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FIRST

Seek First the Kingdom of God!

SUMMER 2022 | ISSUE 1324

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE FAITH MISSION



LOOKING INTO THE GOSPELS

» A VISIT BY THE QUEEN

» A VISION FOR PERILOUS TIMES

» GAVE UP ALL FOR INDIA

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The Faith Mission is a charity registered in Scotland No SC005119

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FAITH MISSION'S GENERAL DIRECTOR

This summer sees several changes take place within the leadership of the Mission. Following the graduation at the end of June, Robert Murdock, along with his wife Elaine, relinquishes his role as principal of our Bible College, having accepted the call to be pastor of Duncan Street Baptist Church in Edinburgh. George and Andrea Conn retire from the work at the end of July, soon to be followed by Donnie and Catherine Macleod and John and Linda Townend. The succession planning process is proving to be a challenging task and we continue to trust the Lord for clear direction and provision as we continue to work through this process. The following arrangements have been agreed and will take effect from 1 August 2022.

Ireland

Director and Central Irish District

Superintendent: *Garry (and Alison) Tutty*

North West Irish District Superintendent:

William (and Carolyn) Harrison

West Irish District — In charge (interim basis):

Anne Brown

Portadown Centre: *Leslie (and Mabel) Brush*

Scotland

Director and South Scottish District

Superintendent: *Gordon (and Janice) Thomson*

Highland District – In charge (from March 2023): *Jeff (and Sarah) Townend*

England

Director & South East English District

Superintendent: *Stephen (and Cynthia) Walker*

North English District Superintendent:

Alistair (and Sharon) Patterson

Bible College

Principal/Leader:

Interim arrangements being finalised

Oversight of the curriculum: *Russell Newton*

Administrator: *Catherine Briggs*

Please note:

1. We have been unable to identify anyone to take responsibility for the vacancies in the Irish Border and Anglo Scottish Border Districts. Please pray for the Lord's direction and provision for these important needs.
2. The leadership will remain unchanged for Districts not mentioned above.
3. To make way for younger men to be appointed to leadership positions, Alistair Patterson is relinquishing his Director's responsibilities as from 1 August. He will continue as a District Superintendent.
4. Jeff and Sarah Townend will move into the Highland District headquarters during the summer. However, Donnie Macleod, who has offered to postpone his retirement until March 2023, will continue as Highland District Superintendent during that period in order to introduce Jeff and Sarah to the District.

In addition to the leadership changes mentioned above, David Reimer will retire from his role as academic dean at the Bible College following the graduation in June, Lewis MacDonald leaves the Mission to take up a church-based apprenticeship at the end of July, and John McCartney withdraws from membership of the Mission at the end of August. We are grateful to all who are leaving us over the coming months for their fellowship and loyal service with the Mission, and wish them God's richest blessing in their retirements or future ministry.

Thank you for your fellowship; please pray for a fruitful summer of outreach and ministry. •

John Townend,
General Director

BY
JOHN MOLLITT



A Visit by the Queen

1 KINGS 10:1-13

At the dedication of the Temple in 1 Kings 8:41-43, Solomon prayed for the knowledge of God to spread beyond the borders of Israel and that foreigners would be drawn to worship at Jerusalem. His prayer is answered in 1 Kings 10, when the Queen of Sheba (generally considered to be present day Yemen) comes from South-East Asia to visit Solomon in Jerusalem.

Her Seeking Spirit

'When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord,' she made the mammoth journey seeking for Solomon and his God. It is estimated her journey covered upwards of twelve hundred miles — not by jumbo jet or fast motorways, but on the back of a camel, across mountains and over deserts. What an amazing journey, and even more amazing because it seems she came without an invitation.

We do not know if Solomon commended her seeking spirit but we know that Jesus did (see Matthew 12:42). She had come a great distance to see Solomon; Jesus could identify with this as He had come a far greater distance to save sinners. He had come from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, and yet the Scribes and Pharisees refused to believe in Him. Unlike the Queen of Sheba, the Scribes and the Pharisees had invitation upon invitation. *'How often I wanted to gather your children together... but you were not willing'* (Matthew 23:37). They rejected all His invitations. What about us? We do not have to go on a twelve-hundred-mile pilgrimage in order to meet with Jesus. We can meet with Him in the quietness of our own homes and He gives us every encouragement to do so. *'Come to Me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest'* (Matthew 11:28), and *'The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out'* (John 6:37). We have what the Queen of Sheba did not have from King Solomon — we have an invitation from the King of Kings. What hinders you? Seek Him with a determined spirit as shown by the Queen of

Sheba and you will find Him, because we have a divine promise: *'You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart'* (Jeremiah 29:13).

Her Searching Questions

The Queen of Sheba came with deep and serious questions. We are not told what they were. Perhaps they were about life and death, time and eternity, about Solomon's God: *'She spoke with him about all that was in her heart'* (verse 2). Whatever the questions, the Queen of Sheba was not disappointed with the answers: *'Solomon answered all her questions'* (verse 3). There was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain to her. Solomon shared his wisdom and she began to understand things which she probably had never understood before.

When we come to Christ, our sins are forgiven, we are reconciled to God and His Spirit comes to live within our hearts. We become the possessors of an eternal home in heaven. All these wonderful things are the result of conversion and coming to Christ. But something else happens as well: we find answers to our hard questions.

As a young man before conversion, I often wondered where we came from, why we were here, and how human existence began. To be told that I had evolved from a tadpole or a fish or a monkey was neither convincing nor encouraging. But when I came to Jesus and read His Word, *'From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female'* (Mark 10:6), I understood. I am a special creation — the crown of God's creation. I am quite different and distinct from any other animal. I have

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To her joy and amazement, the Queen of Sheba discovered that Solomon was much wiser and his God more wonderful than she could ever have imagined or had heard. As the Queen of Sheba went to Solomon, we must go to Christ for answers.

been made by God for God. I can know Him and have communion with Him. That is why I am on this earth. It is a hard question which multitudes wrestle with, but the answer is to be found with Christ.

