

The Presbyterian Banner

April 2019



Model of the Second Temple in the Time of the New Testament

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FROM THE EDITOR

The evil act of hatred perpetrated in Christchurch needs condemnation by Christians with the same force as the actions of Daesh (Islamic State so-called). I'd like to hear that loud and clear from all professing Christians. I fear that sometimes those on the political right are not as forthright as they might be because they associate all Islam with extremists. Whatever the Koran might say, many even most Muslims don't take the more violent parts literally, and they are not extremists. We need to empathise with them, befriend them and show the love of Christ to them.

James 2:8-9 states: 'If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.' Our neighbour is anyone who is brought near us in God's providence. Geoff Thomas, well regarded minister of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, writes on this passage: 'Your neighbour has a different religion from you. He is a student from Iran, or India, or Israel. You may not choose which one is nearest to your beliefs and love that one and ignore the other. Love your neighbour. He thinks differently from you. He has a different holy day from you. There are foods he thinks are unclean. Love him for all of that. Possibly he has no religion at all. Your neighbour is an agnostic; he disregards God; his language is bad –

love him still. His sin is not against you it is against God. Leave God to deal with him. If you can do him a kind turn, if there is anything in which you can serve him, do it, day or night. And if you make some distinction against him let it be this, because he is not of your religion you will serve him more, and you will love him that he may find more easily the Lord you have found.'

I hear some people say, 'But what about Muslim attacks on Christians in many parts of the world which are far more frequent and severe than attacks by Christians?' Yes, that is true, but do not tar all Muslims with the extremist brush any more than you would blame all Christians for the extremist fanatics that come out of that background. Jesus said we are to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us because that what goes does. (Matt 5:43-45). That doesn't mean a country can't have immigration rules; it doesn't mean we must regard all religions equally or as beyond criticism. But it does mean we are to actively seek the benefit of our neighbours, and even our enemies, in practical ways. Is he struggling with some form-filling? Help him. Is she needing help with extra blankets for the children? Help her. Are they finding a new country strange? Invite them for a meal with due regard to their dietary customs. Is he injured on the roadside? Be the Good Samaritan, who though he was a heretic to Jews knew how to love his neighbour.

Don't be taken in by the voices of fear or ignorance so as to bear false witness and bring dishonour on Christ's name. Faith without works is dead faith.

The response of the Christchurch community may fade somewhat as the days pass. But I trust the real Christians will not fall short but continue in practical relationship with their neighbours. How about you? #

The Presbyterian Banner [ISSN 0729-3542] is the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The PCEA was founded in 1846 and adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as a correct summary of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. There are congregations in Woolloowin (Brisbane), Qld.; Maclean, Grafton, Wauchope, Kindee, Taree, Cardiff, Raymond Terrace, Sydney CBD, Mt Druitt in NSW; Wantirna, Mulgrave, Narre Warren, Carrum Downs, Geelong in Vic.; Ulverstone, Tas.

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Psalm 3: God Save the King!



Rev. George Ball, Taree

THE title of the psalm indicates it's a Psalm of David written when he fled from his son Absalom. It's the first of 14 psalms linked with events in David's life. You can find the story in 2 Samuel 15-19. It was a tragic situation. David was facing treachery and rebellion – not from a pagan king – but from one of his own family. It must have crushed his heart. According to 2 Samuel 15: 6, 'Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel'. Once he secured his base, he made his move. He went to Hebron, assembled followers and had himself anointed king. With a considerable army behind him, he marched against his father in Jerusalem and forced David to flee. As he fled, 'Everyone cried loudly as the king and his followers passed by. They crossed the Kidron Valley and then went out toward the wilderness' (2 Sam 15:23). But David wasn't entirely innocent. This was the result of the Bathsheba-Uriah fiasco. Because of it the prophet Nathan declared to David, 'This is what the Lord says, because of what you have done I will cause your own household to rebel against you' (2 Sam. 12: 11). Though forgiven, David still had to face the consequences of his sinful actions.

It's no accident that Psalm 3 comes immediately after Psalm 2. Psalm 2 predicts that rulers and nations will rise against God's Anointed. Psalm 3 begins to chronicle it taking place. This is what life is like for God's king – betrayed by one of his own.

1. The Historical Context of the Psalm.

In verses 1-2 David describes the rebellion he encountered. He describes the magnitude and the malice of his enemies. They were many (1 and 6), they were on the move (1b), and they mocked sarcastically (2). 'Where is your God now when you most need him'? Perhaps they began to throw David's sin back in his face; his relationship with Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah, his failure as a father to Amnon and Absalom. Shimei (a relative of Saul) was one of those who heaped abuse on David. He pelted him with stones and cursed him shouting, 'Get out of here you murderer, you scoundrel! The Lord is paying you back for all the bloodshed in Saul's household. You stole his throne and now the Lord has given it to your son Absalom. At last you will taste some of your own medicine, for you are a murderer!' (2 Sam. 16: 7-8). David seemed to be a man abandoned by God (2b). It appeared he was getting his comeuppance.

