

SKY-WAY MESSAGES



Pointing People Heavenward

Internet Bible Materials

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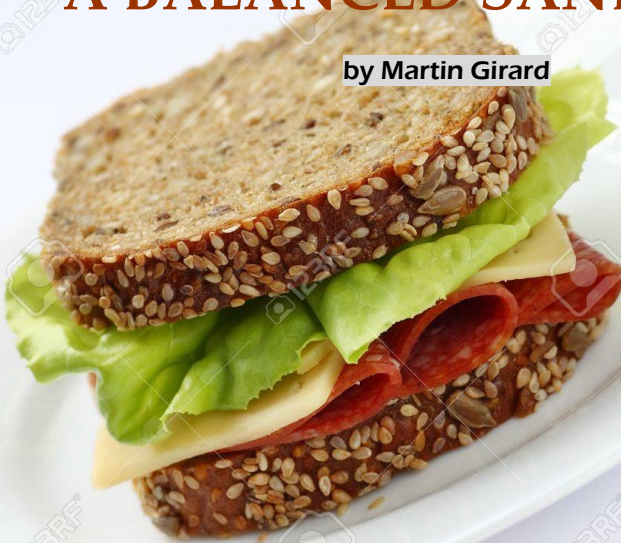
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A BALANCED SANDWICH

by Martin Girard



Sometimes in our reading of the Word of God a verse of Scripture stands out from the rest. One such verse in Psalm 28 struck me and can perhaps be likened to a balanced sandwich. It is worth examining it in a little detail:-

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him. (Psalm 28:7, KJV)

David was the author of Psalm 28 which begins with a cry for help. If God could not help David, to whom could he turn? He was conscious of “the workers of iniquity” who surrounded him and could not be trusted (v.3). David wanted God to know that he had no intention of associating with *them*. But although desperate for help, David was assured that the Lord had heard his voice (v.6). The next verse (which we will consider) is a personal testimony as well as a reminder which David gives himself. It can be divided into three parts.

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION

The words, “The LORD is my strength and my shield” present a twofold *personal explanation*: He is *my* strength and *my* shield. David does not speak of God *giving* him strength but of Him actually being the very source of his strength. When he faced a lion and a bear David was able to overcome them because he was trusting in the LORD, but left to his own devices he failed. The sad account of his adultery with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 demonstrates this point. Within himself he was weak; David needed the LORD as his strength.

Not only was the LORD David's *strength*; He was also his *shield*. When he went out to fight Goliath the giant, David did so without any conventional weapons of warfare in his hand. The giant utterly despised him for this, but David's trust was in the LORD whom Goliath and the Philistine armies had defied (1 Sam.17:45). David knew the importance of being protected by the LORD constantly, hence the analogy of a shield.



A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

The words in the middle of the verse flow from David's personal explanation. He could write, "My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped." Notice the reference to the *heart*, which is the centre of one's being. In the past David had *trusted* (past tense) in Him. Have you done that? The Lord Jesus invites us to yield our lives to Him, as the words, "My son, give me thine heart" indicate (Prov.23:26a). We need to gladly receive Him as our personal Saviour.

The tense used next may not seem right, for the psalmist stated, "I am helped," rather than "I *was* helped". This brings out an important point. Trust in Him in the past must be decisive, but from that experience *ongoing help* can be derived. The heart that trusted in Him in the past was not helped on that one occasion only. Instead, help continued to flow from Him. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart" (Prov.3:5). This practical experience, enjoyed by David, can be ours too.



A POWERFUL EXPRESSION

The verse concludes with the words, "Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him." *Gladness* filled the soul of David. With his heart he had trusted in the LORD; now that same heart was rejoicing greatly. It was therefore no ordinary rejoicing! Should not our hearts rejoice too, for "we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom.8:37).

Wonderful though it is to have gladness within the heart, the joy needs to be released. This was David's *glory*: "With my song will I praise Him." He simply could not remain quiet! This powerful expression of praise could be heard by others. David had a song to sing! His God had done great things for him and was worthy of praise.



