

Rejoice!



Question: How can I - How dare I - show joy in my life when the world around me is so full of examples of pain, of loss, and of suffering?

Answer: All the more reason for me - as one of the Lord's children - to manifest joy in living which can alleviate some of the suffering and help to provide a counter balance to the world's experience of sadness.

Our neighbour opposite us told me that this year the Jewish Passover is on 23rd April - nearly a full month after our Easter. I was intrigued. The Christian celebration of Easter (this year being remarkably early on) is usually dovetailed in with the Jewish Passover celebration because Jesus was celebrating the Passover with His disciples the night before He was arrested and put to death. Jesus was - and said He was - the Paschal (Passover) lamb which was slain to commemorate the joy of leaving Egypt and its slavery.

Our neighbour (his wife is a practising Jew) said that every 19 years the Jews add an extra month - a thirteenth month - so as to keep the Passover in the same time-place of the year - in the spring (for the northern hemisphere) and this year is one of those nineteenth years with an extra month.

So this year we can extend Easter and its joy another full month and bring our celebrations (all too quickly done and forgotten) at least as far as the Jewish Passover which is both a commemoration of life that involves pain and death (a slain Lamb) and joy and freedom (the escape from slavery).

Jesus repeatedly appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. The disciples and also Mary were downcast, believing that their Lord was now dead. When some of them heard indirectly that the Lord had risen, the gospels describe their understandable reactions - they did not believe it, they said it was an idle tale, they failed to recognise Jesus, they doubted it unless they saw it for themselves. Don't be absurd - we saw Him die! (The disciples though hadn't - they had run away!)

Jesus appeared and said "Rejoice!" He cut across their despondency with a single word of command. In Greek it is 'chairete' which means 'have joy!'. I feel our English word is actually very helpful because it is basically saying 'have joy again' or if I can stretch it a bit 'have joy even though you can justify feeling sad and sorry right now'. In English, you see, all those words beginning with **re-** are wonderful **re**minders and spiritual expressions of our need and ability to **re**turn back to the Lord and His joy and to **re**acknowledge His

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Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom

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love for us and remember His purpose and hope for us. Whenever we do that we get restored and reconnected. You can add your own re- words.

Paul Tillich - one of the twentieth century great theologians - wrote a short book called 'The Courage to Be'. It's certainly in most libraries. In it he describes the importance of being ourselves and showing positive life out and around us in spite of every reason to feel completely the opposite. And to show this response because it is the life and power of the Lord at work in the world.

I have my own technique which I use to help me get back into a true, joyful and steadying feeling about life. I repeat a number of short words which are straight out of the gospels. It works, for me. For you it may be thinking about a particular person, or visualising a lovely scene in your mind, or reflecting on all the things you have been blessed with. But whatever it is, find something that quickly brings you back into the best feelings about life as a whole and life as it should be (and life as it is in spite of all the appearances).

May the Lord suddenly meet you and be there in front of you and give you His command to **rejoice!**

Rev Julian Duckworth

Editor's Note:

The biblical reference for Rejoice! Is Matthew 28:9. The Greek word has been variously translated, for example, as **Hail** in the Revised Standard Version or **Greetings** in the English Standard Version and also as **Rejoice** in the New King James Version. To say 'Hail' or 'Greetings' is a kind of simple hello, but to say 'Rejoice' is much more of a command in similar style to Jesus saying: "Repent and believe in the gospel" Mark 1:15.

KILDWICK ONE DAY SCHOOL 2005

This year there will only be one 'One Day' school at Kildwick on Saturday July 9th 2005.

If you have no previous engagements on that date we would be delighted to see you again.

The subject will be '**The Book of Judges**' and we will be looking at the questions:

1. What is meant by the term JUDGE?
2. What was the state of the land of Canaan at the time?
3. What was the state of the Israelite religion and why did the Israelites keep turning away from God?
4. Who were the enemies of Israel?
5. Who were the Judges and what did they each do?
6. What can we learn from the book of Judges by the use of correspondences?

I hope to send out reminders nearer the time but if you wish to book at this stage rather than later on feel free to do so. I am raising the cost this year to £10.00 for the day but this includes morning coffee or tea 10.30am ; lunch 1.00pm; afternoon tea 3.30pm and biscuits and tea at the end of the proceedings about 5.00pm, as well as the lectures and discussions.

