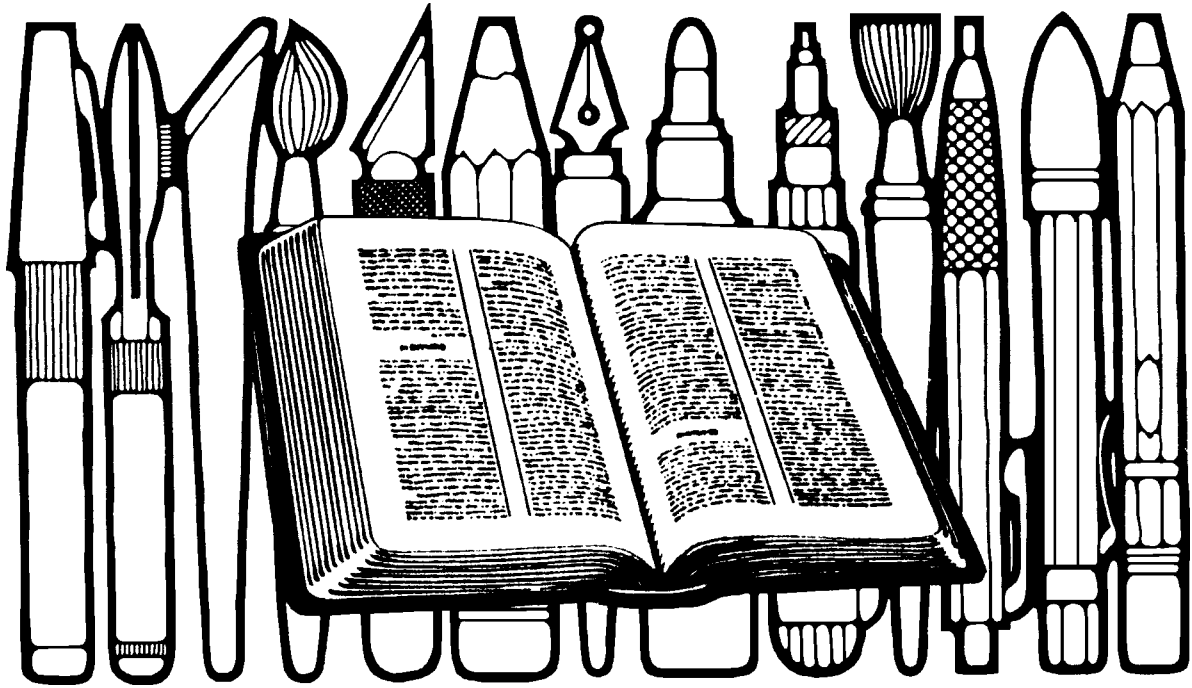




# Adorning The Word

## *Volume 4*



## Character Sermons

*Sermons by:* Gary Fiscus, Wayne Greeson, Jeff Asher, Ron Roberts, Randy Blackaby, Rob Harbison, Terry Sanders, Wayne Walker, Larry Curry, Ed Dye, Gene Taylor, Carl Mullins, David Padfield

*Sermons on:* Abel, Apollos, Barnabas, David, Cornelius, Tabitha, Elisha, Enoch, Hannah, Jason, Job, Job's Wife, John the Baptist, Jonah, Jabez, Joseph of Arimathea, Josiah, Moses, Mary, Zacchaeus

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# Abel: A Man Of Integrity And Faith

by Carl Mullins

## *Introduction*

- I. Abel was a man of deep conviction (Gen. 4:1–8; Heb. 11:1–4).
- II. “Conviction” is “a. The act or process of convincing. b. The state of being convinced. c. A fixed or strong belief” (*American Heritage Dictionary*).
- III. The great patriarch Abel had the kind of faith that is worthy of emulation and should that characterize every child of God.

## *Discussion*

### **I. He Had Saving Faith**

- A. Abel had Divine testimony and acted upon that Divine revelation—this is what saving faith is all about (Rom. 10:17).
  1. He is called “righteous Abel” (Matt. 23:33–35).
  2. God bore witness that he was righteous (Heb. 11:4).
- B. A lot of time has been spent on the question of why Abel’s sacrifice was accepted and Cain’s was rejected.
  1. The text says, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door” (Gen. 4:7).
  2. The reason is in Cain’s own evil deeds—“because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:11–13).
- C. In contrast to Abel, Cain refused to exercise saving faith.
  1. His works were evil (1 John 3:11–13).
  2. He was rejected (Gen. 4:4–5).
  3. His religion was false (Jude 1:8–11).
  4. He had “will worship” (cf. Col. 2:20–23).

### **II. His Faith Led Him To Sacrifice**

- A. He is found at the altar as he brought the firstlings of his flock (Gen. 4:4).
  1. “Then the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing.’ So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver” (2 Sam. 24:24).
  2. This sacrifice was not like Saul’s (1 Sam. 15:19–23).
  3. “Character, then, or, more truly, faith, which is the foundation of a righteous character, determines the acceptableness of worship. Cain’s offering had no sense of dependence, no outgoing of love and trust, no adoration,—though it may have had fear,—and no moral element. So it had no sweet odor for God. Abel’s was sprinkled with some drops of the incense of lowly trust, and came from a heart which fain would be pure; therefore it was a joy to God. So we are taught at the very beginning, that, as is the man, so is his sacrifice; that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination. Plenty of worship nowadays is Cain worship. Many reputable professing Christians bring just such sacrifices. The prayers of such never reach higher than the church ceiling.” (Alexander Maclaren).

- B. The children of Israel were forewarned about the sacrifices that would be accepted and those that would be rejected (Lev. 22:17–22; Mal. 1:6–8).
- C. Today, Christians are priests and we offer sacrifices to God.
  1. We “offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:5).
  2. We are to be a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1–2).
  3. “...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

### **III. His Faith Caused Him To Suffer**

- A. It is interesting that the first recorded act of worship is accompanied by the first recorded murder!
- B. It takes a man of integrity to believe God and knowing that his faith may cause him to suffer (Luke 8:15).
- C. It costs something to live by faith—Abel paid the price.
  1. Such has always been the case (Luke 11:47–51).
  2. Christ left us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21–24).
  3. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).
  4. We will be in good company (Matt. 5:10–12).
  5. We need patience in the midst of suffering (James 5:7–11).
  6. Be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

### **IV. His Faith Still Speaks**

- A. “He being dead still speaks” (Heb. 11:4).
  1. No words from Abel are recorded in the Bible, yet this man speaks to us and says, “Walk by faith.”
  2. The deeds of the righteous will follow them (Rev. 14:13).
- B. When we trust God and His word above all else, it truly will leave a lasting impression on those with whom we have to do.
  1. “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5).
  2. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5–6).

### *Conclusion*

- I. Does your faith move you to sacrifice, even in the face of suffering?
- II. When you die, will your faith continue to speak to your children and grandchildren, like Abel’s has to countless generations?

# A Certain Jew Named Apollos

by Terry Sanders

## *Introduction*

- I. We are introduced to Apollos in Acts 18:24–28: “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”
- II. There are many lessons we can learn from him.

## *Discussion*

### **I. Information About Apollos**

- A. Who was Apollos? (Acts 18:24).
  1. A Jew and from all indications a disciple of John the Baptizer.
  2. He was born at Alexandria which was a chief seat of Hebrew learning.
    - a) At one time its library had 7,000,000 volumes.
    - b) The school was similar to that of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34, 22:3).
  3. Apollos was an “eloquent” man.
    - a) The word “eloquent” can mean either a man skilled in the use of words or one skilled in ideas and thinking.
    - b) Some depreciate the value of a college education while other worship at the altar of advanced education.
    - c) An secular education is a means to an end—it is not essential to being of service in the kingdom (Acts 4:13).
  4. He was “mighty in the Scriptures.”
    - a) The Old Testament scriptures are meant here. His instruction was in the anticipation of the Messiah as revealed in the Old Testament.
    - b) “This was the secret of his power and ability. He knew the Scriptures. Modern education manifests a sad and even tragic lack of learning in any phase of the Scriptures. The weakest spot in modern training falls at this very point where Apollos was ‘mighty.’ Today, the power of preaching has been confused with the expedient externals of politeness, polish, personality, and position. But Apollos was an efficient preacher because he had an understanding of the Scriptures, purity of heart and motives, and ability to proclaim the message. Too often congregations select their teachers ... on the basis of manners, personality, or degrees from some university. These expedients should not be scorned nor overlooked, but the essential thing is to select men... who are wise in the Scriptures. Many a modern tentmaker in the congregation can and will serve much better as a teacher of the Word than the so-called well-educated person who knows science but has never met

nor surrendered to the Savior.” (Gareth Reese, *New Testament History*, pg. 659)

- B. What was he doing at Ephesus? (Acts 18:25).
1. Apollos was “fervent in spirit” (“burning zeal” TCNT). He was not merely “going through the motions.”
  2. He spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord.
    - a) He was careful in all that he knew.
    - b) The passage indicates he know nothing of the baptism of the Great Commission, though he might have known something of the life and teachings of Christ, he probably did not know of His death, burial and resurrection.
    - c) His knowledge was correct as far as it went, but it was incomplete.
  3. This good man knew only the baptism of John.
    - a) John’s baptism was preparatory (Matt. 11:10; cf. Mal. 3:1).
    - b) John’s baptism was commanded by God (Luke 7:29–30).
    - c) Those who obey Christ’s baptism confess Christ (Acts 8:37); not so with John’s.
    - d) Christ’s baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19); not so with John’s.
  4. Was Apollos re-baptized? A question for the ages. The text does not specifically say although it is likely (cf. Acts 19:1–7).
- C. What happened to him? (Acts 18:26)?
1. Apollos spoke boldly, yet inaccurately.
  2. He was taught more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla.
    - a) This further illustrates that Apollos lacked certain facts concerning Jesus and His baptism, the closing week of His ministry, His death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven.
    - b) Aquila and Priscilla (“*they*”) taught him privately.
    - c) Their actions shed light on 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12.
- D. The rest of the story (Acts 18:27–28).
1. He must have been receptive to the “more perfect” teaching of Priscilla and Aquila.
  2. Apollos was highly recommended, well-respected, and capable. In spite of all other qualifications brethren might place upon a preacher, these are what matter.
  3. He “vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:28).
    - a) The word “refuted” does not mean he convinced them, but only that he argued them down.
    - b) By strong arguments he wore down all arguments and in effect silenced the Jews.
    - c) Done publicly—either in the synagogue or in debate (cf. Jude 3).

## II. The Work Of Apollos

- A. Went to Corinth (Acts 19:1).
- B. Extremely popular and successful. Factions arose, through no fault of his own (1 Cor. 1:10–16; 3:4–8; 4:6).
  - 1. Maybe this is why he could not return (1 Cor. 16:12).
  - 2. “Perhaps the Corinthians had written requesting that Apollos be sent to work with them. At any rate, Paul urged Apollos to go to Corinth. Paul had no fears that Apollos was a ring leader in their party strife; he had no animosity toward him. The two worked closely together. Hence, Paul urged Apollos and a group of brethren with him to go to Corinth to help get things straightened out there.” (Mike Willis, *A Commentary on Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 610).
  - 3. In some case there is no desire for a preacher to return.
  - 4. Apollos was successful in retaining the confidence of the brethren at Corinth. What a good remark about him!

### *Conclusion*

- I. Apollos is another one of the unsung heroes of the Bible.
- II. Apollos should cause us to reflect upon a number of things:
  - A. Which is more important for a preacher—college credentials or a knowledge of the Book of God?
  - B. Am I fervent in spirit?
  - C. If others corrected me according to the Word, would I be as willing as Apollos to change my preaching?
  - D. Would others recommend me as just what they need to help them?
  - E. Would they want me to return?

# Barnabas

by Randy Blackaby

## Introduction

- I. Barnabas was a fine Christian and a gospel preacher of the first century who usually is left in the shadow of the Apostle Paul.
- II. There are several excellent lessons to be drawn from the life of this relatively obscure disciple of Jesus.
- III. The book of Acts is full of stories of his work.

## Discussion

### I. Who Was Barnabas?

#### A. First introduced in Acts 4:32–37.

1. One of the earliest Christians—mentioned shortly after Pentecost.
2. A Jew and a Levite.
  - a) All priests were Levites (from Kohath, one of Levi’s sons, from whom Moses and Aaron descended).
  - b) All Levites, however, were not priests. They did lesser temple work, however (sons of Gershon and Merari).
3. Had dwelt in Cyprus (Acts 4:36), an island in the Mediterranean, where the Romans had sent a large contingent of Jews.
4. Originally known as Joses or Joseph.
  - a) Apostles modified his name to **Barnabas** (Acts 4:36), which means...
    - (1) “Son of Encouragement” (NKJV, RSV, NIV, NASV, Goodspeed).
    - (2) “Son of Exhortation” (ASV).
    - (3) “Son of Comfort” (NT In Basic English).
    - (4) “One who encourages” (TEV).
  - b) Apparently given because of his effort and skill along this line.

#### B. He was **bold** and **well-respected** (Acts 9:26–28).

1. Saul, after conversion, came to Jerusalem but the church didn’t want to receive him. They were afraid of him.
2. “He was a man who insisted on believing the best of others. When others suspected Paul of being a spy, Barnabas insisted on believing that he was genuine. The world is largely divided into those who think the best of others and those who think the worst; and it is one of the curious facts of life that ordinarily we see our own reflection in others and make them what we believe them to be. If we insist on regarding a man with suspicion, we will end by making him do suspicious things. If we insist on believing in a man, we will end by compelling him to justify that belief. As Paul himself said, ‘Love thinks no evil.’ No one believed in men as Jesus did and it should be enough for the disciple that he be as his Lord.” (Barclay, *Acts of the Apostles*, pg. 76).

#### C. We are told more in Acts 11:22–24.

1. He was a good man, full of faith and full of Holy Spirit.
2. He lived up to his new name by encouraging others (Acts 11:23).
3. He was successful in his preaching (Acts 11:24).

#### D. Like Paul, he is called an “apostle” (Acts 14:14).

#### E. Like Paul, Barnabas often declined support for his work (1 Cor. 9:6).



## II. The Works And Deeds Of Barnabas

- A. An apparently wealthy man—he sold land and laid the money at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:36–37).
1. Unlike rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23).
  2. He was sharing with poorer Christians (Acts 4:32ff).
  3. Contrast Barnabas with Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).
- B. When a congregation was established in Antioch among the Gentiles, Barnabas was dispatched by Jerusalem church to encourage the new congregation (Acts 11:19–24).
1. While in that work, he went to Tarsus and got Paul, brought him back to Antioch and they worked together there for a year (Acts 11:25–26).
  2. Antioch became the second major base for missionary work.
  3. “Many are the allusions to Antioch, in the history of those times, as a place of singular pleasure and enjoyment. Here and there, an elevating thought is associated with its name. Poets have spent their young days at Antioch, great generals have died there, emperors have visited and admired it. But, for the most part, its population was a worthless rabble of Greeks and Orientals. The frivolous amusements of the theatre were the occupation of their life. Their passion for races, and the ridiculous party quarrels connected with them, were the patterns of those which afterwards became the disgrace of Byzantium. The oriental element of superstition and imposture was not less active. The Chaldean astrologers found their most credulous disciples in Antioch. Jewish impostors, sufficiently common throughout the East, found their best opportunities here. It is probable that no populations have ever been more abandoned than those of oriental Greek cities under the Roman Empire, and of these cities Antioch was the greatest and the worst. If we wish to realize the appearance and reality of the complicated Heathenism of the first Christian century, we must endeavour to imagine the scene of that suburb, the famous Daphne, with its fountains and groves of bay trees, its bright buildings, its crowds of licentious votaries, its statue of Apollo, where, under the climate of Syria and the wealthy patronage of Rome, all that was beautiful in nature and in art had created a sanctuary for a perpetual festival of vice. Thus, if any city, in the first century, was worthy to be called the Heathen Queen and Metropolis of the East, that city was Antioch. She was represented, in a famous allegorical statue, as a female figure, seated on a rock and crowned, with the river Orontes at her feet.” (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles Of Paul*, p. 103).
  4. Notice that Barnabas is leading and developing Paul.
- C. Antioch congregation decides to send financial relief for Christians in famine in Judea.
1. The elders send the money by Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:27–30).
  2. Barnabas was highly trusted and respected.
  3. He and Paul, as Jews, were excellent for the task.