There are hard questions. Why is there so much evil and wickedness in the world? As a young person, I was often told that in essence man is good and by means of education, he will get even better. Sadly, the facts just did not fit the theory — rapes, murders, muggings, wars. Is man in essence good and getting better? Jesus says: *'From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man'* (Mark 7:21-23). The explanation makes sense, not just for the evil in the world, but for the evil in my own heart. Man is a fallen, sinful creature, and though upbringing and environment can bring sin forth, it can only be brought forth because sin is already present in the human heart. As the Queen of Sheba went to Solomon, we must go to Christ for answers.

Her Surprising Discovery

The Queen of Sheba had made this arduous journey to see for herself whether the reports were true or not. To her joy and amazement, she discovered that Solomon was much wiser and his God more wonderful than she could ever have imagined or had heard (verses 6-7). As believers, there was a day when we heard a report. We heard the gospel and in repentance and faith came to Christ. What about today? Is Christ more precious, more wonderful to us now? Is our salvation more amazing than when we first came to faith? If that is true for us on earth, how much more will it be in heaven? We will be in the presence not of King Solomon, but the King of Kings in the New Jerusalem — “Far from a world of grief and sin, with Christ eternally shut in” (Charles Wesley).

The apostle Paul puts it in an even more memorable way: *'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'* (1 Corinthians 2:9). We will be “Lost in wonder, love and praise,” exclaiming, *'the half was not told me'* (verse 7). •

John lives in Yorkshire, is a retired pastor, and spends his time between writing and local preaching.

An open book with glasses on a wooden surface. The text is overlaid on the book's pages.

GOD Is AND SPEAKS GOD

BY HARRY CLAYSON

The genius of English literature CS Lewis once said of Psalm 19: “I take it to be the greatest poem of the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics of the world.” However, Psalm 19 is not just great because of its poetic beauty, but also because in the midst of such great poetry it has great theology.

This psalm helps us to see that God is a God who has revealed Himself to mankind. He has not left us guessing as to whether He exists or as to how we can know Him for ourselves,

but He has revealed Himself to us. God has done this in two ways — through creation and through the Bible. We could say God has two books: one is a picture book, which is nature, and the other is a written book, which is His Word. These are what is known as general revelation and special revelation, general, being through His creation and special being through His Word. The problem is that general revelation only shows us that there is a God, but it doesn't tell us who He is or what He is like or how we can know Him. That is

why we need special revelation — we need God's Word. A great proof for the truth of the Bible is the fact that without it we would never know God. Yes, creation can teach us that there is a god, but we would never know anything else about Him other than that He exists and is powerful and intelligent. There is a necessity for the Bible.

Psalm 19 wonderfully brings together these two forms of revelation. In verses 1-6, King David speaks of creation revealing God, and in verses 7-11, he speaks of the perfections of God's Word. The psalm begins by declaring that creation proclaims the existence of God. All that we see as we look at the skies reveals God. The sun, the moon, even the deep blue sky, all declare God's power and majesty. They show that He is glorious. It is not a weak God who has created these things, but one that is all-powerful and for whom nothing is too hard. One who simply speaks worlds into existence.

Verse two then contributes to David's point as he essentially says that not only do the heavens proclaim God's glory but they never stop doing so. This is not a one-off event that someone can miss and therefore use the excuse they never saw it, but the heavens ever serve their purpose of glorifying God and displaying His power. Not only do they do it continuously, but they do it everywhere: *'their voice goes out through all the earth'* (v.4). The skies prove God's existence and this proof transcends the limits of all languages and cultures. We can see it from the Highlands of Scotland to the jungles in South America. God has not left himself without a witness.

The next section of the psalm turns to the second book of God. Imagine for a moment you were in an art gallery where paintings are

displayed to show the artist's talent and skill. However, whilst the painting shows that there is an artist, we need to look at the signature or read the plaque underneath the picture to find out more about who the artist is. Creation is like a painting — it reveals to us that there is a Creator, but that is as far as it goes. We need more information so that we can know this Creator of ours. God hasn't left His painting anonymous; He has signed it clearly.

In verses 7-11, the psalm refers to the perfections of God's Word. We find a number of ways that the Bible is referred to and described: *'the law of the LORD is perfect'* (v.7), and *'the precepts of the LORD are right... the commandment of the LORD is pure'* (v.8).

Alongside using different terms for the Bible, David also highlights a number of its characteristics. God's Word is perfect and sure, *'reviving the soul... making wise the simple... the precepts of the Lord are **right** rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is **pure** enlightening the eyes... is **clean** enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are **true** and **righteous** altogether'* (vv.7-9).

Here the psalmist is saying that God's Word has no errors and there are no imperfections to be found in it. This is the Bible's testimony of itself: it is perfect because it is the inspired word of the living God. The apostle Paul writes: *'All scripture is breathed out by God'* (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV). This means that everything written in the Bible, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, is there because God intended it to be there. It is what is known as the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible. Not only are the meaning and the message inspired by God, but every individual word and every letter that makes up each word is inspired or given by God.

A second affirmation must also be made which this psalm clearly teaches, God's Word is not only trustworthy, but it also brings change to those who read it. This can be gleaned from the statements already highlighted in verses 7-9: *'revives the soul, makes one wise, rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes.'* When these two affirmations are taken together, the Bible's veracity and its power through God to effect change in its readers, one can only concur with David's words: *'more to be desired are they than gold'* (v.10). One of the most valuable things known to man is gold, and yet God's Word is more precious than gold, even pure gold. The psalmist goes on to say it is: *'sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb'* (v.10).