If you wish to book at this stage please write to or phone:

Rev Geoffrey Clarkson

22 Wimborne Drive, Blackhill, Kelghley,
West Yorkshire
Tel: 01535 605503

God is our Refuge and Strength -

The Book of Psalms

I am delighted to be able to present to Lifeline readers a series of articles by Rev John Elliott. In this third article John writes about the deepest level of meaning in Psalms 3-8.

“By David we have to understand the Lord. In the Psalms therefore, wherever David is the speaker, the Lord is meant in the spiritual sense.”
Prophets and Psalms



The majority of the one hundred and fifty songs constituting **The Book of Psalms** have superscriptions or titles, many of which consist of no more than the words *A Psalm of David*, or simply *Of David*. A slightly longer title may contain instructions indicating which kind of instruments and/or which tune should be used to accompany it, while a lengthy one usually links the song to some memorable incident in the life of David. A shorter title sometimes does the same thing, for example, Psalm 3: *A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his Son*.

Seventy-three songs - that is, just under half of those which make up the Psalter - have titles, long or short, which include the name David. Other songs have such titles as, *A Song of the Sons of Korah*; *A Psalm of Asaph*; or, *A Song of Ascents*. The superscription of Psalm 72 reads *Of Solomon*, and that of Psalm 90, *A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God*. I may come back to these titles in future articles.

(Before going any further I should mention that in printed editions of the original Hebrew version of the Psalms - also in Latin, French, German, and no doubt other translations - a superscription composes a part or the whole of the first verse, or even of the first two verses. In English versions however the superscription precedes the first verse, which means that in English Bibles the verse-numbering of a psalm is often different from that in the original Hebrew and in 'foreign' versions.)

Let me now turn to Psalms 3-8 and to the brief presentation of their spiritual sense or inmost meaning set out in an untitled manuscript found among Swedenborg's books and papers after his death, which I am calling **Prophets and Psalms**.

In the literal sense of these six psalms the author expresses his utmost trust in God, particularly during those times in his life when others were opposed to him and his own life was in danger. In his anxiety he would remember that 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,' to quote from another Psalm. But in the words uttered by David, which in the literal sense contain his response to the dire circumstances in which he finds himself, we should see something of our Lord's words and actions in the times of trial and temptation He passed through during His earthly life. He too sought Divine help; in all His afflictions He prayed to the Father to stand by Him. He too would call to mind and rely on Divine power, which was His own and was infinitely greater than that of those who confronted Him.

For while He was in the world the incarnate Lord experienced two alternating states or conditions of mind and spirit. One was a state of humiliation or humility, also called exinanition, in which He prayed to the Father, as He did in Gethsemane and finally on the Cross; the other was a state of glorification or exaltation, as at His Transfiguration, when He enjoyed a sense of oneness with the Father. It was in a state of humility that He underwent temptations, in a state of glorification that He taught with authority and performed miraculous deeds.

It isn't possible for me to look in detail at each of Psalms 3-8, which, as stated already, are concerned at their inmost level with the temptations of our Lord and Saviour. So let me say just a little about Psalm 3, as it appears in the **English Standard Version** of the Bible, and after that simply present what is said in **Prophets and Psalms** about the other five.

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Psalm 3

A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED
FROM ABSALOM HIS SON

O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
many are saying of my soul,
there is no salvation for him in God.

Selah

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy hill.

Selah

I lay down and slept;
I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O LORD!
Save me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the LORD;
your blessings be on your people!

Selah

The title of this Psalm points to the events described in chapters 15-17 of the second Book of Samuel, that is, to the time when King David was compelled to flee into exile because of the insurrection stirred up by one of his very own sons. In the first stanza or group of verses of the song he prays to his God; he speaks of his distress because vast numbers have joined the rebellion against him, and people are saying that none can save him, not even his God. His position is seemingly hopeless. Our Lord's temptations were no less dire, for His foes - namely the powers of evil, which we call hell or the hells - were very much stronger and far more numerous. And in every trial or temptation which He endured He had to deal with those feelings of doubt and despair which the crafty powers of evil know how to induce. Those in hell are all too ready to suggest, in the words of the psalm, There is no salvation for him in God.

But in the second stanza of Psalm 3 this assertion that the situation is hopeless is plainly refuted. Far from accepting that his God cannot or will not save him, David sings with confidence, You, O LORD, are a *shield* about me. His meaning is that he trusts in God to protect him from every danger, just as a shield wards off lethal missiles or weapons. And He will not only protect him but will also give him back his glory or royal dignity. In so doing He will lift up his head, that is, He will bring him out of the wretched, inglorious circumstances in which he now finds himself, with head drooping and eyes downcast, to the happy situation in which, his royal dignity having been restored, he can hold high his head and face the world again.

