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Marvels of God's Creation

Carlos Fariñas

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"
Genesis 1:1

Throughout history, our world has known many brilliant and dedicated minds who have spent years of their lives seeking explanations for the marvelous phenomena we witness daily. They have tried to unravel the wonder of life in animals, plants, and human beings. It has been an immense challenge to discover how our astonishing universe came into being, how the first human appeared, and how humanity spread across the earth.

Several decades ago, a distinguished Belgian priest and physicist, recognized as a pioneer in cosmology, proposed what he called The Big Bang Theory. Through it, he sought to explain the origin of the universe as the result of a massive explosion. Yet, despite the sophistication of his reasoning, he could not convincingly explain how the vast diversity of stars came to be, nor the unique features of our planet—characteristics unmatched by any other in the solar system.

Any student in secondary or pre-university studies is inevitably fascinated when learning about galaxies, and especially about our Solar System. It is truly remarkable to see how each planet revolves around the Sun—the great center of the system. Even more intriguing is the fact that these orbits are not perfectly circular but elliptical, elongated like the shape of an egg. In addition, the Earth rotates on an invisible internal axis. As it circles the Sun and simultaneously spins on its axis, the Earth finds itself twice a year closer to the Sun and twice farther away, producing the change of seasons. The tilt and rotation of the planet also explain why, while one hemisphere experiences the heat of summer, the opposite side endures the cold of winter. In the Northern Hemisphere, the coldest season extends from mid-November through February, while at the same time, the Southern Hemisphere enjoys a hot summer. Such harmony cannot be explained

away by mere mathematical formulas or chance speculations—it points clearly to a supreme, intelligent mind who designed and sustains it all.

But the marvels of our world do not end there. Many wonders escape our notice, either because we take them for granted or because we do not know them. Take, for instance, the polar bear, that massive creature dwelling among ice and snow. Observing it raises an obvious question: how does it survive in such extreme temperatures? Zoologists explain that its white fur is in fact composed of tiny hollow cylinders that act like prisms, breaking down the sun's rays and channeling their energy to the skin. The bear's skin is not white but black, absorbing the heat transmitted through the fur. Beneath it, a thick layer of fat works like a thermal engine, preserving warmth. Ironically, the polar bear's greatest threat is not freezing to death, but overheating when it exerts itself too much.

Equally marvelous is the mango tree. After the fruiting season, many old leaves fall. With the rains, the branch tips sprout with tiny whitish blossoms, soon followed by reddish shoots that grow into broad leaves. These gradually shift from reddish-brown to yellowish, until they take on the deep green shade that characterizes the tree—until the next cycle of fruit arrives.

And what can we say about the extraordinary and intricate system of human life? Each day we continue to uncover new mysteries about our own bodies. Can such wonders truly be the product of chance? Can we honestly attribute the complexity of our cells, organs, and the perfect cooperation among them to mere accident or spontaneous processes?

The apostle Paul provides the answer in his letter to the Colossians: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. ." (Colossians 1:15–17)

King Solomon echoes this truth in Ecclesiastes: "I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. ." (Ecclesiastes 3:10–11)

The book of Genesis begins by affirming that in the beginning, an intelligent and powerful Being—whom we know as God—created every element of our uni-

verse, our planet, and all living beings. The apostle John, in his Gospel, teaches us the same truth: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. By him all things were made; and without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1, 3-4, 14)

These words resonate with Paul's testimony to the Colossians. Reflecting on the miracle of conception, growth, and birth of each human life, we cannot help but be moved to awe and worship. God, in His infinite love, gave His only Son to accomplish the work of redemption—for every human being who recognizes his sinfulness and separation from God and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is perhaps the greatest of all God's wonders: that the Righteous One died for the unrighteous, bearing in His own body the punish-

ment our sins deserved, to reconcile us to God and grant us eternal life in His glory.

One Wash, Many Cleansings

Jim Brown

My own conversion found me looking at a scripture text on a wall (1 John 1:7) over thirty years ago. It did not matter to me at that moment that the verse, in its context, was written by the apostle to encourage believers to walk in light. In my desperation as a lost soul, I could not quibble over interpretation vs. application principles. All I could see was that the blood of Christ was enough to cleanse me of all my sin and I immediately rejoiced in the relief of a burdened conscience and dreaded judgment when that specific truth became so clear to me. In subsequent verses, John goes on to explain how believers need to be honest before God and with themselves about their sinful nature as noted in verse 8 by the words "we have no sin". The manifestation of that nature is seen in acts of sin, clarified by the words "we have not sinned" in verse 10. What happened with me that bright day in Hinckley, Minnesota was a one-time event referred to as "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5).