This one verse of Scripture contains so much spiritual food. Meditate upon it, and let it fill and thrill your soul. We, too, have a song of victory which we can sing. May we prove the Lord, as David did, and go on singing His praises until He calls us home to heaven.

Nothing But Christ

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

by Martin Girard

Colosse was located in the Roman province of Phrygia which is in present-day Turkey. Its name may have been derived from “colossus” on account of the dramatic limestone formations found in the area. The city developed near to the Lycus River which flows westwards. Not far away were Hierapolis (a centre for both health and religion) and Laodicea, although Colosse was smaller than both. A military route from the River Euphrates to the west passed through the area resulting in Colosse being a commercial centre. When Paul wrote his epistle, Jews had been living in the area for two centuries and had adopted Gentile practices. It is estimated that by 50BC some 50,000 Jews were in the locality. Although Colosse had prospered, at the time of Paul’s epistle it was starting to decline.

TIMING AND TRAVELS

Paul had visited Ephesus on his third missionary journey, so Colosse may well have been evangelized at the same time. According to Acts 19:10 Paul had remained in the area for two years. From Colossians 1:7 it is quite likely that Epaphras was converted through Paul’s ministry and took the message of salvation to his own people. This would have been around AD53-56. Apart from Philemon (in whose home the church met) and his family, Paul evidently did not know the believers at Colosse who were mainly Gentiles. This impression is formed by comparing the references to those who were “alienated and enemies” (1:21,KJV) and who had never seen Paul’s face (2:1). The epistle to Philemon should be read in conjunction with Colossians, for it names Apphia and Archippus, the wife and son of Philemon (v.2). Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17.



WHY THE EPISTLE?

Epaphras had informed Paul of some errors troubling the church at Colosse. One was Jewish ritualism, while another was an early form of Gnosticism. Paul wrote in order to combat this false teaching. Comparing Colossians 4:7-9 with Philemon 12, it would seem that Tychicus and Onesimus delivered the epistle. According to early tradition, Paul wrote the letter when he was a prisoner in Rome about AD61-63 – though it could have been written a few years earlier when he was imprisoned in Ephesus.



THEMES COVERED

In the first two chapters Paul refutes the teachings of Gnosticism that there are mediating beings and that mystical experiences can equip us with knowledge. Mistaken views relating to the person of Christ are also corrected. In the second chapter Paul confronts Judaism, pointing out that ceremonial observances have been done away in Christ. The third chapter answers the claims of Antinomianism – that those who are under grace need not practise self-control.

In dealing with the erroneous “wisdom” and “knowledge” being circulated, Paul directs the attention of his readers to Jesus Christ “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). The concept of the Body of Christ is developed in which He is viewed as Head. The epistle moves from a *doctrinal* emphasis in the first two chapters to a *practical* one in the last two chapters. Having demonstrated what we are in Christ, we are shown our responsibilities in living up to these doctrinal truths. Although similar to Ephesians in some respects, the emphasis in these two epistles is different. In Ephesians the believer is pictured “in Christ”; in Colossians Christ is seen in the believer. Both epistles present the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, but in Colossians the emphasis is placed on Christ being the Head.

Christ
the Head

COLOSSIANS - BRIEFLY

After his introductory greetings Paul turns to thanksgiving and prayer (1:1-23). He then warns of the perils which we face when our attention is not focused on Christ (1:24-2:23). The practical section of the epistle follows in which emphasis is placed on living the new life (3:1-4:6) before the concluding greetings and instructions (4:7-18).

Believers are complete in Christ (2:10). We need to be “rooted and built up in Him” (2:7), seeking “those things which are above” (3:1). As we await Christ’s promised return, Colossians would teach us to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus (3:4,17).

"FIX YOUR EYES UPON JESUS"

by Martin Girard

In the middle of the last century Norman Clayton wrote a short song which some people will remember:

***When the road is rough and steep
Fix your eyes upon Jesus,
He alone has power to keep,
Fix your eyes upon Him.***

The tune was catchy, and the song appealed to young people – and to some older ones too! Although the song was simple, its message was instructive and remains true today. When life's pathway is difficult the believer must remember to fix his or her eyes upon Jesus. It is helpful to be reminded of this – but as a matter of fact we should *fix our eyes upon Jesus* all the time and not only when life is difficult!