The incarnate Lord was subjected to dreadful, depressing feelings of doubt and despair, especially in Gethsemane and finally on the Cross; indeed the latter were far more dreadful than we can ever comprehend. Yet he never gave way to those feelings. In all His temptations, in each of which He was enticed to doubt His mission and to despair of carrying it out successfully, He nevertheless relied on the Divine to shield Him from all that the powers of evil were hurling and thrusting at Him; and with that Divine protection He overcame them. He was, to quote the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Periods of temptation, when He prayed to the Father as one separate from Himself, were followed by times of consolation in which He felt at one with Him. He could then say that the Father's glory was 'my glory'. He could declare that the

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Father within Him was the author of what He was teaching and the works He was performing.

There is no room for detailed comments on the rest of Psalm 3, so let me just say that anyone who looks humbly and devoutly at the whole psalm will see and feel its inmost theme, which is, as **Prophets and Psalms declares**, The Lord, when He underwent temptations, at which times His state was one of humility, in which He prayed to the Father. And the theme in the next five psalms is the same, as may be recognised from the brief explanations of them below.

Psalm 4

Verses 1, 2 The theme is the Lord, when He underwent severe temptations. verse 3 Let [the powers of evil] fear Him, for He receives protection from the Father. verses 4-8 They are urged to come to their senses.

Psalm 5

Verses 1-3, 7, 8, 11, 12 The Lord prays to the Father to stand by Him, verses 4-6, 11, 12 in His opposition to those who are wicked, who falsify what is true, and who pretend to be good.

Psalm 6

Verses 1-7 The Lord prayed to the Father when He had reached the final stage of a temptation, that is, a state of despair. verses 8-10 With the aid He received He thrust back the powers of evil.

Psalm 7

Verses 1, 2, 6-11, 17 The Lord prays to the Father to stand by Him in His opposition to the powers of evil, verses 3, 4, 8-10 for He is righteous and there is no evil in Him, verse 5 so that the powers of evil do not prevail, verses 12-16 and are defeated.

Psalm 8

Verses 1-3, 9 The Lord gives praise and honour to the Father, asking that the Father should regard His blamelessness and stand by Him in His opposition to the powers of evil. verses 4, 5 The Lord's state of humility is described. verses 6-8 The Lord's state of glorification is described.

In the next article Psalms 9 and 10 will be the subject. Readers are invited to contact the editor if they would like any particular psalm, or part of a psalm, to be explained.

To be Continued

New Church Womens League Benevolent Fund

Annual General Meeting

Bradford New Church
Saturday May 14th commencing at 2.30pm

Please come along and join us if you can.

May Liversedge
Secretary

Programme
2.30 Songs of Praise
3.30 Meeting
4.30 Refreshments

About the Governing Council's recent work

It was a cold mid-February Friday when the Governing Council met at Purley Chase. At every meeting eleven men and women gather around a large table in the common room and soon become surrounded by files and heaps of paper. The Chairman, vice Chairman and six elected Trustees are joined by the Senior Minister, Chief Executive Officer and Treasurer.

The meeting is opened by the Senior Minister, Rev Ian Russell, with reflections and prayer. On this occasion he led us with thoughts about our spiritual journeys which can seem slow and risky at times. He reflected on the story of the sower in Mark 4 and the 'you can do it' message on Ellen MacArthur's trimaran. There is an awareness of the awesome responsibility for decisions affecting the Lord's Church on earth and each day begins and ends with prayer.

Members of the Council are often made aware that it is their responsibility to 'govern' and to make decisions, not all of which will be universally popular. Indeed as we all know, it is not possible to please all the people all the time. Many requests, plans and problems are received, discussed and responded to. New ideas are assessed against the previously identified priorities. These are: more focused uses of resources within churches at local level; SOLCe; web development and the Purley Project.

There are financial discussions about salaries, honoraria, payments and car mileage, each with its legal and tax implications. Plans for the Annual General Meeting and this year's Extraordinary General Meeting are firmed up and, as you might expect, the Purley Chase Development is a major factor in the Council's work.