In verses 3-4 we see the reliance that David exercised. In his most devastating and desperate hour when it seemed that God had deserted him he penned these remarkable words, 'But you O LORD are a shield about me' (3). Having the LORD as an all-round shield doesn't prevent one's enemies from continuing to shoot their arrows. It merely makes their attacks fruitless. A.W. Tozer comments, 'What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will be swept away and we shall have only God'.

'You are My glory and the lifter of my head' (3b). David had lost all earthly glory. We read that, 'He walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered, and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning' (2 Sam. 15: 30). David hung his head in sorrow. It's deeply humbling having a rebellious son. There's a sense of shame and failure, even sorrow and loss. It's like a bereavement. Yet despite this crushing blow David's faith in the Lord never wavered. By God's grace he was able to look up heavenward (cf. Ps. 27: 5-6).

'I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill' (4). You can imagine David crying loudly to the Lord. Prayer for David was a well-trodden path. David Dickson sums it up beautifully, 'God is a counter-comfort in all calamity, our shield in danger, our glory in shame, the lifter up of our head in dejection.'

In verses 5-6 we see the rest he enjoyed. Amazingly David was able to lie down and sleep, despite being heavily outnumbered (cf. 2 Sam. 15: 13). He was confident that the Lord who neither slumbers nor sleeps could protect him at night; as indeed happened in 2 Samuel 17: 1 and 16. The Lord was not only his shield but his pillow too. The apostle Peter enjoyed that same peace as he was chained in prison awaiting execution (Acts 12: 7). He was in such a deep sleep that an angel had to strike him in the side to awaken him. David tells us that the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them (Ps. 34: 7).

The Lord was not only his shield but his pillow too.

In verses 7-8 we see the request he expressed. Now we discover the content of his prayer. He prays that the Lord will grant him salvation and deliverance from his enemies. 'For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked'. Sounds violent and bloodthirsty! We must bear in mind however that David was God's anointed king. These insurgents were ultimately God's enemies. It was a reasonable request that the Lord rebuke them (by striking them on the cheek) and disarm them (by breaking their teeth). Toothless enemies will not be able to hurl their insults anymore.

The final verse is no mere appendix. It's integral to the psalm. It expresses David's deep concern for the salvation of God's people. Their salvation was dependent

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on his deliverance. Their destiny and his were inextricably linked. As O. Palmer Robertson remarks, 'For as their messianic king fares, so His people fare.'

2. The Prophetic Context of the Psalm.

Not only is this a psalm of David and about David; it's also a psalm of Jesus and about Jesus. David was not only a poet; he was also a prophet (Acts 2: 30). He foreshadowed the Messiah and he spoke of the Messiah. This psalm is ultimately about Jesus. He is the true King. Jesus too was surrounded by enemies. He was opposed and rejected by His own family; by His own villagers; by His own nation; by His own leaders. From the outset they conspired against Him. Mark records how at the beginning of His ministry, 'The Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Him' (Mark 3: 6). In the end, as we know, they were successful. They persuaded the imperial power of Rome that Jesus was guilty of rebellion – plotting against the state. He was a dangerous fellow. It was a tissue of lies. The punishment was death by crucifixion.

He was betrayed by – guess who? 'My close friend in whom I trusted' (Ps.41:9). He too was mocked sarcastically and taunted before the Sanhedrin (see Mark 15: 17-20). He was also mocked and taunted and spat upon on the Cross (see Mark 15: 29-32). 'Where is your God now?' 'If you are the Son of God come down!' He was a man of prayer, not least when He approached the Cross and when He was on it (4). 'In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of his reverence' (Heb. 5: 7).

Jesus' trust in His Heavenly Father never faltered – He was His shield, and glory, and the lifter of His head (3). He rested in Him. 'He slept in a boat during a wild storm. Night after night He enjoyed rest while His enemies surrounded Him. He prayed for final rescue, was confident of final deliverance, and experienced final victory in bodily resurrection' (Ash). He looked beyond the suffering to the joy and glory set before Him. He knew as David said, 'In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore' (Ps. 16:11). He knew that the salvation of His people was dependant on His deliverance. As Robertson reminds us, '*For as their messianic king fares, so His people fare.*'

3. How the Psalm Applies to us Today.

Not only is this a Psalm of David; and a psalm about Christ, fulfilled in Him and sung by Him; it's also a psalm for us (the church) to sing.

This is the route we should follow as we seek to understand the Psalms. Our temptation is to short-circuit the process – and jump immediately from David to us, in our haste to see how it speaks to us. But that skips the most important element – Jesus. The Psalms speak of Him (Luke 24: 27). Besides, there's so much in this psalm that's simply not true of us. Do you have that many enemies seeking your life? Do you have a friend plotting your demise? Does God always answer your prayers in the way you want? Does the future salvation of the church depend on you? I think not. So how do these

words apply to us?

