

'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

Ephesians 2:8-10.

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Theme for 2021 – By the Mouth of ALL His Holy Prophets

July 23rd, 7pm

Subject: The Testimony of Habakkuk

Speaker: Ian Shaw

Autumn Conference – September 24th, 4pm and 7pm

Afternoon Subject: The Testimony of Zephaniah

Speaker: Stephen A Toms

Evening Subject: The Testimony of Haggai

Speaker: Martin Humphrey

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Representative in Australia: Mr Graeme McPhee, P O Box 346, Naracoorte, South Australia, 5271. (E-mail: graeme.mcphee@gmail.com). (Tel: 08 8762 2582; Mobile: 0421 028 040).

Representative in Canada: Mr Andrew Foster, 549 Johnson Crescent, Oliver, British Columbia, V0H 1T5 (E-mail: atcfoster@gmail.com).

Representative in New Zealand: Miss E R Wilson, 27 Walshs Road, Ashburton, 7700

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LIGHT FOR PERILOUS TIMES

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Website: WWW.SGAT.ORG

Secretary: Stephen A Toms 1 Donald Way Chelmsford Essex CM2 9JB

(Tel: 01245 268815. E-mail: satoms@hotmail.co.uk)

The objects are:

1. To teach the nearing approach of our Lord's return. James 5:8
2. To hold forth the Truth and to expose and resist error. Jude 3
3. To note passing events in the light of 'the Scripture of Truth.' 2 Peter 1:19
4. To unfold the Word of God by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Acts 17:11
5. To encourage missionary endeavour, and all service for Truth. Acts 1:8
6. To comfort and strengthen those who seek to stand with the Lord, apart from abounding lawlessness. 2 Timothy 2:19
7. To call for separation from false ecumenism. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

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The Coming of the Lord

(1 Thessalonians 4-5)

By Alan D Toms

(This message was preached at a Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony Conference on 25th April, 1980).

As we continue our studies of 1 Thessalonians we come particularly to chapters 4 and 5 under the general title 'The Coming of the Lord.' These words are, of course, taken from the latter part of chapter 4. Let me remind you of that which we have seen in our earlier study in chapters 1 – 3. Paul mentioned that it was a characteristic of the early Christians that, having been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, they were waiting for God's Son from heaven. This had reversed their way of living. They had turned to God from idols. They were not only serving Him as they were making the gospel known to others but they were waiting, actively, eagerly, expectantly waiting for the coming again of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We noticed that it was not just a pet theme with them but it was the natural outcome of their conversion. It was the corollary of their faith in the Lord Jesus that they were waiting for His return. It was the basis of their hope. It was an incentive to their service. It was the climax also of their sanctification. The coming of the Lord meant very much to them and therefore they were waiting for His coming.

A Great Comfort to Believers

Now we turn to these last two chapters of 1 Thessalonians and first of all I want you to notice that the hope of Christ's coming is a great comfort to believers at times of bereavement. From verse 13 onward in chapter 4, the apostle is dealing, by the Spirit of God, with the great truth concerning our Lord's return and he wrote these words because it was a very practical concern amongst these early Christians. I do not think we always appreciate this. They had been taught that the Lord Jesus Christ would return, but some of them had died and they were asking what would happen to those who died before He comes. Quite evidently there was a concern among them and it was a very real, a very practical concern. What happens when a believer dies before the Lord comes? So it is that the apostle wrote, 'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep;' and he adds in verse 18, 'Comfort one another with these words.' So what we have here about the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not given to prove the secret rapture theory, as some people would suggest; but on the other hand it is not given to disprove the secret rapture theory. These words were written in order to be a comfort to believers in the time of their bereavement.

He did not write in order that they may have a correct calendar of events accompanying our Lord's return but to deal with a very real difficulty. The whole chapter is very much

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concerned with godly living. Look at verse 3, ‘This is the will of God, even your sanctification,’ and it goes on to spell out the characteristics which should mark the believer whose body is set apart for the Lord’s use. We should know how to possess our vessels in sanctification. We do not live any longer as Gentiles live but it says in verse 7, ‘God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.’ Then in verse 12, ‘That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.’ So here is the context, how are believers to live godly lives in a hostile society? How do they face up to the pressures of life? This is the issue with which the apostle is dealing; then he goes straight into the subject, because this is a very real aspect of life, how do believers face up to the question of death? It is in dealing with this subject that he wrote concerning our Lord’s glorious return.

