

# THE NEW COVENANT NEWS



No. 135

July, 2015

## News and Notes

### Jerusalem

Paper given by Darryl Roe at the 2015 Conference.

### Journeys

Paper given by Merv Buckmaster at the 2015 Conference.

### Jerusalem —

#### **Rejected by the Nations until the Fulfilment of the Gentiles**

Paper written by Zoe Tsakonas and read by  
Ian Miller at the 2015 Conference.

### The Ground on Which We Stand

Paper given by Robert Simpson at the 2015 Conference.

### A Tribute to John Thompson

### Strength

Devotion given by Felicity Bhatnagar at the 2015 Conference

## NEWS AND NOTES

### **New Editor**

Since October 1979, The New Covenant News has been edited and compiled by Harry Shallcross with the assistance of his wife, Shirley. Before this time the Newsletter was produced by Harry's father, Will Shallcross. Because of Harry's recent ill health the editorship and production of the Newsletter has now been passed to Mervyn and Joan Buckmaster.

The original purpose of the newsletter was to offer articles by Bible Students for consideration by those who are interested in the gospel message. It is also used as a means of communication with friends and fellow believers around the world who we don't have the opportunity to meet with. The articles we print are usually papers given at our annual conference and also addresses given to our small Sunday congregation. We are blessed that some of our number spend a lot of time preparing these talks and we feel that many of our readers will also receive blessings from reading them. From time to time we also print questions from brethren on the internet and answers prepared by our congregation after consideration at our Sunday meetings.

Our aim will be to continue the production of a Newsletter for all who are interested in the gospel message and to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Conference 2016**

Our Conference next year will be held at Lyrebird Park, Yellingbo, from Saturday 2nd to Monday 4th April, inclusive. You will note that the length of the Conference has been reduced from four to three days. The topic will be *“Defending the Christian Hope”*. There will be more information in future issues.

*Editor.*

### **THE NEW COVENANT NEWS**

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The New Covenant News is produced by an Editor responsible to the Christian Bible Students (Melbourne). All thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Group, and readers are requested to heed the words: *“Prove all things”* (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

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# JERUSALEM

Paper given by Darryl Roe at the 2015 Conference

Jerusalem. What does that name mean to you? When I think of Jerusalem I think of conflict. I think of anger. I think of four different cultures trying to live together, but with limited success – Moslems, Jews, Armenians and Greek Orthodox believers. Each has a religion, each has a god, but there is no common ground and no unity, which means that there is no lasting peace.

Of all the cities in the world, the city of Jerusalem is perhaps the most important to the serious Bible Student, because of its biblical origin, its history, its location, and its future significance. The name Jerusalem is mentioned in the scriptures over 600 times, and is considered to be the most important city in the world at this end of the Gospel Age. Jerusalem is sacred to the Moslem, the Jew, the Armenian and the Christian.

The word Jerusalem means ‘Vision of Peace.’ It is situated in Israel today about 25 kilometres west of the Dead Sea and about 60 kilometres inland from the Mediterranean. The first mention of Jerusalem, or Salem as it was then called, in the Bible is found in Genesis 14 where Melchizedek, the king and priest of Salem accepted tithes offered to him from Abraham after Abraham and his men had won an important battle to rescue his nephew Lot who had been arrested by four important kings in the area.

In Genesis 22 we are told that God asked Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, which later became part of the city of Jerusalem. About 800 years later in history King David made Jerusalem Israel’s capital, when he and his men captured the city and set up his royal palace and God’s sanctuary on Mount Zion. David wanted to build a temple there, but because David was a warrior it was Solomon, his son, who built a magnificent temple there instead.

It lasted about 350 years until Israel became a divided kingdom and then an idolatrous people, so God sent the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take the remnant of Judah captive to Babylon to teach them a lesson for their unfaithfulness. Jerusalem was conquered and burnt around 586BC. Later, when some of the Jews returned to Jerusalem, the temple was re-built under Zerubbabel, a descendant of Nathan, the son of David. Later, in 444 BC in the time of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, despite some very strong opposition from surrounding nations.

However, the temple did not last very long, because Antiochus Epiphanes, who was a Greek ruler, captured the city and plundered the temple, consecrating it to the Greek god Zeus in 168 BC. Twenty six years later, in 142 BC, Judas Maccabee and his followers established an independent Hasmonean Kingdom that ruled much of Judea until the Romans took over the country under Pompey in 63 BC.

Zerubbabel's temple was then rebuilt and enlarged by Herod the Great, who took 46 years to build the temple that Jesus and His disciples saw. Just before He died, Jesus predicted that the destruction of the temple would occur once again, within His generation. He said to them, "*There will be great distress in the land, and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (Luke 21:24) Jerusalem fell 40 years later in AD 70.

After a siege of 143 days, when the Roman army under Titus surrounded the city, Jerusalem was attacked and destroyed. Six hundred thousand Jews were either slain or taken captive. Only a small part of one wall was left standing as a memorial to the Jewish culture. This is now known as the Western wall, or wailing wall, where today's orthodox Jews come to offer their prayers and to pray for the restoration of Jerusalem and for God's favour as promised in the days of their forefathers.

Since Jerusalem had been the centre of Jewish worship for 1000 years, the city became a symbol of the Jewish nation itself. Jesus' reference to Jerusalem losing control to the Gentiles could apply nationally to the Jews as well as to the literal city as being favoured by God no longer as a place of worship – that is, until the return of Christ Himself, when Jerusalem will again be important in the Kingdom Age.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian built on Jerusalem in 130 AD, and called the city Aelia Capitolina. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built by Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century after his mother converted him to Christianity. The Church of the Ascension was built in honour of his mother also in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. However, in 614 AD Kosrau II, king of Persia, again captured Jerusalem for the Persians, but not for long. In 637 AD Caliph Omar took Jerusalem and set up Mohammedan worship instead, bringing many Moslems to Jerusalem.

