

COUNSEL

STRANGE FIRE

EPAPHRODITUS: A CHARMING CHRISTIAN

COULD JESUS SIN?

PEACE, BE STILL

SIT, WALK AND STAND

THE KING-PRIEST AND HIS TWO PEOPLES

"WHEN THOU PASSEST THROUGH THE WATERS..."

LEARNING GOD'S SACRED SECRETS (DAN. 2)

March—April 2009

Strange Fire

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1).

This incident occurs early in Israel’s history as a nation. It stands as a warning right at the beginning. This direct violation of the Lord’s command came from a source that should have known better. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, had the privilege of learning the word of God from their father. A greater degree of responsibility falls to those like Timothy *“from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise until salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim. 3:15). This should be a warning to those who have been taught the word of God either in the home or assembly that we too are in a place of responsibility.

The severity of the God’s judgement on this act shows the seriousness of the sin. This was not merely an act born out of ignorance or mistake. It has the quality of self will about it, disregarding God’s will. We should not assume Nadab and Abihu made an innocent mistake. The Lord deals with us on the true condition of our hearts. He makes allowances for our genuine ignorance.

Self will in worship is a serious matter. Paul warned the Colossians against false cult like teachers who trafficked in religion and had

“a show of wisdom in will worship...” (Col. 2:23). The mere act of declaring something an offering to the Lord is not justified if it is not in fact commanded by the Lord. We can maybe fool those around us, but we cannot fool the Lord.

The church today is described as a kingdom of priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9). Such holy priests are called to *“offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 2:5). We are taught from the epistle to the Hebrews that the way has been opened for us to come into the presence of God. Even boldly or with confidence (Heb. 4:16). But such an invitation does not presume our offerings can be merely of our own choosing. The same Hebrew epistle, while assuring us of an open way, also reminds us *“For our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb. 12:29, cf Deut. 4:24).

The chief fault of *“strange fire”* was who it glorified. The Lord’s complaint against this action was *“I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified”* (Lev. 10:3) God is not common, nor our equal. Hilarity, familiarity and informality does not characterize being in the presence of God. We do not glory in ourselves while in God’s presence.

The challenge to all of us is, What is our worship like? Does it have the character of Christ about it or is merely an undisciplined display of self will moved by mere emotion or laziness? The essence of the offerings the Lord prescribed for the priests was that it spoke of Christ. This can

be traced right back to Abel. Likewise our offerings in worship to the Lord should speak of Christ. While Old Testament priests had only a shadowy grasp of the true meaning, we have the full blaze of New Testament revelation. Do our offerings display that we have something to say about Christ? Have we been meditating in the scriptures—the true source of knowledge of Him—before bringing our offerings? If we lead the people of God audibly in worship or in inaudible worship, does it centre on Him? Or have we been guilty of bringing strange fire?

Israel was given clear instruction on what constituted an acceptable offering. There was no need to change it. God’s offering required yielding to His command. We too have ample materials in God’s word to encourage our worship. We can search the scriptures for its statements about Him. We are not left to our own devices to try and bring our own offering. But it will take effort to find time of quiet and prayer before we can gather our offering. This will not appeal to those given to fleshly impulse.

We too will face a fire. Mercifully God does not bring such a fire each time we violate His standards. However we will face a fire at the judgement seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:13-15). All that has been done in the name of worship will be tested. The fire will do its work on that day. Will our priestly ministry stand the test?

Brian Gunning
St. Catharines, Ontario



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Epaphroditus: A Charming Christian

“Over the life of Epaphroditus it could well be written: ‘Not I, but Christ.’”

In his tragedy entitled, *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare through the person of Juliet asks the question so frequently cited: “What’s in a name?” In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament Scriptures, names generally bear a spiritually significant meaning. Sometimes Bible personalities live up to the meaning of their names, and sometimes they do not. Incidentally, if you have truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and received Him as your own personal Saviour, you bear the name Christian, which literally means, “a follower of Christ.” Are you living up to your name?

The complete Bible biography of Epaphroditus is recorded in Paul’s “Letter to the Philippians” (2:24-30; 4:18) and, other than what the apostle says about him, we have no details of his fragrant and faithful life in Christ. His name means “charming,” and he lives up to it! In our study of Epaphroditus, we want to center our attention

on three prominent features of his biography which serve as a summary of his career in Christ.

His Spiritual Standing

The early history of the church at Philippi is recorded in Acts 16. In that action-filled chapter, we note the planting of the seeds of the assembly which eventually flourished in that Roman colony. Some years had passed and Paul was again in prison, only this time at Rome. That he was familiar with the inside of the prison at Philippi is well-known. Like many other local testimonies, the Philippian church

late to them that while their faithful messenger had indeed been “*nigh unto death*” (2:27-30), the Lord had graciously spared his life. Seeing Epaphroditus again would relieve their anxiety and at the same time Paul could acknowledge their gift.

With these pertinent facts in mind, let us direct our careful attention to the apostle’s simple yet sterling commendation of Epaphroditus regarding his relationship and spiritual standing with Paul himself.

In the family of God. Paul calls him “*my brother*.” The term “*brother*” was assuredly endear to the heart of the apostle from the very beginning

**“You bear the name Christian, which literally means, ‘a follower of Christ.’
Are you living up to your name?”**

was born out of suffering and persecution for the Name’s sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The saints at Philippi, who dearly loved the Apostle Paul, had in the summer sent him a gift through their message, Epaphroditus. According to the scholar David Smith, it was now the month of November and Paul was soon to send Epaphroditus home, having been unable to acknowledge their gift up to that time.

Somehow, word had reached Philippi that Epaphroditus was seriously ill, and Paul was anxious to re-

of his Christian experience when, in the house of Judas on the street called Straight in the city of Damascus, Ananias put his hands on him and said, “*Brother Saul...*” (Acts 9:17). Thus, when he referred to Epaphroditus as “*my brother*,” there is no question but what he did so with a full sense and realization of the affection and intimacy of such a blessed, personal relationship as this which existed between them because they were both in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the field of service. In addition,

Paul refers to him as his “*companion in labour*.” Here was another vital link of identification and relationship between these two servants of Christ. To be called and classed by the apostle himself a “*companion in labour*” was undoubtedly esteemed a great privilege and honor on the part of Epaphroditus. Both men were in the field of service, working at the same task, serving the same Lord, that God might be glorified in them. How good it is to realize that we are not only linked together in service, but to apprehend and ap-

and selfless ministry, climaxed by His redemptive work on the cross, clearly show us that from the divine standpoint that way UP is, first of all, DOWN (cf. Mark 10:35-45 with Phil. 2:5-11).