Well, what does happen when a believer dies? Verse 14 speaks about sleep. Now this does not mean, of course, that there is such a thing as soul-sleep. There is no question of the spirit of anyone going into a limbo state at the end of life here upon earth. The Bible is absolutely clear as to what happens when a person dies. The spirit departs to God. It returns to God Who made it. Paul, writing in 2 Corinthians 5:8, talks about being absent from the body, present with the Lord. No intermediary state of purgatory but an immediate departure from this life into heaven.

Very often I have felt when I have been at funerals that there has been a consciousness of the coffin and the body. The person is not there. The body is there; that has been left behind. We really knew the person within that body. The spirit has gone to be with Christ. This is what Paul says in Philippians 1:23, to depart is to be with Christ. That moment when the spirit leaves the body it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. How we praise God that is so. This is what Paul is saying here in verse 14 that those who have died in Christ are with Him.

He says that when the Lord comes, God will bring them with Him. They are with Him at present and when He returns they come with Him. They are not penalised on the last day because they have lived in an earlier age. They will not be at a disadvantage because they have passed through the vale of death. They depart this life to be with Christ and as such they will be with Him when He comes. What a tremendous comfort that is! Can you imagine how the Thessalonians must have been encouraged as they grasped this truth?

You know, Jews had very little hope beyond the grave. They were very vague about the life after death. There is not a lot in the Old Testament about it. It takes the New Testament revelation to give us any real confidence in the life that is hereafter. Some of these people were Jews, so what a comfort it must have been to them to know that because they believed in Jesus Christ the moment they died they were with Christ.

Others of them were pagan Gentiles originally. They had turned from idols – that is what the Scripture says – and all that the pagans believed about the other world was so vague and terrible. Now they are given this great assurance that having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they can have comfort in the hour of death because the spirit of the believer departs to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, verse 13 makes it perfectly clear that believers still sorrow. There is nothing

wrong in sorrowing at the time of bereavement but it is not sorrow without hope; and that makes all the difference. In the course of my ministry, I have often been called to occasions of sorrow, sometimes tragic sorrow. Unexpectedly, loved ones have been taken away and sorrow is deep and sorrow is real but where there is faith in Jesus Christ it is not the sorrow of those without hope. I have been called into homes where there has been no faith in God, no experience of His Word and no knowledge of His grace, and I have felt that it was absolutely empty because there is no hope whatsoever. Oh! the difference the gospel makes. Thank God for the comforts of the gospel.

You know, this is the distinction between Biblical Christianity and all other religions. You see what happens when a man dies and you feel the reality of what he believes. When I was in Africa, somebody died in the village where I was staying and they wailed and wailed all night. I also went to an African funeral of a believer in Jesus Christ and it was quite different.

Go to a Catholic funeral and see the moaning and the wailing then. My father died the same week as one of the popes. Oh! the terrible lamenting and the dressing up, and all the fuss because the pope was dead. Although my father had died unexpectedly, and it seemed to us he had died prematurely because he was still quite young and active; nevertheless we were rejoicing because he was with the Lord. What a tremendous difference it makes. Here the great truth of our Lord's return is set before these believers to bring them comfort in the hour of bereavement.

The passage states our Lord, when He comes, will come with the believing dead. Verse 14, 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' What does it say about those who have died in Christ? They will accompany Him when He returns. What does this mean? Well, it means, of course, that their spirits accompany Him. But verse 16 tells us that when He does descend it will be with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; then the dead in Christ shall arise first. Their bodies will be resurrected, gloriously changed and spirit and body will be indivisibly united and glorified in an instant, in a moment.