In response to the rapidly progressing scheme a further one day meeting was held in Swedenborg Hall, London, in mid-March. Councillors are very excited by the plans which provide the new facilities in an attractive block, enabling the much-loved Purley to remain in a recognisable form. The planning of Purley remains broadly on schedule and responses from local churches and others have proved very helpful in this. Thank you to all who have replied.

There is much more good news too: the new web site is live and 'reaching out to new people'; a database is very soon going to ease internal communication and accurate record keeping; the Council will also be recommending a 4% pay rise for all employees. There is now a mechanism in place for paying a token fee to retired ministers in recognition of their valuable contribution to the life of the church.

We cannot sustain all the activities of the past but new and exciting things are happening. We have so much for which to be grateful and give thanks.

Judith Wilson
Conference Recorder

From the Writings ...

The combination of the angelic communities into one heaven takes place in accord with the following laws,

1. Every complete whole in heaven arises from the pattern of many sharing their lives with one another in accord with the harmony of heaven.
2. Love is spiritual togetherness, which leads to the harmony of heaven.
3. There must be a universal bond, in order that the individual constituents may be held in combination and interconnection.
4. The universal bond must enter into and create the individual bonds.
5. The universal bond is the Lord, that is, it is the love that comes from Him, and from this the love directed towards Him.
6. The individual bonds are derived from the universal; they are the bonds of mutual love or charity towards the neighbour.

These are the laws by virtue of which heaven, consisting of countless angelic communities, nevertheless exists as one total human being.

Arcana Coelestia 9613,3

The Royal Marriage

Much has been written and said recently about the Royal Marriage. Every aspect of this has been picked over in fine detail by the press and media. I fear that little of it has been helpful and supportive of the couple as they prepared for their wedding day. It is sad to me that the bride and groom have been given such a hard time, and I hope that the few words that I am about to type will be more constructive and supportive than many that have I heard and read.

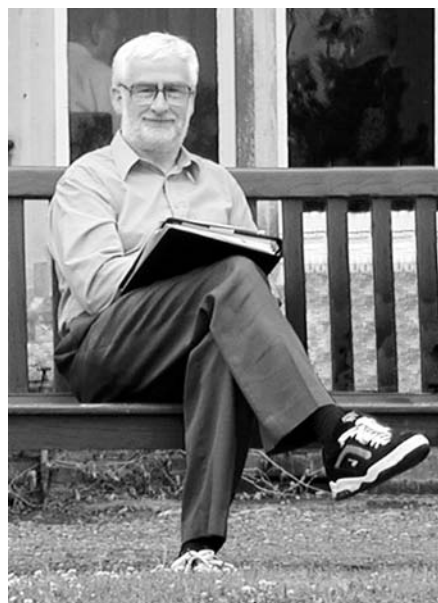
If I appear to start in a negative way it is for a positive end. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches,

"Everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery" Matthew 5:32

These words tell us that sexual immorality (adultery) is a cause of divorce. The reason for this is that adultery destroys marriages. Adulterous behaviour is therefore unacceptable and ought to be avoided.

Much has been made of the breakdown of the royal couple's previous marriages and of the part that their longstanding relationship played in this. The history is certainly not happy, but it is history and life has moved on. One of the glories of the Christian Gospel is that it enables us to break free of past wrongs and make a new beginning. A well-known Gospel story offers a way forward that is both merciful and wise. In John 8:1-11, we read of a woman caught by the scribes and Pharisees in the very act of adultery. Their attitude towards her was one of condemnation; in fact they wanted to have her stoned to death. Jesus would have none of this and addressing the woman said,

"Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" John 8:11



It is with great sadness that I record the passing into the spiritual world of Rev John Presland on Sunday 10th April after a courageous battle against cancer.

I am sure all readers of Lifeline would wish me to publicly extend our love and sympathy to Margaret, Jenny, Alison, Margaret Presland senior and their wider families and offer them our prayerful support.

A full memorial notice will be printed in Lifeline in due course. **Editor**

"Those who trust in the Lord are constantly receiving good from Him; for whatever happens to them, whether it seems to be advantageous or not advantageous, is nevertheless good, for it serves as a means contributing to their eternal happiness."

Arcana Caelestia 8480

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27

In these words Jesus offered forgiveness to the woman for her past behaviour and in releasing her from it gave her a new beginning. At the same time, however, he made it clear that adultery was not acceptable and stressed that she should avoid such behaviour in the future. Her ability to benefit from the Lord's forgiveness and make a genuinely fresh start depended on her putting all adultery out of her life. Forgiveness goes hand in hand with repentance of past evils. If the new marriage is built on these foundations then there is every reason to hope that it will be a happy one.