Since that time, through proper teaching and the Spirit's guidance, the Lord's words to Peter in John 13:10 brought something into focus I had not previously considered. He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet but is clean every whit...". At first blush, this seems puzzling, doesn't it? But what is being conveyed by the Lord is this: He that has been washed by regeneration (being born again) does not need to repeat that one-time washing since the individual has been made clean "every whit" for all time and eternity (John 15:3) by the word that the Lord speaks to each of us when He saves us. However, He refers to the feet as a necessity for a different sort of washing, which, by reason of being contrasted with the one-time washing of conversion, He draws attention to the Christian's walk (manner of life) after his/her conversion. The contrast between walking in darkness (v 6) and walking in light (v 7) makes clear the need for confession of sin (v 8-10).

There is nothing complicated about making the distinction between a one-time washing at conversion and the ongoing practice of maintaining fellowship with God by confessing our sins to Him (v 9). But in the world, there is a great deal of confusion on these matters. We meet many people who are trying to live out 1 John's message of the ongoing cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ for believers without ever first having become

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Editors: Joel Portman & Jim Brown

Publisher: Joel Portman

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a truly “washed”, saved, converted and born again believer. We try to help those who are “putting the cart before the horse”, so to speak, but willful blindness can be a thick defense to penetrate as Satan continues to blind minds, preventing them from embracing the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

So, in conclusion, just a short word to any saint who might be confronted with an honest inquirer who seems to have bypassed what it means to be first “washed” once and for all time by the Lord. You can see they have unsatisfactorily tried to somehow deal with their sins before God repeatedly as the means of establishing that vital relationship with God as their Father without first recognizing their Romans 3:19 guilt before Him and allow the Lord Jesus to wash them the same way He washed eleven of His twelve disciples. If a soul never sees this vast difference, they may frustratingly spin their wheels, sinning and confessing without true repentance forever, with no proper resolve for their lack of Spirit-given life. May we help them understand the distinction between a one-time washing necessary *for unbelievers* (Titus 3:5) and on-going need for cleansing (1 John 1:7, 9) *for believers only*, insisting that the activity of the latter cannot be possible without the establishment of the former.

Assembly Lessons from Solomon's Temple

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:10 -17

David McKinley

Its Whereabouts

Mount Moriah: (Gen. 22:2) The **place of sacrifice of a beloved son by his devoted father!**

But also, it was the **Threshing-floor or Ornan** the Jebusite: (1 Chron. 21:15 & 22:1) where **sacrifice was offered in David's day, to stay the plague inflicted by God due to sin.** What an impressive dual picture of, (i) the death of the beloved Son of God “An offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour”, (Eph. 5:2) and (ii) His all-prevailing offering on account of human guilt. “But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb.10.12).

The New Testament assembly of saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is founded on the sacrifice and death of the Beloved Son of God who “by the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14) and was “...made sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Its Worth

King David bought the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite (also called Araunah) for the place of the altar. (2Sam. 24.24) “So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver”. But it is also evident that he bought the whole site for the temple for a much larger sum: “So David gave to Ornan for the place 600 shekels of gold by weight”. (1 Chron. 21:25) (Mr. Newberry gives the talent as just over 114 lbs. (There were 3000 shekels in the talent so a shekel was about 0.61 ozs.) On June 11, 2025, gold was quoted at a price of \$3346.79 US per troy ounce. Silver on the same date was quoted at \$32.70 USD per troy oz. (One can tabulate the composition and origin of all these riches that composed the temple that he prepared for.)

David had from the spoil of his victories laid up in store gold and silver in abundance. “Now in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 of silver and of brass and iron without weight.” (1 Chron. 22:14)

David gave of his “own proper good 3,000 talents of gold of Ophir and 7,000 talents of refined silver” (1 Chron. 29:3-4). This good example led the chief of the fathers to offer 5,000 talents of gold + 10,000 talents of silver.

Tabulating this we get a total of (from various sources) of \$726,727,692,255.04. Add to this the value of the brass and iron, “without weight.” (1 Chron. 22:3,14 & 16) and the value of the “precious stones” (1 Chron 29:2 & 8) Add to this the cost of the “Great stones, costly stones and hewed stones” (1 Kings 5:17) and the cost of the cedar, fir and olive wood used to beautify the house and it will be seen that the value of the house is beyond computation.

The lesson for us today is that God's House, (the Assembly) is a place of immeasurable value! Every soul saved by grace is purchased, not with corruptible things as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. The assembly is “the House of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim 3:15) and is “The temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Cor. 3:16). Who can evaluate the worth of that which is of divine origin, is indwelt by divine persons, and is the place of communion with the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Its Weight

This house was not a flimsy “timber frame” construction! It was a very sturdy structure of large pre-cut stones. “And the king commanded, and they brought **great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house**” 1 Kings 5:17. “And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone ready-made before it was brought thither.” 1 Kings 6:7.