One passage of Scripture, in particular, expands on this theme. It is found in the opening verses of Hebrews 12:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, ² Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (KJV)

It is worth meditating on these verses for a short while.

This passage must be understood in its context. Hebrews 11 is the great “faith chapter” of the New Testament, presenting us with one example after another of those who triumphed over adversity by means of faith. In spite of difficulties, each man or woman listed in the chapter *persevered*. We are not to forget them. Together, they form that great “cloud of witnesses” which surrounds us. We might picture them as spectators in the grandstand, watching a sporting event taking place on the field below them. They are not watching in order to be entertained: rather, they were competitors in their younger days but have now “retired” from the sport. Still maintaining an interest, they are occupying seats in the grandstand to watch the next generation of youthful sportsmen and women as they compete.



TO BE INSPIRED

The heroes of Hebrews 11 were actually very ordinary people – just like you and me. They had their weaknesses and faults, but they all triumphed by faith. For them, their earthly conflict is over. Now they are at rest in the Lord’s presence. We can be inspired by their example as we reflect on their lives. Like them, we have a “race that is set before us” demanding strength and perseverance. We must be aware of distractions which may rob us of blessing, and thus we must “lay aside every weight” that might hinder our progress. Like the athlete in the race we must not carry unnecessary “baggage” which might slow us down, for the race must be “run”. In particular we must remember the ever-present danger posed by “sin”. Like lengths of almost invisible wire, it lurks at our feet in order to trip us up.

How can we avoid the snare of sin and triumph in the race like the victors of Hebrews 11? Not only do we have their example: there is Another for us to consider. The Lord Jesus is described as “the author and finisher of our faith” (v.2) who has led the way. How could it be said that He “endured the cross, despising the shame”? His experiences at the cross were more painful than the worst endured by any other person. He was pure and holy beyond our understanding. The “shame” He endured surpasses our comprehension – yet He *despised* it. How could He do that?



The answer is found in the words, “Who for the joy that was set before Him” (v.2). That was why He “endured the cross”. The Lord Jesus looked ahead to the accomplishment of His work and to the joy that would be experienced when He would “see of the travail of His soul” and “be satisfied” (Isa.53:11). That joy enabled Him to complete the work which He had been given. Now He is seated “at the right hand of the throne of God” (v.2).

The heroes of Hebrews 11 have left us with a number of great examples, but as we continue in the Christian pathway we do not focus our attention on *them*. No – we “consider Him” and persevere by “looking unto Jesus”. Weariness in the pathway is not unusual. Athletes and competitors in sporting events know only too well how it is possible to become exhausted. We may well “be wearied” and become “faint in [our] minds” as we battle against life’s problems. This is when we must “consider Him” and remember how He endured until the end. Nehemiah encouraged the people of his day by saying, “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh.8:10). We can discover this too.

“Consider Him”

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

In Acts 7 we learn how someone else triumphed by faith. Stephen is often referred to as the first Christian martyr – and since his execution hundreds of thousands of others must have received similar treatment. Stephen resembled the Lord Jesus in so many ways. Like his Saviour, Stephen was falsely accused (Acts 6:13) and faced the mockery of a trial. His defence before those who hated him was truthful, brave and fearless. After recounting accurately the purposes of God towards His people, Stephen confronted those who had accused him with courage and spiritual wisdom. They were “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” and had always resisted the Holy Spirit (v.51). Convicted by his words, his enraged listeners turned on him with bitter hatred.

In times of crisis the Lord never leaves His faithful servants to stand alone. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen “looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (v.55). Joyfully he announced to his listeners what he had seen, but they “stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord” (v.57). Next they cast him out of the city, pelting him with heavy stones (v.58).