What is most important in this marriage is not the constitutional implications, or even public approval, but the building of a loving relationship between two souls. This loving relationship has its origin in heaven and it warms the whole person: -

"Marriage love in essence is the foundation of all loves, whether celestial, spiritual or natural ones derived from these"
Conjugal Love 65

The growth of marriage love is the jewel in the crown of human life and all who love the Lord and seek his heavenly kingdom should celebrate it. If this genuine marriage love is there then the union is a both true and good, no matter what lawyers, journalists, or religious commentators might say.

I firmly believe that this couple can put the past behind them and make a new start for themselves. Of course, they can only do so with the Lord's help, which is why I am pleased that the Archbishop of Canterbury has offered prayers for the couple in their new marriage. I too offer my personal prayers for them and I most certainly do wish them every blessing in their life together.

Rev Robert Gill

The Writing on the Wall

The Historical Context

The Book of Daniel presents us with an amazing range of vivid stories and visions and in chapter 5 we read the startling account of the hand writing on the wall during Belshazzar's feast. Rembrandt captures this occasion in his famous painting (shown on the right) and clearly conveys the fear and foreboding on the part of Belshazzar when he sees the hand write.

The year is almost certainly 539 BC, 23 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Back in 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar had taken the people of Judah into exile in Babylon and there they remained for some 60 years.

As we read Daniel 5 we get the clear impression that Belshazzar is the king and also that he is the son of Nebuchadnezzar. But this may not be an accurate interpretation of the original Hebrew and archaeological finds have shown that at this time Nabonidus was king but he ruled with his son Belshazzar as his prince regent. Nabonidus was Nebuchadnezzar's son in law so that makes Belshazzar a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar not his son!

Go back 500 years and you are in the time of the first king of Israel, Saul, who followed a long run of lesser leaders like Gideon. Following Saul, David became king and made Jerusalem the capital of Israel. And then in 970 BC Solomon became king and with the nation at peace and prosperous he was able to build the temple in Jerusalem.

But when he died in 928 BC the kingdom divided into Israel and Judah with their own kings, Jereboam in Israel and Rehoboam in Judah. Kings came and went and prophets repeatedly warned the kings to turn back to the Lord but in 722 BC Samaria fell to the Assyrians and the kingdom of Israel came to an end. But Judah struggled on until, at the time of King Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and the exile began.

When you come to the end of the story of Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5 you read that when Cyrus captures Babylon, he places Darius the Mede as Governor and then allows the remnant of Judah to return home to Jerusalem.

So you can see from all this history that the story of the writing on the wall in Daniel 5 takes place at a very low ebb in Jewish history, but nevertheless a position from which recovery does take place and Jerusalem once again assumes its central position in Jewish life.



The Writing on the Wall

There are many expressions in the English language that come from the Bible and 'to see the writing on the wall' is just one of many. But what a powerful metaphor it is! We see the writing on the wall when we finally realise that something is really going to happen, or change or end. May be for a while we have guessed that changes were around the corner but we didn't really want to believe it. Then suddenly it becomes incredibly clear, we 'see the writing on the wall' and the event happens and it is too late to do anything about it.

A typical example of this might be in political life.

You know what it is like, as elections progress a politician may remain outwardly confident of success on election day and say as much to reporters asking whether he or she will win. But inwardly there are nagging doubts possibly reinforced by newspaper polls. And then on election night a poll is taken as voters leave the polling station. It now becomes crystal clear, the 'writing is on the wall' the election is lost and there is almost no point in waiting for the full count and result. Seeing the 'writing on the wall' always seems to be associated with something bad that happens.

In Belshazzar's case it was the destruction of his and his father's kingdom. Did he see it coming? Didn't he realise that the corruption within the kingdom of Babylon was sowing the seeds of its own destruction? Perhaps inwardly he had some idea of what was to come but it was only when the writing appeared on the wall that he fully realised that it was too late, the inevitable was bound to happen.

"That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed" Daniel 5:30

Written on the wall were the words:

Mene Mene Tekel and Parsin

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These four words mean, as the book of Daniel describes:

Numbered Numbered Weighed Divided

Basically these words describe the process of spiritual judgement, which starts with numbering and finishes with division.