- D. Holy Spirit calls upon Barnabas and Paul for preaching work in the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–3ff).
1. Hear the boldness of Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14, 42–52).
  2. Contrast Barnabas and Herod (Acts 14:8–15; Acts 12:20–23).
    - a) Luke gives us the Greek name for the gods, Zeus is known as Jupiter and Hermes is called Mercury in the Roman world.
    - b) “Jupiter was the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on Mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Ammon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. He was commonly called The Father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods ... (Hermes) was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travellers and shepherds, he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; he presided over orators, and declaimers, and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as the god of eloquence; and was light, rapid, and quick in his movements.” (Albert Barnes, *Commentary on Acts*).
- E. When Judaizing teachers attempt to bind circumcision on Christians, Barnabas speaks with Paul and Peter to correct this (Acts 15:12).
1. Having settled this problem in Jerusalem, the church there sent a letter to Antioch, Syria and Cilicia by the hands of Barnabas and Paul and others to clarify this issue (Acts 15:22ff).
- F. Paul and Barnabas split up after preaching more in Antioch and get into a contention over Barnabas’ cousin—John Mark—who had started on the first Missionary Journey but quit at Pamphylia (Acts 15:36–41).
1. Paul goes with Silas.
  2. Barnabas heads to Cyprus with John Mark.
  3. This is last we read of Barnabas in book of Acts.
  4. “They will work separately. They agree to disagree. They drop the matter and do not nag each other. Paul will later allude to Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6) in a most pleasant way, showing that he bore no resentment and that Barnabas was still at work. Luke drops Barnabas from his story, for he will follow Paul. One could wish for more knowledge of this generous spirit who did so much for Paul and for Christ. It is always pathetic to see estrangement come between two who have been so much to each other. Barnabas takes Mark and goes to Cyprus, his old home. Mark will learn his lesson. He doubtless was humiliated by Paul’s refusal to take him along. But it did him good. Later he will be of service to Peter (1 Pet. 5:13) and to Paul (Philem. 24; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). A young minister can overcome his failings. Mark the inefficient becomes Mark the useful to Paul for ministry.” (A. T. Robertson, *Epochs In The Life Of Paul*, p. 140).
  5. He and Paul still were close, however (Col. 4:10).

### **III. Lessons From Barnabas**

- A. Generosity.
- B. Unselfishness—left wealth and became itinerant preacher.
- C. Trusting.
  - 1. Trusted Saul when others didn't.
  - 2. Was on “cutting edge” of taking gospel to Gentiles.
- D. Contrasts well against others of his time.
  - 1. Levite who passed by robbed man (Luke 10:25–37).
  - 2. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).
  - 3. Herod (Acts 12:20–23).
  - 4. Rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22).
- E. Did not demand “top billing” in doing Lord's work.
  - 1. He was not a big name preacher.
  - 2. But he encouraged, built up, taught all over Roman world.

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Are you like Barnabas?
- II. Or, are you more like those to whom he was contrasted?
- III. Barnabas fills the book of Acts, but his powerful work was quiet and seldom gets the attention it deserves.

# The Battle Is The Lord's

by Ed Dye

## Introduction

- I. A digest of the story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1–54).
  - A. Goliath's challenge (1 Sam. 17:1–11).
    1. Once again Israel and Philistia were at war (1 Sam. 17:1–3).
    2. On this occasion the battle was pitched farther south—in the land belonging to the tribe of Judah.
    3. The conflict reached a stalemate when a champion, Goliath, came out to challenge the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 17:4–11).
      - a) Goliath was over nine and a half feet tall.
      - b) His breastplate weighted 157 pounds.
      - c) The head of his spear weighed over 17 pounds.
    4. At first, no champion was found in the camp of Saul.
  - B. David hears of Goliath's challenge (1 Sam. 17:12–27).
    1. When Saul went to battle, David returned to his father's house.
    2. Since Jesse's three oldest sons were in Saul's army, Jesse sent David to the battle front to inquire about their well-being—while on this errand David hears of Goliath's challenge (1 Sam. 17:23–24).
  - C. David accepts Goliath's challenge and Saul sends David out to meet Goliath on the field of battle.
    1. David was not afraid to answer the challenge—he based his judgment on his past experiences with the power of God.
    2. By faith in God he had been able to defend his father's sheep when they were attacked by lions or bears (1 Sam. 17:32–37).
    3. This courage impressed Saul and he sent David out to battle.
  - D. David gains the victory and slays Goliath.
    1. David did not use Saul's personal armor (1 Sam. 17:38–39).
    2. He took only his tried and trusty sling and five smooth stones—this is the weapon he felt comfortable with (1 Sam. 17:40).
    3. "Smooth stones like the ones chosen by David for his sling in the combat with Goliath can still be easily gathered in the valley of Elah (or 'of the Terebinth'), where the battle took place. Archaeology has uncovered in various excavations a great number of slingstones. This rustic weapon, so simple and yet so terrible when skillfully handled, was very common, not only in David's time but for centuries before and after him. In many countries slings are still used for chasing away wild animals which threaten the flocks." (Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, *Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, p. 81).
    4. After rendering Goliath helpless, David beheaded him with the sword taken out of Goliath's own sheath (1 Sam. 17:41–51).
      - a) Abusive dialogue was common among Arab combatants—David's speech presents a striking contrast.
      - b) David was full of pious trust and a willingness to ascribe to God glory for the triumph he anticipated.

- II. There were three things David wanted the Philistines, the Israelites and all the earth to know:
  - A. “that there is a God in Israel” (1 Sam. 17:46).
  - B. “that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s” (1 Sam. 17:47).
  - C. He was fighting by faith and for the glory of God (1 Sam. 17:37, 45–47).

### *Discussion*

#### **I. Lessons From David’s Victory**

- A. David was specially prepared for the conflict by the whole of his life—without personal preparedness God would not have fought his battles.
- B. David rendered invaluable service to Israel (God’s people of the day) by this conflict with Goliath.
  - 1. He repelled an invasion and prevented the suffering such an invasion would have brought.
  - 2. He also taught Israel the spirit they should cherish and the kind of king they really needed.
- C. David became a pattern for God’s people today by exhibiting the spirit we should have in our spiritual warfare “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).
- D. David did not neglect the use of weapons altogether and then sit back and wait for God to fight the battle for him, and neither can we.
  - 1. We are to fight the good fight (1 Tim. 6:11–12).
  - 2. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:3–5).
  - 3. We are to humbly correct the opposition (2 Tim. 2:24–26).
- E. The characteristics this ancient man displayed are the same characteristics modern man desperately needs:
  - 1. Faith in God, not doubt.
    - a) Faith led him to do all for the glory of God (1 Sam. 17:45).
    - b) He looked beyond his problems and relied on God for help.
    - c) He did not compare himself with Goliath, but he compared Goliath with God!
    - d) Armed with faith in God he approached the enemy and won.
  - 2. Humility, not vain pride.
    - a) He did not concern himself with “great matters” (Psa. 131:1–2).
    - b) “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility” (Prov. 15:33).
    - c) “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).
    - d) “Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, and before honor is humility” (Prov. 18:12).
    - e) Do we have such humility? (1 Pet. 5:5–6).
  - 3. Zeal rather than apathy.
    - a) He was little concerned about his own safety and renown.
    - b) He had heard the gods of the heathen extolled and the name of Jehovah blasphemed—he was desirous that, above all things, God should be glorified.
    - c) When a man fights for the Lord he may confidently expect God to fight for him, for “the battle is the Lord’s” (2 Chron. 20:1–4, 14–17).
  - 4. David’s courage stands in contrast to the fear which gripped Israel.

- F. The great principle of life which governed David in his victory should govern us as well: *he acted in the name of the Lord and for God's glory*.
1. This great principle of life was not understood nor appreciated by Goliath until it was too late; neither will it be appreciated by unbelievers of today (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Matt. 7:21–23).
  2. In every victory we have over sin we grow stronger in faith.

**II. How Do We Know If Our Battle Is “Of The Lord”?**

- A. If we are doing what God has authorized (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:16–17).
- B. If the truth of God's word is at stake and being taught, practiced or defended against error (Phil. 1:17; Jude 3; Acts 15:1–11).
- C. If it is a spiritual conflict (Eph. 6:10–12; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Matt. 4:1–11).
- D. If it is being done in the name of the Lord and God is being glorified (1 Sam. 17:45–46).
- E. If we are fighting in faith, not just fighting (1 Tim. 6:12; Rom. 10:17).
- F. If spiritual armor can be properly employed (Eph. 6:13–18).
- G. If one suffers for “righteousness' sake” (Matt. 5:10–12; 1 Pet. 4:12–16).
- H. If it can rightly be said we are on the Lord's side (Josh. 24:15).

**Conclusion**

- I. We all fight battles, but they are not necessarily the Lord's battles.
- II. Can you truly say the battle you have been fighting is “of the Lord”?
- III. When we, like David, recognize “there is a God in Israel,” and that “the Lord does not save with sword and spear,” and we fight by faith in Jehovah God and for His glory, the battle will always be the Lord's.

# The Conversion Of Cornelius

by David A. Padfield

## *Introduction*

- I. I believe with all my heart that the gospel is universal in application, intended for all races, classes and conditions of humanity (Rom. 1:16–17).
  - A. It is intended to reach down to lowest depths of degradation & despair.
  - B. Also intended for the very best man this nation affords, morally speaking.
- II. I want look at a prominent man, known throughout the country in which he lived and against whom very few things could be said.
- III. His name is Cornelius, and his story is found in Acts 10 and 11.

## *Discussion*

- I. **His Character (Acts 10:1, 2, 22)**
  - A. Many think it strange that he needed anything.
  - B. People today might be honest, honorable, prayerful, generous, with hearts open to the poor—they think, “What do I have to fear at the hands of a just and merciful God?”
  - C. He was told four times that he needed to “hear words” in order to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32, 11:14).
- II. **The Appearance of the Angel (Acts 10:3–6)**
  - A. What Baptist preacher would question his salvation?
  - B. Though an angel had spoken and God heard prayers, he must yet hear words from man’s lips before he will be saved.
  - C. The angel to did not appear to convert him, to preach to him or change his heart in any way.
  - D. His humility shown in Acts 10:6 when he is told to send for Jewish tanner.
  - E. Did not inquire if he could be saved in some other way.
- III. **The Messenger: Peter (Acts 10:9–18)**
  - A. Our scene changes from Caesarea to Joppa, some thirty miles away.
  - B. The Lord prepares Peter for a favorable reception of the servants.
  - C. While Cornelius was waiting, called his friends together (Acts 10:24, 33).
- IV. **The Sermon, Not In Order (Acts 10:34–35)**
  - A. Introduction to the sermon: a positive declaration that God respects not persons, but character—to fear Him and work righteousness is the ground of acceptability.
  - B. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them...” (Acts 11:15).
    - 1. Weymouth, “No sooner had I begun to speak...”
    - 2. NIV, “Just as I was starting to speak...”
    - 3. Moffatt, “Now just as I began to speak...”
    - 4. Living Bible, “But just as I was getting started...”
  - C. Spirit came. Why? He did not preach the needed words.
    - 1. If Cornelius was saved when the Spirit came, he was saved before Peter’s sermon, therefore he was saved before faith.
    - 2. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing...” (Rom. 10:17).

- D. Speaking by the Spirit does not prove salvation.
  - 1. Saul, while seeking to kill David, had the Spirit of God upon him, and did what Cornelius did—spoke by the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 19:21–23).
  - 2. Balaam’s donkey spoke by the Spirit (Num. 22:28).
  - 3. Caiaphas the High Priest prophesied Jesus would die for the nation.
    - a) God used this unregenerate man to speak (John 11:51; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).
    - b) Caiaphas was a persecutor of the church (Acts 4:6).
- E. The Spirit proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 11:15–18).
- F. Ten years later, in Peter’s final words in Acts, he told how the Gentiles would be saved in the same manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7–11)
- G. The promise of remission of sins through the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:43; cf. Matt. 28:18–19).
- H. It is in harmony with Peter’s first sermon (Acts 2; Luke 24:47).

### *Conclusion*

- I. I repeat what I said at the start: no man will be saved by morality alone.
  - A. They have to heard words (Matt. 28:18 “All power has been given...”).
  - B. Follow the steps of Cornelius and obey the commands of God.
- II. If you are waiting for an angel to come, eternity will find you still unprepared.
- III. Angels no long come—we have the word of God (Heb. 4:12).
- IV. If you are waiting for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit— you will die disappointed.
  - A. Only two cases in world history (Acts 2, 10).
  - B. Purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was fulfilled.
- V. If Christ were visibly present, He would point you to His word (Heb. 5:8–9).
- VI. We are saved, not by the appearance of an angel, nor by the baptism of Holy Spirit, nor by miracles, but by humble, trusting obedience to authority of God.

*(Based upon a sermon by N. B. Hardeman)*



# A Study Of David And Shimei

by Gary Fiscus

## *Introduction*

- I. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11).
- II. In 2 Samuel 15 we find Absalom conspires against his father, David, and uses various methods to seduce the people from their allegiance to their King.
  - A. Under the false pretense of paying a vow at Hebron he leaves David and sends emissaries through the land to prepare the people for a revolt.
  - B. He gains Ahithophel, David’s counselor.
  - C. David flees the city with his servants and goes toward the wilderness.
- III. In 2 Samuel 16:5–14, David comes to Bahurim, a city north of Jerusalem, in the tribe of Benjamin.
  - A. Shimei was of the house of Saul and was a powerful chieftain in the land, for he had in his retinue more than 1,000 men (2 Sam. 19:16).
  - B. Shimei unjustly looked upon David as the cause for the ruin of Saul only because David, by Divine appointment, succeeded Saul.
  - C. David was guiltless of the crime of which Shimei accused him, but his conscience reminded him of other flagrant iniquities, so he regarded Shimei’s cursing as a chastisement from heaven.
  - D. His answer to Abishai’s proposal shows a spirit of deep and humble resignation—the spirit of a man who understood Divine providence and accepted Shimei as the instrument of God’s chastening hand.
- IV. In 2 Samuel 18 the army of David meets the army of Absalom.
  - A. 20,000 men died in the battle (2 Sam. 18:7).
  - B. While fleeing, Absalom gets his hair caught in a tree (2 Sam. 18:9–10).
  - C. Joab kills Absalom with three spears (2 Sam. 18:14).
- V. In 2 Samuel 19:18–23, David meets up with Shimei again.
  - A. Shimei begs for forgiveness from David.
  - B. David grants Shimei his life.
- VI. In David’s final words to Solomon, he reminds him of Shimei (1 Kings 2:8–9).
  - A. Shimei was a devious man; Solomon was to keep watch on him.
  - B. Shimei is executed for violating the terms of his pardon (1 Kings 2:36–46).
- VII. What can we learn from this incident?