The lesson for us here is that the assembly is a place of solidity and weight. Its foundation is the

weighty oracles of God through Christ's apostles. Paul said to the Corinthians "According to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Cor. 3:10 – 11. Christ and the doctrine of Christ form the basis for the building of an assembly. Those who form the local testimony must be resting on Christ and be "steadfast unmovable" in character, "not carried about with every wind of doctrine". They are prepared beforehand by manifesting a reality of being "living stones" before being brought into the assembly of God. We need to guard against building in the mass-produced "bricks of Babel".

Its Workmen

2 Chron. 2:13-14. (also v 17 & 18 – 183,600 men)
"And now I have sent a cunning man endued with understanding – the son of a woman of Dan and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple in blue and in fine linen and in crimson: also to grave any manner of graving and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father."

When God directed Solomon to build the temple he fitted men for the work. Here we see that gift was essential to erect a temple for God. Today God raises up men to do his work. There were variety of tasks, yet God provided the necessary skill to accomplish his will. Today it is still the same. "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry" Eph 4:11 -12.

Let us ask ourselves are we doing the work in the assembly that God has fitted us for? Are our efforts tending to the glory of God and the edification of the people of God? Have we "stirred up the gift" that the Holy Spirit has imparted to us with a view to strengthening that which is of God?

Its Word

2 Chron. 5:7 "And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto its place to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place".

Right in the center of the innermost shrine of this holy house was the law of God! How appropriate! Everything was done according to the pattern given to David. Gods will was done; God's word was obeyed and so the tables of the law are central.

So, in the assembly today, God's word must have the central place. "All the word of God for all the people of God" was the burden of the godly men who re-established assembly truth in the 19th century. It should still be our motto today. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20)

Its Water

2 Chron. 4:2: "He made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim" and v5 "it held 3000 baths" (about 22,500 gallons.) This was for daily cleansing as the priests went about the work of the sanctuary. It is a figure, not of the word enshrined in the assembly, but of the word applied to our daily walk. The 12 oxen that sustained the weight of the "molten sea", are figurative of those fitted in the assembly who "labour in the word and doctrine" and dispense it to the flock.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9) Young or old, we all need the daily cleansing of the Holy Scriptures. Do we read out of **duty** or are we driven to study out of **devotion**? As Israel in the wilderness gathered manna every day, so we need daily nourishment from our Bible.

Its Worship

2 Chron. 5:3 "...it came to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying, 'for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever;' that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.". (Also see Ch 7:1 – 7 – 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep)

The first reason for the existence of an assembly today is to give God his portion. Yes, the assembly must be a witness to the world, but first and foremost we gather to offer to God the worship due to His great and gracious Person. We remember the words of the Lord in reference to the disciples crying "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord", "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:38 & 40). Are we coming with hearts glowing and minds filled with thoughts of Christ and of the Father as gleaned by the help of the gracious Holy Spirit?

When He came the angels sang,
"Glory be to God on high!"
Lord unloose my stammering tongue;
Who should louder sing than I?
(John Newton)

It needs to be stated that while instruments were used in temple worship, the New Testament leaves absolutely no room for the introduction of instrumental music in the assembly of saints gathered to the Lord's Name. No scripture can be validly brought forward to prove that instrumental music was ever used in the apostolic age in New Testament churches, nor can any text be used as proof that such is permissible in assembly gatherings in our day.

But if there was such variety and harmony in the temple of old, should there not be greater variety and harmony in the spiritual worship of saints "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" today?

Its Witness

2 Chron. 9:1 – 4 "And when the Queen of Sheba heard --- and had seen --- his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her" (cp Matt. 12:42)

God's purpose in calling Abraham, the "father" of the nation, was that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18) God's purpose for Israel was, that his Name might be known among the gentiles. The temple and the manifestation of God's presence there, was a testimony to the whole world. So, an assembly in fellowship with God and enjoying His presence will have an effect on the whole community. Our separation is our strength. Others will want to know why we don't run "with them to the same excess of riot" (1 Pet. 4:4). We can reveal to them the spring of our joy – the Lord Jesus and our indebtedness to Him. When Israel joined in with the heathen in their idolatrous worship, they not only grieved the great Jehovah of their redemption, but they also lost their power as witnesses to God. Let us be careful to maintain a holy, devoted separation from all the evil and folly of a passing world and "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15)

Its Watching

2 Chron. 7:16 "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." God was observing in love and appreciation all that was done at the dedication of Solomon's temple. He valued those 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, (which, while they had no intrinsic value, prefigured the infinite value of the sacrifice of Christ.) His Glory filled the house. His eyes were still watching when the people started to divide their love of Jehovah with the idols. He looked with pity on their folly, but in anger on their sin.