Although the pain must have been intense, Stephen was still looking up to the Lord whom he had seen in glory. Like his Saviour who prayed for those who had nailed Him to the cross in Luke 23:34, Stephen prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (v.60). Just as Jesus had committed Himself to the Father in Luke 23:46, Stephen yielded himself to his Master with the words, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (v.59). Having done this, we read “he fell asleep” (v.60).

This statement is truly incredible. How is it possible that Stephen’s death by stoning could be compared to falling asleep? Very simply, Stephen had seen the Lord Jesus and was at peace. His experience is not unique as others facing a cruel death at the hands of hateful enemies have also been conscious of the Lord’s presence. We might also

“he fell asleep”

think of some dear saints of God who died from natural causes but passed from this life with a radiant expression on their faces. Without endorsing any kind of mystical experience, is it not possible that the Lord might grant a vision of glory to one of His children about to pass from time into eternity?

THE EYE OF FAITH

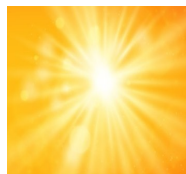
It is clear from Acts 7 that Stephen actually saw Jesus “standing on the right hand of God” (v.55). Few believers will have had a vision such as this, “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor.5:7). The expression “looking unto Jesus” in Hebrews 12:2 does not refer to seeing Him with out physical eyes, for that is not possible now. Some have described the experience as using “the eye of faith” to see Him. When the road is rough and steep we must *fix our eyes upon Jesus*. We look up to Him, focusing our attention on where He is. Our Lord and Saviour lives beyond death in a place of unspeakable glory. We must set our affection on the things that are above where He is – seated at the right hand of God (Col.3:1,2). Our progress in this world depends on Him, so we must look to Him by faith daily.



It would be wrong to say nothing about the end of the journey. Those who have been cleansed from their sin through the precious blood of Jesus and redeemed by the Lamb can look forward to the fulfilment of our Lord's request: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (Jn.17:24). The prospects for the believer are “out of this world” so to speak.

“WE SHALL SEE HIM”

Although we may not see Him now, as 1 Peter 1:8 says, “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn.3:2). All who belong to the Lord Jesus will one day gaze upon the face that Stephen saw. This is guaranteed to happen when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven – and perhaps that event will take place very soon. There will then be a great transformation, for His people will instantly be made like Him.



If we are going to see Him one day and gaze upon Him for ever, we ought to cherish every opportunity we have to draw near to Him *now*. We can see Him, by faith, as we read His Word. Not only in life's trials but every day may the Lord graciously enable us to *fix our eyes upon Jesus*. Can we do anything better than this?

“Fix your eyes upon Him”

Fear Not - GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

by Martin Girard

The words above which have been chosen for the title of this article are familiar to many. In the account of Christ's birth we find the message of comfort brought by an angel to the shepherds at Bethlehem on that unforgettable night: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Lk.2:10 KJV). In those "good tidings of great joy" we find the key for unlocking the theme of this article. Very simply, we need not fear what faces us because of the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world. His presence can dispel our fears!

The *CHRISTIANITY FAQ* website helpfully lists the verses in the Bible where the words "fear not" are found (1). Using the KJV, the expression appears no less than 61 times in Scripture – 47 being in the Old Testament and 14 in the New Testament. In addition to this, the words "fear ye not" and similar expressions appear 31 more times. Obviously we have to be selective and cannot comment on anywhere near one hundred references! As we approach this subject our aim is to be practical and helpful, rather than scholarly and academic. Although the Bible can be studied with great profit and must be rightly understood, it is also available to help us practically in the trials and difficulties of life.



FIRST AND LAST

It can often be helpful to identify the first and last references to a particular theme in Scripture. The first occasion where the words "fear not" are found is in Genesis 15:1: "After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen.15:1). Not long before, God had called Abram from idolatry to commence a journey to a destination that was unknown as far as Abram was concerned (12:1). Difficulties had been encountered along the way, including a very daring rescue

when Abram set out to free his nephew Lot from enemy hands. The venture resulted in many more people than Lot and his family being delivered, but Abram had refused any reward offered by those who were grateful to have been given their freedom again.