In verses 1-2 David describes his unique circumstances and how they foreshadow the troubles Jesus faced. Our enemies are no less real - if less dramatic and numerous. Jesus warned His followers, 'if they persecuted Me they will persecute you also.' Paul warns us, 'All who seek to live a godly life in Christ will suffer.' The psalmist says, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous.' Trouble comes to us in all sorts of places, from all sorts of people, in all shapes and sizes. It may be at work, or at school, or in the home from family members, or in the neighbourhood. If we dare express a Biblical opinion in the public arena, we will be a 'hate target' from the extreme left.

In verses 3-4 we can't be as sure as David that the Lord will always deliver us from trouble or danger. He didn't deliver the martyrs. He didn't deliver James from prison but delivered Peter (Acts 12:1-3). Nonetheless, can we not say because of our trust in the Lord Jesus, 'He is a shield about me' (3). He is always with us and will take care of us no matter what happens to our body. 'He is my glory'. He is everything to me. He is, 'the One who lifts my head' and gives me hope. Because of Him we can pray to God with confidence (4). Because of Him we can enjoy great peace even in the midst of trials. We can testify with the hymnwriter, 'What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer'.

'What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer. O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer'.

We shouldn't feel squeamish about the request to break the teeth of the ungodly. We have no warrant to treat our enemies like that. We are to love them. The weapons we use are spiritual. But when we pray in the Lord's Prayer ('Your kingdom come') we are effectively praying that the Lord will disarm, defeat and ultimately destroy all His and our enemies - either through the Gospel – or in the judgement. The Shorter Catechism says, '*In the second request ('Your kingdom come') we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced and ourselves and others brought into it; and that Christ's return and the kingdom of glory may come quickly*' (Q.102).

We've noted already that the final verse is no mere appendix. Our salvation depends upon it. It's only because the LORD delivered His Anointed King in bodily resurrection that blessing comes to His people. If God saves the King, then His people are secure. We repeat the statement, '*for as their messianic king fares, so His people fare*'. Our lives are inextricably linked to Jesus. Paul says, 'This is a trustworthy saying, if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure we will also reign with Him' (2 Tim. 2: 11-12).

The final request of the psalm, ‘*Your blessing be on your people*’ is a prayer for others. It’s not a ‘me’ prayer. We can never pray the Lord’s Prayer and even once say ‘my’ or ‘me’. O. Palmer Robertson comments, ‘Our prayers must ultimately aim at the good of the whole people of God. By following David’s example, the blessing of the Lord will come upon His people – the church’.

When we recognise the historical and the biblical theological context, we are enabled to see how the blessings of the Psalm relate to us through Christ. #

John Smith: I asked God to raise up a minister to the bikers - and he told me to do it

What happened when the skinheads attacked the Hell’s Angels.

Rev Dr John Smith (1942-2019) went to be with the Lord on 6 March 2019. He was an international speaker, author and founder of God’s Squad Christian Motorcycle Club International, Concern Australia and St Martin’s Community Church in Melbourne, and had been suffering from cancer for the past 19 years. A gifted and complex man he could infuriate with his directness, move one with his emotion, encourage one with his love for Christ. In 1969 he began Truth and Liberation Concern [TLC] to reach out to those not being reached by regular churches. Later there was a split and Smithy or ‘the bulldog’ as he was also known, started St Martin’s Church in Fitzroy. He was a social commentator and media personality, concerned for the marginalised, sceptical of prosperity preachers; altogether an interesting and colourful guy who impacted many people in a positive way including many through addresses he gave in schools.

This article has been adapted for John by Coral Chamberlain from his book On the Side of the Angels by John Smith and Malcolm Doney, revised edition (K John and Glenna Smith: 2015) and is taken from Eternity magazine website. Smithy’s funeral was held at Ocean Grove Baptist Church on 23 March with a large attendance including some 400 motorcycle riders.

Early in 1972, my wife Glenna, myself and a few others attended the Sunbury Rock Festival as an informal “mission” group. Some Christians were scandalised — that was no place for a minister!

There, among that drugged-up, hedonistic crowd of around 35,000, we found people willing to chat with us. Many responded to the gospel and wanted to be baptised. One was a biker, a hard-drinking, hard-fighting member of an outlaw club, now transformed through his encounter with Jesus Christ. He stood knee deep in the muddy river that flowed slowly through the site to be baptised, while onlookers who had been skinny-dipping lounged around on the banks adding their colourful comments.

After his baptism the biker, standing in midstream, explained exactly what the gospel of Jesus meant, using simple, non-religious words. The audience was silenced by his sincerity and passion.

The audience was silenced by his sincerity and passion.

Bikers, hippies and anti-war activists had first grabbed my attention a year or two earlier. I was then an “orthodox” minister on the outside, although beginning to feel drawn towards people on the fringes of society.

