian believer is a temple in which God dwells by his Spirit.

Christians are called to keep these temples holy and spotless. We must not blemish ourselves with vile sin. This means that we must demonstrate holiness in all areas, including in the area of sexuality. Being a temple of the Spirit means that we will want to obey God when it comes to what we do with our bodies. As the Heidelberg Catechism says, "We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy."

Don't Be Like the Pagans

So, why should we control our bodies? Because they belong to God and are temples of the Holy Spirit. But now consider this also: quoting 1 Thessalonians 4:4,5 again – "each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." When we revel in passionate lust, then we are showing that we are like those who do not know God.

Think about that: they do not know God. The unbeliever has no desire to serve God. He has no desire to be obedient to God's Holy Word. It only makes sense that this sort of person will follow the desires of his sinful heart. How else would you expect him to act? But with the Christian, it is different. He strives after holiness because he does know God. He does know what Christ has done for him. He does know how his sinfulness separates him from God, and he longs to be free from that sin so that he might know God even better.

Now, does this mean that the Christian will never struggle with the sin of lust? Not necessarily. Sin will always rear its ugly head in our souls. But will the Christian

fight against that lust? Absolutely.. As those who know God they will fight hard against that lust. They will strive after control of their bodies.

Fighting Against Lust

OK, the Christian seeks to control his body, he seeks to fight against lust, because he knows God. He knows what God has done for him, he knows that he belongs to God. But how are we to go about fighting this battle? How can the Christian control his body? How can he flee from lust?

For one thing, we need to have a change of attitude. Rather than become titillated with illicit sexuality, finding guilty pleasure in it, or even becoming accustomed to its prevalence, the believer instead is called to thoroughly detest all unchastity. We must detest the sin of adultery. We must detest the sin of fornication. We must detest the sin of homosexuality.

Why? Not because of societal norms, which fluctuate with time. But because such things desecrate our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And not only should the Christian detest sinful sexual deeds, he should even detest sinful sexual looks. Jesus said that he who looks lustfully at a woman is already committing adultery in his heart.

The Christian should hate it when he finds himself looking at others in that sort of way. He must repent of making such glances and he must fight against it.

The Christian should also avoid encouraging others to look at him or her in such a manner, by means of suggestive poses or suggestive clothing. He or she should dress modestly in order to prevent others from committing adultery in their hearts. String bikinis and other such overly revealing clothing have no place on the body of the Christian.

And for that matter, we shouldn't even engage in sinful sexual talk by, for instance, telling dirty jokes. Do you think dirty jokes are funny?

Many comics see sexuality as a rich minefield for laughter. It's as if they don't see the humour in any other area of life. Such should not be the

case with the Christian.

Well, there seems to be quite a bit that the Christian is supposed to detest, doesn't there? So much so, that it hardly seems realistic to expect the Christian to detest all unchastity. And yet, that is what God commands of His people.

Sex in and of Itself Is Not the Problem

Some seem to think that the Christian faith makes you hate sex in all of its forms. This is not true. In fact, sex can be very good. But the thing is, Christians are supposed to serve God by remaining within the guidelines for sex that He has established in His Holy Word, and those guidelines demand that sex be reserved for the marriage relationship.

Remember, God is the one who established the institution of marriage. He established that the relationship between a husband and a wife should be one of faithfulness and complete companionship. The husband and the wife are one flesh, and it is a good thing for that oneness to be expressed, including in a physical way.

This is the pattern that God sets for sexuality. He instituted that pattern already in the Garden of Eden, when He joined Adam and Eve together as husband and wife.

This pattern will continue to be in place until the time when Christ returns again. And this pattern for sexuality that God has set, it must not be changed. It must not be changed to allow for adultery. It must not be changed to allow for sex before marriage. It must not be changed to allow for homosexuality, incest, bestiality, or any other abomination before the Lord. We must honor God with our bodies.

Marriage Does Not Cure Every Problem in the Area

Some might think that it's easy for a happily married man to write all of this. And there is no doubt, this can be a very difficult matter for those who are not so blessed. Single people will have a harder time of it. They are called to abstain from sexual activities until they are privileged to participate fully in a marriage relationship.

Maybe their urges give them extra impetus to find a marriage partner. It is better to marry than to always burn with passion. No doubt, this is not an easy matter.

But we have to realize that married people also have to be careful to control their bodies. Marriage is not a license to lust. Having a husband or wife does not mean that you have someone who is there to meet your every whim and desire. Sex within marriage must be a matter of love, of true union. So, whether married or single, we must all honor God with our bodies.

There Is Hope in the Battle

But now, let's face it: being holy in the realm of sexuality is an extremely difficult matter. What a high standard it is that the Bible calls us to live up to, especially when we live in a culture so obsessed with sex.

There is no doubt that the lusts of the flesh are powerful. Temptations are all around us. It's a struggle. Still, the Christian must recognize the call of God to live a life of holiness. And the thing is as well, the Christian can also know that the power of God can help him break free from sin.

Do you struggle in this area? Seek out spiritual assistance. And know as well that in Jesus Christ, there can be cleansing and healing in this area, and in every area of our life. With Him, there can also be forgiveness from sexual sin.

May God give you a strong sense of how He owns you. And may He enable you to learn to control your body in a way that is holy and honourable, that it may be clear that you belong to Him, body and soul.

Churches in the Banner

Australian Inland Mission Commemoration



Clockwise from top left: Memorial Cairn; Banner in the church; the outside of the Beltana Presbyterian Church; plaque on cairn; large gathering in front at the commemoration; inside the church during commemoration; view including cairn and church. For further details see report in previous Banner. Photos kindly provided by www.stephendyer.com.au