His Selfless Sympathy

When Epaphroditus learned that the Philippian Christians had heard about his illness, his selfless sympathy was revealed in the words of Paul: “*For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye heard that he had been sick*” (2:26).

“That Epaphroditus became deeply depressed in spirit was not because of his own trial. On the contrary, this was because the news of his illness had reached Philippi and had caused anxiety among the Christians there.”

preciate the fact that with all true believers “*we are labourers together with God*” (1 Cor. 3:9) as well.

In the fight of faith. Still further, Paul refers to Epaphroditus as his “*fellow soldier*.” Both were fighting “*the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7), facing the same foes, sharing the same hardships and securing supplies from the same heavenly source.

Although Paul had the office and authority of an apostle, it is noteworthy that he did not place himself above Epaphroditus. Here is a humility sorely lacking among professing Christians today, so many of whom seek position and prominence, or at least give that unholy impression. Paul practiced what he preached (e.g., Phil. 2:3-4), and in the same chapter of Philippians 2 further exhorted his readers concerning the perfect example of humility—Christ Himself (2:5-8)—whose spotless life

That Epaphroditus became deeply depressed in spirit was not because of his own trial. On the contrary, this was because the news of his illness had reached Philippi and had caused anxiety among the Christians there. The anguish of Epaphroditus was caused by his knowledge of the Philippian Christians’ anxiety on his behalf.

The keen love of all these Christians—Paul, Epaphroditus, the Philippian saints, and Timothy also (2:19-23)—for one another, each for all and all for each, is plainly indicated. Would that more of this same divine love that “*seeketh not her own*” abounded as much among believers today as it did then.

Epaphroditus is a splendid example of a man whose life was devoted to helping and serving others. This is what made him so much like the Lord Jesus Christ whom he loved, for His life was a life lived and given in

spotless purity on behalf of others.

In one of his helpful writings, Guy H. King relates a quaint incident centering upon the return of Sir Bartle Ferere from India. The carriage was sent to the village station to fetch him to his home, but the newly acquired footman was at a loss to know how he would recognize him. In view of this, Sir Bartle’s aged mother instructed him by saying, “look out for somebody helping someone else.” True to form, when the London train had eased its way into the station, the footman

observed a gentleman assisting an old lady to the platform. As the servant watched, back went the gentleman to the carriage to get the lady’s luggage. Going directly to him, the footman confidently asked, “Sir Bartle?” Yes, it was he. What a noble reputation to have!

Over the life of Epaphroditus it could well be written: “*Not I, but Christ*.”

His Sacrificial Service

As for the sacrificial service of Epaphroditus, let Paul’s concise record speak for itself: “*Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me*” (2:30). The expression, “*not regarding*,” is but one word in the Greek text which means “one who rashly exposes himself to danger,” “to be venturesome” or “reckless.” Used in regard to one’s life, as was the case with Epaphroditus, it means “to expose

Whatever our failures may be, certainly the outstanding character and example of this ardent servant of Jesus Christ should cause us to blush with shame if we have been merely working at Christianity instead of truly living Christ.

one's life boldly," "jeopardy life" or "hazard life." Thus, Epaphroditus worked so hard and fervently in the service of Christ, literally hazarding his life for the Gospel's sake, that "he was sick nigh unto death" (2:27-30). Like Paul and Timothy, his life was wholly dedicated to the Lord as "a living sacrifice," and in seeking to diligently follow God's appointed path, no risk was too great, no venture too costly, no hazard too dangerous. W. Graham Scroggie has aptly remarked:

"It cannot be said, with this passage before us, that to overwork in Christ's service is a sin, though I would be inclined to say that to take it easy is a sin."

In a chapter which presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect pattern of lowliness, Epaphroditus is a shining example of one in whom was the mind of Christ. Like the Lord Jesus Who "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" (2:7), he sought not the things concerning himself, but the things concerning Christ and others, serving the Lord sacrificially.

How Paul must have thanked God for Epaphroditus, and others like him, who served faithfully and fervently with him in the work of Christ, as well as ministering to

his needs from time to time (2:25)! Surely, every devoted child of God shares the same thankful attitude as the fragrance of this godly man's life and testimony comes before him. Through the long centuries since Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ had been blessed and benefited by hundreds, even thousands, of dedicated men and women who have

"How good it is to realize that we are not only linked together in service, but to apprehend and appreciate the fact that with all true believers 'we are labourers together with God' (1 Cor. 3:9).

carried on a "labour of love" for the glory of God, many of them unsung and unheralded in this life, yet working for Christ even to the point of death. Praise God for every Epaphroditus in the service of the Saviour!

What about you and me? Are we willing to hazard our lives in the service of Christ in an age when opportunities abound as never before to practice and proclaim the glorious verities of the Gospel message? The life of this zealous man of God serves as a rebuke as well as a challenge to any of us who, in the service

of our Lord, may be shirking instead of working, holding back instead of holding forth, and letting up instead of letting God have complete command of our wills, our minds, our hearts, our lips, our hands, our feet, our bodies, our all.

Whatever our failures may be, certainly the outstanding character and example of this ardent servant of Jesus Christ should cause us to blush with shame if we have been merely working at Christianity instead of truly living Christ. Many today are diligently working to proclaim and further a sinister and evil doctrine called communism, but hazarding and giving their lives for such a satanic ideology, while many professing Christians settle down in a complacent, self-satisfied, lethargic, lukewarm attitude. It is a sad and

shocking commentary that today there are professing believers who are not willing to put themselves out, let alone hazard their lives, for the Lord Jesus Christ, for other Christians and for those who know not our wonderful Saviour.

W. Ross Rainey
Plymouth, Michigan

Could Jesus Sin?