Fifty four years later, in 691 AD, the Dome of the Rock mosque was built

where the temple once stood, from which Mohammed himself is alleged to have ascended to heaven. In response to a Papal decree in 1096, the first crusade of 12,000 fighting men journeyed to Palestine and recaptured Jerusalem. They converted the Moslem Dome of the Rock to Christian worship, as well as restoring the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

However, all their hard work was short-lived. As soon as the crusaders had gone home, Jerusalem returned to Islamic rule by 1187 AD and just 63 years later the Egyptian Mamelukes took control from 1250 to the year 1516 AD. In that year Jerusalem became a Turkish province under Sultan Selim I and the Turks continued their domination of the city for 400 years.

In 1855, the first Jewish suburb of Jerusalem was built, outside the wall of the old city. It was overseen by a Jew named Moses Montefiore.

In 1830 there were 100 Jews living in Jerusalem. By the year 1900, there were 50,000 Jews living in Jerusalem. During the first World War (1914-1918) an Armistice was signed by Britain and the Turks ending 400 years of Turkish rule in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was free to accept immigrants from all over the world. By 1948 the British mandate ended and the new state of Israel was declared. By this time there were 100,000 Jews in Jerusalem and 900,000 in all of Israel. In their War of Independence the Jewish people were not able to take complete control of the old city.

However, in 1967 Israel regained control of Jerusalem after a 6-day War, and Jerusalem was finally re-united again. Today, over 430,000 Jews, 105,000 Moslems and 14,000 Christians live in Jerusalem. There is still much bitter hatred going on between Jewish and Palestinian settlers, because both groups are claiming to be Abraham's descendants, and both groups are claiming to own the land which was promised by God.

Returning to the words of Jesus to His disciples, as found in Luke 21:24, we read, *"They will fall by the sword and be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* Since the Jews are no longer a subdued people, and since the nation of Israel has now been established, can we say that the times of the Gentiles, or the Gentile domination over them has now ended?

Before we answer that question, we should also consider the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:25-27 regarding the nation of Israel. Paul states, *"Israel has experienced a hardening in part, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written,*

*‘The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn Godlessness away from Jacob, and this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’*

The apostle Paul does not use the name Jerusalem in his writings, but says that all Israel will be saved at that time, and he quotes from Isaiah 59 which tells us of God’s Spirit being restored to the people of Israel once again. It reads, *“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins ... ‘as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the Lord. ‘My Spirit, which is on you and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or their descendants from this time on and forever, says the Lord.”* (Isaiah 59:20,21).

We can see then that both our Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul indicated that the Jews would no longer be favoured by God and that He was now turning to the Gentiles with the message of salvation and the calling of a holy priesthood. The apostle Peter speaks about this in his letter to Christians scattered throughout Asia-Minor. After saying that the Jews stumbled on God’s chief cornerstone, that is, on Jesus Christ, he states, *“They stumble because they disobey the message .... but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God .... once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”* (1 Peter 2:8-10).

And so when the calling out of the Gentiles has been completed, then God will make His covenant with Israel to take away their sins and then they will have the words of the Lord placed in their mouths, words which they will keep forever, as Isaiah tells us. God had intended His Kingdom of Priests to come from the nation of Israel, but since they rejected the One God sent to them and they rejected their own Messiah, they brought judgment upon themselves and lost the blessings of being an holy priesthood unto God.

Jesus was critical of the Jewish leaders. He said, *“Woe to you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like white-washed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean ... therefore I am sending you prophets, and wise men, and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town....”* (Matthew 23: 27-34).

Jesus said, *“Upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth; all this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*

*you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Your house is left to you desolate.”* (Matthew 23:35-38). God’s judgment came upon the Jews in 70 AD when the Roman army destroyed the city, pulled down Herod’s temple, and killed thousands with the sword.

While there are still men and women being called out from among the Gentiles to become members of God’s kingdom of priests, then the end of the Gentile times has not yet come. While the people of Israel today are still showing a hardness of heart towards God and while they are still fighting over the territory allotted to them, then they are still not in the right heart condition for God to place His Spirit in their mouths, as He had promised. We therefore conclude that the Gentile times have certainly not ended.

In Daniel chapter 9 we are given further information in regard to the future of Jerusalem. Daniel was in Babylon at this time, about 539 BC. He knew that Jeremiah had prophesied 70 years of captivity for Israel and those 70 years were almost up, so he prayed to the Lord in order to know when God’s favour would return to Jerusalem. The answer came through the angel Gabriel, who said, *“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy.”* (Daniel 9:24).

Gabriel continued, *“From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the Ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’...The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.... War will continue until the end and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ He will put an end to sacrifice and offering .... on a wing of the temple, He will set up an abomination that causes desolation...”* (Daniel 9:25-27).

Historians tell us that there were three separate decrees to rebuild Jerusalem. The historian Hengstenberg claims the starting date of Gabriel’s prophecy was 455 BC when Artaxerxes made his decree. If so, we must add 69 ‘sevens’ onto that date (that is, 483 years) which brings us to the year 29 AD. This means that Jesus began His ministry in 29 AD. Gabriel then said that the Anointed One would be ‘cut off’ and would have nothing.