He is watching all that happens today in our lives and testimony, as is clearly proved by the seven-fold repetition "I know" in Revelation chapters 2 and 3! He and indeed the holy angels (see 1 Cor. 11:10) are observing our behavior in the assembly and appreciating all that is seen of genuine devotion, but we must solemnly remember that He also sees all that is heartless and all that is insubordinate to his revealed will.

Its Wreck

2 Chron. 36:19 "And they burnt the House of God." The glorious house that Solomon built eventually became a ruin. (It stood for about 415 years) The introduction of idolatry by Solomon in his later years, (1 Kings 11:4) started a process of declension which got bolder

and bolder with succeeding generations, (despite temporary revivals under better kings like Hezekiah and Josiah). "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16) (cp Ezekiel 10:11). God was slow to leave, but He left! The temple was impregnable while God's presence was still there. Sin brought its wreckage. So it is in assembly testimony. Sin overlooked, sin tolerated, sin excused, sin allowed unjudged will work the ruin of the precious testimony for God.

It is significant that **the temple had within it the means of its own destruction.** If it had been all stone, gold and silver, it would not have burned. The boards of cedar on the inside of the walls and planks of fir on the floor, although unseen and the olive wood doors before the most holy place, all contributed fuel to the fire that brought the great house to a pile of rubble.

We must solemnly remind ourselves that there is enough of the flesh in any one of us to bring personal ruin, or in all of us together to bring the ruin of a vibrant testimony for the Lord. May the Lord help us to keep idolatry out of our hearts and assemblies that we will continue to worship Him "in Spirit and in truth" and be a witness for Him until He come again.

Men of God: Samuel

Alan Davidson

"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us"
(1 Samuel 7:12)

The revival in the time of Samuel began with a woman in bitterness of soul, praying unto the Lord and weeping sore (1 Sam. 1:10). Others went up to Shiloh to worship and to sacrifice with thank offerings, Hannah went up with her tears. Out of this travail of soul, God brought not only joy into her life but a savior to her country when it was in danger of desolation by internal anarchy and external attack.

Now Eli the priest "sat upon a seat" (1 Sam. 1:9). This is a most unusual posture for a priest in the temple of the Lord. Eli in his senile decrepitude seemed to count Hannah as drunken, "a daughter of Belial" (1:16), yet he did not wish to see that his own two sons though functioning priests were, "sons of Belial" (2:12).

At home, Hannah was misunderstood and constantly mocked. She was burdened about barrenness.

"She vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts (a title used in Ch. 1, verses 3 and 11 for the first time in Scriptures), if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then will I give him unto the LORD all the days of his life" (1:11). This was not a selfish payer but the cry of a true Israelite. The name she gave to him was "Samuel", meaning "asked of God" (1:20). "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (7:15). Her devotion to God was stronger than the strongest human instincts of motherhood.

In the closing days of the Judges, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). Democracy gave way to anarchy. Naomi and her husband went down to Moab (Ruth Ch. 1). Hannah stayed at home and prayed. "After that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet" (Acts 13:20). The function of each judge was local and transient as God gave respite from specific oppressors. To restore the nation to obedience to God, to recover the people of God to national unity, to resuscitate the people from a decadent state of spiritual departure and defeat required a servant of God who could recognize the Voice of God and communicate God's Word to the people. This was evident from Samuel's first recorded words; "Speak; for Thy servant heareth" (3:10). "The word of Jehovah was rare in those days; a vision was not frequent" (3:1 – JND). Disobedience will hinder us from hearing the Voice of God.

To hear God's Voice, we need to read God's Word and be prepared to obey Him. The lamp of God which burned from evening to morning was going out, Eli's eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and he kept on telling Samuel to lie down again. The testimony in the house of the Lord was very dull (3:1-10). In 1 Samuel 4, Israel went out against the Philistines and brought the ark of the Covenant from its dwelling place between the cherubims into the battle field. The elders of Israel said; "When it cometh among us, it (no mention of God) may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (4:3). Israel had leaders marked by presumption and position without prayer. They were misrepresented by priests who were two immoral imposters in white robes. They carried the ark of shining gold containing the tables of the Law into battle without God. The result of sin and disobedience was defeat; "For there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen" (4:10).