I wonder is the Bible the most precious and sweetest thing to us? We should do anything to get our hands on a Bible and, once we have one, we should read it every day of our lives until we pass into eternity. If it is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey, why would we not want to read it every day?

The Bible is not only for our pleasure but also our benefit, as we see in verse 11. God has revealed all that He has in the Scriptures for our eternal good. It teaches us God's will for our lives, it shows us how He wishes to be worshipped and honoured, and through it there is great reward because its key message is the gospel. It all points to Jesus, and if you have Jesus, you have all things.

The question then arises as to how often we read our Bibles — the book that refreshes our souls, that brings joy to our hearts and gladdens our eyes. Do we take time to read the book of God, to study it, to know why we believe what we believe? God speaks to us through His Word and so we should be yearning to read it.



I wonder is the Bible the most precious and sweetest thing to us? God speaks to us through His Word and so we should be yearning to read it.

Many have risked or even given up their lives for this book in order to possess it and pass it on to others.

There is a reason the Bible is the most read book, the most sold book, the most shoplifted book, the book that has been translated into the most languages, the book that has the most extant ancient manuscripts. This book has changed the world. Pick it up and read it, and if you don't have one, buy one as soon as you can. The only logical response is to say along with John Wesley: "O give me that book, at any price, give me the book of God!" •

Harry and his wife, Jess, are former FMBC students. Alongside further studies, he is currently working part time as an apprentice with a church in Musselburgh, Scotland.

BY HOWEL JONES

Looking into the Gospels

PART 1

The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, spell out the heart of the gospel story. Essentially, they present the story of Jesus who was promised in the Old Testament. It is worth pausing to take a reflective review of the Old Testament, a collection of books written by different authors for various reasons on separate occasions. It is a mixture of different parts. It is not chronological and has many overlaps. There are stories of exploits and experiences, and that is history. There is the expressing of feelings, whether of praise, joy, sadness or even bewilderment. That can be regarded as poetry. And there are a number of books which are essentially records of God speaking directly to His people, whether by way of rebuke or encouragement. That is prophecy.

In simple terms they can be categorised as stories, songs and sermons which show how God's chosen people lived, how they felt and how they failed! And, while the story continues chronologically, the other two sections overlap significant periods in their history: singing when things are going well, sermons when they are called to repent. Yet, together as an entity they represent the whole of life experience, its purpose, pitfalls and potential.

Although it covers the whole of life, the Old Testament appears to be incomplete. Numerically, it is thirty-nine books, but something is missing. In substance, the prevalent feature seems to be failure, not living up to high expectations as if those spoken of are powerless to do so. It doesn't quite work effectively. Something else is needed.

That is where the New Testament comes in, to provide what is missing — the story of Jesus, the Redeemer, whose death and resurrection show that, *'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son'* (Romans 8:3). That is the story and message that has to be told from different perspectives and so we have the four gospels.

Christ is so important that He is introduced by four different evangelists, each from his own particular perspective and yet sharing a common core. What can we discern from that presentation?

Each gospel carries its own set of characteristics. Each writer presents Jesus through his own eyes, and the detail and format are influenced by his own familiar background. For example, Matthew is concerned with authority and with the Jewish tradition. His methodical approach collects the teachings and miracles of Jesus together to make comprehensive sections. He stresses the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. To Matthew, Jesus is King bringing in a kingdom. But to Mark (thought to be a servant), Jesus is at everyone's beck and call with little time to Himself and no privacy. That is what Mark noticed in Him, and highlights that particular aspect. Luke, on the other hand, is a physician and historian. He carefully sets out the facts and details in order and, as a doctor, highlights the concerns of the deprived, discarded, and the needy. He underlines the humanity and tenderness of Jesus. In contrast, John is more reflective, remembers more of the sayings of Jesus and sees the significance of what He did and sought to accomplish. Each is different and yet sees in Jesus someone who appeals to them as individuals.

This is comforting because it means that the gospel presents a Saviour who can meet our individual and specific needs and characteristics as expressed in the hymn, "What a Friend we have in Jesus". He is approachable and He is accessible.

Yet, despite these differences, all four, whatever their individual distinctives and the desperate needs of their respective audiences might be, agree on three vital aspects of Jesus as the Messiah. He was human but lived a sinless life, the only One who has ever done so. Furthermore, despite that innocence, He died for the sin of humanity on a cruel cross, and He was raised from the dead. These are not incidentals or alternatives: they are the core

of the gospel message — the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We too can find sympathy and understanding from Jesus as we come to Him. However, we cannot avoid the obligation of making sure that we believe the central truth that was so evident in the preaching of Peter and the others (see Acts 2:22-24). The gospel is adaptable to personalities and situations, not the same presentation appeals to everyone, but its core is not negotiable. It must include the preaching of the cross. It is this Christ who is, *'in you, the hope of glory'* (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus, the Messiah, is introduced at the beginning of the New Testament in four parallel books, the four gospels, where each of the evangelists presents Jesus Christ from his own perspective. This explains the differences that there are between and among the four gospels even when they are describing the same incident. That is authentic. It also emphasises the consistency among the four evangelists each of whom is intent on presenting the story of Jesus as the One sent by God.

Matthew's Gospel

Matthew presents Jesus as the One who is the fulfilment of all that the Old Testament has promised. Jesus is presented as an 'authority' figure. The birth stories highlight the majestic nature of Jesus of Nazareth. A series of discourses follows which highlight the fact that Jesus came to introduce different life standards and an integrity which is so much higher and better than anything offered by the Scribes and Pharisees. The key to Matthew's gospel is the recognition of this fact and, although Peter's confession is also recorded in the other two gospels, what makes Matthew unique is the declaration that this confession is the basis of the very church.