## *Discussion*

- I. **The Language And Conduct Of Shimei**
  - A. Cruel.
    1. He rails against David and has no compassion for him.
    2. David needed pity and compassion at that time.
  - B. Cowardly.
    1. This grudge was held by Shimei for many years.
    2. One writer said, “He that smiled on David on his throne curseth him in his flight.”
    3. David forbids pursuit and Shimei becomes furious (2 Sam. 16:13).

- C. Malicious.
  1. There was a personal hatred here.
  2. “The ungodly are always selfish. They judge others, not by laws of impartial justice, but by the standard of self-interest. David was called a usurper, a man of Belial, a murderer; and why? Because he had made himself the slave of lust, and had cruelly slain the noble Uriah? No; because he had been elevated by God to the throne of Israel, and had thus marred the prospects of the ambitious Shimei.” (*C. Bradley*).
- D. Unjust.
  1. He makes many accusations of general wickedness.
  2. He accuses David of the blood of Saul’s house.
  3. “Shimei curses and stones David, and barks like a live dog, though Abishai calls him a dead one. The only unjust act that ever David had done against the house of Saul he had newly done; that was, giving Mephibosheth’s land; and here a man of the house of Saul is seen upon him.” (*Lightfoot*).
  4. Maybe David had him in mind when he penned Psa. 109:1–5.
- E. Misrepresentation.
  1. In 2 Sam. 16:8 he acknowledges God’s vengeance, but misapplies it.
  2. Wicked men often wrest the providence of God to justify the evil.
- F. Criminal.
  1. He is guilty of treason and blasphemy.
  2. He could have been punished by law (Ex. 22:28; 2 Sam. 19:21).

## II. The Patience And Forbearance Of David

- A. Uncomplaining.
  1. He does not retaliate.
  2. He is silent (cf. Isa. 53:5; Luke 23:9).
- B. Repressive.
  1. David represses hostilities rather than “fan the flame.”
  2. A natural tendency is to find some way to get even.
- C. Self-Accusing.
  1. David was innocent of the charges made by Shimei, but he knew of his guilt in other sins.
  2. David’s conscience had to wrestle with itself.
- D. Reverential.
  1. David looks beyond the “cheap shots” to the power of Jehovah.
  2. The words of Joseph: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” (Gen. 50:20).
  3. The words of Job: “And he said: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21).
  4. This reverence in David produced humility and mercy that only the godly will understand (Matt. 5:44; Matt. 6:14,15; Rom. 12:19–21).
- E. Submissive.
  1. He accepts the chastisement as coming from Jehovah.
  2. “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me; He will bring me forth to the light, and I will see His righteousness.” (Mic. 7:9).

F. Hopeful.

1. David's heart is turning again to the hope of God's love.
2. "It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day." (2 Sam. 16:12).
3. Realizing our own guilt is needed before God will forgive us.

*Conclusion*

- I. The best of men are often maligned.
  - A. Of Jesus it was said, "He has a devil."
  - B. Can we expect any less accusations to be made against us?
- II. Chrysostom said, "No man is ever really hurt by any one but himself."
- III. Instead of walking in self-pity when we are reviled, we should think of how much we deserve the wrath of God.
- IV. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." (Prov. 16:32).

# A Disciple Named Tabitha

by Terry Sanders

## Introduction

- I. Congregations, such as the one at Joppa, are made up of common people who sometimes prove to be extraordinary characters (Acts 9:36–43).
- II. Tabitha (Dorcas) was one such character who flashes across the pages of the New Testament like a comet across the night sky.
  - A. She is briefly seen, but brightly shines.
  - B. Tabitha is more commonly known as Dorcas (the former is Aramaic and the latter is Greek).
- III. There are several good lessons we can learn from this story.

## Discussion

### I. The Report About Dorcas

- A. She was full of good works and charitable deeds (Acts 9:36).
  1. This is how a Christian is supposed to be (Titus 2:14).
  2. Good works are explained by the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
- B. She made clothing for the widows (Acts 9:39).
  1. It is the work of Christians to help the poor (Acts 20:35).
  2. Dorcas would be remembered among the living and before God.
    - a) She laid up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20).
    - b) “The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot” (Prov. 10:7).
    - c) “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (Rev. 14:13).
    - d) Job took comfort in that fact that the poor were “warmed with the fleece of my sheep” (Job 31:20).
    - e) The dead often have memorials raised in their honor; Tabitha left a memorial in the tunics she had made for the poor.
    - f) In the city of Joppa there is the *Tabitha School*, established by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1863.
- C. Tabitha died, was prepared for burial, and was mourned (Acts 9:37–39).

### II. Peter Came To Joppa

- A. The disciples at Joppa sent for him (Acts 9:38).
  1. Peter was at Lydda, about 12 miles from Joppa (a three hours walk); the modern name for Lydda is Lod (site of the international airport).
  2. Joppa is a seaport town in the tribe of Dan—it is one of the oldest seaports in the entire world—the cedars of Lebanon passed through here to build the temple at Jerusalem
  3. Joppa was the place where Jonah boarded a ship to go to Tarshish.
  4. In the ancient world Joppa was an important stop on the Via Maris, the trade route that extended from Egypt to Mesopotamia.
  5. The modern name of the city is Jaffa.
  6. Beautiful St. Peter’s Monastery is across from Old Jaffa’s central plaza.

- B. He came to comfort them as they mourned Tabitha's passing (Acts 9:38–39).
  1. Exactly why they sent for Peter is unclear—I doubt it was for the purpose of raising Tabitha, for Stephan was not raised.
  2. The gospel contains words of comfort (1 Thes. 4:13–18).
  3. We should turn to each other for comfort (1 Cor. 12:12–18, 25–27).

### III. Tabitha Is Brought Back To Life

- A. The events involved were simple (Acts 9:40–41).
  1. Peter denied anything that looked like vainglory ostentation.
  2. The room is cleared and Peter kneels in prayer.
  3. He tells the body to arise.
  4. He takes her by the hand and helps her up.
  5. He calls for the brethren and presents her alive, as Elijah (1 Kings 17:23), and Elisha (2 Kings 4:36), and Christ (Luke 7:15), presented the dead sons alive to their mothers.
  6. Similar to the healing of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22–23, 35–43).
- B. Notice how this differs from “miracles” today:
  1. They draw a large crowd and create a commotion.
  2. With great fanfare they pray.
  3. Then nothing happens, but they expect pay and praise!
- C. Think of how this resurrection brought great joy.
  1. Yet, this joy would diminish—Tabitha would die again only to await the final resurrection of all.
  2. When that time comes the righteous will receive “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter. 1:4).
- D. This event produced faith around Joppa (Acts 9:42).
  1. Purpose of miracles was to confirm the word (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4).
  2. They were never used as a means of financial gain (cf. Acts 8:13–24).
- E. Peter tarried not at the house of Tabitha, lest he seem to seek glory from among men; he took up lodging with Simon the tanner, an ordinary tradesman, an expression of his humility (Acts 9:43).
  1. Tanner's workshops were required by law to be at least 50 cubits outside the walls of any city.
  2. If a man kept his trade a secret from his prospective father-in-law, the contract of marriage was automatically voided.
  3. Staying with Simon the tanner helped prepare Peter for the vision and experience of chapter ten in preaching to the Gentiles.

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Am I doing the works revealed by the New Testament?
- II. Would brethren mourn my passing?
- III. Would brethren rejoice to see me again?
- IV. Do I love this world so much that I forget about the one to come?

# Elisha And The Jericho Lads

by Jeff Asher

## Introduction

- I. Elijah has been translated into heaven by the chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11).
  - A. Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle and crosses back over Jordan on his way to Jericho (2 Kings 2:14-15).
  - B. The sons of the prophets meet him and request a search be made for Elijah's body—after three days he was not found (2 Kings 2:16-18).
  - C. Before leaving, Elisha purifies the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22).
  - D. Upon leaving Jericho on his way up to Bethel, Elisha encounters some young men on the road (2 Kings 2:23-25).
- II. Information about our text:
  - A. Bethel was the southern most city of Israel's two altars of Baal.
    1. The "little children" (KJV) here are actually young men.
    2. "*nah-ar*...a boy, from the age of infancy to adolescence; by impl. a servant; also (by interch. of sex), a girl (of similar latitude in age)" [Strong's Dictionary, #5288].
    3. "...and *naar* signifies not only a 'child' but a young man,' a 'servant,' or even a 'soldier,' or one fit to go out to battle; and is so translated in a multitude of places..." [Adam Clarke].
  - B. They mocked Elisha and insulted him by making light of his bald head.
    1. Since Bethel was the chief seat of calf-worship (1 Kings 12:32-33), a prophet of God was not unlikely to meet with insult there.
    2. By saying "Go up" they were blaspheming God by ridiculing the miracle of Elijah's ascension into heaven and telling Elisha to go to heaven as had his predecessor Elijah.
    3. Most obviously, their contempt for the prophetic office led them to rail against whatever fault they could find, in Elisha's case baldness.
  - C. For this Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord. He did not lose his temper, but pronounced a curse from God.
  - D. The curse was that 42 youths were torn by two female bears.
    1. Here is an example of God the supernatural acting through the natural.
    2. Similarly, Elijah was fed by ravens, the drought ended, various plagues were brought and turned away.
    3. This event was supernatural but not a miracle.
- III. In this lesson, we will learn four lessons from our text:

## Discussion

- I. **God's Attitude Toward Those Who Revile, Abase And Dishonor The Teachers Of His Word**
  - A. Elisha's cursing of these young men was not profanity, but a curse, an invoking of evil upon them.
    1. This was not in retaliation or out of a desire for revenge.
    2. It was within his scope of authority as a prophet of God (Deut. 27:14-26; Num. 5:12-24; Mk. 11:12-21).
    3. No one can curse one whom God has not cursed ("How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?" Num. 23:8).

- B. Thus, Elisha's curse was in the name of the Lord.
  1. It was by God's authority and the urgings of inspiration.
  2. The curse of Elisha would be parallel to that of Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3-4), or Paul upon Elymas (Acts 13:8-12).
  3. This cursing stands as a testimony that God will repay every unkind deed done by the wicked to His servants (Matt. 23:29-36).
  4. This is also testimony that God regards this as exceeding wickedness among the young.
- C. It is a similar crime against God for the young to speak disrespectfully of those who teach God's word today.
  1. Such terms as "stupid," "silly," "old fool," etc., used of elders, teachers, preachers, those who lead in prayer and serve at the Lord's table.
  2. Complaints against sound doctrine and self-control.
  3. Manifested not only by words, but by actions, disruptions, arguing, backtalk, no preparation, etc.

## II. The Importance Of Proper Training And Supervision

- A. This text reveals youth gangs not an unique problem of this generation.
  1. There were at least 42 youths involved in this incident (2 Kings 2:24).
  2. Why were they on the road to Bethel? Nothing better to do?
  3. Children need to be given just as much responsibility as they can stand.
  4. When will they learn the importance of working for a living, guiding a house, accountability, etc.?
  5. There are a lot of 21 year old babies living off their parents in this world—many not worth the powder it would take to blow them up!
- B. Young people unsupervised will get into mischief.
  1. "Mock" denotes a severe contempt for and scoffing at a thing.
  2. These young men were following Elisha, taunting and cursing him.
    - a) The condition then is similar to that of today.
    - b) Perhaps some of these were "latch key" children?
  3. Psychologists tell us the teen years most important.
    - a) Critical time is adolescence.
    - b) Then a real need for a stable, supportive home environment.
  4. This will account for teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, teen crime, teen suicide.
  5. It will also go a long way explaining why young people leave church.

## III. The Young Are Accountable For Their Behavior Before God

- A. There is a time when we are not accountable before God ("I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Rom. 7:9).
- B. However, in "youth" we learn right from wrong and are accountable (Rom. 2:6; Eccl. 11:9-10).
- C. The text makes it clear that these youths alone were accountable.
  1. Not their parents (Eph. 6:1-4).
  2. Not their religious leaders (Baal).
  3. Not the government (Ahaziah).
  4. Not Elisha.
  5. Not their neighbors.

- D. There comes a time when you must assume responsibility for yourself and your actions. Don't make excuses:
  1. You've had bad home life.
  2. You were not taught properly.
  3. You've experienced bad luck.
  4. People have mistreated you.
  5. The church has hypocrites in it.
- E. How does that relieve you of responsibility for what *you* are? (Eccl. 11:9).
  1. You alone can determine what you will be from now on!
  2. If you through the revelation of God see yourself as God sees you, then let God help you change.
  3. You can be good and beautiful in God's sight (Eccl. 11:10, 12:1).
  4. Today would be a good day to chose to obey the gospel.

#### IV. **God Will Punish The Young Sinner As Well As The Old Sinner**

- A. The mauling of these 42 youths by these two she-bears seems a harsh and cruel punishment.
- B. You need to realize that there awaits a much more severe punishment than this for the young sinner (and the old one as well).
  1. No age limits for accountable beings in hell (Rev. 21:8).
  2. Too often the young do not fear death or eternal damnation.
  3. Young people die too (look at the traffic deaths).
  4. There will be young people on earth when Jesus comes.
- C. The Lord is not holding your sins in abeyance until you have your fill of life and have sown all your "wild oats" (Gal. 6:7-8).
  1. "If I become a Christian there are a lot of things I will not be able to do."
  2. If you don't become a Christian there are some things you will certainly miss (John 14:1-3).
  3. I am baptized, now I have my freedom (Col. 3:1; Eph. 5:1-5; Rom. 6:1-6).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. This story teaches us that the faults of our youth are not considered by God to be of a trifling nature.
- II. Men measure faults by the harm they do in *this* world, not by the harm they do in making us unfit for the Kingdom of God.
- III. Ecclesiastes 12:1-8.



# Enoch Walked With God

by Wayne Greeson

## *Introduction*

- I. Each one of us has an individual responsibility to be pleasing to God.
  - A. While this responsibility weighs heavy, it is not an impossible task.
  - B. Many examples have been given in the Scriptures to demonstrate that we can be and do what God wants.
- II. Enoch provides a shining example of one man's relationship with God.
  - A. A relationship which lasted far longer than most lifetimes.
  - B. Yet despite the duration of Enoch's relationship, we can quickly find out all we need to know about Enoch in the three brief Bible passages.

## *Discussion*

### **I. He Walked With God**

- A. The first passage which refers to Enoch is found in Genesis 5:21–24.
  - 1. Moses mentions twice that Enoch walked with God.
  - 2. The repetition serves to remind us that Moses did not make a mistake the first time, to emphasize the spiritual stature of Enoch and to burn in to our minds the need to walk in the same path.
  - 3. The words “walk” “walked” “walking” are used throughout the Bible to refer to one's manner of life.
  - 4. Enoch's walk refers to Enoch's manner of life and conduct.
- B. Enoch's walk was not just any walk.
  - 1. There is a righteous walk and an unrighteous walk (Prov. 4:18–19).
  - 2. Enoch's walk was in the path of the just, his conduct was righteous.
  - 3. Moses sums it up, “Enoch walked with God”
- C. There was harmony and peace between Enoch and God.
  - 1. The prophet Amos asks the rhetorical question, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3).
  - 2. The obvious and implied answer is “No, two can only walk together if they are in agreement.”
  - 3. The only way that Enoch could have walked with God was if Enoch conducted his life in the manner that God directed him.
  - 4. Man and God do not come together in agreement by compromise.
    - a) A man cannot tell God, “I want to take the low road and you want to take the high road, so let us compromise and walk together on the middle road.”
    - b) If one desires to walk with God as Enoch did, then he must walk the path that God chooses and follow where the Lord leads.
  - 5. The Lord commanded Israel to walk with Him in this way (Deut. 13:4).
  - 6. Likewise, Paul directs Christians to how to walk with God by walking by His rule, “. . . let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern” (Phil. 3:16–17).