The weighty lesson is that we may have the right symbols without the presence and power of God. We may break the bread and drink the cup but not discern the Lord's death. We may have a head covering but not have the Lord's presence. We may observe baptism and yet the flesh be alive and well. I may hold a Bible to preach and the Lord not with me. In these

chapters two boys are born one called "Samuel, asked of God"; and the other called "Ichabod, the glory is departed". The choice for Israel at this time was REVIVAL or REMOVAL.

Samuel served God at a time of transition to carry over the whole nation from the last judge to the first king. To stir the people to repentance for their sins, to lead them back to allegiance to the God of their father, to achieve and maintain the national unity without revolution or rebellion required a man who knew God. Such faith and knowledge were firstly taught to him by his godly mother. Hannah, "lent him to the LORD" (1:28); he "grew before the LORD" (2:21); he "ministered before the LORD" (2:18). He heard the voice of God, for God "called Samuel" (3:4). "The LORD came, and stood, and called ... Samuel, Samuel" (3:10). Samuel at an early age learned to recognize the voice of God. This marked his life of close communion with God. In chapter 9:15-16 we read that, "The LORD had told Samuel in his ear". Like Timothy, from a child he was taught by his godly mother. We do not know if Hannah was still alive when Samuel anointed David to be king. Every king of Israel, whither good or evil, has his mother's name recorded. A mother is the first to influence, the first to encourage in the potential path of life. The mother's sphere is in the home, the domestic realm, the personal and the private. Although she is less prominent than her husband, her role is no less essential, dignified and vital. The focus of these papers is upon Men of God. The assemblies of God's people are equally dependent upon godly sisters. Whether married or single, we are exercised to encourage them. They are vital in their own sphere to beautify the gathered company with their grace and godliness.

"The time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve Him only (7:2-3). Recovery begins with repentance, confession of sins, and turning to the Lord, individually in our "hearts" and "all" unitedly forsaking every hindrance. Samuel went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places, returning to Ramah.

For twenty years, Samuel pursued his quiet and unobtrusive service among his people at first hardly noticed, without great organizations, attractive appeals or special campaigns. The spiritual condition of the assemblies of the Lord's people have in general, seriously deteriorated in the last twenty years. The apostle Paul wrote, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Are you serving Christ alone, "Him" only? We have responsibilities for our family, house, business, farm, money, and other temporal or material things. However, if one of such things displaces the Lord in our heart, we have

made a god of it. The Lord will not take second place. The first step was prompt obedience; put away strange gods and serve the Lord only.

"O, give me Samuel's ear!
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear,
Each whisper of Thy Word;
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all".

James D. Burns 1857

"And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh (watch tower)" (7:5). It is good to ascend to the watch-tower of God's word to see our condition as God sees it. "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18). It is essential to have a clear vision, backward to His cross and forward to His coming. Samuel said, "I will pray for you" (7:5). They said, "Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us" (7:8). They prayed, they fasted, they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD" (7:6). This confession came after they had forsaken their idols. Paul wrote "flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14). John wrote, "Keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). This great turning to God stirred the best forces of the Philistines to attack and "the children of Israel ... were afraid" (7:7). Today, the enemy knows that his time is short and he is certainly gathering his best forces and making an all-out attack upon assembly testimony.

"And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him" (7:9). The offering was not a bullock or a ram but a lamb wholly dependent upon its mother; a clear symbol of weakness and dependence. "My strength is made perfect in weakness" said Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). The Lord said to the Church in Philadelphia "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name" (Rev. 3:8).

Observe that Samuel offered a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord, for the Lord must have all the glory. They called the name of the place, "Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (7:12). The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel and all the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel (7:13-14). Our prayer to the Lord should be; "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (Psa. 85:6).

All through his long faithful life, Samuel was a restraining influence upon Israel during the unfaithful years of Saul, until there was no other such prophet left. The anointing of David to be king was his supreme prophetic act marking the transition to the monarch after God's own heart. May we learn lessons from the quiet, prayerful, steadfast service of this servant of God, until we hear the call, "Arise, anoint Him: for this is He" (1 Sam. 16:12).

The Importance of Daily Living

C A Coates

"Continuing daily...." Acts 2:46

Daily Searching of the Scriptures

I am often surprised that Christians who have listened for years (apparently with interest and attention) to the ministry of the Word know so little of divine things. They seem to enjoy the ministry, their faces are bright in the meetings, and yet when you come to talk to them you find that very little of it has got into their souls. I believe the secret is that they listen to what is said, but value it so little that they do not take the trouble of going to the Scriptures to verify it for themselves. Ministry has its own blessed and important place, but I do not believe any ministry will be of permanent profit to our souls if it is not followed by searching of the Scriptures.