Mark's Gospel

Here Jesus is seen as the Saviour who emerges from below. Mark's circumstances are such that he has very little time for the finer things of life but is aware of the demands that are made on

a servant and sees this in Jesus. Within this sphere of intense activity, Jesus emerges as the Servant who gives Himself immediately and totally to meet the needs of others. He emerges head and shoulders from among the people as the Messiah, but also as a Servant Saviour.

Luke's Gospel

Being a physician, Luke is concerned with showing something of the sympathy and the tenderness of Jesus in addressing key aspects of human need. He notices the disadvantaged and despised. Luke is the only one who records the story of the prodigal son. It is this sympathy that marks Jesus out as the Messiah who will not break *'a bruised reed'* (Isaiah 42:3). Jesus takes time to explain. Those involved with the birth are told what is to happen and are appreciated for their faithful patience. The ministry is explained in Luke chapter 4. The two bemused disciples returning to Emmaus are patiently enlightened as to why Jesus had to suffer, and in that explanation, came to see Jesus as Lord.

John's Gospel

The gospel of John is quite different. He focuses on the very essence of Jesus as the Word of God, the incarnate, God who is present in Jesus. John declares quite clearly that these things are *'written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that, believing, you might have life in His name'* (20:31). John takes various incidents in the life of Jesus and shows their significance; he shows that the very life that He manifests is divine.

All four gospels agree that He is the complete Messiah: *'God was manifested in the flesh'* (1 Timothy 3:16). In part two we will look further at each of the gospels independently.

*Jesus Messiah, name above all names,
Blessed Redeemer, Emmanuel;
The rescue for sinners, the ransom from Heaven,
Jesus Messiah, Lord of all.*

Chris Tomlin. •

| *Howel lives in Glasgow and is a retired pastor and lecturer.*

Getting the Foundation Right

I don't know anything about building houses although, when I was a student, I did work on building sites as a summer labourer for John Laing and Co. At a stretch I could probably present you with something constructed from Lego bricks; that's the extent of my expertise. But even I know if you

are going to put up a building to stand the test of time, you need to get the foundation right. No one in their right mind tries to raise a house just by cementing bricks together on a piece of level ground. The depth and accuracy of the foundation gives stability to the whole construction.



BY SANDY ROGER

This came into my mind when sorting through some old diaries stretching back to when I first began to prepare for Christian ministry. Reading through the scribbled pages, I reflected that everything I have achieved academically, evangelistically and ministerially in the last forty years is grounded in the time I spent in Bible College. Little did I know then that God would lead me to study in three universities, minister in three congregations, and conduct missions all over the UK and beyond. No wonder when I come across young people seriously thinking about becoming involved in Christ's work I tell them: "Well get yourself to Bible College first". There is really no substitute for laying a solid foundation in the basics before embarking on more advanced levels of theological study. Let me enumerate the advantages, not in any great level of importance, but all of them foundational.

Access to Godly and Inspirational Teachers

Sad to say, there is no guarantee that in academic theological circles these days all the teachers will be fully convinced of the authority of Scripture or the full deity of Christ. In some instances, believers can find themselves under the tutelage of people who make no profession of Christianity at all. Such is the situation in many academic institutions that are unashamedly secular, humanistic and atheistic. The goal is the achievement of a degree, not the attainment of likeness to Christ. I like my teachers to reflect in their lives the truths that they teach. I learned more from these lecturers, from their example as people who clearly put God first in their lives and let it spill over into all they did interacting with their students.

Like-Minded People with a Living Experience of Christ

Bible College draws in people from across the denominational spectrum with a variety

of backgrounds and cultures. This is also true of secular academic seats of learning, but the difference lies in a common experience of Christ unknown in the secular world. It often establishes a bond that lasts long after College. There is nothing like a good-going discussion among students with various opinions, to help them differentiate between the essentials of the faith and things of secondary importance. I thank God for lasting friendships, instantly re-kindled every time a letter, a phone call, an email or a Zoom call brings former students together. Such friendships are encouraging and challenging. They provide a reliable network of support in Christian ministry.

Provision of Intellectual Ammunition to Confront Various Issues

Today's secular society is full of 'isms' and 'ologies'. In a kind of pick-and-mix culture, people are encouraged to make up their own beliefs. The academic world of religion embraces much of what secular culture pressurises it to think. Everything is up for grabs and what you believe is a private matter between you and your conscience. There are no absolutes and certainly no clearly defined standards of truth or morality. Bible College is the ideal training ground for equipping people to fight the good fight of faith. Many a theological student has fallen hook line and sinker for such teaching, only to find that in the battle zone of Christian ministry they had no resources with which to confront the enemy. Bible College provides the necessary ammunition. No soldier would ever go into battle devoid of the necessary equipment.

Opportunities in Practical Ministry

The College from which I graduated operated a team of six evangelists based at the College. I was privileged to become one of them, and for the next three years threw myself into the

There is really no substitute for laying a solid foundation in the basics before embarking on more advanced levels of theological study.



work of outreach and mission. We would go out on ten- or seventeen-day missions all over the country, from Peterhead to Cornwall to Cardiff. Usually based in local churches, we engaged in the full gamut of mission work. I honestly think when I was eventually ordained as a minister with my own congregation, that the lessons learned in those years made me a better minister than I would have turned out without that practical experience. The insistence of Scripture is not just to be an evangelical, but actually *do* the work of an evangelist.

Acquiring an Unshakeable Conviction of Two Essentials

Bible College taught me the necessity of prayer and the centrality of the Word. In those diaries I mentioned earlier I kept coming across entries such as these: “Attended the College prayer meeting”; “Met with a few of the students in a bedroom for a time of prayer”; “I need to broaden my understanding of prayer”; “I didn’t want to leave the College Chapel this morning”. It also impressed upon me that the Word is everything. At College I learned to read it, understand it, pray it and preach it.