What a wonderful event this will be. All those that have died in Christ, right from Abel – I do not believe it will be from Pentecost, it will be from Abel. He died in Christ as much as anybody else. Hebrews 11:4 tells us that he lived by faith; he offered a more perfect sacrifice than Cain because he anticipated Christ, the Lord Jesus; and he stood before God on that basis and died in that faith. Therefore he will be present when the Lord Jesus Christ comes. Right from Abel to the very last one to die, possibly a few seconds before our Lord returns. What a tremendous host! When you think of those that you know, those of whom you have read, Missionaries, great Church-leaders, Reformers, the Puritans; they will all be there in that great day when our Lord comes. Oh! the comfort it gives to us in the hour of bereavement and how it makes our heart rejoice to anticipate that great throng that will be with our Lord Jesus when He comes.

No wonder that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, spoke of Him coming with ten thousands of His saints; and when the ancients spoke about 'ten thousands' they did not mean a particular number but it was their way of saying a great host which no man can number.

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The Basis of Their Hope

The Lord will come with His saints. His coming is an absolute certainty. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again ...' Do we believe that? Is not our faith based upon it? 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again **even so...**' The coming again of our Lord Jesus, though it is future, is regarded as much a fact as the great events of His death and resurrection. Our whole experience of God's grace is based upon the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but my dear friends, His coming again is as certain as anything that He has performed and fulfilled at His first coming. Our faith (our experience of faith, or the things that we believe) is based upon facts. I am so glad of that. These are historical facts, not just vague ideas, not theories, but facts relating to a Person and His work. As we think of the historic death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, so our faith can be based upon that which is yet to be because it is equally factual that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again.

You see, His promise is not conditional; it is absolutely unconditional – 'I will come again,' and all that the Lord has said about the end of the age, He will perform. Nothing can swerve Him from His eternal purpose. True eschatology is not conjectural; it is not hypothetical; it is not theoretical; it is factual. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so ...' His coming is an absolute certainty.

The apostle goes on to tell us that living believers will be caught up to join the throng. Verses 16-17, 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' Verse 16 emphasises that it is the dead in Christ first; then we who are alive will be caught up to meet Him. Body, soul and spirit glorified in an instant – an eternal, indissoluble union in that incorruptible state.

Verse 15 answers the question, will the living have an advantage over those that had died? 'This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent ...' – we will not go before, we will not precede, we will not have an advantage over those that have died because those in glory will come with Him and those who are alive will be caught up to share that glory.

Some people have spoken as though they will be disappointed if they are not alive when the Lord comes. Not very long ago, I was reading a prayer letter from a very dear friend of mine, who is now becoming an old man, and there seemed a note of almost despair in his letter because the Lord had not come. He was quite sure the Lord would have come in his life-time. I said, My dear friend it does not matter whether the Lord comes in your life-time or not, whether you are dead before He comes or whether you are alive and caught up to meet Him; it will make no difference, it will then be instantaneous glory.

Mr Spurgeon used to say to some of those early men of his own period who used to talk so much about being alive when the Lord comes, that those who are alive when He comes will have missed the grace that He gives to those who pass through the vale of

death. So, it may be very wonderful to be alive when the Lord comes but it is good to know that all experiences are great, even passing through the valley of the shadow of death.

Now you will notice here a reference to His coming in the clouds. This appears in a number of places in Scripture and it is always associated with our Lord's return to rule. So, although there is nothing here about the millennium, it is the Lord coming with clouds to establish His kingdom and that triggers the great resurrection of the just, when the dead are caught up to meet the Lord with the living as He makes His return triumphantly as King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is a passage which has so often been quoted to 'prove' the secret rapture theory but I wish to emphasise that the Lord's coming will 'not be secret but in manifested glory' (a phrase often used by Mr Fromow). You will see from this passage that His coming is accompanied by an outstanding demonstration of the Lord's power and glory. Three things are said about this.

First, the shout of the Lord Himself. 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.' When He came the first time it was said of Him that He would not cry nor lift up His voice in the streets; but when He comes the second time it will be with a shout. True, He cried upon the cross 'It is finished' – 'accomplished,' 'done' – but when He comes the second time His cry will be so loud the whole earth will hear it. On His first coming, in a sense, His outward display of glory was veiled – 'veiled in flesh the Godhead see,' as one of our hymns puts it – but when He comes there will be this outward manifestation and display of power and glory as this great shout goes up. He Who spoke at Lazarus' tomb and Lazarus came forth, will speak at His coming and all who are believers in Him will be caught up to meet Him in the air. This is not just the voice that raises the dead but the word that is used here is the shout of command. It is the command which calls for submission. It not only raises the dead but it calms the earth and establishes the rule of Messiah over the nations of the world.