"They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

Daily Watching at Wisdom's Gate

Are we on the alert to improve our acquaintance with Christ? The great defect of modern Christianity is that there is so little affection for Christ. Many hear what is called a clear gospel, and trusting the Person and work of Christ they get the assurance of the Scriptures that they will never perish, and this seems to satisfy them, and they settle down upon it and go to sleep. There is not the earnest longing after Himself, the watching daily at His gates. Did it ever occur to you that Christ values your affections? You belong to Him; you are the object of His love; you are His own. Your heart is Christ's property. Is it His dwelling place?

"Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (Prov. 8:34).

Daily Prayer

Christendom is full of solemn warnings as to the tendency of our hearts to drop into a routine of religious forms. It is a very great loss to the soul to get into the habit of repeating substantially the same words in prayer every day. It is not real prayer at all. Today is not like yesterday and tomorrow will not be like today. If you are really with God, you will be sensitive to the fresh needs of every day. God delights to have our confidence as to every need and care. Then let us cultivate a child's confidence, and a child's simplicity as we come to Him in prayer. Bring the trying circumstances of today, and the expected difficulties and perplexities of tomorrow.

"Be merciful unto me, O Lord; for I cry unto thee daily" (Ps. 86:3).

Daily Bread

What have you had from the Lord today? You may say that you have been reading a very good book, and part of one of the periodicals. I am glad to hear it, but did you get anything from the Lord? Again, you may say that you have read one or two chapters in the Bible. I am very thankful for that, but still, you might read many chapters without getting anything from the Lord to meet the present need of your soul. Food is that which satisfies a craving (a felt need) and unless we have an appetite there is not even the desire for it. The food of which I speak is the gracious supply to our souls of that which answers the exercises and meets the need of which we become conscious in our experience day by day. I do not mean your external need, but the need of your heart and spirit, in the various experiences of your soul. May the Lord preserve us from becoming insensible to our daily need that His love delights to supply as our daily bread.

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

Daily Cross

To bear the cross is to accept the reproach of being connected with that which is mean and despicable in the eyes of men. The daily cross is not bodily affection or the ordinary trials of life, as so many suppose, for these things are not peculiar to Christians, they are the common lot of mankind. The daily cross is the acceptance day by day of a path and a portion which, so far as this world goes, is one of dishonor and reproach. If we are true to Christ, it will involve the surrender of much that we naturally esteem - the praise of men, and the honors of life in this world. You may be sure that every bit of real testimony for Christ will cost you something.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).

Daily Encouragement

There is a constant tendency in our hearts to be discouraged because of the way. I am afraid that many souls backslide and drift away simply because we are not near enough to the Lord and have not sufficient affection to give them a word of encouragement. You must keep your eye on that which is of God in the saints and lay yourself out to encourage that. There is something which is of God in every saint; it may be very weak and small, but we must build on and encourage that. We must count on the work of God in the souls of His saints and seek to help and encourage that which is of Himself in every way. Let none of us think that this is only for teachers and ministers of the Word. This applies to every one of us in our individual contact with each other.

"But exhort (encourage) one another daily" (Heb. 3:13).

Habakkuk's Person and Problem

Joel Portman

The anxieties of a believer can, sometimes, be overwhelming, and there are many examples in Scripture that illustrate the deep concerns that saints face in life. It is helpful for us to know that they passed through times of discouragement and distress much the same as we. In the Psalms, we repeatedly read the deep longings and genuine anxieties of saints, even David, who felt the oppression of the wicked world and ungodly men in their lives. What we now experience in a world that is increasingly turning against God and His principles is only a continuation of the difficulties that they encountered as well.

In this respect, we can appreciate in some measure the deep concern and exercise of the prophet Habakkuk, as he was very aware of the violence and evil that prevailed in his world and concerning which we read his words in the first verses of his prophecy (Hab. 1:1-4). Actually, the prophecy of Habakkuk is very unusual in many ways. Those who can appreciate the depth of the original language in which it is written tell us that its language makes it one of the richest, most sublime of the prophecies of our Old Testament. "The lofty sublimity of this brief composition, as regards both thought and expression, has been universally recognized. 'His language is classical throughout, His view and mode of presentation bear the seal of independent force and finished beauty.'" (Delitzsch, quoted in "Pulpit Commentary"). He was evidently a very educated writer, and as a result of his refined, godly character, he was sensitive to the ungodly conditions that prevailed. There are some who suggest that he might have been a priest as well as a prophet, due to the last words of his prophecy, and thus he was intimately conscious of the holy standard that God desired for His people. His prophecy is entirely in the form of a dialogue between the prophet and his God, in which he (as do so many other godly saints) complains to God concerning the abounding evil and resident wickedness that prevailed among his people, perplexed at such conditions and the apparent lack of God's judgment on those who perpetrate such deeds. Other prophets addressed the nation for God, so their attention was directed man-ward; Habakkuk's attention is God-ward, and he addresses God on behalf of the nation. "... He does not adopt the attitude which is characteristic of the prophets. His face is set in an opposite direction to theirs. They address the nation Israel, on behalf of God: he rather speaks to God on behalf of Israel. Their task was Israel's sin, the proclamation of God's doom, and the offer of His grace to their penitence. Habakkuk's task is God Himself, the effort to find out what He means by permitting tyranny

and wrong. They attack the sins; he is the first to state the problems of life." (Expositor's Bible).