In small mission halls, in village chapels and in house groups, I cut my teeth in the art of preaching. Difficult as it was to do, and patient as many a listener must have been, eventually progress was made and results in people’s lives began to show. One entry in the diary says: “The Principal preached a powerful message this morning about success in Christian work. It was based on Acts 6:4: *‘We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word’*. Not one without the other, but both together; and the order is important.”

If you are reading this now and already sense God’s call to full-time ministry, then my strong advice to you before you embark on any academic theological study is get yourself into Bible College. It is the foundation for a successful ministry. My great burden in penning this fairly personal article is the hope that it may be read by someone thinking about their future ministry. It could alter the whole direction of your thinking at this stage, and prepare you to fulfil the calling that you have upon your life for the Lord’s work. •

Sandy lives in Edinburgh and is a visiting lecturer at FMBC.



A VISION FOR PERILOUS TIMES

Many images fill our screens at this perilous time. Disturbing and heart-breaking images of leaders, weaponry and fleeing women and children. As we wonder what to think, pray and do, may our hearts and minds be filled with another vision — of our glorious Lord Jesus.

In war, Christians often turn to the Bible book of Revelation. Some read it as detailed contemporary history. Others find in it broad-brush themes that characterise the AD era. Yet others find it tricky to understand. The late preacher John Stott wrote about the book of Revelation, that

BY REUBEN MANN

people “with their backs to the wall need more than moral exhortation... They must see Christ... A history of the world in cipher is cold comfort in comparison with a vision of the exalted Christ.”

Above all fighting and fears, hatred and horrors, powers and pandemics, our world needs to see Jesus Christ. Revelation is, above all, a revealing of Jesus Christ: ‘...*the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth*’ (Revelation 1:5a).

As we wonder what is going to happen in the world, so did the elderly apostle John. In Revelation 5, he longs for somebody worthy to unroll the scroll of history. Then he hears: ‘*Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll*’ (Revelation 5:5). Picture a lion, huge and golden! Feel his mighty mane! Hear his awesome MGM roar! Jesus is the king that God had promised to his ancestor, David (2 Samuel 7), and to David’s ancestor, Judah (Genesis 49). Jesus triumphed over storms, sickness, Satan and death.

In CS Lewis’s Narnia stories, when the children discover that Aslan is a lion, they ask nervously: “Is he safe?” Mr Beaver replies: “Of course he isn’t safe – he’s a lion! But he is good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

As we face the uncertainty and horror of war in Europe, let’s be encouraged that there is a higher throne than Moscow or London or Washington. Let us humbly honour Jesus as our Lord and find security at His feet. But maybe we wonder about this Lion. He may be big, but is he (like Aslan) good? So we turn with the apostle John to see the mighty mane and the roaring teeth, but what a surprise we find: ‘*Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had*

been slain, standing at the centre of the throne’ (Revelation 5:6a).

We see, not a lion, but a lamb! They are both picture language for Jesus: He sounds like a lion — but he looks like a lamb! Towering over the throne of the universe, with all power everywhere forever, is... a little lamb. Countries choose big, strong animals for their symbols — lions for England, a bear for Russia, an eagle for the USA. But the Kingdom of God is symbolised by a slaughtered, yet living, Lamb. The one on the throne has scars, just as the risen Jesus showed His disciples His nail-torn scars.

Jesus the Lamb has the right to roll out history, on the one hand, because He can sympathise with us — an infant refugee; a homeless man, unjustly convicted, tortured and killed, all out of love for us. I don’t know why God would allow war, but I can trust that kind of God, and that He has the answers.

Jesus can sympathise and, even better, He can redeem. He can deal not only with our sadness but also with our sin. In the Bible slain lambs are sacrifices — dying to pay for the guilt of others. That wrongdoing is there both on the news and also here in my heart, but wonderfully Jesus died to redeem me and all who turn and trust Him as Saviour and Lord.

May we trust in Jesus, and sing with the crowd in John’s vision: ‘*You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from [Ukraine and Russia and the UK and] every tribe and language and people and nation*’ (Revelation 5:9).

May Christ, the Lion-Lamb, be our vision in this perilous time. Come Lord Jesus! ●

Reuben is currently pastor of Emmanuel Church, Marlborough — www.emmanuelmarlborough.org



Softly AND Safely

The story of Jacob's thoughtfulness for the cattle and the children is a beautiful little picture. *'I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before and the children be able to endure'* (Genesis 33:14). He would not let them be overdriven even for one day. *'My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me'* (verse 13).

He would not lead on according to what a strong man like Esau could do. He had had so much to do with them that he knew exactly how far they could go in a day, and he made that his only consideration in arranging the marches (verse 12).

Perhaps his own halting thigh made him more

considerate for, *'the foot of the cattle'* and *'the foot of the children'*. Besides, he had gone the same wilderness journey years before (Genesis 29:1) and knew all about its roughness and heat and length by personal experience. And so he said, *'I will lead on softly'*.

For us, we have not passed this way before but the Lord Jesus has. It is all untrodden and unknown ground to us, but He knows it all by personal experience, the steep bits that take away our breath, the stony bits that make our feet ache, the hot shadeless stretches that make us feel so exhausted, the rushing rivers that we have to pass through. Jesus has gone through it all before us: *'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our*

infirmities' (Hebrews 4:15). He was wearied with His journey (John 4:6). Not some but all the many waters went over Him and yet did not quench His love (Psalm 102:7).

He was made a perfect leader by the things which He suffered: *'though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered'* (Hebrews 5:8-9). For now He knows all about it and leads us softly according as we are able to endure, *'for He knoweth our frame'* (Psalm 103:14).