First of all, the hypostatic union¹ gave the world an impeccable Person. This predicates of Christ, mark you, not only anamartesia², but impeccability. It is not just a matter of posse non peccare³, but of non posse peccare.⁴ It is not enough to say Christ did not sin; it must be declared unequivocally that He could not sin. To entertain for a moment the thought that Christ could sin, would involve issues that call for a radical revolution in our conception of the Godhead. To say that Christ could not sin is not tantamount to maintaining He could not be tempt-

1 A term used to describe the presence of both human and divine natures in the Lord Jesus Christ

2 Sinlessness

3 Able not to sin

4 Not able to sin

ed. Because He was man He could be tempted, but because He was God He could not sin, for there was no sin principle in Christ that could or would respond to solicitation to sin. When Satan tempted the Last Adam in the wilderness, He was tempted and tested in all points (1 Jn. 2:16) like as the first Adam, and the human race ever since, yet in His case without sin. Sin as an inherent nature or as an outward act was foreign to Christ. Luke records that the angel disclosed to Mary that of her would be born that holy thing which was to be called the Son of God (Lk. 1:35). The hereditary sin nature that Mary had received mediately from Adam through her progenitors was not transmitted to Christ because of His miraculous conception through

the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. Christ could later challenge, not His friends mind you, but His enemies to convince Him of sin (Jn. 8:46). He knew that when the prince of this world was come, he would find nothing in Him (Jn. 14:30). Paul says of Him that God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Though tempted in all points as we are, He was nevertheless without sin (Heb. 4:15); indeed, we are told, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). In short, the combined testimony of Scripture reveals that in Him is no sin (1 Jn. 3:5).

Dr. Charles Feinberg,
Bibliotheca Sacra, SCII, 422-23.

Peace, Be Still

**"Carest Thou not" – how many times the cry
Has winged its way up to the throne on high!
As from the boat upon the rolling deep,
Where Jesus, wearied, found sweet rest in sleep.
"Why are ye fearful" of the raging sea?
It is the Master who is calling thee.**

**Fear not the fury of the breaking gale,
The pilot is with thee – He cannot fail;
He who rebuked the waves can calm the soul,
Dispel our fears and guide us to the goal.**

**No harm can come with Jesus at the helm,
Nothing can conquer, nothing overwhelm.
Then rest within His blessed will,
And hear Him saying, "Peace, be still."**

—Maude Steenburg

SIT, WALK AND STAND

“And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2.6).

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1).

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

These three verses amplify the title of a little book by the late Watchman Nee, a Chinese brother who suffered much for the Lord. He called it SIT, WALK and STAND. When you come to think about it, these three words and the truth they contain describe the NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE (the title of another much read book by the same author)

SITTING with Christ

Raised from death to life: transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love, enthroned with Him in the “*heavenlies*.” The Apostle does not want us to think of heaven as a PLACE, so much an EXPERIENCE!

We have an every-day expression “over the moon” Where is that? But a kind of heaven! But what does it all mean practically, in the here and now?

Put simply, it means that I view all that goes on in life from my Heavenly Father’s vantage point! I can see things differently from an aeroplane than from my garden, and so it is in the spiritual realm. If, by faith, I can rise to my grace-given status, I will be helped to accept the unacceptable, glory in the ordinary, and see the trials and difficulties of life as the careful planning of a loving God.

It is within our own power of understanding as to how fully we appreciate this. It means living in the daily consciousness of His presence, and rejoicing in the free grace bestowed upon us through faith.

Some years ago I met a brother in our local town, I greeted him with “Well George, are you looking up!”

Immediately he responded “No, I’m looking down!” He saw my puzzled expression, so, smilingly he said “I see you from the heavenlies in Christ!” There was no answer to that!

WALKING with Christ

When we reach Ephesians 4, we have reached a major point in Paul’s letter. The first three chapters are occupied with the doctrine of our position IN and THROUGH Christ. Now the writer is concerned primarily with exhortation about our behaviour, or our WALK. A walk is a repeated step that leads to a given direction. We need to pick up our

“If we are unaware of a spiritual conflict ... we must be closing our minds to the implications of SITTING and WALKING.”

steps as we walk through a polluted world. It is so easy for us to get overcome with its affairs, and become contaminated with its impurities.

The Apostle unapologetically says, in the light of who, what and where we are now in Christ, “*walk worthy of the calling wherewith you were called*” (4:1).

The word WALK means to walk about, or walk around. The Apostle is saying: As you go about your

daily duties, and in your leisure, see that the amount of dedication you put into those activities corresponds to the value you place on your position in Christ!

In developing his argument about our walk, the Apostle relates “walking” to time, “redeeming the time because the days are evil” (5:16), that is,

“As you go about your daily duties, and in your leisure, see that the amount of dedication you put into those activities corresponds to the value you place on your position in Christ!”

buying up and investing the time. It may not appear to be a popular investment now, but it will prove to be so in the day of true evaluation.

“Ills that God blesses are our good,
And unblest good is ill...”

When talking about time in this context it is not so much ‘clock’ time but “opportunity” time. Not wasting our opportunities, which includes the misuse of time.

He also relates our WALK to light. “Walk as children of light” (5:8). This truth is developed in 1 John 1:5-7. “Walk in the light as he is in the light...” and if we do so we “have fellowship one with another” By God’s grace every believer is in the light, we have been brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. Unbroken fellowship is the hall mark of the believer’s walk. The question is how do we measure up to it in practice.

STANDING for Christ

We now come to the last of the three messages from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus.

We have appreciated our position in Christ, raised and seated. We have been exhorted to walk worthy of our calling. Now we are told we must STAND, clothed with the whole armour of God. Our fight

is not against physical forces, but against unseen principalities and powers, and with the rulers of this world’s darkness.

Here on earth we do not get immunity from spiritual warfare, by being in the heavenlies with Christ. If we are unaware of a spiritual conflict, somewhere along the line we must be closing our minds to the implications of SITTING and WALKING. Perhaps this would be a good time to re-examine where and how we are in our Christian life.

The Apostle clearly points out the form and methods of our formidable foe. Kenneth Wuest comments

“When we consider that the loser in a Greek wrestling contest had his eyes gouged out, we can form some conception of the Ephesian Greek believers reaction to the illustration.”