- D. Enoch's example teaches us that one is never too old to start serving God and it is never in this life too late to begin walking with God.
  - 1. Moses indicates that Enoch did not begin his walk with God until after he was sixty-five years old.
  - 2. While it took Enoch a while to get headed in the right direction and he misspent sixty-five years of his life, once Enoch got on the right path he stayed on it for the rest of his life.
- E. What is truly amazing about Enoch and his walk with God is the length of time his walk with God lasted.
  - 1. Enoch walked with God for three hundred years!
  - 2. How many years might one serve God in our day? Sixty, seventy, maybe eighty years?
  - 3. How sad it is in comparison to see those who cannot even walk with God one week, much less until the end of their life.
  - 4. If the path seems long and hard, just remember Enoch.
    - a) He was just beginning to walk with and serve God about the age you will retire from your secular job.
    - b) And about the age you close your eyes in death's sleep, Enoch continued to walk that same path for more than 250 years.
    - c) How fortunate we are that God has given us a much shorter path to walk in this life than those who lived before the flood.

## II. He Pleased God

- A. The second mention of Enoch is in the "Hall of Faith" (Heb. 11:5-6).
  - 1. What an honor for Enoch to be included in a list of those who faithfully served God.
  - 2. But you and I can also have the honor to be listed with the faithful down through the centuries. Jesus told his disciples, "...rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).
- B. The writer of Hebrews explains the ground upon which Enoch was listed among those faithful to God: Enoch pleased God.
  - 1. Instead of pleasing God, Enoch could have pleased himself.
  - 2. He could have pleased his wife or his children, rather than God.
  - 3. Enoch could have tried to please other men instead of God.
  - 4. But for three hundred years Enoch pleased God.
- C. If only more Christians would follow in Enoch's footsteps.
  - 1. Many are living divided and compromised lives trying to please everyone and ending up pleasing no one (1 Thes. 4:1).
  - 2. In everything you do you must ask whether God is pleased or not.
    - a) If you stay home to watch TV on Sunday evening when it is time for worship, are you pleasing God or are you pleasing yourself?
    - b) If you take your son or daughter to a school function on Wednesday night when Christians meet for Bible study, are you pleasing God or are you trying to please your children?
    - c) If you leave home on vacation without thought or plan as to where you will worship with faithful saints, are you pleasing God or are you pleasing your family?
  - 3. For several lifetimes Enoch walked so to please God, the least we can do is conduct ourselves to please Him in one lifetime.

### III. He Did Not See Death

- A. "...He was not, for God took him", Moses succinctly concludes his few sentences about Enoch (Gen. 5:24).
1. "Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, and was not found because God had translated him" (Heb. 11:5).
  2. Enoch at 365 years of age disappeared from the face of the earth.
    - a) He was not found among men of this world, but he did not leave this world through the avenue of death.
    - b) God took Enoch by translating him, that is God transferred him to another place.
- B. Of the billions of men and women that have walked on this planet only two are recorded in the Bible as leaving this world without seeing death, Elijah and Enoch (2 Kings 2:11).
1. Unlike Enoch, you and I must face death to leave this world, unless the Lord returns first (1 Thes. 4:13-17).
  2. However, the translation of Enoch teaches us a valuable lesson, that God "is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).
- C. Enoch's three hundred years of walking with God were not wasted.
1. His day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade of pleasing God rather than himself or someone else was not in vain.
  2. God rewarded Enoch richly, Enoch did not see death, but God took Enoch to live eternally with Him.
  3. God's reward was so far greater than the sum total of Enoch's three hundred years of service.
  4. For 300 years Enoch walked with God and so close did he walk that one day he walked with God right out of this world to another world and thousands of years later Enoch is still walking next to God.
- D. God still rewards those who diligently seek Him.
1. Jesus proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn. 11:25).
  2. Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).
  3. Those who trust and obey Christ may one day face physical death, but they will never see spiritual death and go to the reward of eternal life with God as Enoch.

#### **IV. He Told of the Lord's Return**

- A. "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14–15).
  - 1. This passage about ungodly men and the time in which Enoch lived indicate that Enoch's walk was through a very wicked world.
  - 2. By the end of the life of Enoch's son, the Lord brought the Flood upon the earth because of the great wickedness therein.
  - 3. But the wickedness of other men did not deter Enoch, nor did he doubt the goodness and justice of the Lord to handle ungodly men.
  - 4. Enoch looked forward to the day the Lord would come in judgment against those who have abused and mocked His goodness and mercy and persecuted His faithful.
- B. For those who walk with God and seek to please Him the thought of the Lord's return in judgment is a comfort (1 Thes. 4:18).
  - 1. For those who seek to please themselves and travel their own path the thought of the Lord's return is agony (2 Thes. 1:7–8).
  - 2. What is your attitude towards the Lord's return?
  - 3. Do you look forward to the Lord's return as Enoch or do you fear it?
  - 4. If you are fearful and uncertain, than it is time you put on Enoch's shoes and start walking!

#### *Invitation*

- I. Are you walking with God? Are you pleasing God?
  - A. If not, you are in spiritual death and will face the second death, eternal separation from God, when that final day of judgment comes.
- II. Begin your walk with God today, by walking down this aisle to the front of this building.
  - A. One small step today will be a giant leap toward eternity.
  - B. Believe, repent, confess and be baptized, here, today, now!

# Hannah

by Larry Curry

## *Introduction*

- I. Motherhood is often maligned in our society.
  - A. Everyone knows it is necessary.
  - B. Some women want the rewards of motherhood but not the work.
- II. We approach the subject by looking at Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1–11).
  - A. She was one of Elkanah's wives (1 Sam. 1:1–2).
  - B. She was childless, and unlike some women today, was sad about it.

## *Discussion*

### **I. Hannah Gave Herself To Prayer**

- A. She prayed to the Lord.
  - 1. Elkanah's other wife had provoked her, but she did not grow bitter.
  - 2. Eli thought she was drunk (1 Sam. 1:12–15).
  - 3. Matthew Henry wrote: "Hannah mingled tears with her prayers; she considered the mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul. God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing we most need and desire. She spoke softly, none could hear her. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Eli was high priest, and judge in Israel. It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in censures of others, and to think people guilty of bad things while the matter is doubtful and unproved. Hannah did not retort the charge, and upbraid Eli with the wicked conduct of his own sons. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to clear herself, and so must we. Eli was willing to acknowledge his mistake. Hannah went away with satisfaction of mind. She had herself by prayer committed her case to God, and Eli had prayed for her. Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so. None will long remain miserable, who use aright the privilege of going to the mercy-seat of a reconciled God in Christ Jesus."
- B. God heard her prayer (1 Sam. 1:17–20).
  - 1. Do we take our problems to God in prayer (1 Pet. 5:7)?
  - 2. Are we faithful to God in this (1 Pet. 3:12)?

### **II. Hannah Gave Her Son To God**

- A. She had vowed to do this before his birth (1 Sam. 1:11).
  - 1. All of his days were to be devoted to God.
  - 2. He would live a life separated from her and as well as to the world.
  - 3. We must give our children to God (Psa. 127:3–5; Matt. 6:33).
  - 4. Think of young Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14–15).

- B. She kept her vow (1 Sam. 1:22–24).
  - 1. God kept His part as He always does.
  - 2. Men often make vows before God: baptism, marriage, children, sickness (their own and their children), debt, success.
  - 3. Men often forget their vows (“it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay” Eccl. 5:5).
- C. She dedicated her son to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:26–28).
  - 1. More was involved than a modern day “christening” ceremony.
  - 2. “Hannah presented her child to the Lord with a grateful acknowledgment of His goodness in answer to prayer. Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from Him. All our gifts to Him were first His gifts to us. The child Samuel early showed true piety. Little children should be taught to worship God when very young. Their parents should teach them in it, bring them to it, and put them on doing it as well as they can; God will graciously accept them, and will teach them to do better.” (Matthew Henry).
  - 3. We show by our example what is important (“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” Eccl. 12:13).
  - 4. She sang a song of thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:1–10).
- D. Hannah continued to care for her son (1 Sam. 2:19).
  - 1. She made him a coat every year.
  - 2. It would have been easy for her to forget what God had done for her.

### III. Hannah Was Blessed

- A. She had other children after Samuel (1 Sam. 2:20–21).
  - 1. These children were a reward for her faithfulness.
  - 2. Meanwhile, Samuel “grew before the Lord.”
  - 3. She was given five children in return for the one she gave to the Lord.
- B. God always blesses His people when they do what is right.
  - 1. Happiness is a guarantee (Matt. 5:3–12).
  - 2. It is worth everything we might have to give up (Phil. 3:4–8).
- C. So it is with us today.
  - 1. We might have to give up our family (Mark 10:17–30).
  - 2. It might even cost us our very life (Luke 9:23–26; 14:25–33).

### *Conclusion*

- I. What was said of Samuel (1 Sam. 2:26) was said of Christ (“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” Luke 2:52).
- II. We are to bring honor to our parents (Eph. 6:1–3).

# The Prayer Of Jabez

by Wayne Greeson

## Introduction

- I. Who was Jabez? Probably no one here could tell me anything about him.
  - A. Yet he is mentioned in the Scripture and identified as a man “more honorable than his brothers.”
  - B. We find Jabez mentioned in the middle of a sea of names in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1—9.
- II. Why was Jabez honorable? (1 Chronicles 4:9–10).
  - A. Why was he more honorable than his brothers?
  - B. Apparently, because of his prayer.

## Discussion

- I. **“Bless Me Indeed”**
  - A. Are we willing to ask for blessings for others but not for ourselves?
    - 1. We are shocked at the brash, bold request of Jabez.
    - 2. But he was called “honorable” for this boldness.
  - B. God wants us to ask him to bless us.
    - 1. Example of Jacob (Gen. 32:24–26, 29).
    - 2. Example of Solomon (1 Kings 3:5–14).
  - C. “Indeed!” Not just “bless me” but “bless me indeed.”
  - D. By our requests, we acknowledge and recognize that all blessings come from God (James 1:17; Matt. 6:8–11; Phil 4:19).
- II. **“Enlarge My Territory”**
  - A. To often we want the Lord to bless us, but we do not want the extra responsibilities that go with the blessings.
    - 1. The more blessings provided means more responsibility.
    - 2. Jabez’s request was not selfish; he was asking for more work, more responsibility.
    - 3. Example: Pray for a new car, but when we get it, are you willing to use it to carry the gospel to a friend across town?
    - 4. Example: A Christian with ten cows claimed “If the Lord blessed me with 100 cows, I would give 10 to the Lord!” “Well, you have 10 now, how about giving I to the Lord?”
  - B. Our abilities plus our opportunities equal our responsibilities.
    - 1. This is true of our giving (Gal. 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:2).
    - 2. Saul’s zeal in persecuting the church.
      - a) He sought to enlarge his territory (Acts 9:1–2).
      - b) Is it any wonder that when he became a Christian, he sought to “enlarge his territory” by taking the gospel to Asia Minor, Cyprus, Greece and Rome?

### III. “Be With Me”

- A. We should not only pray for blessing and responsibilities, but for the presence of God to abide constantly with me. “I need you all the time, your help, your guidance, your strength; Lord, I need you!”
- B. Jabez recognized he could not succeed without the Lord. Do we?
  - 1. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 Pet. 5:6–7).
  - 2. “...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit...” (Eph. 3:16).
  - 3. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph. 6:10–11).
- C. With this prayer, you have to stop saying “I can’t.” You surely can’t without God, but with him, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:13).

### IV. “Keep Me From Evil”

- A. Jabez has three positive requests and one negative request.
- B. Do not forget the Lord when you get all you ask for—that is when you need Him the most.
  - 1. Remember the warning to Israel: “When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant” (Deut. 31:19–22).
  - 2. “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are covered with fat; then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” (Deut. 32:15).
  - 3. Example of Gehazi—he was richly blessed and he allowed his blessings to become a stumbling block (2 Kings 5:15–16, 20–27).
  - 4. The words of Agur (Prov. 30:7–9).
- C. God does not tempt us with evil (Jas. 1:12–13).
  - 1. We can overcome temptation (Matt. 6:13; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 Cor. 10:13).
  - 2. Example of Noah (2 Pet. 2:4–5).
  - 3. Example of Lot (2 Pet. 2:6–8).
  - 4. He will deliver us (2 Pet. 2:9).

### *Conclusion*

- I. “God gave him what he requested.”
- II. Are you surprised? (Matt. 7:7–11).



# Jason: A Man Whose House Was Worthy

*by Larry Curry*

## *Introduction*

- I. In the limited commission, Jesus taught that some houses are worthy while others were not (Matt. 10:5–15).
  - A. Those who received His word were considered worthy (Matt. 10:13).
  - B. Jason, a Christian we read of in Acts 17, welcomed Paul and Silas and proved his home to be worthy.
- II. Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica after leaving Philippi (Acts 17:1–9).
  - A. Paul and Silas preached the Gospel (Acts 17:1–3).
  - B. Some were persuaded, and joined in support of Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4).
  - C. Persecution soon followed (Acts 17:5–9).
- III. What lessons can we learn from the text?
  - A. Paul had a method to his preaching.
  - B. Persecution accompanied the faithful preaching of the word.
  - C. Jason was one of the faithful.

## *Discussion*

- I. **Paul's Preaching In Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–4)**
  - A. He preached in the synagogue (Acts 17:1–2).
    1. His work took him to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:15).
    2. His preaching included debating (Acts 17:2).
    3. His theme was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, not social improvement (1 Cor. 2:1–5).
  - B. The basis for his preaching was the Scriptures (Acts 17:3).
    1. The Old Testament prophets spoke of Him (Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 1:10; Psa. 22).
    2. Men were living who had been eyewitnesses of the resurrection of our Lord (2 Pet. 1:16–21; Heb. 2:3–4; 1 Cor. 15:1–8).
  - C. This resulted in conversions (Acts 17:4).
    1. Some were Gentiles, others were Jews, and some were prominent women of the city (Acts 17:4).
    2. Faith is impossible without evidence (John 6:44–45; Rom. 10:17).
    3. They became a force for good in that area (1 Thes. 1:8–10).
    4. Among the members of that church was Jason.
- II. **Persecution Accompanied The Preaching (Acts 17:5–9)**
  - A. The Jews were jealous of the success of Paul's preaching (Acts 17:5–6).
    1. The Word had accomplished its purpose (Isa. 55:10–11).
    2. They found allies in some wicked men in the city and went looking for Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4–5).
    3. When they could not find them, they took Jason instead (Acts 17:6).
  - B. What was there about Jason that prompted this action? (Acts 17:7–9).
    1. He had earlier obeyed the truth through the preaching and debating of Paul (Acts 17:5).
    2. He had provided a shelter for Paul and Silas (Acts 17:5–6).
    3. He was not ashamed to be supporting men who had "upset the world" (Acts 17:7; 2 Tim. 1:15–18).

4. He was known in the city for his agreement with Paul's preaching, and was falsely accused along with Paul (Acts 17:7-9).
- C. How do we compare to him?
1. Are we known as a faithful Christian where we live? (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17).
  2. Would we help and support those who preach the truth and those who defend the truth in debates? (2 Tim. 4:1-18).
  3. As someone once asked, "If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

*Conclusion*

- I. Is your house a worthy house?
- II. Have you obeyed the gospel?
- III. Will you defend the truth?

# Job's Happiness

by Larry Curry

## *Introduction*

- I. Man has always longed to be happy.
  - A. He has tried in many ways to be happy (Eccl. 2:1–11).
  - B. Some think they have “found” it in sin (Heb. 11:25).
- II. True happiness can only be found God's way.
  - A. Man's duty is to serve God (Eccl. 11:9—12:13).
  - B. Seek to cultivate the right qualities (Matt. 5:1–12).
- III. What brought happiness to Job?
  - A. Let's think of Job as a representative man.
  - B. We can find happiness in the same way he did.