It is accompanied with the voice of the archangel. We just cannot grasp the full significance of the voice of the archangel but there will not only be the voice of the Saviour, there will be celestial voices manifest upon the earth.

Then there is this mysterious expression 'the trump of God.' In the experience of Israel the trumpet's sound had a very special significance. Trumpets were to call solemn assemblies and other occasions. They were always to command attention. It will call for silence! For God has something to say. Here the great trump of God will sound and all the earth shall hear. I am sure that many of you instantly think of the comparison with 1 Corinthians 15 – the trumpet of the Lord sounding and the great resurrection. Well, my dear friends, there is no secret coming in this chapter, is there? If you want to find that you must read somewhere else. It is not here. This is the noisiest moment the earth has ever known. It is the brightest moment that the earth has ever experienced. It is the widest publicised event the world has ever witnessed because the Bible tells us that when our Lord returns there will be those from every nation who will own Him. So, as He calls the resurrection from all nations of the earth this great event will be known wherever man is to be found.

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The Climax of Their Sanctification

Now we are not only asked to consider chapter 4 but chapter 5 too and in the earlier verses of this chapter we see that the coming of our Lord will not surprise the believer but it will completely mystify the unbelieving world. 'Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.' Again, these verses have been taken to suggest that the Lord's coming is secret, to steal away His Church; but that is not what the apostle says at all. He is talking about the world and he says 'when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon **them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they** shall not escape. But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake **you** as a thief.' It will not come upon the Lord's people as a thief in the night but it will surprise and mystify the unbelieving world.

Now we do not know the day or the hour when the Son of man will come and the S.G.A.T. has always taken a very strong line rejecting any date-fixing. This is why our literature is readable from one generation to the next. We do not have to trim any theories to suit passing events. We deal with principles. We deal with movements among the nations that are clearly to be seen as fulfilment of prophecy rather than focus our attention on some passing man who may arise but so quickly his place may be taken by others. Having said that, we are told that there are certain signs for which we are to look; and we are beginning to see some of these characteristics appear today. This is a reminder surely that although there are yet other things to be fulfilled the coming of the Lord is certainly drawing near.

The apostle does not say here that we need to read the signs right in order that this day should not overtake us as a thief in the night but he advocates that we should live after a godly manner and then the day will not overtake us as a thief in the night.

Then finally, we move towards the end of the chapter, verse 23. The coming of the Lord Jesus is the ultimate for the believer. 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The Thessalonians were, and we today are, in a hostile society; but we believe that God is able to keep us and He is able to present us before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. For this we need the God of peace, not just the peace of God. We do need that peace, but pre-eminently we need the God of peace. It is not just the grace of God, and we need that, but the God of peace, God Himself. That is what we need. The apostle prays that these people might go on to know God Himself and this will enable them to live godly lives in a hostile environment. Oh! thank God that Jesus is coming again. Thank God that He is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year. He has a plan for the nations, for Israel, for the Church, for you and for me. He has a plan concerning the great consummation. Whether we live to see that event or not, really and truly does not matter. The important thing is that we should live as those Thessalonians in the light of that great day which shall be when our Lord shall come. And if we live in the light of that day, as John says, we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming. This we say, the Lord will descend. 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul

and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And I say to you as the apostle Paul said to those early Thessalonians, 'comfort one another with these words.'

The Gospel of the Grace of God

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By Dr Cecil Yates Biss

(Continued from page 27)

Of all the truths which underlie the proclamation of salvation as God's free gift through His Son, there is none that stands to it in a more important relation than the doctrine of the total depravity of the human heart, entailing complete moral alienation from God, ignorance of His character, and inability by man's unaided efforts to seek and find Him. Deeply solemn, and yet unmistakably clear, are the statements of Scripture upon these points. In Romans 3, the alienation of the heart is put before the depravity of the life: 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God' (verse 11); and this is the natural order; for if man understandeth not the character of God and His will; if man seeketh not to know God and to follow His will; if this be the essential condition of his heart – what can the issues of the life be but self-pleasing, disobedience, and rebellion? And let it be noted that this is not the accidental but the essential condition of human nature; **'not one understandeth, not one seeketh.'** Thus we are clearly taught that a man can never by the mere exercise of his own faculties 'understand' or 'seek' God: the enlightenment of the Spirit must give him that understanding, the impulse of the Spirit must make him willing for that search.