It is no wonder, therefore, that Paul tells us we need the FULL set of

armour, supplied by our risen Lord, to face the enemy, head to head! The Apostle is describing the armour of a heavenly soldier, and he tells us that the spiritual pieces we put on are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Holy Spirit. What infernal foe could penetrate such armour? Note that there is no protection for the back. This is because we stand on resurrection ground, won by the Saviour in His death and resurrection. From this sure foundation there can be no thought of retreat.

Redemption ground has been fought and won for us at infinite cost.

It is unassailable, provided we wear the armour!

“If, by faith, I can rise to my grace-given status, I will be helped to see the trials and difficulties of life as the careful planning of a loving God.”

Drew Craig
Belfast, Northern Ireland

THE KING- PRIEST

AND HIS TWO PEOPLES

MEDITATIONS ON PSALMS 110 AND 118

Psalm 110

The LORD said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand, until I
make thine enemies thy footstool.

The LORD shall send the rod of
thy strength out of Zion: rule thou
in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people shall be willing
in the day of thy power, in the
beauties of holiness from the
womb of the morning: thou hast
the dew of thy youth.

The LORD hath sworn, and
will not repent, Thou art a
priest for ever after the order of
Melchizedek.

The Lord at thy right hand
shall strike through kings in the
day of his wrath.

He shall judge among the hea-
then, he shall fill the places with
the dead bodies; he shall wound
the heads over many countries.

He shall drink of the brook in
the way: therefore shall he lift up
the head.

Psalm 118

O give thanks unto the LORD;
for he is good: because his mercy
endureth for ever.

Let Israel now say, that his
mercy endureth for ever.

Let the house of Aaron now say,
that his mercy endureth for ever.

Let them now that fear the
LORD say, that his mercy en-
dureth for ever.

I called upon the LORD in dis-
tress: the LORD answered me,
and set me in a large place.

The LORD is on my side; I
will not fear: what can man do
unto me?

The LORD taketh my part with
them that help me: therefore
shall I see my desire upon them
that hate me.

It is better to trust in the LORD

than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the LORD
than to put confidence in princes.

All nations compassed me about:
but in the name of the LORD will I
destroy them.

They compassed me about; yea,
they compassed me about: but in
the name of the LORD I will de-
stroy them.

They compassed me about like
bees: they are quenched as the fire
of thorns: for in the name of the
LORD I will destroy them.

Thou hast thrust sore at me that I
might fall: but the LORD helped me.

The LORD is my strength and
song, and is become my salvation.

The voice of rejoicing and sal-
vation is in the tabernacles of the
righteous: the right hand of the
LORD doeth valiantly.

The right hand of the LORD
is exalted: the right hand of the
LORD doeth valiantly.

I shall not die, but live, and de-
clare the works of the LORD.

The LORD hath chastened me
sore: but he hath not given me over
unto death.

Open to me the gates of righ-
teousness: I will go into them, and
I will praise the LORD:

This gate of the LORD, into
which the righteous shall enter.

I will praise thee: for thou hast heard
me, and art become my salvation.

The stone which the builders re-
fused is become the head stone of
the corner.

This is the LORD's doing; it is
marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day which the LORD
hath made; we will rejoice and be
glad in it.

Save now, I beseech thee, O
LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee,
send now prosperity.

Blessed be he that cometh in the

name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

How fitting it is that these two Psalms are the final two Messianic Psalms in the book, since they both deal with the current and the future glories of Messiah. Combined together they portray Him as risen, glorified and now seated at the right hand of His Father.

“For no king in the Nation’s history combined the offices of king and priest. One tried to do so but suffered severe judgment as a result”

As he continually intercedes for His heavenly people as their Great High Priest. They also present to us His gracious protection and perpetual goodness to His earthly people not only in the past but also at a future time during the Tribulation period and in His Millennial kingdom. And though He is the stone that was rejected by the builders, He will ultimately be received by the remnant as the Blessed One that comes in the Name of Lord. These two Psalms complement one another and we therefore, need to meditate on them together.

Psalms 110 was written by David but as in all the Scriptures, and as further confirmed by the Lord Je-

sus Himself, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit *“For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool”* (Mark 12:36). And the Psalm indeed was written by David but not in any sense about David. None of its contents can be applied to David or any other king for this matter.

For no king in the Nation’s history combined the offices of king and priest. One tried to do so but suffered severe judgment as a result (2 Chron. 26: 16- 21). This makes this Psalm rather unique for unlike other Psalms, it does not have a primary application to an earthly king and another future application to Messiah. Furthermore, in its context it is both current and millennial.

David is given, by the Holy Spirit to record in the first verse, a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. So we have here the involvement of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity in that one statement. The Savior while on earth used this statement to point out to the Jewish leaders the great truth of the Deity of Messiah (Matt. 22:44). A truth that eluded them then, and continues to be ignored by them even now, though clearly recorded in their Scriptures.

This invitation to Messiah to sit comes as a result of His work here on earth having been finished (John 17:4). No more does He have to face travail, rejection or humiliation.

Furthermore, because the work was well done He is now offered the place of honor at the right hand of Jehovah sharing with Him His throne (Mark 16:19, Rev. 3:21). However the time will yet come when Messiah will sit on His own throne in the Millennial Kingdom. So while He patiently waits for that (Rev. 1:9), He is fully assured of complete and final victory over His adversaries by Divine promise and appointment *“Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.”* His enemies may rage and imagine a vain thing but His being at the right hand is itself the Divine guarantee.

A vision of the future kingdom of Messiah is described in the following two verses. Out of Zion, the seat of the future kingdom, shall the LORD send the rod of Messiah’s strength. For the Deliverer shall come out of Zion and shall turn away the ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11: 26). Yet when He shall have established His reign there, then the rod with which He shall rule the nations will be His means of subduing the enemies. For with it He shall dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel (Ps. 2:9).

His own earthly people, Israel who have rejected and crucified Him in the day of His humiliation, shall all be willing to serve Him in the day of His power (v. 3). So while now they say *“We will not have this man to reign over us”* (Luke 19:14). In that day they will all join in receiving Him saying *“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD”* (Ps. 118: 26).