The Anointed One (a reference to Jesus Christ) was certainly ‘cut off’ (a reference to the crucifixion) in the prime of His life, and had nothing (that is, no Kingdom of which He was the King). Gabriel said, *“The people and the ruler to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary”*. When the 10<sup>th</sup> legion under Titus broke through Jerusalem’s gates in 70AD, they slaughtered the Jews and destroyed Herod’s magnificent temple.

Gabriel said, *“War will continue to the end and desolations have been decreed.”* Historians have lost count of the number of times that Jerusalem has been desolated since Daniel’s time to the present. *“In the middle of the ‘seven’ He will put an end to sacrifice and offering.”* The middle of seven is 3½. For 3½ years Jesus told the people of His coming Kingdom and how they could be part of that Kingdom. In dying on the cross He paid the ransom price for mankind, fulfilled the Mosaic Law perfectly, and provided the blood required to seal God’s New Covenant with Israel and the world.

After Jesus’ death, God’s favour to the nation of Israel continued for another 3½ years before Cornelius and his household received God’s Holy Spirit, through the apostle Peter. This event began a new era for the Gentiles and completed the 70 weeks of Gabriel’s prophecy. The Companion Bible suggests a better rendering of Daniel 9:27. Instead of *“on a wing of the temple”* it has *“in its stead shall be abominations”* – that is, in place of the daily sacrifice, abominations will take place which will make Jerusalem desolate. These abominations can be seen in the false worship of successive Gentile powers which have conquered Jerusalem since our Lord’s time.

So we see that Jerusalem and the Jewish nation have been an important part of God’s plans and purposes, and will still play an important part in the Kingdom Age. At present there is a New Jerusalem being developed, mentioned in Hebrews, 1 Peter 2, Galatians 4 and in Revelation 21. In Galatians, Paul compares Sarah with Hagar, the two wives of Abraham. One represents the present city of Jerusalem, the other is the heavenly Jerusalem, the city that is free, the one who is our mother (Galatians 4:25,26).

In Hebrews 12 we read *“You have come to Mt. Zion, to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the City of the Living God, to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”* (Hebrews 12:22,23). In Revelation this Holy City comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. The voice said, *“Now the dwelling of God is with men. He will live with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There*



*will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:3,4).*

We eagerly await that wonderful time ahead when people of all nations will come to know the Lord and will rejoice together at the wisdom of His loving plan for a world which was lost in sin and death. Amen



## **JOURNEYS**

Paper given by Merv Buckmaster at the 2015 Conference

### **Introduction**

A journey is the transit from an origin to a destination: the traverse of space and time between departure and arrival. We make journeys every day; most of them small, but occasionally we journey afar, to another state or another country. All our journeys are return journeys because we start them from home. However, in this world of turmoil many, many people have made journeys from the country of their birth to other countries, because they were fleeing from persecution.

Daniel was told that until the time of the end many shall run to and fro, and at this time of the gospel age making journeys under the name of tourism is mankind's third-largest industry.

The record of our past, the historical account of mankind is studded with famous journeys:

the travels of Marco Polo;  
the voyages of Christopher Columbus;  
Dirk Hartog, De Quiros and Flinders,  
blazing their paths over perilous seas;  
Burke and Wills ... ill-informed and ill-equipped;  
Robert Peary and Robert Scott ... poles apart;  
Stanley and Livingston;  
Neil Armstrong.

All these journeys had purposes which I shall not dwell upon here. They were earthly journeys, whether exploration or tourism, and each was important from an earthly point of view at the time of its undertaking, recorded in diaries, news headlines or family photo albums. Each journey had an earthly reward, although the cost incurred was always high from any point of view.

There are more important journeys than these, all with greater purposes, all with greater rewards; and they also are recorded for us to consider. These journeys are recorded in the Bible.

## **BIBLICAL JOURNEYS**

### **OLD TESTAMENT JOURNEYS**

#### **Adam and Eve**

When God created Adam and Eve he put them in a garden where everything was provided for their earthly and spiritual needs. We are not told how long they lived there, although it would have taken Adam quite some time to name all the animals and all the birds, since at that early time everything was done to perfection. But in time they disobeyed their creator and were expelled from the garden.

Thus began the first of mankind's important journeys; from a garden into the wilderness. From peace, comfort and security into challenge, toil and uncertainty. We are not told how far they travelled, and it could be said that that journey was a disaster; but it was their disobedience that was the disaster.

#### **Babel**

After the flood the descendants of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth had the same language. They all lived in the land of Shinar, having spread there from the east. They decided to build a city and a tower to establish that place as their own. But God was offended by their arrogance and ambition. He knew of their abilities and that they would be able to carry out their disrespectful plan, so he confused their language. And we have some appreciation of the confusion of language from the plethora of languages and dialects in the world today. We also can appreciate how diversity of language separates peoples into racial groups which have an innate tendency to keep to themselves and mistrust other groups with different languages.

The confusion of the language at Babel was followed by the people being scattered abroad over the face of all the earth. We are not told how God achieved this diaspora, but we can see how effective it was from the great variety of the human families to be found in all the countries of the world. For some of them the journey would have been long and perhaps difficult, but from our vantage point in history we are able to see the importance and divisive nature of the calamity of the confusion of language as shown by the chaos in the world around us.

## **Abraham**

The journeys of Abraham are legendary; legend but not myth. From Ur in the Chaldean hills where he lived with his father Terah, God instructed him to go to the land of Canaan. Abraham and his cousin Lot, their families and their possessions, servants, flocks and herds and the chattels for living as herdsmen, set off, firstly north-westwards to Haran, then southwards to Shechem, thence to Bethel where famine prevailed, and so on to Egypt. The distance covered was hundreds of kilometres, and travelling on foot and on four-footed animals would have taken years to accomplish.