Equally plain are the words of Ephesians. Men 'walk in the vanity of their mind' (that is with their minds uncontrolled by truth) 'having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their own heart' (Ephesians 4:17-18); and they are declared to be 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Moral death, however, is a condition of being in which evil is active, for sinners are described as 'walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' (Ephesians 2:1-2). In this passage, as also in 2 Corinthians 4:4, the blindness of man's heart is connected with the deceiving influence of Satan, the 'god of this world,' who 'hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine in unto them;' and this darkness cannot be dispelled by any means originating in the soul of man himself, but only by sovereign and divine grace: 'For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

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Deeply solemn, also, is the apprehension shown of this truth by the great Protestant Reformers, whose convictions of it may be seen, for example, in the 10th Article of the Church of England. ‘The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare (*bring*) himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.’ The words of this Article are not quoted as though they were words of authority because published by the Church as an Article of Religion. The Church has no authority to ordain or decree any doctrine, but is at the most, as Article 20 expresses it, only ‘a witness and keeper of Holy Writ.’ The words are transcribed and set down here as a solemn and significant testimony of the convictions of those who wrote them in the midst of much darkness and of many conflicts for the truth, and as a clear and definite expression of the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Thankful may we be that such a testimony should remain recorded in a public confession of faith, even though made void, alas, by the doctrines current on every side in our day – a day when many are turning away from the faith to the fables of human light and progress.

No preaching of the Gospel, therefore, can be complete which leaves out of its testimony a clear enunciation of this solemn truth. If God has declared that the heart of man is so depraved as to be unable by itself to understand or to seek after Him, it is needful that this fact should be set out before the minds and consciences of men. If God has revealed this truth, we must declare it to men whether they will hear or will forbear. If the wisdom of God has declared it, it would not be wisdom in us to withhold it. If God, who is the God of Love, has declared it, it cannot be love in us to keep it back from those to whom the knowledge of it is of vital importance. For the preaching of this truth lies at the foundation of the Gospel; and it will itself, under the power and grace of the Spirit of God, be the means of differentiating those whose hearts are in rebellion against Him, from those whose hearts, under the softening influence of His grace, are seeking after God: to the one it will be an offence and a stumbling-block; to the other it will become the very first link of blessing; for as they learn their need of righteousness and strength not their own, this lesson will be the first encouragement to them to lay that believing touch upon the Saviour which will draw out His virtue for the healing of their souls.

As then the innate and unchangeable evil of the human heart (for ‘the mind of the flesh,’ the Scripture declares, ‘is enmity against God,’ Romans 8:7), is such that man, left to the choice of his own will, would never ‘seek after God,’ would never submit to God, it is clear that the first step must be taken by God Himself. (Note, as to this, the solemn emphasis of the words of Galatians 4:9: ‘But now, after that ye have known God, **or rather are known of God,**’ etc). It is not sufficient to make known that God has prepared a salvation for sinners: left to themselves men would misunderstand it in their ignorance, and reject it in their pride. It is needful that, even as the Atoning Work of Christ provides a righteous ground for the sinner’s reconciliation to God, the work of the Holy Spirit should effectuate that reconciliation by working in him the

enlightenment, the humbling, the quickening of the soul. With God it must rest to choose the objects of His mercy: no man deserves it – left to himself, no man would desire it; left to himself, no man would seek it. The declarations of human evil above-quoted abundantly prove this. With God, then, must begin the seeking of the lost, even as by Him alone can be effected the saving of the lost; for as reasonable would it be to believe that a lost sheep, in its foolishness, could find its way back to the fold and the shepherd, as to suppose that man, alienated not only by his folly, but by the hatred of his soul towards God, could spontaneously find and follow the way that would lead him back to God.