His people, then sanctified unto Him will be seen in garments described as *“the beauty of holiness”* (v. 3), for they would realize that

He Himself is their righteousness, Jehovah Tsidkenu, indeed (Jer. 23: 6).

It shall also be a new day for Israel, the day of their repentance. At the beginning of that day as it dawns, the refreshing dew of the newly born people in their willingness to crown Him king will be seen (v. 3).

The current role of Christ towards His heavenly people the Church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, as their High Priest is the central truth of this Psalm (v. 4). The uniqueness of His priesthood is seen first in the fact that He is made a Priest by an oath (Heb. 7:20-22). Thus He became a surety of a better covenant. Secondly as the King-Priest he stands alone in that glory which He shares with no one else. Melchizedek may have been a faint shadow pointing to Him. For that king priest of old was just made like unto Him; the Eternal Son of God (Heb. 7:3). Our Blessed Lord is the true king of righteousness by virtue of His atoning sacrifice, and He is the true King of peace, which he has brought about by the blood of His cross. Thirdly His Priesthood is eternal, since He lives by the power of an endless (indissoluble) life. He is therefore able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him (Heb.7: 23-25).

The next two verses describe the day of His wrath. When the acceptable year of the LORD shall have come to an end and the day of vengeance of our God has arrived (Isa. 61:2, 63:4). With help from Jehovah on His right hand, the King will be able to strike through kings

that have led the rebellion against Him. The resulting slaughter of the enemies is graphically described both here and in Revelation chapter 19:18. Thus the judgment of those many nations will bring an end to the rebellion and will pave the way for establishment of the kingdom.

Finally the secret of the King's strength is presented here in metaphorical language (v. 7). His dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by water) is referred to here, by "the drinking from the brook in the way." That will cause Him to lift up the head in Regal

“The enemy may thrust hard at the child of God but the LORD’s help is always at hand”

strength and might.

The similarities between the themes of the two Psalms will become more obvious as we further meditate on our second Psalm.

This one is both Messianic and Millennial, yet it emphasizes to start with, the goodness of Jehovah to His earthly people both in a historical sense, and also prophetically in regards to the future trouble of Jacob.

The first part of the Psalm is occupied with an exhortation to give thanks unto Jehovah for He is good and for His eternal mercy. All the categories of the people are called unto to praise the LORD starting with the Nation as a whole, then the priesthood and finally all who fear the Lord (v. 1-4).

But the next three verses seem to introduce us to a personal experi-

ence of a believer. One who called upon the LORD in deep distress, and has experienced the Lord's answering Him with a great deliverance. He therefore speaks with confidence that comes from the knowledge that the LORD sustains him. And with boldness of faith he owns that the LORD is on his side and that He takes part with those that help him. But in typical Old Testament sentiment he is wishing to see the destruction of his enemies.

Such experience may have been that of Old Testament saints in the past. But it would also point us to the feelings of the pious remnant in the great Tribulation (v. 5-7).

This becomes even clearer in the next few verses. There we get to see all nations gathered against Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-3), encompassing the faithful remnant inside of it. This is described here in graphic language as a swarm of bees, or as fire of thorns. The outcry of the faithful at the time will be *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man ... or in princes”* (v. 8-9). There will be those indeed who will set themselves up as princes among the people of God. But they will not be trustworthy for they will be merely false shepherds and willful leaders. Deliverance of the remnant from danger and destruction of the enemies will be achieved only in the Name of the LORD and by the arrival on the scene of the One who is to come in that Name (v. 8-12).

From verse 13 to verse 17 the psalmist records his individual experience of proving the LORD's power and faithfulness. The enemy may thrust hard at the child of God but the LORD's help is always at hand (v. 13). He will therefore acknowledge that the Lord is both his strength and salvation (v. 14).

How very true of us New Testament believers who have known not only His salvation but the Savior Himself. Salvation will result in praise; hence the voice of rejoicing will be heard in the abodes of the righteous (v. 15). And as in the song that emanated from the hearts of the redeemed people at the Red Sea (Exod. 15:6), Here we see a recogni-

righteousness (Rom. 10: 3-4). But then on that day they will be asking admission into that gate (door) of righteousness (v. 19) that belongs to the LORD (v. 20). Now at last they recognize that He is their salvation (v. 21). Entering this gate they will be clothed in the beauty of holiness (Ps. 110:3) not having their own righteousness but that

emies they ask the LORD to send prosperity (v. 25). The highlight of the day however, will be the receiving the One that is coming in the Name of the Lord (v. 26). The last time they saw him was when he looked over the city and cried over it. He said then *"Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the*

“Our Blessed Lord is the true king of righteousness by virtue of His atoning sacrifice, and He is the true King of peace, which he has brought about by the blood of His cross.”

tion of the strength of the right hand of the LORD and its exaltation (v. 16). Such language will be so appropriate for that remnant facing death in the future, and having been delivered from it they will sing, *"I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the LORD"* (v. 17).

The following six verses from 18 to 23 are a beautiful statement regarding the blessed results of Calvary towards Israel. For us in the Church age we are aware that Christ is the door. And faith in Him is the only way to acceptance before God. How about Israel the old covenant people? How will God accept them back again? It will still be only on the basis of the finished work of Christ Jesus their true Messiah. In that day of their repentance, which we alluded to in Psalm 110, they will look back on their national history and see God's hand in it all. *"The LORD hath chastened me very much, but hath not given me over to death"* (v.18). For two millennia they have suffered persecution and dispersion, but they have never lost their identity. For all that time they sought, and are still seeking to prove their own

which is through the faith of Christ (Phil. 3:9). And how could this be possible were it not for the work of the cross where that precious Stone, chosen of God was rejected by their leaders (the builders) and crucified? This very same rejected and despised Jesus has become the head of the corner. They would then marvel at the wisdom of God

“As the King-Priest he stands alone in that glory which He shares with no one else.”

which they once refused and say, *"This is the LORD's doing and it is marvelous in our sight"* (v. 23). Wonderful Calvary, blessed Calvary!