He does not only know with that sort of up-on-the-shelf knowledge which is often guilty of want of thought among ourselves, but He *'remembereth'* that we are dust. Think of that when you are tempted to question the gentleness of His leading. He is remembering all the time and not one step will He make you take beyond what your foot is able to endure. Never mind if you think *you* will not be able for the step that seems to come next. Either He will so strengthen it, that it shall be able, or He will call a sudden halt and you shall not have to take it at all.

Is it not restful to know that you are not answerable to any Esau for how much you get through or how far you are led on in the day? *They* don't know, or knowing, don't remember the weakness or drawbacks. Maybe *they* wonder you do not get on farther and faster doing the work better, bearing up against suffering or the sorrow more bravely. And maybe you feel wounded and wearied without a word being said, simply because you know they don't know. Then turn to the good Shepherd in whose 'feeble flock' you are and

remember that He remembers. Talk to Him about it, and if too weary even for that, then just lean on Him.

It is only when we are coming up from the wilderness, leaning on our Beloved, that we can realise how softly He is leading us. For if we are pulling this way and that way, straggling and struggling, wasting our steps by little turnings aside, He may have to resort to other means to keep us in the way. But if we are willing to lean, we shall soon find that He is leading not only rightly but softly too. And leading softly will not be leading slowly (Psalm 107:7).

For us, we have not passed this way before but the Lord Jesus has. It is all untrodden and unknown ground to us, but He knows it all by personal experience.

One sees at a glance that our leader Himself was not gently led. He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). He was led by men filled with wrath to the brow of a hill that they might cast Him down (Luke 4:19). He was led away to Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57). He was led into the council of the elders and chief priests and scribes (Luke 22:66) and then to Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:2). And then He, our Lord Jesus Christ, was led as a sheep to the slaughter (Acts 8:32),

led away to be crucified (John 19:16). But as for His people, *'He led them on safely so that they feared not'* (Psalm 58:53). Not only safely as to the end of the journey, but as to each step.

So He leadeth me! Responds your heart does it not? Softly and safely, step by step, mile by mile, till the journey is over and the Father's home reached. •

Editor's note: while looking through my bookshelf recently, I discovered some very old books written by Frances Ridley Havergal. This is taken from 'Starlight Through the Shadows' which was printed after her death in 1879.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART

One FMBC student shares what they have learnt from studying Puritan theology about the centrality of the heart in the Christian life.



Proverbs 4:23 exhorts us to keep our heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. What does it mean for a Christian to guard their heart? Why is the heart so important?

The English Puritan Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) — affectionately known as the ‘heavenly doctor’ because of the passionate way he spoke of the life-giving God — believed that the heart was at the centre of what it meant to experience a personal reformation.

Sibbes’ book, *Josiah’s Reformation*, was originally preached as a four-part sermon series on King Josiah’s

humbling before God (2 Chronicles 34:26-28). He interprets the Lord’s gracious response in the story to be a result of Josiah’s tender heart. The opening sermon, ‘The Tender Heart’, forms the foundational theology for the book. The heart acts as the command centre for all outward actions and so a transformation of its affections is required for a growth of holiness. In Josiah’s life, God averted him from seeing the disaster prophesied for Judah because of his genuine spirituality. Sibbes places God’s intervention as a direct response to Josiah’s efforts; therefore, reformation is to be accomplished completely

through Christ when the heart is submitted to God.

One of the key reasons why Sibbes placed the heart at the centre of his vision for personal reformation was because of the theology of union with Christ. The whole affections were to be united with one accord to Christ. If we have entertained Christ and He is in us then “we should have the same disposition, the same mind, and the same will with Him; for He will alter us to Himself.” Remarkable on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Sibbes says: He “lives in us to restore and transform our souls and ripen us for glory.” This union of the heart of man

with that of Christ is a key driver of personal reformation.

Sibbes' emphasis on the heart as the experiential focal point of personal reformation can also be attributed to the priority English Protestants placed on emotions: hard hearts must be ploughed and broken in order to be equipped and fit for use by the Holy Spirit. Deep-rooted surgery of the heart was required to see lasting change. Indeed, in our own experience that same deep-rooted surgery is necessary for God to challenge us to surrender to Him.

Perhaps influenced by the sixteenth-century Reformer, John Calvin, Sibbes believed our worship ought to be affectionate, with inspiration coming from the Spirit dwelling within: "the best confirmation for us [of the Spirit], as I have said, will be from familiar use... thus through Him we come into communion with God." Likewise, Sibbes believed that communion with God through the Spirit was the best condition for maintaining tenderness of heart. He sought a religion that was heartfelt; not merely an unwavering obedience to Scripture driven by legalism. Or, as the old Scottish adage puts it, "better felt than telt".

For Sibbes, the affections evidenced the Holy Spirit's work in the Christian life.

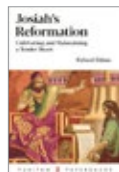
In one of the sermons in Josiah's Reformation, "The Art of Mourning", Sibbes sees true humiliation of the inward affections as manifesting itself in the outward actions. The Christian was not just to plead guilty and appeal to God's mercy, but to humble their heart in seeking God. His emphasis was that by humbling the heart, the more Christ would increase in the life. One contemporary of Sibbes wrote: "the lower ebb, the higher tide. The deeper our descent in humiliation, the higher our ascent in consolation... surely after the most toilsome labour is the sweetest sleep." Sibbes echoes this thinking as he writes: "the making of us as low as the ground itself... is fit to be humbled."

Sibbes has sometimes received criticism for a lack of focus on practical divinity, but he believed focusing on the heart would result in a practical reformation. He thought that it was the brokenness and tenderness of the heart that would be the source of effectiveness in ministry. Sibbes urges the humbling of the heart, under the conviction that God "will exalt us in due time". He saw the depravity

experienced before conversion as hard-heartedness, and the heart as central by God's design, so believed that conversion had to take place in the heart. Likewise, as the Christian sought to grow in godliness, the chief motivation was to be that of loving affection.