In Egypt Abraham was involved in a dispute with Pharaoh, who sent him north to Bethel, and from there he went to Mamre in Canaan, where he died and was buried.

Abraham's other notable journey was shorter but very significant. He took Isaac to Horeb to offer his son as a sacrifice at God's command, and as we know, the boy was spared and later had sons of his own. The importance of that journey established unequivocally and eternally that faith is the basis of God's plan of redemption, delivered during the ages before Christ through faith in God, and delivered during the Gospel age by the New Covenant, sealed by another sacrifice more than sixteen hundred years after Abraham's time.

## **Isaac**

The son who God promised to Abraham and Sarah was only a boy when he made the journey with his father to Horeb, and it appears that after returning with his father he spent the rest of his life in Canaan.

## **Jacob**

Jacob was sent away from strife with Esau to Padan-aram where he worked many years to find a wife. He returned with two wives, two concubines, eleven sons, a daughter and great wealth of property. Late in his life he also made the journey to Egypt, and died in the land of Goshen.

## **Joseph**

Joseph's journey, another journey into Egypt, was not of his choosing. Although he was sold into slavery it was an important journey because he became the second to Pharaoh in command over the Egyptian nation, and he, with his brothers who also made the journey to Egypt, was a progenitor of the nation of Israel.

## **The Nation of Israel**

And so we come to the great journey of the Israelites: the Exodus. During four hundred and thirty years of slavery in Egypt the families of Jacob's sons had grown to become a nation of more than two million people. After his intimidation by the miraculous plagues Pharaoh was brought to desperation and let the Israelites go. On the morning after the visit of the angel of death, that multitude of people, their servants, their flocks and herds and with their earthly goods, set out for the land promised to them as an inheritance from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That journey would take them for hundreds of kilometres through desert, mountains and valleys, and occupy a period of forty years, with many adventures along the way.

The Exodus was a huge undertaking, and the account of it forms a large part of the Old Testament. However, despite the extent and detail given in that account, the scope of that journey is surely beyond our comprehension. The Exodus must be the most stupendous of journeys in the history of our race.

## **Joshua**

Before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, God's authority was transferred from Moses to Joshua, and the task of overseeing the occupation of the land was given to him. He made many journeys involved with his battles to drive out the other nations so that the Israelites could take up their territorial inheritance. Two of those journeys of war are well-known. One was the taking of Jericho; the other was the pursuit of the Amorites down the valley of Ajalon during the ferocious storm.

## **Elijah**

His first recorded journey was to flee from king Ahab because he had prophesied drought for Samaria, and he went to the brook Cherith. When the stream dried up he went on to Zarephath and stayed with a widow there. Then after the contest with the priests of Baal he fled again into the wilderness where he was directed to take a forty-day journey to Mount Horeb. Some time later he confronted Ahab again to urge him to denounce his ungodly ways. He was with Elisha when his final journey took place. As they walked and talked a chariot of fire and horses of fire parted them, and Elijah was taken by a whirlwind into heaven; a most spectacular journey.

## **David**

Joshua and the Israelite army achieved the conquest of Canaan, and King David consolidated the occupation of the land. David's journeys were mostly concerned with the battles fought to clear Canaan of the foreigners. In doing so he incurred the displeasure of King Saul and had to take refuge in flight

until Saul was killed in battle. David became king, and during his reign he established the throne at Jerusalem, and extended the kingdom until it covered the area promised by God to the patriarchs. But there were periods of dissent which obliged David to journey from Jerusalem in order to quell them.

### **Jonah**

Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, but refused, and would have journeyed to Tarshish, but had an adventure that convinced him to make the journey to Nineveh after all.

### **Daniel**

Daniel was taken from Canaan to Babylon where he gained favour with Nebuchadnezzar. When Cyrus became king, Daniel did not remain at Babylon, but the destination of his last earthly journey is not recorded.

### **Isaiah**

This prophet who wrote some of the most inspirational words in the Bible was taken to Babylonia as a captive of Nebuchadnezzar. He had foretold the downfall of Israel and became a victim of it. He longed to return to Canaan because he knew that the captivity would come to an end and open the way for a happier journey for the nation when they returned to Canaan.

### **Jeremiah**

During Jeremiah's lifetime the Israelites were in jeopardy from the Chaldeans on one side and the Egyptians on the other. He told his kinsfolk that they would be less ill-treated by the Chaldeans than by the Egyptians, but by a strange turn of events the Israelites went to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them.

### **Ezra and Nehemiah**

These two prophets returned from Babylonia with the exiled Israelites, a journey that took four months.

And some time after that **Zechariah** also returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel.

## **NEW TESTAMENT JOURNEYS**

### **Jesus**

Jesus lived in Nazareth, and when he was of age he went to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary for each Passover. When he was thirty years of age he went to the Jordan river to be baptised. That event was the commencement

of his ministry, a period during which he journeyed all over much of the area of Palestine. Satan took him into the desert where he tempted Jesus. He preached in the synagogues of the major towns and cities to which he journeyed continually. He preached from hilltops and from a boat on the sea of Galilee.

His mission precluded any relief from his journeyings, and he acknowledged this when he said to the disciples, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head*" (Luke 9:58).

### **The Disciples**

The twelve men whom Jesus chose to learn from him followed him wherever he went, although not all of them together at the same times. Some of them carried out special errands for him. Others were selected for special privileges, such as Peter, James and John who journeyed to a mountain to witness the transfiguration. While we focus on the teachings and miracles of the Lord, it should be recognised that the work of Jesus and the disciples incurred continual journeys, long and short, that need not be listed here.