The day of repentance and of accepting Jesus as Messiah is also made, arranged and appointed by Jehovah (v. 24). It will turn to be a day of rejoicing and gladness. Now having been saved from their en-

name of the LORD" (Matt. 23:39). The house was then called "your house" and has been left desolate until now. In that day it will no more be "your house" but the house of the LORD. And now that the deliverer has come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, the light will be restored to the house and worship will be reinstated, with sacrifices on the altar. A final burst of praise closes this wonderful Psalm

Thus our two Psalms beautifully complement one another adding together some of the manifold glories of Messiah, the Redeemer, High Priest, Deliverer and coming King of both His heavenly and His earthly peoples.

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“When thou passest through the waters...”

An Encouragement from Isaiah 43:2

The aim of this article is to encourage and reassure the hearts of all fellow-saints who are currently enduring severe trials in their lives, or even facing the prospect of physical death in the foreseeable future. The writer is aware that many believers are suffering, and wishes to help them by reminding them of the words associated with the above Scripture promise.

1. The Primary Interpretation

To what, then, does the Lord in this verse refer, when He speaks of “passing through the waters?” First of all, He is addressing the failing nation of Israel, His chosen earthly people, and telling them that they would before very long be facing the terrors of conquest by the Baby-

lonians, and the hardships of their subsequent exile in Babylon. There they would remain captive for seventy years before the Lord would give them the opportunity to return to their own land. But, secondly, and beyond that experience, He was predicting that the nation would in the distant future, in “*the time of the end*,” which is now probably within our sight, have to face the even more traumatic horrors of “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*,” otherwise referred to in Scripture as the Great Tribulation. This will form the last half of the seventieth week of the prophet Daniel’s predicted Seventy Weeks of years needed to consummate all God’s purposes for His people Israel. The primary reference of the waters which must be passed through

is therefore to the disciplinary dealings of the Lord with His ancient people Israel.

2. The Present Application

This being so, what encouragement can believers today possibly derive from such a Scripture? Most of us are not Jews, but Gentiles, and we may not be suffering for any particular sins that we have committed, unlike Israel. However, the New Testament assures us that, although not all Scripture is about us, it is nevertheless all given to us for our spiritual edification. Also, there is a clear parallel between Israel, God’s chosen earthly people, and ourselves, as members of the Christian Church, God’s present chosen heavenly people. The New Testament Church today represents God’s interests in the world, while Israel has been set aside temporarily until we have been raptured to heaven by Christ. So that sometimes New Testament writers apply verses concerning Israel in the Old Testament to New Testament Church believers. Israel and the Church are quite distinct in God’s purposes and programme of the ages, but parallels can be drawn between them, and lessons which Israel had to learn, we also need to learn. Therefore, the promise associated with this verse can rightly be applied in spiritual principle to believers today, and the same kind of encouragement gained from it as ancient Israel could have gained from it in their days and circumstances.

3. The Lord’s Promise

Let us, then, consider these words in their context, in order to gain maximum spiritual benefit from them; for the Lord is our God, just as really as He is Israel’s God also.

What words of encouragement and comfort can we find here to sustain us in our own trials and sufferings? Firstly, the Lord speaks as the One who created His people, ourselves as well as Israel. We have the Eternal Creator God with us in all our difficulties. That fact should surely reassure us, and remove our fear of the future. Secondly, the Lord speaks as the Redeemer of His people, the One who redeemed us from the bondage of our sins and Satan's grasp, just as really as He once redeemed Israel from Egypt's bondage. Since we thus belong to Him, there is even less need for fear in the face of our sufferings in this life. He is our Saviour God, who was even prepared to sacrifice some other nations in favour of His people Israel, and can therefore be counted upon to act on our behalf too. For the Lord says to His people, "*Thou art mine,*" and, "*Thou wast precious in My sight.*" We do not understand why this should be so, but gratefully accept the evident truth of the fact, and worship Him for it. But, thirdly, and most reassuringly, the Lord promises His redeemed people that He will be with us, our constant and ever-present Companion, in all our problems in this life, whatever they may involve. Nothing can separate us from the love of our Saviour God in Christ Jesus our Lord, as Romans 8 reminds us. And our very sufferings drive us ever closer to Him, which is His constant desire for us.

4. The Christian's Assurance

The Christian believer today can view his or her sufferings as a means by which he or she is able to prove God in a way that we cannot otherwise prove Him. Adversity in our lives is a God-given opportunity to develop our spiritual roots in

God and our fellowship with God. This is why we should count it all joy when we fall into various kinds of trials in life, according to James chapter 1. Only so will we grow as Christians into the full likeness of Christ, and manifest His mature and gracious character in this world. For a believer who is facing the prospect of physical death, let it be said that death for a Christian is only a gateway which allows him or her to pass into the immediate and consciously-experienced presence of Christ. The act of entering requires the exercise of faith that the Lord Jesus is waiting on the other side of the river of death to receive us to Himself and heavenly glory. It requires, also, that we be prepared to let go of earthly things, desires, and even the closest earthly relationships in favour of Him, and to entrust ourselves entirely into His tender care. He promises to be with us throughout the experience, as well as at its end. In a very real sense, the maxim "let go, and let God" can be proved true at the moment of our Homecall to glory, because then we can have no control over the situation, and must rest entirely upon God to take us through "*the Valley of the Shadow of Death.*" Try to think not only of all whom you are leaving behind you in this world, but even more about all those people and wonderful things that lie before you in heaven. Furthermore, be comforted by the glorious prospect of being reunited with all your believing loved-ones at the imminent Rapture of the Church; the parting is not for ever in their case. And you know that meanwhile you are leaving them safe in your own Tender Shepherd's care. Finally, the Lord's promise here is that neither the waters, nor the fires of affliction, or death, will

be allowed to overwhelm our spirits with fear, or apprehension, however dark the experiences you are going through may seem now. Trust yourself to Him alone, and "He will carry you through."

5. Faith's Constant Vision of Christ

The following poem was given to the writer on the occasion of his baptism in January 1956 by close friends of our family. Its words still represent his constant desire:

Lord Jesus,
make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality;
More present
to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen;
More dear,
more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest
earthly tie!