Mene – Numbered

The Word of God is full of numbers but in the spiritual sense these numbers are not numbers at all but rather descriptions of the quality of a persons inner life. When someone is 'numbered' it means that the quality of their spiritual life is being assessed.

Tekel – Weighed

The process of 'numbering' or assessing the quality of a persons life involves weighing in a balance. This is something we can readily picture. What is the balance in a persons life between truth and falsity, between goodness and selfishness. If our qualities were weighed in a balance would it tip in favour of love and goodness or go the other way.

Parsin – Divided

Finally there is a separation between what is good and true and what is evil and false and judgement is complete. Recall for example the words in Matthew 25:32-33

"All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

This sort of judgement is not a once in a lifetime process but something that can take place at any time. The whole cycle of repentance, reformation and regeneration depends on looking deeply within ourselves, allowing our real spiritual qualities to be clearly seen and assessed. Asking ourselves what the balance of goodness is in our lives and what are the things that are bad and self-seeking. If we carry out this examination sincerely with the Lord's help then a division can take place and what is selfish can be removed. A judgement takes place.

All the people in the Word of God picture some aspect of our own spiritual character and Belshazzar is no exception. He was a king and like all kings in the Word he represents something that can rule in our lives.

The first good king that can rule in our lives is Saul, simple obedience to God's word. A great deal can be accomplished by simple obedience but we can move on spiritually to the point where David rules, when we begin to understand what truth is all about and where it must lead us. This is a great step forward but we can move on yet again. We begin to love the truth for what it can do in our lives and we become wise. Solomon reigns in our lives and the temple can be built.

But Solomon's reign comes to an end and the kingdom becomes divided.

If only we could hold onto the Solomon stage for ever. But we can't, we are not perfect and soon all sorts of different principles begin to lead us and spiritual decline and division sets in. And if we let them, self-seeking principles come to rule and dominate our lives and carry us far away from the God centred life pictured by Solomon building the temple in Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar is now king and we are in a foreign land. Love for the truth has given way to spiritual corruption. And then further and final decline takes place pictured by Belshazzar's feast where he even used the vessels of gold and silver taken from the temple in Jerusalem. How low can we sink spiritually? Low enough even to profane what is really good and true?

But then the writing on the wall appears, Belshazzar is judged and he dies. Cyrus the Persian is now king and he lets the remnant of Judah return home and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.

Even if what rules in our lives is spiritually corrupt there is always a way back provided by the Lord. There is always the opportunity for new ruling principles to be established which can lead us back to better things, back to a God centred way of living.

We just need to see the writing on the wall!

Alan Misson



News from the Churches

Derby

The Derby church has organised a series of presentations on the Apocalypse at Derby University - here is their advert from a recent newsletter.

APOCALYPSE NOW!

Friday April 8th 7.00pm
at the Multifaith Centre, Kedleston Road
Derby University.



A fresh insight into the most puzzling book of the Bible - The Book of Revelation or Apocalypse

A presentation of entirely new artistic drawings of dramatic scenes from this book by the modern artist Roland Smith.

The Speakers: Clifford Curry & Christopher Hasler will present a selection of these images and show that they contain a divine message which is realistic in that it recognises the pain and terror which human beings experience. Yet it also reveals that there are deeper, angelic resources of love and peace constantly available to us.

In order to harness them, we need to understand the nature of evil and its purposes, and how easily it can manipulate us.

Thus the overall message is one of hope and the general prospect is optimistic, because the real clash between good and evil is psychological and spiritual. In this conflict we need to be on the side of the angels!

Admission £1.00 : light refreshments
Please Support this Venture

Seaburn Dene

School Visits Church

Residents in Torver Crescent, Dovedale Road and Shields Road were intrigued one morning in February to see two separate crocodiles of children and escorts making their way somewhere on foot. As part of their work, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have to study what happens in churches, so those children came along to Seaburn Dene New Church to find out. They were told about the various furnishings used in worship, and as part of that exercise were invited in pairs to place illustrated labels against the altar, font, kneelers, lectern, and 20 or so other items. They joined in a mock baptism, and were told about the significance of the baptismal water, and about the promises made by parents and godparents. Then there were lots of questions asked of the Minister about his work, about what goes on in the building, and so on. Finally came a tour of the building, before the trek back to Seaburn Dene Primary School. In between the two groups, the Minister, Rev Bruce Jarvis, popped down to the school to lead an assembly!