### **The Apostles**

An apostle is someone who is commanded, or asked by someone of higher authority, to undertake a task such as taking a message to people in a distant place. The word of God has been made famous by the special messengers commissioned by Jesus Christ to "*go therefore and teach all nations*" (Matthew 28:19), and their orders could not have come from a higher authority. Their work involved many journeys throughout the lands of the Middle East, particularly in the land of Palestine, and, as for the Lord's journeys, the apostle's journeys need not be detailed here. However, one special apostle deserves special mention because of the particular commission he was given by Jesus to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

### **Paul**

The records of Paul's journeys stand alone, for merit, in all literature, as a saga of evangelism.

Before his conversion he went from Tarsus to Jerusalem to learn thoroughly the Jewish law, which he applied rigorously until he was confronted by Jesus while journeying to Damascus.

After his conversion and recovery he journeyed to Arabia, then returned to Damascus. Wherever he went he preached the gospel message, and that essential feature of his life became of monumental proportions when he undertook his missionary journeys through Asia Minor.

During those journeys he established many congregations in the towns and cities that he visited; and in those places, he taught, counter-acted false doctrines, encouraged consecration and faith in all who would listen, dedicating his efforts to the spiritual needs of Jews and Gentiles, healed the sick and empowered others to share the work with him. Those journeys have been considered in depth by others. They have been recorded in some detail to supply us with doctrine, encouragement and spiritual guidance, because the Lord knew that we would have a great need for his help in all those aspects of our lives. Thus Paul's journeys are particularly important for us, and for all who would follow our Lord.

## **John**

There is little detail of the journeys of the other apostles, but one deserves mention, and that is John's journey into exile on the Greek island of Patmos where he was inspired to write the book of Revelation.

## **OUR JOURNEY**

We have been called to undertake a journey. As with Abraham and the other patriarchs and prophets, the call comes from God. But whereas God's call to Abraham was a command, God's call to us is an invitation. For Abraham his was an earthly journey with an earthly end, an earthly destination.

The apostles were also called to undertake a journey, a life-long journey. The call to them came from God through Christ. Their call was also an invitation: He said to them, "*Follow me*" (Matthew 4:19). The Lord commissioned them to go on many earthly journeys, but despite their earthly destinations, because they were under a new dispensation they were promised a heavenly destination to come after their earthly journey.

The invitation to us for our journey also comes from God through Christ. But ours is not only an earthly journey. Although it is here on earth and also is life-long, it is a spiritual journey. As Paul wrote to the Colossians it is a journey of spiritual revival.

The apostles were sustained throughout their earthly duties for the Lord with temporal and spiritual provisions. According to the Lord's promise we are strengthened, comforted and guided through our earthly life-journeys by the Holy Spirit, and as it was for them, our individual journey will end as it does for all of Adam's fallen race.

Our journey began with our recognition of the reality of the New Covenant and acceptance of its terms. The evangelism of the apostles and their

miracles ceased when their work was done. But their words are before us still, and through those words we should be convinced that God is satisfied that they are all we need to complete our journey, and so to continue in that faith until He decides that our journey is at its close.

Just as the faithful men and women of olden times were given directions for their journeys, we are given signposts for our journey. The map for our spiritual journey through life is the example set by Jesus himself, and the value of that guiding influence is demonstrated by the lives of the apostles. They lived according to Jesus' precepts defined in his discourse in the sermon on the mount; the moral law declared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai in the Law Covenant, and re-phrased by the Lord in the law of love in the New Covenant.

While their examples may be sufficient for our needs, God has also provided us generously with words of encouragement in the letters penned by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Those epistles were dedicated specifically to the congregations which were established by the Lord's apostles, bringing God's invitation to each individual, guiding them away from the failures of the past, to start a new journey for which directions were given clearly, sidetracks were well-defined, identified in the allegory of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' by John Bunyan, and a more glorious destination was assured.

The invitation to our journey is open to all who will hear the offer made through the New Covenant, and who try to obey the Lord's commands and serve the LORD God. This is the high calling in Jesus Christ, and the reward for faith in the terms of that covenant is the promise of joint-heirship with Christ when he returns to bring about the reconstitution of all things during the kingdom age.

### **A Future Journey**

Thus, today we hold that promise before us as a beacon of hope, asking the Lord for strength, comfort and guidance as we have need for our journey through this world and all its trials.

However, God has promised us another journey. It will begin when we are called from the grave. It will continue through one thousand years of work, responsibility and achievement during a new age, and after that the journey will expand physically and spiritually to include all of the universe of creation, and that journey will never end.





## JERUSALEM -

### REJECTED BY THE NATIONS UNTIL THE FULFILMENT OF THE GENTILES

Paper written by Zoe Tsakonias, read by Ian Miller at the 2015 Conference

Greetings to you all beloved brethren, and thanks be to God for allowing me and Ian to be here among you at this time. We have known you for over thirty years, and that is God's work in bringing us together for His glory and to our benefit. We are blessed to be here and to see you all, even though over the years many of the brethren have fallen asleep in the Lord, including in recent times our dear sister Elsie. 1 Corinthians 15:6; *"After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep"*. Revelation 14:13; *"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write; Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on' "*.

And now on to us that are left and today's talk. My topic is 'Jerusalem, Rejected by the Nations Until the Fulfilment of the Gentiles'.

Matthew 23:37; *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate."* Luke 21:24; *"They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* These are the Lord's words to his people of the flesh, Israel.