If we have this constant vision and desire for Christ before our hearts, surely we shall be able to face the trials of life, and even death itself, with greater calmness, submission to God's will, and assurance of final rest and victory in His eternal Presence. May God grant us all grace to "commit the keeping of our souls unto Him, as unto a faithful Creator," knowing that "His way is perfect," and our times are in His hand! For the key to blessing is always found in the wise advice, "In acceptance lieth peace." God's chief end and aim with us is always the simple acceptance of Himself. Then often, when He has brought us to this point, He lifts the burden of the trial, as He did with Job, and untold blessing is the result. May we all prove this, for His Name's sake!

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Learning GOD'S Sacred Secrets Daniel 2

“Daniel believed that God could over-rule the insanity of an unreasonable yet powerful king, bringing deliverance to them, and glory to God.”

“The Spirit-led man has the unique capacity to understand spiritual things that are beyond the capability of the greatest intellects.”

Daniel chapter 2 is a chapter of firsts. For example, it records Daniel's first exposure to public service, and how he conducted himself in it. Also, here for the first time, we have a description of the course of world empires during that phase referred to in Scripture as, “*the times of the Gentiles*” (Luke 21:24). However, we will be making only passing reference to the prophetic vision contained in the chapter, as we wish to concentrate attention on the man Daniel, and to draw some practical lessons that will be profitable for our own lives.

Times of Crisis are Times of Opportunity

Daniel chapter 2 is the story of a crisis in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, but upon waking, he could not remember what the dream had been. He then made completely unreasonable demands on his wise men. He wanted them to tell him what he had dreamed, and also its meaning. He told them that failure would incur death, but that success would bring gifts, rewards and great honour. Not unexpectedly, his wise men said, “*There is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh*” (Dan. 2:11). Subsequent to this confession of failure, the king gave the order

to execute all of the wise men, and of course this included Daniel and his friends. On the surface of things, this was a crisis of unprecedented proportions. Daniel and his friends were at risk, but what followed shows how we can use times of crisis to advantage, and find opportunities to glorify God. Daniel and his friends took up the challenge of the king since they knew “*the [God], whose dwelling [was] not with flesh.*” They were confident that God could reveal the thing to them, thus saving their lives, and the lives of the wise men of Babylon.

How do we view the crises that arise in our lives? Too often crises propel us into uncontrolled panic. The words of Isaiah come to us afresh, “*He that believeth shall not make haste*” (Isa. 28:16). An alternate translation says, “*They that believe shall not panic.*” Daniel believed that God was sovereign, and that this crisis was a time of opportunity rather than a disaster, and he did not panic. Daniel believed that God could over-rule the insanity of an unreasonable yet powerful king, bringing deliverance to them, and glory to God. Similarly, our world today seems to be spinning out of control, and the prediction of Scripture of “*men's hearts failing them for fear*” (Luke 21:26), is evident all around. How do we as believers face this? Do we panic like the rest of the world, or do we rest in the confidence that our God is sovereign, and that these crises could

introduce a period of unprecedented opportunity to present the gospel as the only answer to man's fundamental need? As men see their whole material world collapsing, may we be like Daniel, bringing words of confidence and assurance that God can be trusted to deliver the one who trusts in Him.

God's Servants Can Know God's Secrets

For reasons we do not know, God gave a vision of successive world empires to the ruthless, heathen King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. Following this we learn that his wise men were impotent to reveal the dream and its meaning. How does Daniel handle such an unreasonable man and his problem? First, he asked for time to discover the dream, and surprisingly, Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to suspend the executions to allow Daniel time to reflect. Now note how Daniel proceeds. We read, *"Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon"* (Dan. 2:17-18). It was after this intense prayer meeting that God revealed the secret to Daniel in a vision during the night, and Daniel was able to show that the wisdom of men was impotent in spiritual matters, and that *"the [God], whose dwelling [was] not with flesh"* would prevail.

The Impotence of Worldly Wisdom

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has a great deal to say about the impotence of human wisdom in relation to spiritual things, and this is a lesson that we also

need to heed. We must not put priority upon intellectual ability when dealing with spiritual matters. Paul writes, *"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Cor. 1:20) ... But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"* (1 Cor. 2:9-10). The Spirit-led man has the unique capacity to understand spiritual things that are beyond the capability of the greatest intellects. Undoubtedly, Daniel was a man of superior intellect, but he was at pains to show that the answers he received did not come from his own skill but from the God of heaven.

The Importance of United Prayer

Not only do we learn about the impotence of this world's wisdom when it comes to spiritual things, but we learn the importance of united effort in prayer. In the crisis, Daniel shared the problem with

“The Spirit-led man has the unique capacity to understand spiritual things that are beyond the capability of the greatest intellects.”

others of like mind, and then they combined their efforts in prayer. If we would know how to remain undaunted in the crisis, we must not bear the burden alone. Involve others. Paul exhorted the Galatians, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2). Uniting in prayer can bring great re-

sults. The early disciples faced the daunting challenge of preaching the gospel to a waiting world, and then of establishing local churches following the apostles' doctrine. How did they handle this crisis? We read, *"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication"* (Acts 1:14). Following this prayer meeting, 3000 souls were saved. If we pray believing, we will receive a response from God beyond what we could ever imagine.

God's Servants are Indestructible Till Their Service is Done

It is a principle that runs through Scripture, that God's servants are indestructible until their service is over. God protects and preserves His servants until His purpose for their lives is complete; then He takes them to Himself. Daniel and his friends were exposed to the ruthless decree of an uncaring king, and could have been swept away along with the other wise men of Babylon, but God had other plans for them. Neither Nebuchadnezzar nor any other, could thwart these plans. We will see this principle in

operation frequently in the book of Daniel. We also see this exemplified in the life of the Lord Jesus. For example, in the Gospel according to John we read time and again, *"His hour was not yet come"* (John 7:30). Men could not take Him and kill Him at their whim, because the life of the Lord Jesus was being

ordered according to His Father's timing. So it is with our lives. We can rest secure that He will keep us right to the end, and that His purposes for our lives will be fulfilled. Only when His purposes for us are complete will we be taken to His

“God protects and preserves His servants until His purpose for their lives is complete; then He takes them to Himself.”

presence. Until then, our lives are invincible. Paul also rested secure in this knowledge. Writing to the Philippians he said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Again he wrote that, “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20). Life and death for Paul were in the hands of the Lord. Even when it became evident that God's purposes for him were nearing completion, and he was to die on Nero's execution block, he wrote, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. 4:6). The poet has written so beautifully:

“Our times are in Thy hands,
Father we wish them there;
Our life, our souls, our all we
leave,
Entirely to Thy care.