(To be continued)

Why True Christians Will Refuse to Take the Mark of the Beast

By David McMillan

(This article appears as an appendix in Mr McMillan's booklet, 'Where is Europe Heading?').

It needs to be made clear that all those who are truly saved and belong to the Lord and who live during the reign of the Antichrist will refuse to receive the mark of the Beast. There are a number of Scriptural reasons why the true child of God will not want to receive his mark; despite the very serious consequences that will accompany that course of action.

1. The Scriptures

The Bible not only tells us about the past, but it also reveals the future. The first book of the Bible tells us how everything started, whereas the last book of the Bible tells us how everything will end. Peter told us that the Prophetic Scriptures are, 'a light that shineth in a dark place' (2 Peter 1:19). The Bible gives us light for the dark days in which we live, and it will also be a light in the wicked days of the end time. One of God's purposes in telling us about the future is to warn us of events and circumstances that will take place, and to warn us of what the Christian should avoid and not be involved in those days when, 'iniquity will abound and the love of many will wax cold' (Matthew 24:12). One very serious issue of which we are clearly warned is the mark of the Beast (Revelation 13:14-18). It is the clear teaching of the Word of God that God's people should not take this mark, which will be such a prominent aspect of the Antichrist's programme.

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2. Separation

The Christian life is a life of separation. Both personal and ecclesiastical separation are very clearly taught in the Word of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). It may be that separation has gone out of fashion in the day in which we live, but the Bible's teaching on the subject has not changed. However, when the city of Babylon is ruling the earth and nearing its final judgment the Lord's people are especially exhorted to separate from that evil system. The Lord says in the Book of the Revelation, 'Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues' (Revelation 18:4). The fact that this call is made reveals that at the time of the end there will be Christians in Babylon, in a place they ought not to be, just like carnal Lot in Sodom. However, it is clear from this call to separation that the Lord did not want His people to be associated with Babylon or Babylonish practices. Babylon at that time will rule the earth. The mark of the Beast will be a primary policy of the then King of Babylon, who is also known in the Bible as the Beast. Therefore, never will there be more need for separation from all that defiles than there will be at that time.

3. Salvation

The Bible is very clear in stating the truth that those who receive the mark of the Beast cannot experience God's Salvation. The Book of the Revelation leaves you in no doubt that those who take the mark of the Beast will go to a lost eternity (Revelation 14:9-11). This is one reason why the Antichrist cannot be the Pope of Rome. There have been many through the centuries, who have worshipped the popes, who afterwards were truly converted to Christ.

The Apostle John also teaches clearly that all who refuse the mark of the Beast, will rise with the redeemed of the Lord, in the first resurrection at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth (Revelation 20:4).

4. Sufferings

One of the very clear and solemn warnings in the Bible about the mark of the Beast is that those who receive it will experience great sufferings. Those unprecedented sufferings will be twofold.

(i) Earthly

Those who receive the mark of the Beast will experience great pain and suffering while they are still alive and upon the earth in the form of a grievous bodily affliction. This suffering will come about as a result of the first vial of judgment being poured out by an angel on the kingdom of the Antichrist. John teaches us, 'And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image' (Revelation 16:2).

(ii) Eternal

In addition to earthly sufferings those who receive the mark of the Beast will

experience the eternal wrath of God in all its fulness in a lost eternity. John sets out this awful prospect in Revelation 14:9-11. It should be especially noted that the apostle declares that they will experience the wrath of God 'without mixture' (Revelation 14:10). That plainly indicates that God views the act of taking the mark of the Beast and worshipping his image as being a most wicked sin because it receives the greatest eternal punishment possible.

5. Subtlety

At the beginning of time the Devil used great subtlety in the Garden of Eden to deceive Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1). In the last book of the Bible, it is revealed that the Devil will display that same subtility at the time of the end, when by means of the miracles wrought by the false prophet, he will deceive many to receive the mark of Beast (Revelation 19:20).

The Apostle Paul also warned that the Antichrist will use 'lying wonders' and his policies will be characterised by 'all deceivableness of unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Many will be deceived by him at that time to receive his mark. We urge you to heed the clear warning of the Scriptures and not to be among those who will be deceived. There is nothing in this world more important for you than to come to Jesus Christ and receive Him by faith as your Saviour (Acts 16:30-31).