While driving towards Bendigo, I passed a bunch of menacing-looking outlaw bikers parked by the side of the road. Oddly, I felt a surge of compassion for these guys who no one really wanted to know. I couldn’t see the local minister making much headway with people like that.

I was far too straight for the job.

So I began to pray that God would raise up someone able to get alongside such outsiders and show them something of the love of Christ. I sensed a reply, “Why don’t you answer your own prayer?”, but initially doubted the call. I was far too straight for the job.

Soon afterwards at a Christian family camp, I met Eddie Pye, a youth worker and first-rate stunt motorcyclist. He said, “If you really want to grab the attention of teenagers, you should get yourself a motorbike.” He persisted until, hesitantly, I took his advice.

I then began to chat with a few bikers, some of whom became believers. Despite their apparent toughness, I found they were often vulnerable and lost but searching for a better life. Also the more I dug into Jesus’s life, the more I was challenged by the way he ministered to the outcasts of his day. I reckoned the bikers had to be the “lepers” of our society. I was becoming increasingly convinced of God’s call to be “the answer to my own prayer”.

Despite their apparent toughness, I found they were often vulnerable and lost but searching for a better life.

Before long, with the support of Eddie Pye and five others committed to a ministry to bikers, I established a reshaped God’s Squad Christian Motor Cycle Club in Melbourne in 1972, adding to our emerging ministry to people who felt alienated from conventional church.

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In the early days, it was important for us just to be seen around. We went to places where bikers and other non-conformists met and began to strike up friendships with individuals. Eventually we began to blend into such scenes. We had good bikes and good riders and wore leathers emblazoned with our club insignia. We varied our language so they could understand and, while we made no secret of the fact that our values and attitudes were different, we didn't set ourselves up to attack them for who they were or the way they behaved. Nevertheless, as a ministry, we were still outsiders trying to get in.

At the 1975 Sunbury Rock Festival, where diverse subcultures gathered for alternative countercultural activities, that changed. The atmosphere there was tainted by uneasiness and threatened violence: skinheads and bikers were at loggerheads.

They had baseball bats, metal bars and chains, and they were ready for action.

After a few early skirmishes between the two, the police tried to solve the problem by booting the bikers out — except for God's Squad and, strangely, the Hell's Angels, a tough, aggressive club who had set themselves up as warlords at the festival. We had only recently begun to make contact with them. Some of us had struck up a good relationship with one of their better-known members, who introduced me, as Squad president, to their president. Later they asked us to look after their camp while they went for a swim and we readily agreed.

Word came through that a large group of skinheads were massing for an attack on the bikers. They had baseball bats, metal bars and chains, and they were ready for action. There were two or three hundred skinheads and only 60 remaining bikers, including us. One of the Angels approached me and asked, "You guys going to fight with us? They don't give a stuff that you're Christians. As bikers, you're going to get it as well."

"When the skinheads turn up, we're just going to confront them and ask them to lay down their weapons."

We went away to talk and pray and decide what to do. Our reply to the Angels was this: "We're not gutless wonders. We'll stand with you. But our egos don't depend on winning a fight. Our security rests in our belief that the God of the universe loves all of us. So when the skinheads turn up, we're just going to confront them and ask them to lay down their weapons."

The Angels were shaking their heads in disbelief at this madness. They warned us we'd be ridiculed then beaten to a pulp. Moved by Scripture — "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov 16:7) — I said, "I don't think it's going to work out that way. We believe God's with us and that somehow he's going to sort this out."

This had the ring of Old Testament times when the Israelites asked God to deliver them from their enemies.

It was getting dark when we joined the well-armed Angels to await the arrival of the skinheads. To save face, they had to turn up. We sat there for four hours and, to our amazement, nothing happened. I can't prove it, but it is my belief that God heard our prayers and intervened in some miraculous way. This had the ring of Old Testament times when the Israelites asked God to deliver them from their enemies.

A lot of bloodshed was avoided that night. Also it was an excellent opportunity for God's Squad to show we weren't wimps, yet neither were we prepared to compromise our beliefs, even in the face of physical risk. So as "peacemakers" we were "blessed". I think our stand made a real difference to the way we were viewed in the biker scene generally and among Hell's Angels in particular. They said, "Look, we don't buy what you're selling, but we respect you. You blokes are fair dinkum."

We knew we had to earn the right to speak through relationship.

Countless bikers have since "bought" our gospel message and many have joined us in our ministry. It was never our way to go around Bible-bashing people, handing out religious leaflets or asking them to come to church. Fear of being beaten up wasn't the reason; rather it would have prevented communication. We knew we had to earn the right to speak through relationship. Nor did we deliver immediate directives about how people should behave when they became Christians. The leaves on some trees don't fall off in the autumn; they're pushed off later by the budding of the new shoot. No point in running around pulling the old leaves off to speed up the process. If the tree's alive it will happen. We just accepted people where they were, nurtured them and saw that principle work out in many lives in due course.