This emphasis on the importance of the heart permeated all parts of life and was especially visible in prayer. Sibbes recognised that even the Protestants in his day were vulnerable to dullness of religion. Christianity without Christ is lifeless! While accusations of mysticism can be thrown at anyone who so much as prays affectionately, Sibbes taught that the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in human experience and that His leading exalts Christ in the believer's heart.

Richard Sibbes' desire for personal reformation was grounded in a longing for Christ to be a vibrant reality in the believer's heart and not just dead religion. How we must guard our hearts, and ensure they are both broken and tender for God to use once again. •



"Josiah's Reformation" by Richard Sibbes is available to order from Faith Mission Bookshops

CHASING THE WRONG THINGS



Testimony by Stacey McLean



I was brought up in a non-Christian home with a loving mum and dad and a younger sister. Although my parents weren't Christians, we attended a local Sunday school where we heard the gospel stories. We thoroughly enjoyed being there.

However, growing up as a teenager, I made my own choices, which were not always good ones. As a child, some things happened outwith my family home that created anger and rebellion in me. This led me into a way of life that involved alcohol and drugs, and also to people who were living the same way. This isn't to blame anyone — it was my choice, my way of escape, my coping mechanism to avoid facing things that happened at an earlier age.

By this time I had a beautiful daughter, Rebecca. I am so blessed to have her, she has been the joy of my heart. To have a happy family life, friends, a job, a nice home, was everything to me. People would have thought I had everything, and on the outside I did, but there was an emptiness inside.

My dependency on drugs spiralled out of control and there were difficulties within my family relationships. I was losing everything that was dear to me, I couldn't see a way out. I became so lost and broken. At that time, my sister, who had her own struggles, became a Christian. She would often tell me I needed Jesus in my life, much to my annoyance. However, I did see a change in her. In a way

“We all have sins, but it was then that I realised I was guilty, that Christ had died for ME, in MY place, for MY sin. At that point I was broken inside. In tears, I realised my need for Jesus and His peace, I needed to get right with God.”

I wanted what she had, but I was terrified of what it would mean and what I would have to give up.

In September 2011, my sister was going to Aviemore for a weekend with the Stauros group she was involved in and invited me to go. I was curious about this Christian life and what they would be doing for a weekend with no drink or drugs. I now know that the Holy Spirit was drawing me and it was God who wanted me there.

That weekend was an experience unlike anything I'd ever had before. I had a perception of what I thought a Christian was — perfect people who went to church with their lives all sorted. It was so refreshing to find out that actually these people were normal. They had a past, people with their own struggles either with addiction or living with someone who had an addiction, but there was a peace and a joy about them accompanied by humility.

The speaker spoke from God's Word in Isaiah 53 — the beautiful passage that points to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died on the cross for all our sins, because we are all guilty and have fallen short of the glory of God. We all have

sins, but it was then that I realised I was guilty, that Christ had died for ME, in MY place, for MY sin. At that point I was broken inside. In tears, I realised my need for Jesus and His peace, I needed to get right with God. I prayed along with the group leaders, and that day I received Jesus as my personal Saviour.

That was September 3, 2011. I would love to say everything since then has been smooth. In reality I've had difficult days and difficult times, but God has been faithful and has kept His hand on me, always drawing me back to Himself when I lose my way. I now know where to go for help. I had chased the wrong things in life seeking for fulfilment, and at the end of it all was still unfulfilled. I now know that Jesus is everything I need, He fills me up. Jesus says: *'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me'* (John 14:6).

*When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glowing sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o'er life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know —
Not till then — how much I owe.*

Robert Murray McCheyne. ●

BY ANNA ANDERSON

Gave up all for India



Hannah Marshman (1767-1847) was the first female missionary to leave England for missionary work in India when she and her husband, Joshua, answered the call from William Carey to come and help with the work in Serampore, sixteen miles north of Calcutta. After labouring there for five-and-a-half years, Carey wrote to Joshua Marshman and William Ward: “I feel as a farmer does about his crop, sometimes I think the seed is springing up and then my hopes are gone like a cloud. They were only weeds which appeared, if a little corn sprung up it quickly died, being either choked with weeds or being parched up by the sun of persecution. Yet I still hope in God and will go forth in His strength.”

Hannah did not find it an easy decision, and struggled to leave England, but she committed herself to God for whatever lay ahead. After spending twenty weeks on board ship with William Ward, they and their two children arrived on 13 October, 1799. Six missionary families were living on the mission compound, all of whom were pioneers in modern missions. This group

were to produce the first editions of the New Testament in more than thirty languages and dialects, and printed the first books in Bengali.

“Where are the women?” was Hannah’s bewildered question when she arrived. Thanks to her efforts, many women would go forth to missionary work. While living at Serampore Mission,

Below: The old Mission Chapel (now called Serampore John Nagar Baptist Church), William Carey Road



Hannah began to show her strengths. She took on many of the burdens of managing everyday life at the Mission, kept the accounts, was a great help to her husband, and was a faithful and reliable support to her fellow missionaries. As well as looking after her twelve children, she cared for Carey's mentally ill wife. In spite of all she was doing, she wrote home to a friend: "I am not worthy of being employed in anything belonging to Christ and often wonder at the dispensations of God in sending me to this land, where so much grace is needed. I long for the increase of Christ's kingdom upon earth".

The Marshmans opened their first school in 1800, and by 1815 they were responsible for forty-five schools within a twenty-mile radius. Hannah was especially eager to see girls attending. Her approach to educating the young was faced with daily difficulties, but with a strong determination she became more zealous in achieving this goal. Crucially, in all their efforts, evangelism remained at the centre.