Zephaniah

By John Hunt Lynn

(Pastor Lynn was the first chairman of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony and he faithfully and graciously served the Lord in this capacity from the inception of the Movement in 1918 until his home-call in 1941. This article is a short outline of a study that he gave at an S.G.A.T. meeting about 100 years ago at 'Bethesda' Chapel, Notting Hill Gate. It is taken from 'Watching and Waiting,' July 1922).

This book is divisible into eight sections, thus:

Section 1 – (1:1-6). A preliminary section concerning the destruction of idolatry and idolators. See 2 Kings 23 (The 'Chemarim' are the priests of idolatry, 'Malcham' = Molech).

Section 2 – (1:7-13). The Day of the LORD foretold; adumbrated in the records of 2 Kings 23 and 24. (The strange or foreign attire of verse 8 indicates that the rich violated the ordinance regarding national costume (Numbers 15:37-40), and wore the costly and showy raiment of idolators, with whom they could thus more easily mingle. *Henderson*).

Section 3 – (1:14-18). The Day of the LORD more fully announced.

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Section 4 – (2:1-15). Appeal to the Remnant in verses 1-3. Judgment denounced on various nations that have been hostile to Israel in verses 4-15. [The travail of the decree of wrath, before it ‘bring forth,’ provides for the Remnant, made meek in ‘the land’ (A.V. earth), that they shall be HID from the wind and tempest of that Day, verse 3: see Isaiah 32:2: And ISH shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a COVERT from the tempest.’ *Covert* in Isaiah 32:2 and *hid* in Zephaniah 2:3 are from the same Hebrew word].

Section 5 – (3:1-7). Exposure of Israel’s sin and that of her princes, judges, prophets and priests, showing, verse 2, the four stages of her apostasy, and her frowardness notwithstanding her punishments.

Section 6 – (3:8). Call to prayer pending destruction of enemies. [Verse 7 wonderfully leads up, through abounding sin, to much more abounding grace. Verse 8 more correctly reads: ‘NEVERTHELESS wait for Me, saith the LORD, until ...’ In chapter 1:18, ‘the fire of His jealousy’ indeed burns upon His people, but in chapter 3:8, it is associated with the outpouring of His INDIGNATION and ALL HIS FIERCE ANGER upon His and their enemies, which outpourings are not mentioned when the prophet speaks only concerning Israel. His people’s sins are against Him; those of the kingdoms are against Him and also against His. In wrath mercy is remembered, and Jehovah’s heart triumphs in grace. The burnings of each Dispensation prepare for Blessings].

Section 7 – (3:9-15). Restoration and Conversion of the Remnant. [Preliminary announcement is made of the blessing of the peoples which will immediately follow Israel’s deliverance: ‘THEN will I turn to the people a pure language,’ etc. verse 9. No longer haughty, verse 11, the Remnant left become HUMBLED (A.V. afflicted) and poor, verse 12 (Septuagint renders it ‘meek and lowly people’). This section concludes with heavenly music, verses 14-15].

Section 8 – (3:16-20). The ultimate Blessing. [Compare Isaiah 61:8-9, and note that the response to Zephaniah’s challenge in verse 14 is recorded in Isaiah 61:10-11.

Recent S.G.A.T. Publications

We anticipate that, by the time this magazine is distributed, Adolph Saphir’s excellent exposition of the Book of **Hebrews** will have been printed. Dr Saphir was of Jewish origin and as such is extremely suitable to deal with the subject. This is a treatise which every Bible Student should have, read, and ponder. The Book of Hebrews superbly shows the unity between the Old and New Testaments. In addition to the work, we have been able to include some pictures which readers may appreciate. One is supplied by and used with the permission of the National Portrait Gallery in London – perhaps this indicates that Dr Saphir was a man of eminence. Another is from and included with the permission of the Free Church of Scotland. With nearly 1000 pages, this book is a bargain at £18 per copy.