Brightlingsea

Women's World Day of Prayer

The Women's World Day of Prayer is celebrated every year in Brightlingsea. This year it was the turn of the New Church to host the service, which was held on Friday 4th March. The weather was rather cold, but there was still a reasonable attendance. In addition to the ladies there were about half a dozen men.

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The service for the Women's World Day of Prayer is prepared each year by the women of a different country. This year it was the turn of Poland. At the beginning of the service booklet was a potted history of Poland and various facts about the country. It has a population of 38 million, of whom about 85% are Roman Catholic. The collector of useless information lurking not so deeply within me was delighted to learn that the highest point of Poland is Mount Rysy (2,499 metres) and the lowest point is Raczki Elblaskie (2 metres below sea level).

The congregation was greeted in the vestibule with a piece of bread to be dipped in salt - a traditional Polish welcome. Inside the church the accompanist was playing some beautiful piano music by Chopin. The service was led by Frances Fisher and one of the first things which she did was to lead us in saying "God bless you" in Polish, which is "Szczęść Boże". Fortunately immediately after these words a guide to pronunciation was printed: Shtensht Bor-jher.

The theme of the service was "Let our light shine", which was echoed in hymns and readings. There were some familiar English hymns but also some Polish ones, which were sung in English translation. The Bible readings and prayers were read by representatives of the different churches. It was good to see so many participating in this. Sometimes there were several ladies gathered round the lectern and its microphone, taking their turn. Mrs Kimmitt read the story of the curing of Naaman's leprosy in 2 Kings 5. There were then five short 'messages' which different Polish women had drawn from the story.

Instead of an address the curate at St James, Hilary Le Sève, led some short guided meditations - an opportunity to approach the Lord in a more personal way. At the end everyone had a candle which was lit from a central candle as a symbol of our receiving light from God and then passing this on to others so that no one will be left in the darkness.

At several points in the service one was reminded of the difficulties faced by the people of Poland during the Communist era and the inner strength which many people there gained from their faith and the leadership of the Catholic Church. At least one member of the congregation commented afterwards on her awareness that the same worship was taking place all over the world and how this brought people together and strengthened their spiritual bonds.

Gordon Kuphal



Frances Fisher at Brightlingsea has spotted that the 2005 UNICEF Diary has the following entry for June 19th - "**Pentecost/New Church Day/Father's Day**" which is a remarkable occurrence. Readers with access to the internet might like to visit the following calendar sites which also refer to New Church Day:

www.christianitysite.com/Christiancalendar2005.htm

www.interfaithcalendar.org/calendartrial05.htm

www.spiritrestoration.org/Church/Worship%20Resources/Christian_Holy_Days_2005.htm

I suspect there are many more!

Editor



Visit:

www.spiritualwisdom.org.uk

Letters

Dear Editor,

I was most interested to read the letter from the Rev Alan Lewin in Lifeline.

I am sure the vast majority of those of us who try to live our lives as our Lord would wish us to do, do not justify what may appear acceptable to many in society today by simply seeking support for those views in the Writings. However, the world is as it is today, and to some extent we have played our part in allowing it to become so. When the world became too bad, the Lord came among us, lived alongside us to help it become better. He did not isolate Himself. He came into the thick of it.

This is how I see our wonderful doctrines – nothing can take away their distinctiveness, their spirituality not their preciousness to us, but they do stand alone – whatever we do, or mankind generally does – they will always stand alone as Doctrine. But they do have to exist alongside all other philosophies and thinking, but these do not detract from the uniqueness of our Doctrines.

Personally, I feel it is a pity that Alan sees the need for a “new society”. He is entitled to his viewpoint, but to form yet another group seems divisive to me, rather than a joining of ideas from a common standpoint.

I attend at least two Bible Study groups regularly and believe that these “exist for quiet reflection, study and thought on what the Lord tells us in the Writings about how we prepare ourselves for the life in heaven for which he has created us.” Parts of our Sunday Worship also do this, and I would suggest that many of us feel we do this in other ways, too, alone or in the company of others.

The Writings have always been the first port of call in decision-making in most of our member’s minds. Although I rejoice in Alan’s appreciation of the Writings, I regret his need for a separate group to make us aware of them. They are indeed the very basis of our New Jerusalem Church, and I question what use a separate group would supply.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Sutton
Derby Society



Lifeline

Contributions should be sent to the Editor,
27 Woodland Way, Shirley, Croydon, CR0 7UB

Alan C Misson
Tel: 020 8777 5098 Email: alanmisson@btinternet.com

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