Living in India brought physical difficulties, a lack of proper accommodation, relentless diseases, with sickness and death all around. In the midst of these daily struggles, Hannah's writings

show that doubts crept in: "I am in bondage because of my sins and am afraid of Thy judgements, my heart is sick of iniquity, the hold of every unclean thought. I am terrified at the sight of myself. Cleanse Thou me. Jesus suffered the just for the unjust... but while I am shut up in unbelief, this salvation is lost to me, as though I am reserved for blackness and darkness forever." In 1820, she returned to England because of ill health. Perhaps this was a time of needed recovery from the many demands placed upon her — an opportunity to be built up both physically and spiritually. As soon as she regained her strength, she returned to Serampore.

Just before her husband died in December 1837, he wrote to her: "You have more than deserved all my love, you have been my strength in all my trials". "Your dear mother," he wrote to their daughter, "from love to the Redeemer, gave up all for the sake of His cause in India".

The following inscription to Hannah's memory is placed in the Mission Chapel at Serampore: "In memory of Hannah Marshman, widow of Joshua Marshman DD, the last surviving Member of the Mission family at Serampore, she arrived in this settlement in October 1799,

"Where are the women?" was Hannah's bewildered question when she arrived. Thanks to her efforts, many women would go forth to missionary work.

and opened a seminary to aid in the support of the Mission in May 1800, after having consecrated her life and property to the promotion of this sacred cause, and exhibited an example of humble piety and energetic benevolence for forty-seven years. She died at the age of eighty on 5 March, 1847."

Much can be learned from the lives of the Serampore missionaries. They did not hesitate to give up everything for the cause of Christ. They did not know what was ahead, but considered not the cost of leaving all behind to bring the good news of the gospel to India. *"Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest"* (Matthew 9:38). •

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BACK TO BANGOR!

It has been two years since we last had our Easter Convention in Bangor, Northern Ireland. It was such a blessing to be able to meet this year, and from the photos we can see how much folk enjoyed the Bible ministry and the fellowship. Why not put it in your calendar to come and join us next Easter — make it a family day out, bring a picnic. There is something for all the family.





WHAT GOD'S BEEN DOING AT HARBY FM CENTRE



BY ALISTAIR AND YVETTE PARK



We have the privilege of serving the Lord at The Faith Mission's Camp Centre in Harby, Leicestershire, in the Vale of Belvoir. There are around fifty villages in the vale, with very little Christian witness, if any, in many of them. Much of the three years we have been here has been spent in lockdown. We can honestly say that the Lord has been good to us, seeing us through many difficult situations: *'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me'* (Psalm 138:7).

God's Provision

Arriving at Harby in April 2019, we wanted to build on the good foundations already in place through the work of those who had gone before us. Due to new regulations, we realised that some upgrading of the facilities was necessary. After making a list — which included electrics, gas, an extractor fan over the cooker, fire alarm and fire extinguishers — the Lord led us to an electrician who gave practical help and advice on who to contact for the things he couldn't do. We were thankful to get all these things

in place, as well as a new play park, just before our three weeks of camps. Again, God helped by providing the helpers needed. The children came and we had a great time with them, with three children making professions of faith.

The Centre was busy every weekend as we facilitated groups from different churches, which gave us opportunities to get to know the leaders of some of the churches. Our desire was to build up relationships with them that we might be of use to them in Kingdom work. Unfortunately, just as we were getting to know the leaders, Alistair was cutting some trees down when one fell on his leg and caused him injury. This curtailed many of the things we had hoped to do. When he got out of hospital, the country was dealing with Covid and the Centre ministry more or less closed down. After a little time, we thought that getting a dog and walking along the canal would give opportunity to get to know some of the villagers, and this proved to be very fruitful. Many mornings were spent talking about Christian things to local people. It's amazing how people will stop and speak to you when you have a dog.



Above: The finished fire pit area

God's Preparation

Around this time, Wesley Brewer, who had recently completed his studies at FMBC and joined the Mission, came and worked with us. Over the next year he was a great help, especially practically, as he was a builder by trade before going into Bible College. This was when Yvette's ideas for the Centre really began to take off! One thought was for an outdoor seated area where people could just sit at night with a fire pit and have a barbecue. Since its completion, groups have commented on how lovely it is that they can get around the fire and sing together. The first group after lockdown asked us to come and sing with them — it was a very emotional night. We then turned our attention to the washing up area, which needed improvement. A commercial dishwasher was to be installed, but this meant stripping everything out of the room and beginning from scratch. The end result has proven to be a great help when it comes to washing up. Although not yet finished, we have also started work on a 'Nerf war' area.



Above: Wesley at work

Along with the list of practical things we wanted to do, we were very keen to do outreach. We decided to visit our local village, going from door to door on Valentine's Day and putting through each letterbox a small chocolate heart and a tract that spoke of love. This started people talking, particularly on Facebook; it caused quite a debate. At Easter we followed up with something similar, this time delivering small chocolate eggs and a fridge magnet with a Bible verse on it. We built on this with a drive-in service, inviting the people from around the village. It was encouraging to have a good crowd, especially some from the village, who heard the 'good news' of the gospel.

God's Plans

As we write, we are arranging a one-day conference on 21 May, involving two services with a meal in between. It's been a long time since a conference was held at the Centre, and

we would value your prayers that those who come will catch a vision for the work in this area. We are also planning to start a Rejuvenate meeting for the local young people, and have a desire to do some outreach breakfasts with a gospel talk in the Centre. And, of course, we look forward to our summer camps, which will be the first in two years.

If we were asked what the great need of this District is, we would have to say two things. The first is **prayer** — we have only one Prayer Union, which meets on Zoom once a month. The folks who join us are brilliant and a real encouragement to us, but we would love to see more. The other is a **young couple** who have a heart for evangelism for the rural villages of the vale. What could be done with such a couple who had a heart for England and were willing to sacrifice all for Him and work alongside us to reach the people for Christ. ●

Below: The much-improved washing up area



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