## *Discussion*

- I. **A Right Relationship With God (Job 29:1–5)**
  - A. God watched over him (Job 29:2, 10:14, 13:27).
    - 1. It is important to have someone around who cares for us.
    - 2. Job recalled his relationship with God.
    - 3. Indeed, God cares for His own (Matt. 6:25–34; 1 Pet. 5:7).
  - B. God provided light in darkness (Job 29:3).
    - 1. Such light is provided by His word (Psa. 119:105, 130; Pro. 6:20–23).
    - 2. Life and immortality have been made known (2 Tim. 1:10).
    - 3. We are called from darkness into light (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7–9).
  - C. What is your relationship with God?
    - 1. Sin brings unhappiness (Psa. 32:1–7; Pro. 13:15).
    - 2. Are you right with God?
- II. **The Companionship Of His Children (Job 29:5)**
  - A. Job had enjoyed a good relationship with his family (Job 1:2, 4, 21).
    - 1. Satan was allowed to take his children.
    - 2. His wife remained, but was weak (Job 2:9).
    - 3. His brothers forsook him (Job 19:13–17).
  - B. What is our relationship with our children like?
    - 1. Do we have a “filling station” type operation because we are too busy?
    - 2. Latchkey programs are needed in many two-parent homes.
    - 3. We need to make our homes a sanctuary (Eph. 5:22–6:4).
    - 4. Death might enter the home and remove our opportunities.
- III. **The Respect Of The Community (Job 29:6–25)**
  - A. Young and old, rich and noble alike respected him (Job 29:6–10).
    - 1. He had a prominent place in the town.
    - 2. Remember the importance of a good wife (Pro. 31:10–31).
    - 3. We must be active and responsible citizens and workers (1 Pet. 2:13–17).
  - B. He was a benevolent man (Job 29:11–17).
    - 1. He came to the aid of the orphans and widows (Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27).
    - 2. He was righteous and felt secure in his place among men (Job 29:14).

- C. His word and judgment were valued (Job 29:18–22).
  - 1. Are we involved in our communities and schools?
  - 2. We can be a great influence (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14–16).
- D. He brought cheer and comfort (Job 29:23–25).
  - 1. We can make the world a better place.
  - 2. Let our forbearing spirit be seen (Phil. 4:5–7).

*Conclusion*

- I. Have you found happiness? Why not obey God and begin to be happy?

# Job's Wife

by Wayne Greeson

## *Introduction*

- I. Many sermons tell of Job (his temptation, trial, patience and life) (Job 1:1–12).
  - A. Job lived in the Patriarchal age and is described as “the greatest of all the people of the east” (Job 1:3).
  - B. He had not only wealth and the honor and praise of men, but he was favored by God for he was a “blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8).
  - C. Satan entered the picture, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9).
- II. God, willing to show Job's goodness, allows Satan to tempt Job.
  - A. Satan hurls everything he can at Job.
  - B. Job loses his wealth, children and health (Job 1:13–22).
  - C. Did Satan win? No. “In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22).
  - D. In his misery he sat down in the ashes and scraped the boils that covered his body with a broken piece of pottery (Job 2:1–8).
- III. In this lesson I want us to consider someone we often pass over, Job's wife.
- IV. All that we know about Job's wife is one statement, but that one sentence tells us many things and teaches us many lessons (Job 2:9–10).

## *Discussion*

- I. **She Emphasized The Present Life**
  - A. Job's wife's attitude was “God took everything away from us.”
    - 1. She was concerned about the here and now.
    - 2. She too had lost 10 children, her wealth and now has a sick husband.
  - B. There are too many who place their emphasis on the present.
    - 1. The job they have. The way they spend their money.
    - 2. What if you lost it all tomorrow? Would you be like Job's wife?
  - C. Job's attitude was the opposite: “And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’” (Job 1:21).
    - 1. “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16–18).
    - 2. “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim. 6:6–8; Matt. 6:19–21).
- II. **She Ridiculed Her Husband**
  - A. She ridiculed her husband instead of encouraging and helping him.
    - 1. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Prov. 18:21).
    - 2. “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Col. 4:6).

- B. “But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).
  - 1. “Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (Prov. 16:24).
  - 2. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 25:11).

### III. She Falsely Accused God

- A. She falsely accused God of causing Job to suffer.
- B. There are many today who falsely accuse God.
  - 1. Blame God for *their* misfortunes.
  - 2. Blame God for the death of their loved ones.
- C. God is not the cause of our suffering and death (James 1:12–17).
  - 1. “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45; cf. Luke 13:1–5, Heb. 2:14–15).

### IV. She Served Satan’s Purpose

- A. Satan works through people.
  - 1. Satan used Eve to tempt Adam (Gen. 3:1–8).
  - 2. Satan used Judas to attack Jesus (Matt. 26:47–50).
  - 3. Satan used Peter to try to hinder Christ (Matt. 16:23).
  - 4. Satan uses men today to do his work (2 Cor. 11:13–15).
  - 5. Satan used Job’s wife to try to get Job to renounce God! She echoed the words of Satan (Job 2:4–5).
- B. Does Satan use you?
  - 1. “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:26–27).
  - 2. You can be a puppet of the devil.
    - a) “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).
    - b) “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matt. 12:30).

### Conclusion

- I. By now you might picture Job’s wife as an ugly, wicked hag. She was not.
  - A. She was a woman, a wife and a mother, just as many here.
  - B. She allowed herself to be used as a tool of the devil because she did not stop and think about the effect her words and her life had upon herself and those around her.
- II. “No man is an island to himself...” Neither are you (Rom. 14:8).
  - A. Think about how your life, your actions and your words effect your husband, your wife, your children.
  - B. Don’t be Satan’s puppet any longer, become a child of God today.

# John The Baptist

*by David A. Padfield*

## *Introduction*

- I. The closing words of the Old Testament give promise of a messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal. 3:1, 4:5).
- II. This “Elijah” was John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11–14; 17:11–13).
- III. Since Jesus said that “among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist” (Matt. 11:11), let us look at his life and work.

## *Discussion*

### **I. His Background**

- A. Under the Law of Moses, all priests had to be of the tribe of Levi—but not all Levites were priests.
  1. The family of Aaron (of the tribe of Levi) was selected at the priestly family (Exodus 28:1, 43; Num. 3:10, 18:7).
  2. When the land of Canaan was divided, the Levites were not given their own territory—certain cities located in the territory of other tribes were given to them (Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 21:1–42).
  3. When the priests became numerous it was not necessary for them all to reside in Jerusalem continuously.
  4. To establish an order and system, David divided the priests into twenty-four courses (1 Chron. 24:1–19).
  5. The courses served by turn in the temple and each course had a chief—hence, the origin of the term “chief priest.”
- B. John’s parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were both from priestly families—Zacharias was of the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5–6).
  1. Zacharias and Elizabeth prayed for a son (Luke 1:7–13).
  2. Zacharias was a good man, but his faith wavered (Luke 1:18–20).
  3. A forecast of John’s greatness (Luke 1:14–17).
  4. Zacharias prophesied (Luke 1:76–77).
- C. John grew up in the wilderness hill country of Judea (Luke 1:80).
  1. This environment gave him time for meditation and communion with God—as his character matured he was unspoiled by the world.
  2. This gave him boldness in denouncing sin and error.
- D. There was a general expectation among righteous people that a Deliverer would come about that time “and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not” (Luke 3:15).
  1. “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him” (Luke 2:25).
  2. Anna the prophetess “gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38).
  3. Religious leaders in Jerusalem sent a delegation to learn if John was indeed the Messiah (John 1:19–27).

## II. The Forerunner Of The Messiah

- A. John prepared the way for Christ (Luke 3:3–6; Matt. 3:1–12).
  - 1. The imagery is drawn from the building of a highway.
  - 2. John was not literally digging down the hills and filling up the valleys—he was dealing with people.
  - 3. “Every valley shall be filled”—the downcast, the hopeless, the dispirited, needed to be lifted up, and to have their hopes rekindled.
  - 4. “Every mountain and hill brought low”—the self-righteous, the arrogant, the haughty, the proud, must be brought to a true humility of spirit at bows them trembling at God’s word.
  - 5. “The crooked shall become straight”—those who had been crooked in their dealings with their fellowman needed to be straightened out.
  - 6. “The rough ways made smooth”—otherwise good people who were rough in their ways and manners and inconsiderate of the feelings of others needed to learn gentleness, forbearance and consideration.
- B. John pointed out who the Messiah was (John 1:32–34).

## III. John’s Message

- A. Repentance (Matt. 3:2).
- B. The approach of the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 16:18–19).
- C. Eternal punishment (Matt. 3:12).
- D. Marriage and divorce (Matt. 14:3–4).

## IV. John’s Baptism

- A. It was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3).
- B. It was preceded by a confession of sins (Matt. 3:5–6).
- C. It accomplished purification (John 3:22–26).
- D. To accept John’s baptism was to “justify God” (Luke 7:29).
- E. To refuse John’s baptism was to reject the counsel of God (Luke 7:30).
- F. Three classes of people came to John:
  - 1. Some came “confessing their sins”—these John baptized without question or delay (Matt. 3:6).
  - 2. Those who claimed they were already saved—these John refused to baptize (Matt. 3:7–9).
  - 3. The sinless Son of God—the exception to the rule (Matt. 3:13–15).
    - a) “Suffer” — “permit it just now” (Thayer).
    - b) “Now” — “denoting strictly present time, signifies ‘just now’ this moment” (W.E. Vine).
    - c) If to reject the baptism of John was to reject God, what is it to reject the baptism which Jesus Christ commands (Luke 7:29–30)?

## V. John Did Not Build Any Church

- A. He was dead and buried when Jesus promised to build the church (Matt. 14:10; Matt. 16:18).
- B. He was never in the Kingdom or church (Matt. 11:11).
- C. Paul baptized some of John’s disciples (Acts 19:1–5).



## VI. The Death Of John

- A. His death is recorded in Matthew 14:1–12 and Mark 6:14–29.
- B. After John had rebuked Herod for his unlawful marriage, John was cast into prison—his judgment was deferred because of the multitudes.
- C. It seems Herod’s first wave of anger had passed and there returned a growing respect for John.
- D. In Herodias there burned and implacable thirst for his blood—she kept to her purpose and waited for a convenient time.
- E. On Herod’s birthday he gave a supper at which wine freely flowed.
- F. Herodias shamelessly sent Salome, her daughter by Philip, to dance the licentious dance of the Orientals.
- G. Herod was so pleased with the dance that he vowed to give her anything—up to half of his kingdom.
- H. The king was “exceedingly sorry”—but he would rather commit a revolting crime than break his word.
- I. John’s head was brought in on a silver platter and given to Salome, who in turn gave it to her mother.
- J. “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught” (Mark 6:30).

### *Conclusion*

- I. “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt. 11:11).
- II. You have a tremendous opportunity that John did not have—to be in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13).

# The Sin Of Jonah

by Gene Taylor

## Introduction

- I. Jonah was the most “successful” preacher of the Old Testament.
  - A. He had 120,000 converts—in spite of the fact he hoped for failure.
  - B. There are many lessons we can learn from him.
- II. The church is parallel to Jonah in many ways.
  - A. We are God’s people (1 Pet. 2:9–10).
  - B. We have God’s message (1 Cor. 1:18).
  - C. We are told to go and preach (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - D. We can sin like Jonah did.
- III. What was the sin of Jonah?

## Discussion

### I. What His Sin Was Not

- A. Inactivity.
  - 1. After God gave the command to go to Nineveh, Jonah made preparation and boarded a ship (Jonah 1:1–3).
  - 2. Many Christians are active in social, self-edifying work—the problem is they are busy in the wrong kind of work.
- B. Preaching the condemnation of God.
  - 1. His “fire and brimstone” message came from God (Jonah 3:2–4).
  - 2. The people of Nineveh believed God (Jonah 3:5–10).
  - 3. We must not preach a watered-down message (Acts 17:30; Heb. 9:27).
- C. Doubting what he preached.
  - 1. His faith did not weaken in a pagan world (Jonah 1:6, 9; 2:7–9).
  - 2. He believed God would keep His word (Jonah 4:1–2).
  - 3. We are not wrong when we boldly preach the one body (Eph. 4:4–6).

### II. What The Sin Of Jonah Was

- A. Running from responsibility.
  - 1. After being told to preach, he ran in the opposite direction—this equaled rebellion against God (Jonah 1:10).
  - 2. “Jonah learned, and through his valuable experience millions have learned, that when God enjoins a disagreeable duty, it is far easier to go and do it than to run away from it.” (J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 54).
  - 3. He rebelled against God just like Saul (1 Sam. 15:3, 8–9, 22–23).
  - 4. We are told to preach, but often do “busy work” instead.
  - 5. “Oh for a great fish that we might repent before the end!”

- B. No concern for the people to whom he was supposed to preach.
  - 1. He knew God would spare the city if they repented (Jonah 4:1–4).
  - 2. “Jonah represents the national feelings which he shared. Why did he refuse to go to Nineveh? Not because he was afraid of his life, or thought the task hopeless. He refused because he feared success. God’s goodness was being stretched rather too far, if it was going to take in Nineveh. Jonah did not want it to escape. If he had been sent to destroy it, he would probably have gone gladly. He grudged that heathen should share Israel’s privileges, and probably thought that gain to Nineveh would be loss to Israel.” (Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*, p. 179).
  - 3. Jonah was much like the older brother in Luke 15:25–32.
  - 4. Could this be why we don’t evangelize as we should?
    - a) Do we think that some are unworthy of the invitation (Jas. 2:1–9)?
    - b) Would you have preached at Corinth (1 Cor. 6:9–11)?
    - c) We must realize the church is not a social club.
- C. Failure to understand God’s eternal purpose and mercy.
  - 1. As the book closes we see Jonah pouting outside the city.
    - a) The vine is given as an object lesson.
    - b) If Jonah could be concerned about a vine, God had the right to be concerned about 120,000 souls (Jonah 4:6–11).
  - 2. God has a Divine right to save all men (John 3:16; Heb. 2:9–10; 5:9).
    - a) “For there is no partiality with God” (Rom. 2:11).
    - b) Peter also learned this lesson at Joppa (Acts 10:15, 34–35).
  - 3. We must understand God works through:
    - a) The preaching of the Word (1 Cor. 1:21).
    - b) The church (Eph. 3:20–21; 1 Tim. 3:15).
    - c) Individuals (Acts 8:31).

### *Conclusion*

- I. Are you like Jonah?
  - A. You say you are active? That you are not afraid to speak of the wrath of God? That you do not doubt God?
  - B. Well, neither did Jonah?
- II. Avoid the sin of Jonah.
  - A. Do not run from God’s commission.
  - B. Be concerned about the salvation of others.
  - C. Realize that God intends to work through you to save others.
- III. If you have been too much like Jonah, then repent and go preach in Nineveh.
  - A. Where is Nineveh?
  - B. You are living in it now!

# Joseph Of Arimathea: A Secret Disciple

by Randy Blackaby

## Introduction

- I. Joseph is a Bible character we sometimes overlook (John 19:38–42).
- II. He appears only once in Bible history and then disappears.
- III. But, if we look closely, there are some important messages for us in the events that propelled him into the pages of Scripture.