We see from his example, that for godly saints in affliction and experiencing troubles, the best and only thing for them is to speak to the Lord about it. Complaining to others only makes one a burden and a bother; they soon tire of hearing our complaints! However, the Lord's ear is always open and His eye is upon His own, and He never tires of hearing their cries as they heed the admonition of Ps. 37:5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord (or roll thy way upon the Lord), trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Doesn't his perplexity resound in the hearts of many saints today? Who can behold the prevalence of moral evil, open denial of divine standards of behavior, rejection of spiritual realities or accommodation to other forms of depravity without feeling an inward repulsion that makes one wonder why God doesn't intervene? J. N. Darby says that Habakkuk's complaint concerning the insupportable evil that existed is "the natural effect of the working of the Spirit of God in a heart jealous for His glory and detesting evil." Also A. C. Gaebelien says, "Like Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, Habakkuk is deeply stirred on account of the declension among the people of God, and that led him to cry to Jehovah, to tell Him all about it." ("Annotated Bible"). It seems that a safe gauge for one's spiritual state before God is seen in the degree that such evil is detested and judged in the light of divine truth. Carnal believers can tolerate and ignore that which causes a godly saint to cringe and sorrow. We can test our own state by this means. In such cases, it is not only a personal reaction, but is also one that recognizes the such conditions impinge on God's glory, especially when seen among those who profess to be God's people, as Israel was.

We can learn a little of the believer's recourse at such times from a brief study of this prophecy. Beginning with his perplexity and concern directed in the form of a question to Jehovah, he learns what the LORD will do to judge such prevalent evil. However, the information he receives causes further questions, so it is only by waiting further on the Lord that he receives the needed answer. Finally, he ends, as we also should, by recognizing the greatness and grace of the Lord and, with confidence that rests on His goodness, rendering praise to Him no matter what conditions may come in his life. He reminds us that, regardless of the uncertainty of future events that might affect a believer in Christ, continuous confidence in the Lord will result in praise and joy. Philip Harding, in his commentary on Habakkuk in "What the Bible Teaches," says, "Habakkuk learned that in every circumstance of life one can rest and depend upon God and His word. In this book, therefore, we see the prophet transformed from a perplexed and questioning man to a rejoicing and confident one who rests upon the majesty and word of God." "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew

their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40:31).

Habakkuk's Person

Admittedly, little is known of Habakkuk personally. It is conjectured that he might have been a Levite or a priest who was involved in the service of temple singing, since he was evidently familiar with the structure of such songs and words that were used (such as "selah," v. 9, the structure of his expressions, and the words used at the close (v. 19). However, there is no certainty in those conclusions. Whether he was or not, it is clear that he was very familiar with the psalms of praise that were the normal voices that rose in the temple worship. He was one who knew what it was to rejoice in going into the house of the Lord (Ps. 122:1). Those who constantly know that presence as he did will have a similar sensitivity to evil that he expressed in his prophecy. He also quotes other scripture in his prophecy, so he exemplifies a believer whose thought is saturated with the Word of God.

Habakkuk's time of prophecy is not clear, but some have located him as a contemporary with Jeremiah during the time of Jehoiakim, a wicked king who rejected the Word of the Lord through Jeremiah and sought his life. Others have placed him at the end of Josiah's reign, but the conditions that he describes seem ill-suited to that period of prosperity and righteousness. The conditions he faced are, however, very similar to those that Jeremiah encountered (Jer. 5:1-9; 11:10; 12:1; 20:7-8; 22:3 etc.). Considering the description of those days, we easily relate to such conditions and feel the same concern.

Habakkuk's name is very interesting and applicable. It seems to mean "embracer," either passively (being embraced) or actively (embracing others). He embraced God in prayer and his people in his heart. At the same time, he was embraced by God. The word implies "one who takes another to his heart and into his arms, as one soothes a poor weeping child, telling it to be quiet," (C. J. Barber, "Habakkuk and Zephaniah"). Such a man knew and felt the suffering of others and thus demonstrated a great depth of spiritual exercise.