Let us see what Stephen had to say in Acts 7:51. *"You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit!"* And also what Paul and Barnabas had to say in Acts 13: 46 and 47. *"Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly. We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us. "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*

I have read and heard it said that when Christ returns it will be to set up the Kingdom in literal Israel of the flesh. My question is, how does that stand up against the word of God? Let's read Revelation 21: 1 to 5. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride*

*beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'*

God made a covenant with Abraham, one of faith not law, a far-reaching covenant that extends and covers all nations, Jew and Gentile alike. From the first coming of Christ until the second coming of Christ is the time of the Gentiles.

Let us turn to Genesis 32: 27 and 28, where we see the beginning of the nation of God. *"The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men, and have overcome."* We follow their progress, and see that as far as the law given them to obey and follow was concerned, they were unable to do so. *"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* (Exodus 19: 5 and 6). *"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today, the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known."* We know the story well, but thanks be to God for providing the means where both Jew and Gentile could come together for salvation and forgiveness, where the outcome did not depend on human weakness but on the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us go to Romans, firstly chapter 3 verse 20. *"Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law, rather through the law we become conscious of sin."* Then Romans 4:13, 17 and 20. *"It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations. He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God."*

Romans 10: 1 to 5; *“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge, since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”*

Romans 11:25 and 26; *“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”* And Acts 3:22 and 23; *“For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people. You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.”* We must understand that the literal Israel of the Old Testament was an example not only for us as Christians but for all the world.

1 Corinthians 10: 6, 11 and 12; *“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall.”* Christ’s first coming was to preach the good news of the kingdom of God, the resurrection of the dead and eternal life, to the Jews and then later to the Gentiles.

John 3: 13 to 16; *“No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* And this takes us right back to Genesis 22: 17 and 18; *“I will surely bless you and your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*

In Psalm 2 verse 8 we see that Christ now casts his nets in at much wider expanse. *“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.”* And then in Revelation 20: 4 to 6 we see that from that wider net there is reference to a special group of people, not now literal but spiritual. *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been*

*beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” This is a holy kingdom, a holy people over and above the promises made to Abraham in the covenant which would cover all mankind. 1 Peter 2:9; “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Luke 1: 32 and 33; *“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”* How will Christ reign over the literal house of Jacob when only two houses out of the twelve remained, the others having been incorporated into the Samaritan line, the Gentiles. The verse read previously in 1 Peter 2:9 speaks of a holy nation, a holy people; no longer a literal nation but a small flock sealed of the Holy Spirit. Gentiles have now been brought in and sealed as a holy people. Ephesians 1: 13 and 14; *“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.”* God will bring back all the nations through the resurrection to a new earth and a new body and a new order.

1 Corinthians 15: 21 and 22; *“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”* We read that all of Israel will be saved. Indeed, but when? Now or then? Romans 11:15; *“For if the rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”* They also will be saved from death unto life in the kingdom, through faith. They also will have the same opportunity and blessing as everyone else at that time.

No-one can enter into this great time of the Kingdom age unless and until there is a process of death, resurrection and judgement; all within a time frame and within a new order of things. 2 Peter 3: 9 and 10; *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*

My final point is that we are told by Christ that we are not to concern ourselves about the time of His return, the place of His return, the condition of His return. His return could be and will be at any time, whether we are still alive or have died. Every day is a day where we ought to be ready in word, deed and faith as unto the Lord.

I close with my love and one final reading: John 8: 32 and 31; *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. .... If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”*



## **THE GROUND ON WHICH WE STAND**

Paper given by Robert Simpson at the 2015 Conference

Yahweh created and formed the earth in all its array. God made it perfect and complete in its substance to be a home for mankind, and He created it to remain forever.

The ground on which we stand is full of stones and minerals. They reach down into the earth. Some are common rock, others are valuable ores, and some of these are cherished more than others.

This talk is about beautiful stones and minerals, and how they, because of their rarity and beauty, can and do in scripture describe the beautiful things of heaven and of earth.

To begin with these precious stones and ores would probably have been found near the surface of the ground, but in time, shafts would have been sent down to follow the ore bearing veins.

About 1,600 years before our Lord, Job described how miners had sunk a shaft far from where people reside; *“And there in the gloom and deep shadow”* they searched, having swung down and precariously dangled, to obtain the desired rocks and metals (Job 28:1-5).

Digging below the ground to locate these metals is nearly as old as mankind, for as we see in Genesis, reference is made to Tubal-Cain as a forger of every sort of tool of copper and iron, and Tubal-Cain lived before the flood (Genesis 4:22).

The first Biblical reference to any stone is in Genesis 2:11 and 12. Here Havilah is identified as a land containing "*good gold, bdellium gum and the onyx stone*".

The beauty and pleasurable effect of jewellery and precious stones and other beautiful materials enable us to visualize and appreciate also the wonders of things of heaven and earth, as we see in Exodus 24. Yahweh said to Moses, "*Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Na-dab and A-bi-hu and 70 of the elders of Israel. You are to worship and remain at a distance*". And there they saw a vision of God's glory; "*And beneath his feet, there was what seemed like a work of Sapphire stone and like the very heavens of purity*" (Exodus.24: 1-11). There they saw a vision of the place where Jehovah stood, the brightness of a clear blue pavement of sapphire.

Ezekiel twice beheld a vision of Yahweh's glory, and saw "*something in appearance like a throne of sapphire*" (Ezekiel 1:25-28; 10:1). Here a vision of purity and truth is conveyed by the clearness of sapphire.

The glory of Yahweh is likened to the dazzling beauty of gemstones, for when the apostle John beheld God's heavenly throne, he said: "*The one seated is, in appearance, like a jasper stone and a precious red-coloured stone, and round about the throne there is a rainbow like an emerald in appearance*" (Revelation 4:1-3).