## Discussion

### I. Who Was Joseph Of Arimathea?

- A. An apparent resident of Jerusalem, since he had a tomb for his family there (Matt. 27:57–61).
  1. His hometown was apparently Arimathea (believed to be a town in Judea not a great distance from Jerusalem).
  2. A rich man (Matt. 27:57–61).
  3. A prominent council member—part of Sanhedrin, a group of 70 rulers of the Jews (Mark 15:42–46).
- B. Morally speaking, he was a *good* and a *just* man (Luke 23:50–56).
  1. This certainly distinguished him from the majority of the Sanhedrin who turned out to be blood-thirsty murderers and dishonest men who suborned perjury and lied to Pilate.
  2. Moral goodness illustrated in fact he did not go along with the rest of the Sanhedrin in condemning Jesus (Luke 23:51).
  3. Further, his goodness is seen in wanting to give Jesus a proper burial—one fitting a king, not a criminal.
  4. Interesting note: Another Joseph was described as just (Matt. 1:19).
    - a) He was guardian of Jesus at his birth.
    - b) This just Joseph will be the guardian at His death.
- C. He was a *secret* disciple (John 19:38).
  1. Were other rulers in similar position (John 12:42–43).
  2. As we shall see, however, Joseph will soon leave this class of disciples.
- D. Joseph was “expecting” the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51).

### II. Joseph’s Brief But Important Moment In History

- A. He boldly requests permission of Pilate to bury Jesus’ body (Mark 15:42–45).
  1. Jesus had died around 3 P.M. on Friday. The Sabbath would commence at 6 P.M. According to rabbinical writings a few hours before the Sabbath were called the Preparation.
  2. It was contrary to Jewish law to have a criminal hanging on a cross overnight (Deut. 21:22–23; Josh. 8:29).
  3. It was the custom of the Romans to just leave the body for birds.
  4. Other Jews also concerned—the breaking legs was asked.

- B. Joseph “takes courage” following Jesus’ death (Mark 15:43).
1. He sheds his secret disciple role.
  2. He “boldly” goes before Pilate (Mark 15:43).
  3. He is joined by another ruler—Nicodemus (John 19:39).
    - a) Nicodemus, a Pharisee, had discussed entrance into kingdom with Jesus early (John 3:1–5).
    - b) He now brings 100 pounds of spices for Jesus’ body (John 19:39).
      - (1) “The Greek says: ‘100 *litras*.’ Since the *litra* was only twelve ounces (see NASB margin), 100 *litras* would be ‘seventy-five pounds’ (NIV).” (Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings*, pg. 95).
      - (2) Myrrh was a resin and the aloe was pulverized word; both were aromatic (cf. Psa. 45:6–8).
    - c) First he came to Jesus by night. Now he shows himself in the day.
    - d) “Nicodemus is not heard from again till Jesus is dead upon the Cross. Two members of the Sanhedrin come forward late Friday afternoon to give decent burial to the body of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea had been a secret disciple ‘because of fear of the Jews’ (John 19:38). He was a rich man with a new tomb and he had not consented to the dreadful deed of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:51). He asked Pilate for the body of Jesus that it might not be buried in the potters’ field. Then it was that Nicodemus, another secret disciple in the Sanhedrin, stepped forward and took his stand by the side of Joseph of Arimathea. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes. These two men of scholarship and wealth now in the hour of deepest shame for Jesus openly avowed their love for him and confidence in him. How they felt now about his claims to be the Messiah we do not know. But they at least took up their cross when the apostles had fled. They gave Jesus dignified and honorable burial in Joseph’s new tomb to the north of Jerusalem in the garden (John 19:41).” (A. T. Robertson, *Some Minor Characters in the New Testament*, p. 11).
- C. They take Jesus body down, prepare it and bury it.
1. Unless they had servants do this, they were defiled (Num. 19:11–13).
  2. They would not be able to fully participate in Sabbath the next day.
- D. Their actions fulfill prophecy (Isa. 53:9).

### III. Lessons From Joseph

- A. When we look at what Jesus did for us on the cross, it should instill a spirit of boldness within us.
1. Remember the events from noon to 3 P.M. on Friday (Matt. 27:37–53).
  2. Remember Jesus’ words: “Father, forgive them...” (Luke 23:34).
  3. Remember the centurion’s confession (Matt. 27:54).
  4. Remember Jesus’ words earlier: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).
- B. Notice how Joseph is exactly opposite of Peter.
1. One speaks out boldly—then becomes afraid (Matt. 26:35; Lk. 22:54–62).
  2. The other is secret disciple—then becomes bold.
- C. There are more ways to “confess” the Lord than with mouth (Psa. 107:1–2).

- D. The power of fear is great—but the power of love greater.
  - 1. He had not let fear make him join Jesus' enemies.
  - 2. But he had let it keep him from open allegiance.
  - 3. The cross had the power to overcome the world's opinion.
- E. We have many "secret disciples" today.
  - 1. Should take courage from Joseph's example.
  - 2. We also should take courage from the one who gave Joseph courage—the Lord (Heb. 13:5,6; Matt. 28:18–20).
  - 3. Secrecy thwarts our own progress (Heb. 4:14–16).
  - 4. Jesus urged open confession.
    - a) He that is not with me is against me (Matt. 10:32–33).
    - b) Lord's Supper proclaim Lord's death till he come (1 Cor. 11:26).
- F. By being bold we embolden others—look at Nicodemus.

### *Conclusion*

- I. Joseph was late, but not too late (flowers at funeral).
- II. Many things make a man fearful to openly accept Jesus.
  - A. Physical danger.
  - B. Loss of influence.
  - C. Influence of wealth.
  - D. Natural timidity.
  - E. Incomplete faith.
  - F. But one look at the cross and all these things melt.
- III. What about you?
  - A. Have you had the boldness to accept Christ, confess His name and be added to his body?
  - B. Or, are you a silent Christian?

# Josiah: A Tender Heart For Truth

by Gene Taylor

## Introduction

- I. Josiah was king of Judah from 641 to 609 B.C.
  - A. He ascended to the throne at the tender age of 8 and reigned for 31 years.
  - B. The three decades of Josiah's reign were characterized by peace, prosperity, and reform—they were among the happiest years experienced by Judah.
  - C. King Josiah devoted himself to pleasing God and reinstating Israel's observance of the Mosaic Law.
- II. Josiah's reform actually occurred in three stages.
  - A. Ascending to the throne at age eight, he apparently was blessed with God-fearing advisors who resisted the idolatrous influence of his father.
  - B. At the age of 16 (*stage one*), Josiah personally "began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chr. 34:3).
  - C. At the age of 20 (*stage two*), Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and the land of Judah of idolatrous objects (2 Chr. 34:3–7).
    1. His reform was even more extensive than that of his predecessor, Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kg. 18:4; 2 Chr. 29:3–36).
    2. Josiah extended his cleansing of the land into the territory of fallen Israel—at the time Israel was nominally controlled by Assyria.
    3. Josiah personally supervised the destruction of the altars of the Baals, the incense altars, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images as far north as the cities of Naphtali.
    4. Josiah's efforts were aided by the death of the great Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, which brought about a serious decline in Assyria's power and allowed Josiah freedom to pursue his reforms.
  - D. At the age of 26 (*stage three*), Josiah ordered that the Temple be repaired under the supervision of Hilkiah, the high priest.
    1. A copy of the Book of the Law was discovered (2 Chr. 34:14–15).
    2. When it was read to Josiah, he was horrified to learn how far Judah had departed from the law of God.
    3. This discovery provided a new momentum for the reformation that was already in progress (2 Kg. 23:4–20).
    4. He celebrated the Passover (2 Kg. 23:21–23).
- III. In 609 B.C. Josiah attempted to block Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt as he marched north to assist Assyria in her fight with Babylon.
  - A. Despite the Pharaoh's assurance to the contrary, Josiah saw Necho's northern campaign as a threat to Judah's security.
  - B. When he engaged Necho in battle at Megiddo, Josiah was seriously injured—he was returned to Jerusalem, where he died.
  - C. His death was followed by widespread lamentation (2 Chr. 35:20–27).
- IV. Josiah was righteous in a time of wickedness (2 Chr. 34:2).
  - A. "Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him." (2 Kg. 23:25).
  - B. His righteousness is an example to all who would seek God's favor.

## *Discussion*

### **I. Josiah's Faithfulness In An Evil Environment**

- A. His righteousness did not come from the influence of his family.
  - 1. His grandfather was Manasseh (2 Kg. 21:1–9, 16).
  - 2. His father was Amon (2 Kg. 21:19–22).
- B. His righteousness did not come from the influence of society.
  - 1. His people were worse than the nations God destroyed (2 Kg. 21:9).
  - 2. Jerusalem was “filled with blood” (2 Kg. 21:16).
  - 3. His people were totally given over to idolatry (2 Kg. 21:2–7, 21).

### **II. Josiah's Faithfulness Manifested**

- A. In the changes he instituted.
  - 1. “For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images” (2 Chr. 34:3).
  - 2. In the 18th year of his reign he began repairs on the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (2 Kg. 22:3–7).
    - a) Judah had been indifferent to God and His house and allowed it to fall into disrepair.
    - b) Josiah wanted to restore it to its former glory.
- B. His tender-hearted reaction to the Law of the Lord.
  - 1. While working on the temple Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law (2 Kg. 22:8).
    - a) It is incredible that the word of God could get lost in the temple!
    - b) I would not be surprised if this were to happen in some church buildings today as they make room for parties and plays.
    - c) The attitude of Judah was similar to that of Israel in the time of the prophet Hosea (Hos. 4:1–6).
  - 2. Josiah recognized the value of the book (2 Kg. 22:11, 13).
    - a) He had godly sorrow over Judah's sins (2 Kg. 22:11).
    - b) He had a desire to learn more (2 Kg. 22:12–13).
    - c) We too must be seekers of truth (Matt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:1–2).
  - 3. God's mercy extended to Josiah—the evil of Judah was to be punished, but Josiah would be spared (2 Kg. 22:18–20).

### **III. Josiah's Faithfulness Explained**

- A. He tender-heartedly received the will of God and humbled himself.
- B. He was filled with godly sorrow over sin and cleansed his life of evil and all its impurities (cf. Matt. 5:5).
- C. He sought to know as much of the will of God as he could (Acts 17:11).
- D. He walked in the way of God, not turning aside to the right or the left, by humbly obeying the commands of God.
- E. Knowing the value of the Law, he shared it with others (2 Kg. 23:1–3).
- F. The key to finding favor with God: have the attitude of Josiah!

## *Conclusion*

- I. Do you have a tender heart for the truth?
- II. You must if you desire remission of your sins and the hope of eternal life.
- III. Be as Josiah and you'll find favor with God.



# A King And His Sin

by Ed Dye

## *Introduction*

- I. Sin is sin, no matter who commits it, king or peasant, “for there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).
- II. When kings sin, even great kings, they must repent to be forgiven.
- III. King David of Israel coveted his neighbor’s wife, committed adultery with her and was guilty of deceit, treachery and murder.
- IV. The purpose of this study is to make us truly conscious of sin, aware of its results and fearful of its burden; we also want to show the blessings of genuine forgiveness.

## *Discussion*

### **I. David’s Wretched Sin**

- A. The sin of adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–5).
  1. David was walking on his roof one evening and saw a beautiful woman bathing—he should have been on the battlefield and she should have been more modest!
  2. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, a Hittite, who served as a soldier in David’s army at the battle front.
  3. David sent for Bathsheba and committed adultery with her—she conceived and later bore a son.
- B. David’s treatment of Uriah.
  1. Realizing something had to be done lest his sin be exposed, he tried to hide his sin by deceiving Uriah.
  2. Uriah was recalled from battle and David tried to send him home to his wife—this failed because of Uriah’s honor (2 Sam. 11:6–12).
  3. David tried to get Uriah drunk (2 Sam. 11:13).
  4. Now in desperation, David arranges for Uriah to be killed on the field of battle (2 Sam. 11:14–25).
  5. David marries Bathsheba, “but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (2 Sam. 11:26–27).
- C. Nathan, the man of God, rebukes king David.
  1. Nathan tells a touching story (2 Sam. 12:1–4).
  2. David is moved to anger (2 Sam. 12:5–6).
  3. Nathan’s bold and specific charge strikes David (2 Sam. 12:7).
  4. David is to be punished (2 Sam. 12:8–12).
  5. David’s penitence, confession and forgiveness (2 Sam. 12:13).

### **II. A Graphic Portrait Of David’s Repentance**

- A. First, his earnest prayer for forgiveness (Psa. 51:1–4).
  1. He requests pity, compassion and mercy, which is the ground or basis of his hope; not according to works, but God’s lovingkindness.
  2. He prays to have his “transgressions” blotted out and removed from God’s book of remembrance.
    - a) He speaks of “my transgressions” because his great sin did not stand alone (it seldom does); adultery was followed by deceit, treachery and murder.

- b) “According to the multitude of Your tender mercies”—this is the measure of hope he had.
- 3. He asks to be fully washed and cleansed—not like a man washing his hands, but like one cleaning a garment.
- 4. He acknowledges his transgression is his own and it is against God.
  - a) His is a true pattern of repentance: a change of mind, contrition, confession and amendment of life.
  - b) Nathan’s success with David is evident—David truly realized that “thou art the man” (Psa. 51:3–4).
  - c) This great evil was not just against men, as bad as that is—sin is against God (cf. Gen. 39:9; Acts 5:4).
  - d) He acknowledges that God is fully justified (free from all charge of harshness or injustice) when He judges David and condemns him.
  - e) David makes no attempt to shift the blame or lessen his guilt.
  - f) If you are not a Christian, or if you are a Christian living in sin, can you be persuaded to do as David did?
- B. Second, look at David’s plea for restoration and renewal (Psa. 51:5–12).
  - 1. He passes from the first step of seeking justification to the next step of restoration and renewal of spiritual life—for a return to God’s favor, and the spiritual joy he once possessed.
  - 2. He pleads, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psa. 51:7).
  - 3. He wants the old feeling of “joy and gladness” to return; he wanted a “clean heart” and begged God to “renew a steadfast spirit within” him and pleaded with God to “restore to me the joy of Your salvation.”
  - 4. If you are not a Christian, God looks on your sins as He did David’s!
- C. He turns from petition to promise (Psa. 51:13–17).
  - 1. In essence, he is saying, “If God will grant me my petitions for forgiveness, restoration of Divine favor and renewal of spiritual life, I will gladly accept the consequent duties of service.”
    - a) This is not an attempt to bargain with God.
    - b) It is an act which naturally and of necessity follows repentance.
  - 2. He promises to “teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.”
  - 3. He will continue to “sing aloud of Your righteousness” and open his mouth to “show forth Your praise.”
  - 4. He would not offer a bloody sacrifice, but the sacrifices of “a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.”
  - 5. If you desire that for which David longed, then do what he did and accept the subsequent Divine obligations as he did.

### *Conclusion*

- I. David carried in his heart and in his mind’s eye this graphic portrait, “my sin is ever before me.”
- II. Note that he says, “my sin.”
  - A. This is what we must acknowledge; I am the one who is guilty.
  - B. Not the sins of others, but of my own (Ezek. 18:20; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27).
  - C. Sin was a reality to him—it was not his imagination.
  - D. Our sin is more our own than anything we possess, except our soul.
  - E. It brought grief and self-abasement, not haughtiness (cf. Luke 18:9–14).

- III. David said, “my sin is ever *before me*.”
  - A. His sin was before the world, the nation, his friends and family, but not like it was before him—it crushed his very spirit.
  - B. This is the way it should be with us!
- IV. This served to continually humble David and make him aware that sins of any kind are grievous and would condemn him eternally.
  - A. Sin cannot be treated lightly—it must be removed in God’s own way.
  - B. Pardon takes place in the mind of God, not man.
- V. From the story of David six things stand out:
  - A. Man has sinned and needs forgiveness.
  - B. All sin is against God, not just man.
  - C. What impenitent men will do to try and cover up sin.
  - D. What God-fearing, penitent men will do about their sins.
  - E. God will forgive the humble penitent who obeys Him.
  - F. There are consequences of sin which remain and for which we pay again and again even after the sin if forgiven.
- VI. If you are not a Christian, then I say to you, “Thou art the man!”
  - A. What are you doing about the sin in your life?
  - B. Will you let Christ wash you in His blood that you may be “whiter than snow” (Psa. 51:7; Rev. 1:5).