The challenges we face as Christians in today's increasingly secular society are similar to those we faced in God's Squad. Whatever our sphere of influence, we all need courage to identify ourselves as Christians and wisdom to share the good news of Jesus' saving, transforming power in ways that are suited to that situation.

John Smith's most recent book is "Beyond the Myth of Self-Esteem: Finding Fulfilment" written with co-author Coral Chamberlain, is available at Koorong.

Rev. Dr John Smith



The Ark and the Tabernacle Studies Part 1

Rev. Stewart N. Ramsay

“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” Exodus 25:8-9¹

God’s Presence with his People

This instruction given to Moses marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of God’s relationship with His people.

Away back in Eden, we read of how God ‘walked’ with Adam and communed with him in the garden, but man, through his disobedience, cut himself off from that close and intimate relationship with his Maker which could only be restored by God Himself.

But God did not cast off His people, and we read how He ‘spoke’ to Moses, ‘visited’ Abraham, ‘went before’ His people in the pillar of cloud and of fire; but now He says, ‘*Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.*’ Thus, the LORD comes to make His abode in the midst of His people, and ever since He has had His dwelling place among His own redeemed.

When their earthly wanderings had come to their appointed end, then the wandering tabernacle would give place to the temple at Jerusalem, and when its day was past, we read (John 1:14) ‘*And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled amongst us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*’ He is ‘*God manifest in the flesh*’ (1 Tim 3:16).

For ‘God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things’ (Acts 17:24-25). Again, ‘Heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool; saith the Lord.’ (Isaiah 66:1, Acts 7:49). And again, in 1 Peter 2:5: ‘you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

It is this temple, this *spiritual house* of ‘living stones’ that is the dwelling place of the Most High to-day; the church, the body of His redeemed believing people, ‘the temple of the Holy Spirit. ‘No brick, no mortar, nay nor even stone, lifting up its spires and its battlements on high can ever by its grandeur claim to be the ‘house of God’, but ‘*where two or three are gathered together IN MY NAME there will I be in the midst of them.*’

And when the wilderness journey is over – when all the days of this earthly pilgrimage are come and gone – when the old order shall have given place to the New: and God’s redeemed shall enter into the glories which are but foreshadowed here, then will they begin to understand those things which John was called to write on Patmos – ‘*I saw a new heaven and a new earth....and I john saw the holy city New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven....and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God...’*

And, so the tabernacle is, in a sense, a picture of the church in her journey through the wilderness; she is in the world, yet is set apart from it... We say a picture of the church, - NOT as a building in which to assemble for worship, as our church buildings are to-day, for Israel, when they assembled together NOT *in* the tabernacle, but *in* the court thereof. There, in the court, they worshipped, and offered up their sacrifices. For the tabernacle proper was not for the people, but for the priests alone – The Holy of Holies for the High Priest alone – because the tabernacle was ‘a mansion for the Deity, a dwelling-place for the Most High.

‘No brick, no mortar, nay nor even stone, lifting up its spires and its battlements on high can ever by its grandeur claim to be the ‘house of God’

How different now, when Christ the Great High Priest has executed His office in once offering of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and to reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven.

Yes, how different now, that the Son of God has instituted the ‘priesthood of all believers’ – that He has *made us* kings and priests unto God and our Father - so that through Christ our ONLY

¹ Rev. S. N. Ramsay, minister of Hunter/Barrington PCEA 1954-84, quoted the King James Version of in his notes but to maximise clarity for the present time I’ve generally substituted the New King James Version of 1982 in the quotations. - RSW

MEDIATOR (*'for there is **one** mediator between God and men, even the man Christ Jesus'* 1 Tim 2:5), we have access *without* the intervention of any earthly **mediator** into the very presence of God, yes, even to the Mercy Seat itself. As it is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews 10:19-22" Therefore, brethren, having boldness^[1] to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith

Lessons from the tabernacle

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them...' And so, they built the tabernacle, which in every detail pointed to the Christ of God - in His person; in His work; in the fruit of His labours. These things we may see in more detail at some other time; our main concern now is to see in the tabernacle, 'the place where God would make His abode in the midst of His people.'

Here we see that He 'whom the heavens of heavens could not contain' was graciously pleased to dwell in a boarded and curtained tent erected for Him by those who desired His presence. 'A sanctuary that I may dwell among them.' Not that God was in need of a place to live in! - 'Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool, says the Lord' - **but for the spiritual good and the religious needs of His people** God was pleased to give them something tangible to link their thoughts, their feelings, the yearnings of their hearts and souls with Himself. He would give them something to help them feel and to understand that He was in their midst. And He would give them a stated place where He would meet and commune with them. The heathen round about, in their ignorance and folly would make to themselves idols which they were pleased to grace with the name of gods and worship them. But God had said to His people, *'you shalt not make any graven image.... bow down yourself to them and worship them....'* They would have no image - no likeness of Jehovah, but the Tabernacle would be to them the dwelling-place of THE PRESENCE whom they could not see.