Beautiful stones further describe the beauty and radiance of Yahweh and of heaven, for emerald imparts a green colour and carnelian is a glassy translucent stone. Its colour varies from a pinkish-orange to a deep rusty brown.

The apostle Paul, after identifying Jesus Christ as the foundation on which Christians should build, mentioned building materials of various kinds in connection with the Christian ministry. He indicated that the choice materials would include figuratively "*precious stones*" capable of withstanding the force of fire. These choice materials that are capable of withstanding fire are the pure truths of God, and we should build up our faith on these truths (1 Corinthians.3:10-15).

Yahweh said to Moses while in the wilderness; "*Tell the people of Israel take up a contribution for me; from every person who is willing and whose heart is moved, an offering for the work on the Tent of meeting; The Tabernacle.*" The freewill offerings of the people included gold and jewellery of all kinds; broaches, earrings and ornaments, the onyx stone and other gems. Much of it, with no doubt, was given to them by the Egyptians when urging them to depart.

The high priest's ephod had two onyx stones on the shoulder piece with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in the order of their births inscribed on them as a memorial to the sons of Israel, and the breast piece of judgement was embellished with four rows of precious stones, one for each of the sons of Israel. They were in settings of gold and inscribed with the name of each tribe upon each of the stones. The precious stones, with their richness and brilliance, represented the glory into which Israel was to be transformed as the possession of Yahweh (Exodus. 28: 9-21, 39: 6-14. 19: 5).

Precious stones were mentioned in Job's discourse in chapter 28. When seeking to find wisdom and understanding he compares it with precious stones and in part reads:

*"It cannot be bought with the finest gold,  
Nor can its price be weighed in silver.  
It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir,  
With precious onyx or sapphires.  
Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it,  
Nor can it be had for jewels of gold.  
Coral and pearls are not worthy of mention;  
The price of wisdom is beyond rubies.  
The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it;  
It cannot be bought with pure gold."*

And unto man he said: "*Behold the fear of the Lord,*" for that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is "*understanding*".

The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel; "*Take up a lament concerning the King of Tyre and say, 'Every precious stone was your covering, ruby, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, onyx and jade, sapphire, turquoise and emerald, and of gold was the workmanship of your settings and your sockets.'*" Here it is taken as a vision of purity that was first in Tyre and was likened to "*As in the days of Eden, beautiful and perfect were your ways - and full of wisdom, until unrighteousness.*"

Though Yahweh would not permit David to build the temple in Jerusalem, the aged king joyfully prepared valuable materials for its construction, including onyx stones and stones to be set in hard mortar, and mosaic pebbles, and every precious stone and alabaster stones in great quantity. He made substantial contributions of materials, and the people in general also contributed. When Solomon built the temple he overlaid the house with precious stones for beauty. [The onyx stone displays parallel layers of white

that alternate with another colour. The onyx stone is made up generally of two layers, although some that are rare have up to five layers.]

Materials of gold, silver, copper, iron and iron mixed with clay were the substances of the dream the Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar had while he lay upon his bed. The prophet Daniel told the king how the God of Heaven had made the dream known to him, and how he, the king Nebuchadnezzar, was that head of gold and how the kingdoms that would follow him would be inferior to his own. The dream also symbolized the growing degree of toughness and endurance with each successive empire, and how each lasted longer than the preceding one. And as Daniel relates, the last and fifth kingdom is the eternal kingdom of God that will crush all the preceding kingdoms and they would be found no-more (Daniel 2: 29 – 45).

Referring back to 1 Corinthians.3:10-15, it reads more fully, *“How if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide, which he hath built there upon, he shall receive a reward.”*

An explanation of these verses was given in the New Covenant Advocate June 1941 pages 40 and 41, as follows: ‘Any man who desired salvation must build on a rock foundation. He should build with the proper materials, gold, silver, precious stones, that is, build a character and a faith structure with the durable materials which God is willing to accept, and which will endure trial as by fire. These durable materials are the pure truths of God, and if we build up our faith with these truths, we shall receive a reward. But if we build on wood, hay, stubble, which represent flammable materials or erroneous teachings, that structure is not acceptable to God. So let us be careful to build a proper structure on a sure foundation, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.’

And it goes a little further to say, ‘Many have attempted to lay other foundations, such as ‘Live right’, ‘Do your best’, ‘Be as good as the average or a little better , and you are sure to be saved’. Those things may be all right in themselves, but they are not foundations. The sure and only foundation is Jesus Christ. Anything not built on that foundation evidently is built on some other foundation - no other foundation can any man lay [that is, no other acceptable foundation in God’s sight] than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ and him alone.’ (by George Herring).



Wealth also was partially measured by one's possession of precious stones. King Solomon and King Hezekiah apparently had them in great quantity (1 Kings 10:11; 2 Chronicles 32: 27).

Precious stones were given as gifts. The Queen of Sheba went to Jerusalem to test Solomon of his wisdom and saw the blessings that Yahweh had given him. She gave him one hundred and twenty talents of gold and balsam oil in a very large quantity and precious stones (1.Kings 10:2 -10; 2 Chronicles. 9: 1- 9). (The 120 talents of gold she gave to King Solomon would be about 4080 kg; that is, more than 4 tons.)

King David, after the defeat of Rab-bah, took the king's crown made of gold and precious stones weighing one talent, off this head, and it was then set on David's head (2 Samuel 12: 29 and 30; 1 Chronicles 20:2). The crown's weight was one talent, approximately 34 kg.