# Lot's Sons-In-Law

by Wayne Walker

## *Introduction*

- I. Most Bible students are familiar with the story of Abraham and Lot.
  - A. While living in Canaan, they had to separate and Lot chose the plain of Jordan near Sodom (Gen. 13:1-13).
  - B. The city of Sodom became so wicked that God determined to destroy it, but He warned Lot and his family to flee.
  - C. "So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, 'Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!' But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking" (Gen. 19:14).
- II. There are many parallels between the Lot's sons-in-law and people today.

## *Discussion*

### **I. The Moral Climate**

- A. Sodom was an exceedingly evil city (Gen. 13:13; 18:20-32; 19:1-11).
  - 1. Our society is becoming increasingly wicked: drug abuse, homosexuality, abortion on demand, violent crime (Rom. 1:28-32).
  - 2. This is nothing new (Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:14-15).
  - 3. "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13).
- B. What is our responsibility (Matt. 5:13-16)?
  - 1. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Matt. 10:16).
  - 2. We need to be like Lot, not in his mistakes, but in his desire to take a stand for what is right (2 Pet. 2:6-8).
  - 3. Lot warned others of the consequences of sin (Jude 1:22-23).

### **II. The Reaction Of The Wicked**

- A. Like many sinners today, his sons-in-law mocked (Gen. 19:14).
  - 1. Paul's audience at Athens, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter'" (Acts 17:32).
  - 2. They might throw dust into the air (Acts 22:17-24).
  - 3. They might start a riot (Acts 19:23-34).
  - 4. They might gather a mob and cause an uproar (Acts 17:1-9).
  - 5. They might scoff at the idea of a judgment (2 Pet. 3:1-9).
- B. Like many sinners today, they rejected the method of escape and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:44-46).
- C. Like many sinners today, they rejected the earnest plea of those concerned about their souls.
  - 1. Think of the plea of our Lord (Matt. 11:28-30).
  - 2. Some Christians fail to remain faithful (Heb. 2:1-3).
  - 3. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!" (Rev. 22:17).
- D. Let us make sure that we do not react to Christ and His salvation like the sons-in-law of Lot did to their physical salvation.

### III. The Doom Of The Wicked

- A. “Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.” (Gen. 19:23–24).
- B. “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:28–29).
- C. Jesus talked about the doom to come (Matt. 25:41–46).
- D. Peter preached about it (Acts 3:22–23; 2 Pet. 3:10–13).
- E. Paul wrote about it (2 Thes. 1:7–9).
- F. Just as Lot’s sons-in-law were destroyed physically because of their refusal to do something about their salvation, so all be will destroyed in hell who refuse to do something about their sins.

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Will we be like the sons-in-law who perished or like Lot who, in spite of his failings, escaped because he obeyed God?
- II. The choice is yours.

# Moses, An Example For The Young

by Rob Harbison

## *Introduction*

- I. Would anyone disagree that it is difficult growing up in this generation?
  - A. Those who would say it is not obviously don't know any teenagers.
- II. Moses grew up in a hostile environment too.
  - A. His is an amazing story of faith and courage, especially for young people who are struggling to overcome our modernistic and atheistic society!
- III. Little is recorded about Moses as he grew to manhood.
  - A. His birth occurred during Egypt's oppression and enslavement of the Hebrew people.
  - B. Moses was born to godly parents who refused to let the Egyptians kill their son along with all the other newborn Hebrew boys (Heb. 11:23).
  - C. This expression of their faith gives us a hint as to the kind of instruction Moses received from his mother during the first few years of his life in which she was allowed to raise him (Ex. 2:1-10).
- IV. Already we have a "ray of hope" for ourselves.
  - A. An ungodly environment, no matter how degenerate, need not destroy our children if we have faith, courage and a strategy to combat it.
  - B. What Moses learned in his parents' home left a lifelong impression on him and influenced the rest of his life.
  - C. Moses was in a hostile spiritual environment (no home is more corrupt than a reigning king) and yet he retained his spiritual priorities.

## *Discussion*

### **I. Moses' Upbringing**

- A. Wisdom Of The World (Acts 7:22).
  1. Moses was highly educated in the wisdom of his day.
  2. The Egyptians were noted for their knowledge and worldly wisdom.
    - a) "Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 4:30).
  3. Moses was influenced by worldly men who did not know God and who scoffed at the idea of his God, Jehovah.
    - a) In their arrogance they did not see their foolishness (Rom. 1:21-25).
    - b) Such are similar to some educational institutions today.
  4. Although educated in a system of science and religion which neither acknowledged nor revered God, he remained true to God!
- B. False Knowledge.
  1. The false knowledge, speculations, and theories of these men could not shipwreck his faith (1 Tim. 6:20-21).
  2. Their confident, scholarly assertions did not phase him because he saw their inconsistencies.
  3. Despite their scientific affirmations that he would be branded as "a fool not to accept," he grew to be a strong believer in God.
  4. Then in later years he recorded the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2, which is consistent with the scientific evidence today.
  5. His faith overthrew their speculations (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

- C. Moral Corruption.
1. Not only did his training place no emphasis on God, he constantly faced great pressure to compromise his morality.
  2. Ungodliness was encouraged in the king's court and morality ridiculed.
  3. He lived in a world that, having turned away from God long before, had degenerated into wicked and sinful lifestyles (Rom. 1:18–32).
- D. Our World In Comparison With Moses' World.
1. In many ways, our world is not that different from his!
    - a) These same three things (worldly wisdom, false knowledge, and moral corruption) are prevalent in our society.
    - b) Our young people are growing up and battling head-to-head and heart-to-heart with:
  2. Humanism.
    - a) Let a "humanist" define the word: "I use the word 'humanist' to mean someone who believes that humans are just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or plant, that our bodies, minds, and souls were not supernaturally created but are the products of evolution, and that we are not under the control or guidance of any supernatural beings, but have to rely on ourselves and our own powers" (Julian Huxley, signer of *Humanist Manifesto 11*, 1973).
    - b) Humanism has spawned many other children which we may not realize are related.
  3. Atheism.
    - a) The existence of God is denied.
    - b) This means there is no one whom I answer to except myself, and that attitude always degenerates (Psa. 14:1; 36:1–4).
    - c) No atheistic society has ever been a righteous society!
  4. Evolution.
    - a) Without a Creator, evolution is the only other alternative.
    - b) Even its proponents admit how great the odds are that it could ever happen... but they believe it anyway!
    - c) They believe in which require more faith than creation:
      - (1) Matter is eternal.
      - (2) Life spontaneously arose out of non-living matter.
      - (3) One kind has evolved into completely different kinds of life.
  5. Situation Ethics.
    - a) Young people are being taught in school, on television, and in the lives of everyone they know, that there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, but that they will have to decide what is right for them to do, and no one else can decide that for them.
    - b) Look the the "Values Clarification" courses of today.
    - c) That philosophy is disastrous. Look at what it did to Israel in the time of the Judges (Judges 21:25).
    - d) We must depend on God for guidance (Jer. 10:23; Jas. 1:21–22).
  6. Eastern Mystical Religions.
    - a) The rise of some of the eastern religions among our young people, along with "New Age Thinking" is a big threat to more young people than we realize.

- b) America's brand of "Christianity" (which is not the real thing) has become so meaningless and repulsive to many young people that they are looking for meaning and answers in some of the eastern religions based on pantheism, idolatry, and the worship of many gods (1 Pet. 4:3; Rom. 1:21–25).
- 7. Satanism.
  - a) Many people become interested in the occult because it is fun.
  - b) It seems harmless enough playing with a Ouija board, holding seances, and drawing pentagrams and other Satanic symbols.
  - c) Many heavy metal rockers pique the interest of young people because these people are into the occult.
  - d) Then many young people go too far and delve into Satanic rituals, "altered states" and many other such things themselves.
  - e) These are not "harmless fun" (Lev. 19:26–29,31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9–14).
  - f) Young people are often exposed to these kinds of things (Eph. 5:11).
  - g) Moses likely faced the same kind of occultic influence (cf. Ex. 8:7–18; Isa. 19:3, 11–14).
- 8. Like Moses, our children are growing up in a hostile environment.
  - a) They need the faith, courage and strategies of their parents to help them prepare for these challenges.
  - b) Our young people need our support.

## II. Moses's Decision

### A. Slavery Or Royalty.

1. The time came in Moses' life when he had to make a choice: would he be counted with his people and be true to his heritage as a child of God or would he remain in line for the throne of Egypt? (Heb. 11:24–26).
2. There is a price to be paid for commitment and doing the right thing.
  - a) Not even our own children (whom we may have groomed to become Christians when they reach the "age of accountability") can become children of God without paying the price of commitment to doing what is right.
  - b) Even Jesus had to pay the price of obedience (Heb. 5:8–9).
3. With nothing to gain and everything to lose, Moses descended from the loftiest throne in the world to be among God's chosen people.
4. Many would have tried to retain the proud position and try to somehow ease the burden of their enslaved brethren.
  - a) When two things are so opposed to one another as those two things were, it is impossible to strike such a compromise.
  - b) Moses could not continue to mistreat his brethren just to be able to ease their burden a little—they had to be freed.

### B. Pain Or Pleasure.

1. The choice was his to continue enjoying the luxuries that only the king's court could provide for him and the opportunity to engage in any and every sin that he found desirable with no reprisals or the opportunity to suffer affliction with his people because he was a Hebrew (Heb. 11:25).
2. It takes great faith to subject yourself to that kind of treatment.
3. It's the kind of faith necessary to be a Christian (Luke 9:23; Gal. 2:20).
4. Sin is an enjoyable thing—if it wasn't, it wouldn't tempt anyone.



5. Moses made the decision to do what was right, *because* it was right!
  - a) Whatever consequences followed were immaterial!
  - b) Young friends, that is the way you will have to make your choice!
- C. Eternal Reward Or Eternal Reward?
  1. Why did Moses make this difficult decision? What swayed him?
    - a) He was already a rich man.
    - b) From his childhood he had everything a man could want or dream of having—his royal garments were woven from the best materials available, he ate the best food Egypt could offer, his allowance was open-ended, and he was served by hordes of servants at his every beck and call.
  2. Moses saw beyond the temporary and the material (Heb. 11:26).
    - a) He saw the emptiness of such fullness (Eccl. 2:10–11).
    - b) He saw a God who offered him more that Egypt could (Heb. 11:27).
  3. We too must see beyond this world and that which is fleeting to that which lasts in the world beyond (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16–18).

### *Conclusion*

- I. Moses grew strong as a young man, undoubtedly gaining the favor of those around him, but he was always different.
  - A. We should admire him.
  - B. In a hostile environment (much like our own) he kept his perspective and stood firm in his resolve of faith.
- II. Humanistic, atheistic, and “New Age” thinking are dangerous influences on young people today.
  - A. Keep your perspective through the midst of them.
  - B. You can remain loyal to God, because the same God who gave Moses the strength to overcome is your God too (Luke 18:26–27; Phil. 4:13)!

# Myths About Mary

by David A. Padfield

## Introduction

- I. What attitude should we have towards Mary, the mother of Jesus?
  - A. She was indeed honored by being selected to bring the Christ into this world (Luke 1:26–35).
  - B. “Among all the women who have ever lived, the mother of Jesus Christ is the most celebrated, the most venerated, the most portrayed, the most honored in the naming of girl babies and churches. Even the Koran praises her chastity and faith. Among Roman Catholics, the Madonna is recognized not only as the Mother of God but also, according to modern Popes, as the Queen of the Universe, Queen of Heaven, Seat of Wisdom and even the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.” (Richard N. Ostling, “Hand-maid or Feminist?,” *Time*, Dec. 30, 1991, p. 62).
  - C. In 431 A.D., at the third Ecumenical Council, in Ephesus, Mary’s title as “Mother of God” was made official and incorporated into prayers.
- II. Some leave the impression that Mary is mentioned on every page of Bible.
  - A. “At the command of Mary all obey, even God. She is omnipotent, for the queen, according to all laws, enjoys the same privileges as the king; and since the son’s power also belongs to the mother, this Mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son” (Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, *The Glories Of Mary*, p. 114).
  - B. “When he was made a bishop in 1958, John Paul emblazoned a golden *M* on his coat of arms and chose as his Latin motto ‘*Totus Tuus*’ (All Yours)—referring to Mary, not Christ. Once he put on St. Peter’s ring, John Paul made Mary’s unifying power a centerpiece of his papal arsenal. He has visited countless Marian shrines during his globe trotting, and invokes the Madonna’s aid in nearly every discourse and prayer that he delivers.” (Ostling, p. 64).
  - C. Pope John Paul II has referred to Mary as the “Co-Remptrix” on at least five different public occasions.
  - D. “But a much more aggressive view of Mary is emerging from feminist circles within the church, emphasizing her autonomy, independence and earthiness.” (Ostling, p. 65).
- III. She is never mentioned by name in any New Testament epistle, and only appears four times after the beginning of Christ’s personal ministry:
  - A. At Cana (John 2:1–11).
  - B. At Capernaum (Matt. 12:46; Mk. 3:31–35; Luke 8:19).
  - C. At the Cross (John 19:25).
  - D. In the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).
- IV. In this lesson we will study four prominent false doctrines about Mary.

## Discussion

### I. The Immaculate Conception

- A. Most people confuse “immaculate conception” with “virgin birth.”
- B. “The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace” (Karl Keating, *Catholicism And Fundamentalism*, p. 270).
- C. The Knights Of Columbus publishes a book which speaks of inherited sin and attempts to explain how the “defects” of Adam were “passed on to his children as a man may pass certain qualities by heredity. First of these defects was, of course, the original sin. Adam’s children (and we are all Adam’s children) were born without grace. And all inherited other evils as well...” (*The Apostles’ Creed*, p. 10).
- D. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared Mary to have been preserved from original sin, by virtue of a special grace of God.
- E. The Bible never speaks of “inherited sin” (Ezek. 18:1–5, 19–20).
  - 1. Mary did not inherit sin, but then again, no one ever does—she needed a Savior (Luke 1:47; Rom. 3:23).
  - 2. Christ is the only sinless one mentioned in the Bible (1 Pet. 2:22).

### II. Perpetual Virginity

- A. “A careful look at the New Testament shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus” (Keating, p. 284).
  - 1. Where did she make this vow?
  - 2. Where is it recorded in the Bible?
- B. “A Catholic and Orthodox tradition 15 centuries old holds that Mary was ever virgin, meaning that she and Joseph never had sex and that the ‘brothers’ of Jesus mentioned in the Bible were cousins.” (Ostling, p. 66).
  - 1. “Accusation has been made by many rationalists and others attacking the perpetual virginity of Mary because of reference in the gospel to the ‘brethren’ of our Lord. This reference denotes solely a group of cousins. It is clear from the gospels that Mary kept her resolve and had no other children after the virginal birth of Christ” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Broderick, editor, p. 601).
  - 2. That a married woman has no children is no proof of her virginity.
  - 3. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t Mary known to be his mother and James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? Aren’t his sisters our neighbors?” (Matt. 13:55–56, NAB).
  - 4. “He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son, whom he named Jesus.” (Matt. 1:25, NAB).
- C. “It is traditional, at the conclusion of the (wedding) ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to a side altar and lay it at the feet of a statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and a mother” (Keating, p. 259).
  - 1. The Catholic dogma of Mary’s perpetual virginity would actually debase and degrade the mother of Jesus, making her a disloyal wife, unfaithful to her marriage obligations.
  - 2. Not many men would want their wives to “emulate Mary as a wife” if the Catholic claim of her perpetual virginity is true.