Josephus tells us of how Pompey, when he entered Jerusalem, 'went into the Temple and saw all that which was unlawful for any other men to see but the High Priests....the golden table the holy candlestick....the treasures of the temple...the sacred money...yet did not Pompey touch any of this because of his regard for

religion, but another writer records that when Pompey entered the Holy of Holies...he found '*AN EMPTY SEAT*' 'Nothing,' says the writer, 'shows the immense superiority of the Jewish religion to any that existed on the earth'...'there was nothing' instead of all the fabled figures...he found but an empty shrine'. This is a great lesson, which we cannot explore to-day. I simply say, 'Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar (Ps 138:6). Again, 'He is near to all that call upon Him, to all who call upon him in truth' (Ps 145:18).

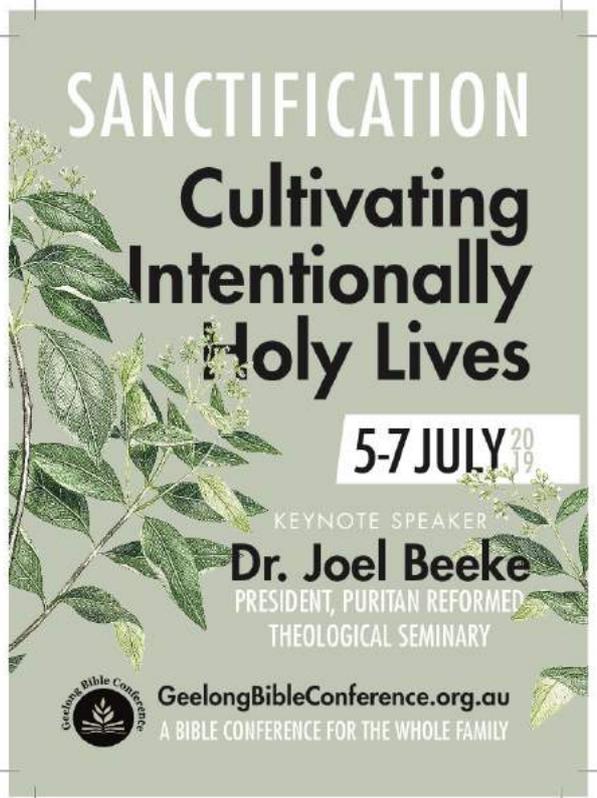
Yes, we may look upon the holiest things....we may take in our hand God's very Word...we may hear with our ear His words of life.... but HIS PROMISE IS NOT TO THOSE WHO LOOK IN IDLE CURIOSITY.... but to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

We note that this dwelling-place would be built from the **free-will offerings** of the people... 'From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering'(Ex 25:1). Freely have they received, freely they were to give. The requirements were such that *everyone* would have opportunity to make a contribution. The poor could not bring the gold, but they could hew the timbers, they could weave the cloth.

Finally, '*to be built according to the pattern shown to Moses?*' the house was God's and God would order the building and the conduct of it. 'It would be well for us today,' says John Ritchie, 'to remember that the Lord has not been less careful about the building of His church.... He has given the Divine pattern...as to how His house on earth is to be ordered. This abides the unrepealed unchanging will of God for His people's obedience throughout the whole of the church's earthly history until the Lord comes again.' **And it is from this principle that we derive the purity of worship** and it is to this principle that we owe the form of worship which we practice and in which we believe.

'Let them make Me make a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them!' **In their journey through that wilderness, let them make a place for God!** And if ever a people journeyed through a wilderness, surely, we do in this world of distorted values and conflict and tension. Do you want God to go with you? Because if we do, we have got to be prepared to make some sacrifice.... We've got to prepare in our own hearts a **sanctuary** that God may make His dwelling-place there. #

[From Notes transcribed by Nola Tibbs, Wauchope.]



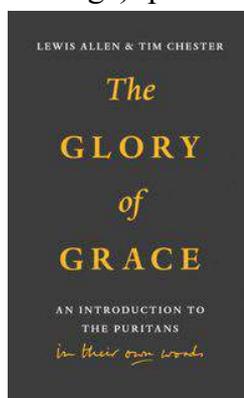
Saved by Grace Alone: Sermons on Ezekiel 36:16-36 by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Banner of Truth, 2018; 230pp., pbk.

Few people could or should preach 14 evangelistic sermons on these verses from the prophet Ezekiel. They are rich and Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), the man who in many ways brought back expository preaching to England, mines them to great effect and profit. Preached in 1956 it is good to see them in print, and one prays their challenge will find a response in many readers.



The Glory of Grace: An Introduction to the Puritans by Lewis Allen and Tim Chester
Banner of Truth, 2018, 167pp. pbk.