“Our times are in Thy hand,
Why should we doubt or fear?
Our Father's hand will never
cause,
His child a needless tear.

“Our times are in Thy hand,
We'll always trust in Thee;
Till we have left this weary
land,
And all Thy glory see.”

A True Servant Does Not Attract Attention to Himself

It is worthy of note that whereas Daniel could have used the crisis in the palace of Babylon as an opportunity to glorify himself, he studiously avoids doing so. Daniel told the

king, “There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28). He goes even further, “But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living” (Dan. 2:30). Daniel made it his business to ensure that he was given

“It is worthy of note that whereas Daniel could have used the crisis in the palace of Babylon as an opportunity to glorify himself, he studiously avoids doing so.”

no credit for the revelation, and that glory was ascribed to God alone. Joseph likewise directed the glory to God when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream. He said, “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (Gen. 41:16).

We are living in days when men in the world systems vie with each other for a place in the limelight. Whether it be in the political arena, the sports field, or wherever, man is always striving for self-glorification. Sadly this spirit is also at work among the people of God. Remem-

ber when the Lord was nearing the cross and the disciples were striving among themselves as to “*who should be the greatest*” (Mark 9:34). As the servants of God we cannot allow ourselves to be caught up in the frenzied attempt to get the glory. We have to remind ourselves constantly that, at best, we are only servants. The great Apostle Paul had grasped this when he tells us that everything that men would count as a credit towards self, he counted but dung. He wrote, “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” (Phil. 3:7-8). He further exhorts us, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 2:5), and he went on to describe the down-

ward path taken by the Lord Jesus, which culminated in the cross.

May God grant us the same spirit of self-effacement and self-abasement that we see in Daniel, as we serve the Lord. And if the Lord has given us a unique and valuable insight into His will and His word, and if we are able to serve the Lord in the public forum, influencing assembly life for good by our ministry, let's refuse to take any glory to ourselves. We are but bond-slaves. The glory belongs to Him whom we serve, and to Him alone.

We Must Take into Account the Big Picture

Daniel was able to show Nebuchadnezzar that, in his dream, God had revealed the whole course of Gentile power, and how it would end. His dream of the great image covered from the time of the Babylonian empire, until times yet future, when the revived Roman empire will again be a force in the world. In

“God's plan is to destroy the world system, and on its ashes to establish His Kingdom of Righteousness.”

his dream Nebuchadnezzar saw the image struck by a stone cut without hands out of the mountain. It smashed the image to pieces and ground it to powder. The stone was then seen to become a great mountain that filled the whole earth. Daniel was able to show that the empires of this world are headed for destruction, and that when Christ returns in power and glory, it will not be to improve the world system but to destroy it completely. Christ will establish His kingdom in the world where men once cried, “*Away with Him, crucify Him*” (John 19:15), saying in effect, “*We will not have this man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14).

Now we might wonder what all of this has to do with us. This revelation is significant to us because, knowing what God has in mind for the political and social systems of our world, we will understand that the Kingdom of Christ will not come through a process of gradual

improvement in the human condition, nor through our political or social involvement. No. God's plan is to destroy the world system, and on its ashes to establish His Kingdom of Righteousness. This knowledge will preserve us from expending our energies on improving world conditions. Instead we should direct them toward spreading the gospel of Christ, which tells man that he is hopelessly depraved and that the answer is not in improving his nature or his world, but in receiving new birth.

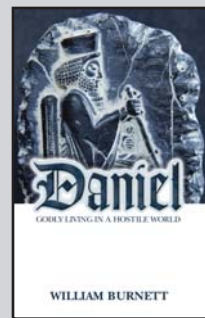
Summary

These then are some of the important lessons that we learn from Daniel chapter 2.

- Times of crisis are times of opportunity.
- We can know God's secrets by the Spirit, from His Word, and through prayer.
- God's servants are indestructible until their service is complete.
- A true servant does not glorify himself, but he gives all the glory to God.
- We must view current events in light of the revelation of God's purposes, and must concentrate on delivering men from the world system, rather than making them more comfortable in it.

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An excerpt from his book called,
**Daniel:
Godly Living in a Hostile World.**
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Daniel: Godly Living In a Hostile World

William Burnett

The study of Bible characters is a most profitable exercise as it brings a wealth of practical lessons applicable to everyday living. How pertinent are the words of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “*Now these things happened unto them for examples: and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age have come.*” (1 Cor. 10:11). In the study of biblical characters, we learn how God dealt with them under various conditions, and how they responded. This in turn helps us to understand the mind of God towards us in our circumstances, and the way in which we should conduct ourselves.

One outstanding character in Scripture is Daniel. Much attention has been directed to the prophetic section of the book that bears his name. Yet, the historical records concerning Daniel and his companions provide background that is critical to the understanding of the prophecies in the book, and they also provide rich counsel to help us as we face trials.

Daniel lived a long godly life in unbroken faithfulness to God amidst a godless people. The historical record provides a series of snapshots of Daniel at various stages of his career in Babylon, and highlights lessons that are relevant to us today.

May these mediations be a source of challenge, inspiration and practical guidance, whatever stage of life you may be at, and above all bring glory to God.

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“What If”

What if your way is stormy
As you travel on life's road;
What if your path is thorny,
And your back is bent with its load?
What if the day is dreary,
And your way is dark as night;
What if your soul is weary,
And there seems to be no light?

There's One who knows your sorrow,
Who's acquainted with all your grief;
He knows your path for tomorrow,
And will surely bring relief.
Your back for you He'll lighten,
He knows your every care;
Your way He'll bless and brighten,
If you go to Him in prayer.

What if He sometimes chastens,
It proves His love for you;
He may not always hasten,
But He'll surely see you through.
For we know there is no other,
Who'll be with us to the end;
So trust your all, my brother
To this never failing Friend.

—Author Unknown