The articles which appeared in *Watching and Waiting* during 2020, supplied by our

chairman, Mr McMillan, have now been printed as a booklet. The messages were entitled **‘Where is Europe Heading?’** and this is a subject which, although neglected by many, every Christian ought to pay attention to what the Word of God teaches in this respect. Who will be ready when these events occur? We suggest it will be those diligent Christians who have studied the Scriptures. An appendix (as given earlier in this magazine) has been added to the articles making the booklet an extremely useful collection of messages and, attractively produced, is a very suitable present to give to friends. Each booklet costs £1.50 but we are able to supply 5 copies for £5 and 20 copies for £15.

Then, we recently republished Miss Guy’s excellent work, **‘Concordance to Prophecy.’** This is also a useful publication to have, similarly attractively produced, and we can supply the booklets at the same prices - £1.50 per copy, or £5 for 5, or £15 for 20.

Also, we would remind friends that bound volumes of **Watching and Waiting, 2017-2020 (volume 29)**, are available at £9 each. We still have in stock some earlier bound volumes of Watching and Waiting (Volumes 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28) at £9 each. We are able to supply all these 8 volumes for £50 or any 3 of them for £20.

We would strongly recommend that all our readers purchase these publications and distribute them. Orders should be sent to the SGAT secretary.

Called Home

Miss Patricia Lawrence was called home on 31st January, 2021, age 74. A brief account of her life and experiences can be found in an interesting booklet entitled ‘Yet will I remember thee.’ Having had an undesirable upbringing, she could trace the sovereignty of God’s grace in the way she had been led. Although it is not mentioned in the booklet, she found instruction given to her by Pastor James Payne to be very helpful. She supported the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony and, when able, attended our monthly meetings. The last years of her life were spent happily in the Bethesda Home at Harpenden.

Mr David J Doberer of Cessnock, N.S.W., Australia was taken to be with the Lord on 22nd March, 2021. He and his wife Joy assisted with the distribution of Watching and Waiting in Australia for a short time following the retirement of Mr Matthews as our representative.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Legislation came into force in May, 2018 regarding information kept on database. We confirm that the record we hold of names and

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addresses of our friends is NOT passed to any third party but is merely used to send 'Watching and Waiting' and occasionally other small items of literature. Should any friend wish us to delete their details from our records, kindly let us know and that will mean that you will not be sent the magazine, etc.

Bible Spreading Union: The Reports and Annual Meeting messages from 2000-2020 have been bound and the volumes are available from ourselves at £9 each. Also, there are still some copies of the previous volume (1990-1999) available. The two books can be purchased for £12.

Mindfulness is a relatively new therapeutic meditative relaxation technique that has been popularised at an extremely rapid pace since its inception in the 1970s. It is being promoted in schools, universities, health and social care settings, etc; and sadly it is being recommended by ministers and pastors within evangelical and reformed churches. A booklet has recently been printed to warn God's people about this matter and it is entitled, 'Mindfulness – A Dangerous Deceit of the Devil.' Any friends desirous of having a copy may obtain one, free of charge (whilst stocks last), by contacting: believersalerted@yahoo.com

S.G.A.T. Meetings: God willing, meetings of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony will be held during 2021, when we continue to emphasise the fact that ALL the prophets spoke of Christ's Second Coming. Thus the theme for the year is '**By the Mouth of All His Holy Prophets.**' We trust that friends will be interested in this chosen theme, and we would like to see others come to our meetings, which we expect to hold on the fourth Friday of each month except August and December. The Autumn Conference is in September, when we have an afternoon meeting at 4.pm. in addition to the usual evening meeting. All evening meetings are at 7.pm. Details of the meetings for this Quarter are given on the back page but so that you can insert the dates for the remainder of the meetings in your diary and arrange to be present, we give particulars which are as follows:

October 22The Testimony of Zechariah *David McMillan*
November 26The Testimony of Malachi *Richard Monteith*

If Government restrictions continue due to the virus, so that the meetings cannot be held in London, the services can be heard on line at the same time as announced (i.e. British time, either GMT or BST) by using one of the following links:

<http://sermonaudio.com/sgat>

<http://facebook.com/sgat>

<http://youtube.com/channel/UC8fFgLBzrc8GuSzcmOC5vMA?>