Immediately after those events (described in Genesis 14) we read of God speaking words of reassurance to His servant. Had he done the right thing to refuse rewards which would have made him richer than he was? “Fear not,” God said to Abram: “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (15:1). God’s reward was greater than anything which the king of Sodom could offer! But if Abram felt apprehensive of the way ahead, the LORD reassured him with those comforting words, “Fear not.” He would be with him as a shield to protect him from further danger.



For ourselves, as we face an uncertain future in a world of danger, these precious words of comfort can dispel any lingering fears. The LORD who accompanied Abram on his journey will be with us as we travel through a hostile world. He will be *our* shield too.

The first time we encounter “fear not” in the New Testament is in Matthew 1:20. Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, was facing uncertainty. News had reached him that she was “with child” before their marriage. Should he break the engagement on account of what had happened? He was “a just man” and did not want to cause Mary any unnecessary public shame (1:19). “While he thought on these things ... the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (v.20).

First

It is interesting to note that Joseph was both “just” and thoughtful. God’s words of reassurance (“fear not”) are not for those who are careless or worldly. We need to be just (or righteous) in behaviour, like Joseph. We also should take care to *think* rather than acting hastily. If we are seeking to please the Lord, as he was, we can be sure that the Lord will allay our fears whenever we are perplexed.

The final reference to fear in Scripture is found in Revelation 1:17. John, the elderly apostle who was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, had seen the Lord Jesus in all His glory. As a result of this vision, he “fell at His feet as dead”. But the risen Lord laid His right hand on the apostle saying, “Fear not: I am the first and the last” (v.17). Seeing the Lord in such a blaze of glory was terrifying for John as a mere mortal, but the Lord spoke those familiar words of comfort, “Fear not”. If, like John, we are in His presence, we need not be afraid either.

Final

SO MANY MORE!

Between the verses in Genesis and Revelation which we have looked at, we can find many more containing the familiar words, “Fear not”. On some occasions they were uttered by God Himself; on other occasions they were uttered by an angel or by a human messenger. The books in the Bible containing this expression **“fear not”** the most times are Genesis and Isaiah in the Old Testament and Luke in the New Testament. Three times in Isaiah 41, within the space of a few verses, the Lord encouraged His troubled people to “fear not” (vv.10,13,14). It is a comfort to know the nearness of the presence of the One who declares, “Fear thou not: for I am with thee” (v.10). Even though our insignificance may be likened to that of a worm (v.14), our God is present beside us to hold our right hand and help us along life’s pathway (v.13).



Shortly before his death, Moses addressed the people of Israel. Knowing the challenges facing them as they entered the Promised Land, he encouraged them to “be strong and of a good courage” and to “fear not” (Dt.31:6). As we face the challenges of the unknown future we can take to heart these same words to strengthen us. When the pathway ahead seems uncertain we need reassurance too. So many of God’s dear people down through the centuries have received that same promise and have found encouragement: “The LORD ... doth go before thee: He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed” (Dt.31:8). The promise is still valid for you today, whatever your circumstances and needs in life may be.



At the beginning of this article we thought of the shepherds at Bethlehem who were terrified by “the glory of the Lord” which “shone round about them” when an angel appeared in the stillness of the night (Lk.2:9). It was the “good tidings” of the Saviour’s birth which caused the angel to tell the shepherds to “fear not”. A little earlier, on two previous occasions, those familiar words had brought peace to troubled souls. First, Zacharias had a similar experience to the shepherds when an angel appeared before him to bring him the news that his wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to a son named John (Lk.1:12,13). Then Mary, destined to be the mother of Jesus, was also troubled by the appearance of an angel. She, too, heard those words of comfort addressed personally to her, “Fear not, Mary” (v.29,30). Do these verses not teach us that God would not have His people to be overwhelmed by what lies before them? Those tender words show the mercy and compassion of our Father.

THE LORD HIMSELF

Of the four gospel writers it has often been pointed out that Luke presents Jesus as a Man. Four times in his gospel Luke records the Lord Jesus saying “Fear not” –

twice to individuals and twice to a group. After the miraculous catch of fishes Simon Peter felt very unworthy. Humbled at his own ignorance as a skilled fisherman he had said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Lk.5:8). But Jesus had a plan for Peter’s life and gently responded by saying, “Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men” (5:10).