There are many books on the Puritans, that body of often misunderstood and misrepresented men and women, who contributed so much to English society in the 17th century and from whom we have the Westminster Confession of Faith. Joel Beeke and Mark Jones' large volume *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Reformation Heritage) provides a comprehensive study of their teaching that students and ministers will find invaluable. Leland Ryken's, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as they Really Were* is an accessible book that debunks myths about the Puritans. But Yorkshiremen, Allen and Chester have a more modest aim. They introduce us to 10 men and

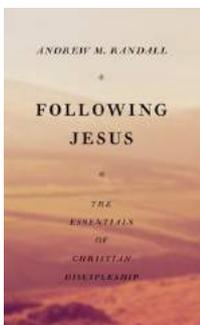


one woman (Anne Bradstreet, the Puritan poet), allowing a chapter for each. There is a brief introduction followed by a portion of their writing with the language gently modernised for today's readers. Well-known names are here, including John Owen, John Bunyan, Richard Baxter and Samuel Rutherford. This is an easy entry into Biblical teaching on subjects as diverse as Assurance, Loss, Suffering, Communion with God and others. Commended.

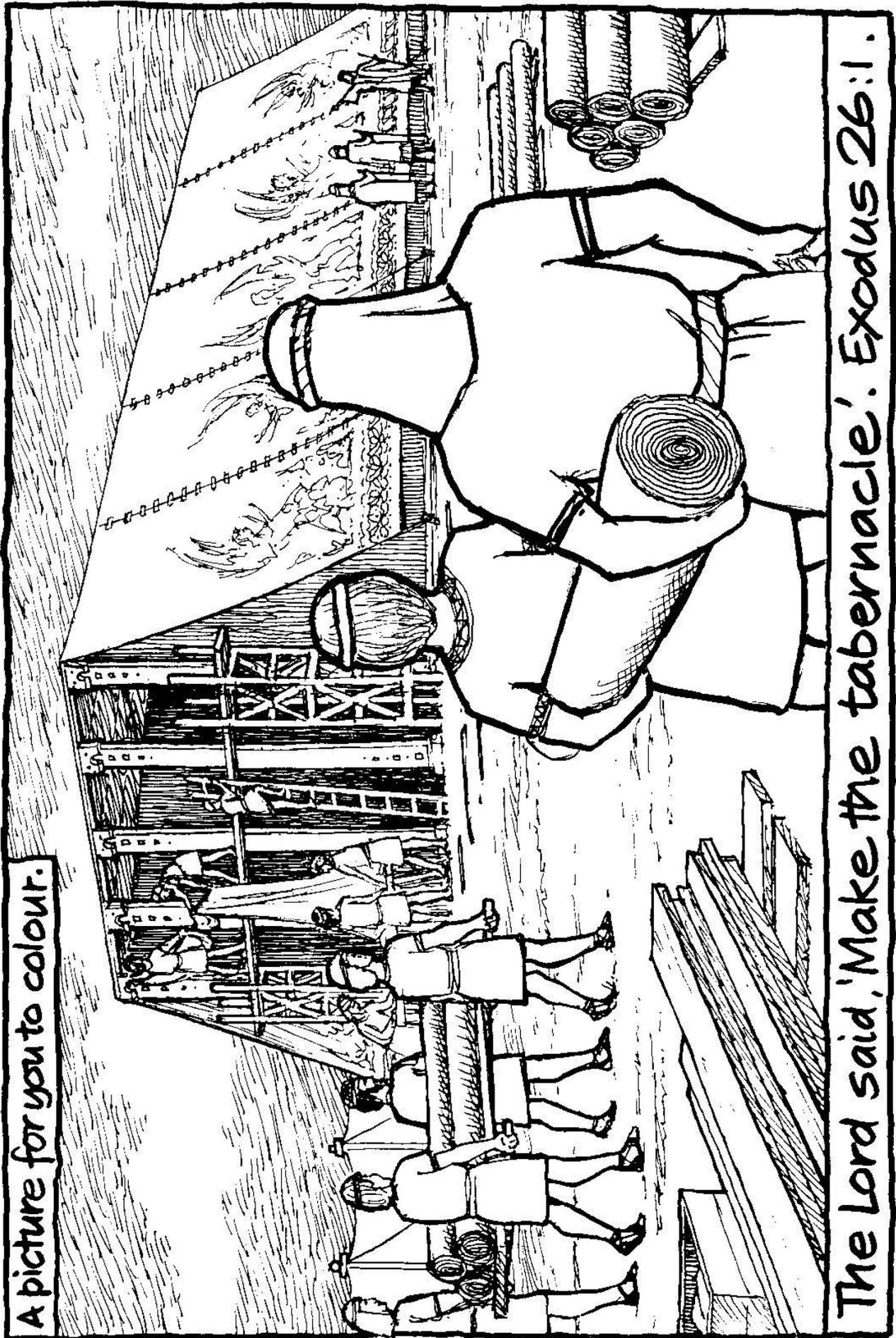
BOOK REVIEWS

Following Jesus; The Essentials of Christian Discipleship by Andrew Randall
Banner of Truth, 2018; 231pp., pbk.