Habakkuk's Problem, (Hab. 1:1-4)

This first section of his prophecy describes his "burden." This word signifies that what he was concerned with was a weight, a heavy message with ominous implications, something that expressed the deep concerns of his soul. Malachi likewise begins his prophecy, and other prophets use a similar expression (Isa. 13:1, 21:11, 21:13, etc.). The Lord rebuked the false prophets for using the expression (Jer. 23:33-34, 36, 38). It was likely a common expression among prophets who were going to deliver a weighty message

to the people. In the case of genuine prophets, it meant that what they were going to say involved severe results to the listeners and that these messengers were responsible before the Lord to deliver the message. What could be more "burdensome" than a message that Habakkuk carried that expressed his concern for the welfare of his people? It was heavy on his heart, and in the entirety of the message, it also conveyed God's declaration of how He would judge His own people. Such knowledge would be a weight on the heart of any spiritual man of God!

Habakkuk's problem was two-fold: He had difficulty understanding why God allowed evil conditions to continue among His people, and, secondly, he longed for a reply from the Lord, which had not been forthcoming. His perplexity is reflected in the concerns of many others under similar conditions. The psalms often express the same question: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed . . ." (Ps. 2:1-2). "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? . . . the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor . . ." (Ps. 10:1-4). Repeatedly the psalms express the concerns of saints when they saw or experienced the oppressive power of the wicked. Assuming that the psalms address conditions dealing with actual events of their time, one wonders how it could be that amid the chosen nation of Israel, such violence and wicked oppression could prevail? It seems that the results of sin and its evil influence on man spreads so far as to affect the behavior of those who were identified as God's people. To read these descriptions reminds us that conditions of our present world are not new, but are only a part of the continuum of the pattern of evil that has existed from the beginning.

The question of Habakkuk is echoed by many, even unbelievers. "If there is a God," they say, "why does He allow children to suffer? Why doesn't He intervene to stop violence, killing, and all the other forms of evil that offend the normal thinking?" Of course, in many cases, this question arises from an attitude of unbelief or disregard for God or His power, but it is still often a legitimate one. Why is there suffering, and the abuses of mankind even in the most enlightened society? Habakkuk faced this enigma, and turned to God for the response.

His other concern often troubles saints, and that is, why do they cry unto God in prayer but seem to receive so few answers? They long for some word of comfort, some counsel, some direction, but to no avail. Usually they long for an answer immediately, but it doesn't come. Their heart can become overwhelmed, and the sense creeps into their soul that God doesn't care. Yet that is far from the truth, and in Habakkuk we can learn some lessons regarding both disconcerting questions in our lives as well. "Faith could hardly be

more severely tested than by seeing the people of God suffer oppression without any apparent intervention of God on their behalf," (C. A. Coates, "Minor Prophets").

Habakkuk's Plea

Habakkuk's prayer had been sustained over a long period ("how long . . ."). His expression, "thou dost not hear," actually is based on the lack of an answer. That apparent indifference to his cry seemingly only increased his burden. God's apparent failure to respond gave him the impression that He had not heard. But He had heard! There is not a prayer or petition of a saint that fails to reach the ear of God. The lack of a desired response may be due to other reasons. Habakkuk cried out "Violence," but he saw no act of deliverance by God. Why? He was seeing sin's results in their worst form: iniquity abounded, grievance (worry, perverseness) was before him. Robbery (spoiling) and violence was prevalent along with strife and contention. The people were being victimized, The law was powerless, ("slacked" means it is benumbed, paralyzed, unable to deal with these conditions) and there was no justice. The wicked (plural, lawless ones) surrounded (in their hostility) the righteous man (singular) and judgment was perverted, and the wicked were obviously invigorated by God's lack of response. They felt that they could commit atrocities with impunity. What a description of abysmal conditions under which he lived!

Undoubtedly there are many saints in this world who suffer equally under similar conditions. They may also feel as Habakkuk did, that they are alone and without recourse since it seems that God doesn't know. May every believer in such stringent conditions know something of the ultimate end that Habakkuk came to, the point of understanding that God was "in His holy temple," (Hab. 2:20), and despite such evils, "the just shall live by his faith," (Hab. 2:4). They can well be like Habakkuk, of whom one has said that "still, dark as the outlook was, and oppressed in heart as he felt himself to be amidst the mysteries of life viewed in relation to the Divine government, he maintained throughout unswervingly his trust in God; and which so clearly pervaded his spirit and so repeatedly revealed itself in his expressions as amply to justify the representation that he is "eminently the prophet of reverential, awe-filled faith," ("Pulpit Commentary").

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