The other individual who heard those tender words was Jairus. He had appealed to Jesus for help because his only daughter was very ill. A messenger had then arrived bringing Jairus the tragic news that it was too late for Jesus to intervene because the little girl had died. Although **"believe"** Jesus had not been told directly He knew how Jairus would be feeling. Turning to him, He said, “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole” (8:50). What a compassionate Saviour we have! Whether we are facing a task, such as soul-winning, which seems beyond us, or whether we are confronted by death, the Lord would have us be unafraid. Our need and weakness present us with an opportunity to trust Him.

There are also the two occasions when the Lord Jesus addressed His followers as a group. In Luke 12 the Lord sought to remove the fears of His people. Rather than fearing human beings whose power is limited to killing the body, we ought to fear God who has the power to “cast into hell” (vs.4,5). If we fear God (meaning to reverence Him) we need never fear man. The sparrows being sold in the marketplace were cheap, but God’s children “are of more value than many sparrows” (v.7). In human terms they may be viewed as just a “little flock” with no great ability. However, God delights to take up and use what is weak. Though of little value on earth, the Lord has a wonderful future planned for those who love Him. “Fear not, little flock,” He declared, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (v.32).



CONCLUDING THOUGHT

As we bring these thoughts to a conclusion, have you ever wondered why the words “fear not” are found so often in the Bible? The answer is really very simple. Each person who was told to “fear not” was actually fearful, otherwise they would never have been told not to fear! We are just like that. All kinds of situations can make us fearful – especially as we anticipate the unknown future. The Lord does not want us to fear anyone or anything. We can “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim.2:1). Go back in thought to Bethlehem and think of the “good tidings of great joy” that have been made known (Lk.2:10). The Saviour who in great love for us died for our sins at Calvary will never leave us or forsake us (Heb.13:5). He is sufficient for our every need. Let us then “fear not” whatever lies before us but trust the One who is able to hold our hand and lead us safely on.

(1) <https://christianityfaq.com/how-many-times-is-fear-not-in-the-bible/>

READY FOR HIS RETURN

by Martin Girard

Since the beginning of Church history believers have been looking for Christ's return. At the time of our Lord's ascension to heaven the promise that "this same Jesus" would return was given by "two men ... in white apparel" who appeared before the watching disciples (Acts 1:10,11 KJV). Their words simply confirmed promises made earlier by the Lord Jesus in verses such as John 14:3.

Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians are believed to be some of the first of his recorded writings. In them there are indications that Paul himself looked for the Lord's *return* rather than for death in that he included himself in the words "we which are alive and remain" (1 Th.4:17) at the time of His coming again. Paul and many succeeding generations have lived their lives and passed from this scene. The promise of Christ's return has not yet been realized, but we are now more than two thousand years closer to its fulfilment.

Down through the centuries there have been events which made believers think that the return of the Lord Jesus must be very near. Messages encouraging believers to "look up" were preached in the sincere belief that Christ was coming very soon. Stirring though those messages may have been, it was evidently not the moment God had planned for the return of His Son. We are still waiting for Him to come again from heaven.

Events taking place as this article is being written could be significant pointers to Christ's return, but by the time this is read the world scene may be very different. It may turn out that those events were not so significant after all, and subsequent happenings among the nations may appear to possess greater significance. Bearing this in mind we will approach the subject in a broader way by looking at trends rather than specific events.

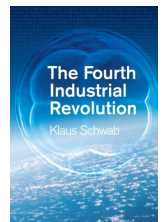
POINTERS TO CONSIDER

In the New Testament a picture is painted of the kind of days there will be before the return of Christ. The Lord Jesus drew the attention of His listeners to “the days of Noah” in Luke 17:26,27. Before the Flood men and women were living busy lives and were totally indifferent while Noah preached of coming judgment. Those days were marked by corruption and violence (Gen.6:11). “The days of Lot” were also mentioned by the Lord Jesus (Lk.17:28,29). As in Noah’s day, people carried on living their sinful lives regardless of God’s displeasure.