In 15 short chapters and some 200 pages, Andrew Randall, minister of the International Presbyterian Church in Larbert, Scotland, cover the basics of Christian Discipleship. It is certainly helpful and practical. I suppose it presupposes the reader belongs to a good Bible-based church for there is a lack of basic teaching about God although what is there is fine. Good theology is at the heart of practical living and addressing sinful attitudes (see for example Philippians 2:1ff.). The chapter on *Following Jesus in our Love for Others*, concentrates on our love for God and love for other Christians but primarily our spouse; there is nothing in it on love for our neighbour, although this receives a little attention in the chapter on *Following Jesus in his World*



but then in the context of evangelism. It will be useful for study group leaders.



Cutting the Cake – Dumisani’s 40th Anniversary

Saturday, March 2nd, graduates, alumni, board members, faculty, staff and friends of Dumisani gathered at the venue of Bethany Emmanuel Church in King William’s Town, South Africa for the Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School graduation, 40th anniversary celebrations, and installation of the new principal and vice principal. The Bethany Emmanuel Church has been gracious to allow Dumisani to use its facilities for such a large event as this for the past 23 years. It is only a few blocks from the Dumisnai campus. (This was proceeded on the Friday with a Christian Leaders’ Workshop at the Dumisani campus where Dr Whytock, Rev Chipenyu and Rev Meredith had all spoken to the 81 church leaders present.)

The warm, sunny day Saturday was reflective of the spirit of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for His mercy and faithfulness over the four decades of Dumisani’s ministry in the Eastern Cape. The singing, reading of scripture, and prayers were all offered with a sense of gratitude and amazement at what the Lord has done.

Rev. David Meredith, Mission Director for the Free Church of Scotland, spoke from Joshua 1 under the theme “New Beginnings, The Same God” and applied the principles of the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua to the transition that is taking place at

Dumisani as the leadership now passes from Acting Principal Dr. Jack Whytock to Principal Wilbert Chipenyu and Vice Principal Patrick Diniso.

The 24 graduates this year represent several different denominations and callings. Some are entering pastoral ministry, some are involved in women’s ministry, others are Sunday school teachers, and evangelists.

At the end of the service, board member Toyo Mngqaba presented the college 40th anniversary book, *Voices of Thanksgiving*. He encouraged all in attendance to read this book and also to review the 100 plus photos contained in it in order to gain a better understanding of the Lord’s mercy to the Eastern Cape through Dumisani over the past 40 years.

Following the service, there was a reception and cake cutting held in the church hall. This joyful day will long be remembered by all in attendance. We give thanks to all who sent messages of greetings and encouragement from far and near.

On the next day Sunday invitations were received from two churches. The one was a special Missions Sunday with an evening supper and a team of five from Dumisani were in attendance to minister for this.

To God be the glory.



SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY
ALL NATIONS

The All Nations Congregation had a steady year financially and in other ways. Jonah Gatluak Kot, who has been very active, particularly among the young, was unanimously approved for eldership and installation is expected soon after some pre-ordination training.

Since the beginning of the year there has been a fall -off in givings and, as the congregation has no reserves, this is matter of some concern. The reason seems to be the continuing issues in South Sudan, requiring relatives there to be helped, as well as unemployment issues locally.



KNOX

Knox Congregation had an array of reports at their meeting on 20th March. A modest increase in offerings, a steady attendance and the youth programme led by elder Chris White were noted, as well as the Sunday School work in two classes. The Ladies' Bible Study on Tuesdays continued positively as did the Knox Knitting Group (some members pictured at left) which concluded their activities for the year with a lunch on 25 October.

CARRUM DOWNS

Carrum Downs held their first congregational meeting in the new church which had been generously paid for by the Knox Congregation and opened on 21 April 2018. The attendance had increased to typically average 19. The Congregations was in good heart and there was a positive outlook. A number of useful suggestions were made so far as outreach is concerned.

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ULVERSTONE The Ulverstone Congregation report to Presbytery indicated good harmony and the congregation holding together well with conscientious local elder, Ian Hamilton, doing a sterling job. The ladies craft group met on 12th March and to start off this year made things from gem stones and shells that were given by Jess Driscoll before she moved to New South Wales. Some of these items will be used to pot up small cacti which we hope to sell on a trade table at our next High Tea. Nine ladies attended, some stayed for lunch. Next month Denise will show us how to make pictures from Hessian and Doilies.

the discussions after the service are spiritually maintenance.

GEELONG

Geelong has continued steadily during the year and profitable. Attention is being given to property

NARRE WARREN

Narre Warren continues with a well-supported morning service. As is unfortunately all too common, the evening service is not as well supported as one would like. Stewart and Eileen Louden's baby son Malcolm John (born 21st December @ 4.03kg) was baptised by Eileen's father, the Rev. Sjirk Bajema, on 13th January.