John, tells of a heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. *"It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like Jasper, clear as crystal. The walls were made of jasper and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. And the foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stones."* Here describing the heavenly city, the church, coming in perfect harmony and unity and reflecting the perfect glory and happiness of all the inhabitants of it, and the most glorious presence and protection of Yahweh (Revelation 21: 10 to 21).

## **Conclusion**

There are some 54 occurrences of jewels mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and they may be viewed by entering the web site 'Bible Hub'.

Precious stones, gold and silver and other beautiful materials brighten our day. Their strength in colour and dazzling beauty liven us to the wonders of creation. And we can also value them in other ways, as we read of them in our Lord's inspired Holy Bible.

Just to finish, although it has nothing to add to the above, if only to add a jewel (to this talk). The earth itself was once described as a jewel, 'a sparkling blue and white jewel'. That is how astronaut Edgar Mitchell described our earth as he viewed it against the contrasting blackness of space.

Indeed, another beautiful display of Yahweh's creative work, and may we be ever thankful to our Father in heaven through our loving Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

**TRIBUTE TO**  
**JOHN THOMPSON**  
**(26.4.1927 - 17.4.2015)**

John Thompson was the eldest child of Hubert and Kathleen. In his early life he lived on the Eastern side of London near the Forest Gate Church of Bible Students. He later went to the Aldersbrook Class of Bible Students.

He married in later life and lived near the Bible Student Retirement Home in Somerset and then moved to Northern Ireland. After the death of his first wife, Isabel, he married Joyce Henderson whom he had met when she visited England some years earlier, and moved to Australia in 2003.

From messages that have been received and from my own acquaintance with him in England, he was a quiet and sensitive person with a high degree of intelligence. In his working life he was a pest inspector examining ships' cargoes in the Port of Liverpool. He was interested in all the insects of God's creation, and was sensitive to the fact that he had to organise the destruction of pests that were the work of God's hand.

He learnt to speak both French and German, which he used when visiting Bible conferences in those countries. He also gained a knowledge of the Greek language and its intricacies, which was useful in understanding the original writings of the New Testament. Music was part of his life, and he was an accomplished pianist. All these talents he sought to use in the service of the Lord. He was generous in giving of his time and in helping others who were in need.

He always expressed his thoughts in spiritually uplifting words. It is with a sense of loss and sadness that we remember John Thompson. His death reminds us that we all suffer the penalty of death because of disobedience to God's instructions, and this even applies to those who seek to faithfully follow their Lord.

Colin Giles.

## STRENGTH

Devotion given by Felicity Bhatnagar at the 2015 Conference.

One day, as a young woman sat in her garden, she noticed a cocoon hanging from a nearby branch. Before long a small opening appeared in the cocoon. The woman watched for several hours as the butterfly within struggled to free itself from the envelope in which it had recently been transformed. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had got as far as it could and it could go no further. So the woman decided to help the butterfly. She took a pair of scissors and cut open the cocoon, from which the butterfly then emerged easily.

But, to the woman's surprise, the butterfly didn't fly away. Instead it crawled out onto the branch and sat there. As the woman looked more closely, she noticed that the butterfly's body was withered, its wings were tiny and shrivelled. The woman continued to watch because she expected that, at any moment, the wings would open, enlarge and expand sufficiently to support the butterfly's body. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a withered body and shrivelled wings. It was never able to fly.

What the woman, in her kindness and her goodwill, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were the Life Force's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If the Life Force allowed us to go through our lives without any obstacles it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could be; never being able to fly. God gives us these same experiences to strengthen us. If we are not strong we will be unable to do His work.

Trees stand strong in wind when they have lots of other trees to support them. All the root systems support each other. A tree standing alone has to have an enormous root system to balance it against the wind's fury.

This is also the same for the Christian. We need to support each other, **but** we walk our own journeys. If you can imagine sets of footprints leading to our Lord Jesus, with our eyes on Him, our lighthouse, the prints follow a straight line. Side by side the rows of prints head toward Him.

Notice that they do not cross over into our neighbour's prints, because then we would be following our neighbour's journey, not our own, the same as if we follow gurus or self-professed prophets or ministers. If we follow their interpretations we cross into their path and leave our own. But if we listen to others then refer to the Scriptures and hear what God has to say to us, we still stay on our own path, but gain strength from others walking in the same direction.

When gardening the other day I had another example of this. I was pulling out both convolvulus and wild passion-fruit vine. When there were lots of vines I couldn't pull them out. But if I went to each individually, they had lost their strength and I could pull each one out. Divide and conquer, as the old adage goes. So we walk our own journeys gaining strength from each other on the way.

## COMMUNICATION

### **Email of Newsletter**

We are able to email our Newsletter to anyone who would like to receive it this way. This would save us time and expense compared to mailing it, especially to overseas readers, however we are still happy to mail hard copies to those who prefer this format. Please contact me if you would like your Newsletter delivered by email.

**Our new email address is : [jmbuckmaster@bigpond.com.au](mailto:jmbuckmaster@bigpond.com.au).**

### **New Covenant Fellowship Mail Box**

For over 50 years the mail address that has been on the published books for the New Covenant Fellowship has been a post office box in the city of Melbourne. We are closing this box as it is no longer convenient to collect mail from the central city.

**Any correspondence should be addressed to :**

Mervyn Buckmaster  
1923 Samaria Road, Moorngag, Vic., 3673, Australia.

### **Books**

We still have copies of some of the older publications of the Fellowship and also copies of all the newer publications produced over the last few years. These books are available to anyone on request, free of charge. We can also provide the New Covenant Advocates in digital format on request.