NEWS

Readers in many parts of the world will be well aware that we are living in very similar days now. Society is plagued with corruption and violence, while homosexuality has become rampant and is shamelessly promoted. These pointers to Christ’s return must not be ignored, for they are signs of coming judgment.

Those who track the development of policies within the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the World Economic Forum will be well aware of global agendas which are being pursued. Books written by Klaus Schwab of the W.E.F. reveal his intention of implementing “The Great Reset” or “The Fourth Industrial Revolution”. Agenda 2030 with its seventeen “Sustainable Development Goals” is being pushed through globally by the United Nations. The intention is to dramatically alter our lives and control what we do. Klaus Schwab and his “adviser” Yuval Harari make no secret of their delight in promoting transhumanism. They describe a kind of *Humanity Version 2.0* which will replace the humanity we know today. They imply that God’s creation of humanity was deficient and they can do better!



The plan of the globalists is to take control of our lives through implementing Central Bank Digital Currency and a Digital ID for every person on the planet. It is not possible to discuss these matters at length here, but readers are encouraged to engage in their own research. For those who do, it will soon become clear that technology already exists to introduce the system of the Beast where buying and selling will be impossible without having received his “mark” (Rev.13:17). This alone should make us sit up and take notice. Surely the Lord’s return is near!



“WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS”

Shortly before His death the Lord Jesus was asked by His disciples about “the sign” of His coming (Mt.24:3). Rather than giving them one particular sign the Lord Jesus painted a picture of what life would be like from that moment on and particularly in the days immediately preceding His return. His first warning is one

of particular importance: “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Mt.24:4). We need that warning as much now as when our Lord first gave it. **DECEIT!** He also spoke of coming “wars and rumours of wars” but told His disciples not to be troubled by these things (v.6). This decade has not been without its share of wars which have claimed countless lives and caused untold destruction and misery.

Events in Israel are always significant too. Many prophetic Scriptures reveal what is going to take place in that country during the Great Tribulation, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon. Although we believe the Rapture of the Church will take place before the commencement of that significant period of 7 years, we may see some of the pieces falling into place in our day.



DON'T JUST UNDERSTAND!

Important as it is to understand what God has revealed in His Word, we need more than just head knowledge of what is going to take place. As we study Scripture we discover the great emphasis that is placed on serving the Lord faithfully as we wait for Him to come. This practical focus is found in many of our Lord's parables.

In Luke 19:12-27 Jesus presented a parable about a nobleman who entrusted his servants with responsibilities before setting out for a far country. While the citizens of his home country hated the nobleman, his servants were provided with equal sums of money to use in his absence. The story describes how some were faithful with the money entrusted to them and used it wisely, but one was lazy and failed to use what he had been given. When the master returned he called his servants to see how responsibly they had acted, rewarding some for their diligence. After this he meted out judgment on the citizens who had shown their hatred of him.



The application to be made from this parable is very straightforward. We who belong to the Lord Jesus are His servants and are responsible to use wisely what has been entrusted to us. While our Lord is despised and rejected in this world we are to serve Him faithfully. The servants in the parable knew that their master was going away “to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return” (v.12). In the same way we know our Lord is destined to reign in His kingdom and will therefore return, but we also know that we are accountable to Him. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” in order for our service to be assessed by Him (2 Cor.5:10). It is therefore vital for us to use our time wisely and serve Him while we are able. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are accountable to Him.

CONSTANT READINESS

Various Scriptures reveal how important it is to remain in a constant state of readiness as we think of Christ's promised return. The Apostle John wrote, "And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 Jn.2:28). The Lord Jesus could appear at any time, but are we ready to meet Him? Where might we be when He returns from heaven? Would we be ashamed if He found us in a certain place at His return? This thought ought to challenge us when we think about the world's places of entertainment. Surely we would not want to be "caught out" and unprepared for Him by being in a place of which He would not approve.



The Christian believer is like a soldier facing combat. We are in a battle against the forces of evil. Using this illustration, the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that the effective soldier will not entangle himself with unrelated civilian affairs if he wishes to please his commanding officer (2 Tim.2:4). As we fight against the powers of darkness it is easy to become sidetracked and lose our focus. Surely we should aim to please the One who has chosen us to be His soldiers. Like Paul, we should seek to "be accepted of Him" at all times (2 Cor.5:9).

IN ANTICIPATION

Although the return of the Lord Jesus is certain, we do not know when it will be. His message to the church at Philadelphia was, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev.3:11). These words indicate how it is possible for a reward to be lost. In the light of His coming, we must "hold fast" to that which we possess in order not to lose it. He will come "quickly" – without advance notification – and it will be *soon* as far as He is concerned. The final promise in the Bible is one made by the Lord Jesus, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev.22:20). We ought to respond gladly by saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (v.20).



At the beginning of this article we highlighted a number of reasons why we believe the return of Christ is very near. We must remain vigilant, living for Him, serving Him, and looking for Him. May we be ready for His return!

ONLY BY SURRENDER!

by Martin Girard

⁸ And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. ⁹ He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. ¹⁰ For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. [Jeremiah 21:8-10]

For those who are prepared to look, the theme of God's Salvation can be found latent within many passages of Scripture. One such example is in the verses printed above. God was speaking to His rebellious people through His servant Jeremiah, explaining how their lives might be spared. Salvation, for them, could not be obtained by means of their own wits: strangely, it could only be found by surrender to the Babylonians. Similarly, the New Testament makes it clear that we are saved through surrendering ourselves to God. Notice in these few verses five points concerning biblical Salvation.

1. A DISCERNED WAY

On account of their sin, God had already planned to deliver Jerusalem and its people into the hands of the Babylonians (v.10). With *ruin* ahead because God's face was against them, the inhabitants of Jerusalem urgently needed a *remedy*.

For us, the background is similar. We are guilty of sinning against God and deserve His wrath to fall upon us. How can this be avoided? We, too, need a remedy – otherwise we will face eternal loss.

2. A DECLARED WAY

God had chosen His *messenger* who would declare a *message* to the doomed people. Although He was not obliged to act, God – in pity and yet with authority – told Jeremiah what he was to say (v.8a).

The New Testament makes clear to us how God has spoken finally through His Son (Heb.1:2). Could anything be more authoritative than this? The message has been declared through evangelists ever since the formation of the Church at Pentecost.

3. A DISTINCT WAY

Jeremiah could be in no doubt about the message he had received. It was *explicit*, for it concerned “the way of life, and the way of death” (v.8b). Using the word “behold” as he addressed his listeners, Jeremiah was to *explain* “the way” clearly.

In this twenty-first century, the Way of Salvation is distinct from any other, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

4. A DEFINED WAY

How *certain* was the message of Jeremiah! Nobody could be left in any doubt. Its content was *compelling*. The person who remained in Jerusalem would “die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence” (v.9a). Escape from each of these threats would be impossible.

Can we not see a parallel for ourselves? If we remain where we are and trust in our own resources we will be lost. Such knowledge ought to cause us great consternation.

5. A DECISIVE WAY

To be saved, the people of Jerusalem had to *surrender* to the Babylonians (v.9b). What a *surprise*! This was certainly not what they would have expected to do.

For us, surrender to God and to Christ is vital. In our sin we must yield ourselves to Jesus Christ, calling upon Him for mercy. We can plead no merits of our own. The way of salvation stands in stark contrast to the works-based “way of salvation” found in the religions of man.

Through the finished work of Christ the Saviour we can be forgiven and saved, but we must accept what He has done for us and yield our sinful lives to Him. In the eyes of the world this is “foolishness”, but there is no other way to be saved (1 Cor.1:18). Salvation is a free gift offered to poor, helpless sinners. To receive it we must come empty-handed and receive God’s free pardon offered in Christ. As for the person who is willing to come God’s way, “He shall live” (v.9). Will you?