3. Married couples are not to refrain from intercourse, except for short periods of time devoted to fasting and prayer (1 Cor. 7:2–5).
4. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled.” (Heb. 13:4).
5. “If Mary was married to Joseph and Joseph to Mary in appearance only, then they were recreant to each other and to the ordinance of God which made them one. How a Roman Catholic, to whom marriage is a sacrament, can entertain such a notion is an unfathomable mystery. The fact that Mary was miraculously the mother of the Messiah has nothing to do with the question of her privilege and obligation in the holiest of human relationships. Back of this unwholesome dogma are two utterly false ideas: that the marriage relationship is incompatible with holy living, and that Mary is not to be considered a human being under ordinary obligations of human life” (I.S.B.E., Vol. IV, p. 2003).

### III. Our Mediator

A. Many people mistakenly believe the Catholic Church teaches Mary is on par with Jesus in the role of mediating between God and man.

1. This is not official Catholic doctrine yet, but it might soon be!
2. There is a huge fight within the Roman Catholic Church to change this doctrine to suit modern feminists.
3. “This week a large box shipped from California and addressed to ‘His Holiness, John Paul II’ will arrive at the Vatican. The shipping label lists a dozen countries—from every continent but Antarctica—plus a number, 40,383, indicating the quantity of signatures inside. Each signature is attached to a petition asking the pope to exercise the power of papal infallibility to proclaim a new dogma of the Roman Catholic faith: that the Virgin Mary is ‘Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God.’

“Such a move would elevate Mary’s status dramatically beyond what most Christians profess. But in the last four years, the pope has received 4,340,429 signatures from 157 countries—an average of 100,000 a month—supporting the proposed dogma. Among the notable supporters are Mother Teresa of Calcutta, nearly 500 bishops and 42 cardinals, including John O’Connor of New York Joseph Glemp of Poland and half a dozen cardinals at the Vatican itself. Nothing like this organized petition drive has ever been seen in Rome. But then, it isn’t often that Catholics beg a pope to make an infallible pronouncement.

“If the drive succeeds, Catholics would be obliged as a matter of faith to accept three extraordinary doctrines: that Mary participates in the redemption achieved by her son, that all graces that flow from the suffering and death of Jesus Christ are granted only through Mary’s intercession with her son, and that all prayers and petitions from the faithful on earth must likewise flow through Mary, who then brings them to the attention of Jesus. This is what theologians call high Mariology, and it seems to contradict the basic New Testament belief that “there is one God and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). In place of the Holy Trinity, it would appear, there would be a kind of Holy Quartet, with Mary playing the multiple roles of daughter of the Father, mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit.” (Kenneth L. Woodward, “Hail, Mary”, *Newsweek*, August 25, 1997, p. 49).

- B. Some of this confusion comes when non-Catholics hear Catholics say the Rosary and repeat the required “Hail Marys”: “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”
- C. What is the Rosary? “This is the name of both a devotion and the chain of beads used for counting the prayers. As a devotion, the Rosary arose in the fifteenth century and became very popular. It was begun by a Dominican preacher, Alan de Rupe (d. 1475) in northern France and Flanders.” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 529).
- D. The Catholic Catechism says, “Mary, ever associated with her Son, prays for us with Him. She is not alone in this. The whole community of the blessed in heaven imitate Christ in continuing their concern for us. As we pray for one another upon earth and for the souls in purgatory, so our brothers and sisters in heaven intercede for us. We are united with all of them by the intimate bonds of Christian love. But Mary, our spiritual mother, has an altogether exceptional role in this. Among those redeemed by her Son, her intercessory power is by far the most extensive and effective” (*The Teaching Of Christ*, pp. 228–229).
- E. “Mary is the ark which saves from eternal destruction anyone who takes shelter in it. In the great Deluge even beasts were saved in Noah’s ark. Under the shelter of Mary even sinners are saved.” (Ligouri, p. 53).
  1. “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5, NAB).
  2. The Bible never refers to Mary as our “spiritual mother,” nor does it refer to a place known as “purgatory” (cf. Heb. 9:27).

#### IV. Assumed Into Heaven

- A. The Catholic Church teaches that after Mary ended her earthly life, she was taken up into heaven in body as well as in soul—this doctrine was “defined” by Pope Pius XII in 1950.
- B. Knowing that no verse in the Bible even hints at this doctrine, Keating, in his chapter on Marian Beliefs, says, “fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none... The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it is true” (Keating, p. 275).

#### Conclusion

- I. “While he was saying this a woman from the crowd called out, ‘Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!’ ‘Rather’ he replied, ‘blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it.’” (Luke 11:27–28, NAB)
  - A. This woman is truly representative of the attitude of devout Catholics.
  - B. Jesus does not deny Mary was blessed in being His mother, but He insists that more blessed are those who “hear the word of God and keep it.”
- II. Saint Bernard said, “Remember that in this world you are tossed about on a stormy sea; you are not walking on solid ground. Remember that if you don’t want to be lost at sea, you must keep your eyes fixed on this bright star and call on Mary.” (Ligouri, p. 59).
  - A. The Bible tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ (Heb. 12:1–2).
  - B. Christ is preeminent, and we are complete in Him (Col. 1:18–19; 2:10).

# Remember Lot's Wife

by David A. Padfield

## *Introduction*

- I. In Luke 17:26–32 Jesus speaks of the past judgments of God and records words which will be remembered throughout eternity by those who do not heed the warning issued to “Remember Lot’s wife.”
- II. The story is a very ancient one (Gen. 19:12–26).
  - A. In his anxiety, Lot was willing to sacrifice his daughters to uphold his duty as a host and committed sin by seeking to avert sin.
  - B. “Fire and brimstone” quite literally fell from the sky and ignited the asphalt and sulfur pits around the cities, so that the entire city was consumed—it now lies under the Southwest end of the Dead Sea under 10 feet of water.
  - C. Even birds dare not fly over the Dead Sea.
  - D. Even to this day, a sulphur vapor hangs about it and great blocks of sulphur lie on every hand—the utter absence of the slightest trace of animal and vegetable life in its waters are a testimony to this catastrophe.
  - E. Abraham went there the next morning to the place where he had stood the day before interceding with the Lord for Sodom and he saw how judgment had fallen upon the entire plain—the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace.
- III. There are many lessons we can learn from this ancient story.

## *Discussion*

- I. **She Perished Though The Wife Of A Righteous Man**
  - A. Lot made many mistakes but was still called righteous (2 Peter 2:4–8).
    1. “He keeps acting as a judge” (Gen. 19:9).
    2. We all know the power of a good example (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33).
    3. She went out with him, but only so far.
  - B. No one righteous enough for self (Isa. 59:1–2; Rom. 3:10).
  - C. Must seek redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:23–26).
  - D. Righteous scarcely saved (1 Peter 4:17–18).
- II. **She Perished Though Warned Of The Danger**
  - A. “Escape for your life...” (Gen. 19:17). A message from God himself.
  - B. Christ warns us of our danger; spoke more about it than all the apostles – knew about it (Matt. 7:21–23; 25:46).
  - C. Paul warns (2 Thes. 1:6–9) “seeing it is a righteous thing with God...”
  - D. Think of Paul preaching to Felix: “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you” (Acts 24:25).
  - E. “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40).
  - F. Lot “lingered” in the face of destruction (Gen. 19:16).

### **III. She Perished Though She Made An Effort To Be Saved**

- A. Her doom is rendered all the more impressive when we consider the circumstances—she so nearly escaped.
  - 1. She was lost because her heart was still in Sodom.
  - 2. Convinced, but not converted; seeking safety with divided desires.
  - 3. No doubt she could hear the sound of her own flesh and blood dying.
- B. We must strive (Luke 13:23–30).
  - 1. A lesson for Christians also (Heb. 3:7–19, 4:1, 9).
  - 2. “No man, having put his hand to the plow...” (Luke 9:62).
  - 3. “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended...” (Phil. 3:13).
- C. Remember that time in your life when eternity was brought near and your false confidence was dispelled.
  - 1. Earnestly sought refuge in Christ (Heb. 6:18).
  - 2. Read the Bible; your prayers were real pleadings.
  - 3. Maybe the immediate cause of fear fades away.
  - 4. Stop and reconsider your former earnestness and the thoughts you had during the communion; blessings of salvation; how precious and dear.
  - 5. All the parables of judgement were given the Christ’s followers.
  - 6. We can “neglect” our salvation (Heb. 2:1–3).

### **IV. She Perished Though She Committed But One Sin**

- A. We have a tendency to minimize and down-play sin.
  - 1. Preachers minimize “sins of weakness and ignorance.”
  - 2. All sins stem from ignorance and weakness.
- B. Some say we do not have to repent of our “everyday sins” to be forgiven.
  - 1. Ask them to be specific— name the sins (Gal. 5:19–21).
  - 2. Once you open the barn door, you loose all right to close it.
- C. Lot’s wife had a better moral life than others in Sodom.
  - 1. Picture that day of destruction: sun rose as before, attractive house, friends in town, no signs of danger.
  - 2. She must leave at once—she had daughters in the city; she paused and that pause was the pause of death.
  - 3. She was guilty of the sin of unbelief.
  - 4. Picture like that of Moses at Nebo (Deut. 34:1–7).

### **V. Our Need Is For More Faith (Luke 17:5)**

- A. “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matt. 9:27–29).
  - 1. Our life as a Christian is lived according to our faith (2 Cor. 5:7).
  - 2. Contribution; attendance; study; prayer; teaching.
- B. One with great faith will not have to be begged to attend, work, give.
  - 1. Why should elders and preachers have to beg and plead with weak?
  - 2. We degrade the glorious gospel when we take the best we have and lay it at the feet of swine (Matt. 7:6).
- C. When something happens to our faith other Christians need to help.
- D. We need faith, not pop-psychology and psychobabble (Rom. 10:17).

### *Conclusion*

- I. Our continued salvation lies not in the past, but in the present.
  - A. Lot's wife perished because she looked back, not went back.
  - B. It was a sign of where here real interests were.
- II. "But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39).
- III. Let us not look back, but look unto Jesus.
- IV. "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:1-2).



# Zacchaeus

by Randy Blackaby

## Introduction

- I. The case of the short man who wanted to see Jesus offers many valuable lessons for us today (Luke 19:1–10).
- II. We will examine his story in expository style, looking at details and drawing the various lessons as we go.

## Discussion

### I. The Story Of Zacchaeus

- A. Occurs about one week before the entry into Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 21:1–11).
  1. Jesus has spent much time with sinners previously (Luke 15:1–2).
  2. But Zacchaeus is too much for any of Jesus' followers.
- B. Jesus previously gave a parable concerning a publican (tax collector) and about the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom (Luke 18:9–27).
  1. A humble publican is better than hypocritical Pharisee.
  2. All things possible with God (Luke 18:27).

### II. Zacchaeus Himself

- A. His name: a Hebrew name, thus it is likely he was a Jew.
- B. His occupation: a Publican (tax collector) (Luke 19:2).
  1. “*Chief publican*. The word occurs nowhere else apparently but the meaning is clear from the other words with *archi-* like *archiereus* (chief priest) *archipoimen* (chief shepherd). Jericho was an important trading point for balsam and other things and so Zacchaeus was the head of the tax collections in this region, a sort of commissioner of taxes who probably had other publicans serving under him.” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, p. 239).
- C. His location: Jericho (Luke 19:1).
  1. “Jericho was a very wealthy and a very important town. It lay in the Jordan valley and commanded both the approach to Jerusalem and the crossings of the river which gave access to the lands east of the Jordan. It had a great palm forest and world-famous balsam groves which perfumed the air for miles around. Its gardens of roses were known far and wide. Men called it ‘The City of Palms.’ Josephus called it ‘a divine region,’ ‘the fattest in Palestine.’ The Romans carried its dates and balsam to world-wide trade and fame. All this combined to make Jericho one of the greatest taxation centers in Palestine. We have already looked at the taxes which the tax-collectors collected and the wealth they rapaciously acquired (Luke 5: 27–32). Zacchaeus was a man who had reached the top of his profession; and he was the most hated man in the district.” (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 234).
- D. He was wealthy, but despised by his fellow Jews because he collected taxes for the hated Romans.
  1. Tax collectors were often unscrupulous.
  2. Involved in regular contact with Gentiles, which made a “unclean.”
  3. Publicans grouped with prostitutes by Jews (Matt. 21:31).
  4. He was a man of short stature physically (Luke 19:3).

### III. The Curiosity Of Zacchaeus

- A. His initial interest is only to “see who Jesus was” (Luke 19:3).
- B. But his interest is intense, earnest, even impulsive.
- C. He takes unusual step to insure he “sees” Jesus (Luke 19:4).
  - 1. Grown man “out on a limb” in public.
  - 2. Even more unusual because he was so despised.

### IV. Jesus’ Reaction

- A. Jesus looks up and sees Zacchaeus—the publican wasn’t necessarily trying to attract Jesus’ attention—only to see, but gets more than he bargained for.
- B. Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus’ house (Luke 19:5).
  - 1. Jesus is bold—He stands at the door and knocks.
  - 2. Jesus wants in our houses too—and our hearts.
- C. Jesus tells him to “make haste” or “hurry.”
  - 1. Just days before the cross, Jesus takes talks with this despised sinner.
  - 2. The effort puts in perspective Jesus’ mission, which will be consummated in nearby Jerusalem in just days on the cross.

### V. Zacchaeus’ Reaction To This Invitation

- A. Zacchaeus did hurry (Luke 19:6).
- B. He is joyful about receiving the Lord.
- C. Jesus gave him so much more than he expected.
  - 1. This sinner wanted to “see” Jesus.
  - 2. He gets to “dwell” with him and be taught personally by him and be accepted by him as a fellow descendent of Abraham.

### VI. The Murmuring Of Jesus’ Followers

- A. A collective gasp (Luke 19:7).
- B. “All” murmured or “grumbled” (apparently including the apostles).
- C. Gone to be “guest” of sinner.
  - 1. He’s leaving us...to be with a sinner.
  - 2. No ordinary sinner at that—a “chief” publican.
  - 3. Like Paul’s assessment of himself as “chief” of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

### VII. The Signs Of Zacchaeus’ Repentance (Luke 19:8)

- A. “*If I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man. A most significant admission and confession. It is a condition of the first class that assumes it to be true. His own conscience was at work. He may have heard audible murmurs from the crowd ... He had extorted money wrongfully as they all knew. I return fourfold. I offer to do it here and now on this spot. This was the Mosaic law (Ex. 22:1; Num. 5:6f.). Restitution is good proof of a change of heart.*” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, p. 240).
  - 1. He is giving *half* of all he owns to the poor.
  - 2. This is half of his estate, not just half of income.
- B. He will correct unjust collections by repaying fourfold.
  - 1. This was the rule for theft or robbery (Exodus 22:1).
  - 2. For other cases of unjustness, the law only required restitution plus 20%, so Zacchaeus may have been going well beyond the requirement of the law (Num. 5:6–7; Lev. 6:5).
  - 3. This latter restitution would come from the half of his possessions remaining after he gave first half to poor.

## **VIII. Jesus' Blessing Upon Zacchaeus**

- A. Salvation: Zacchaeus had repented and Jesus told him of his salvation.
- B. Called him a "son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9).
  - 1. He was that already in physical sense.
  - 2. Moreover, he was now like Abraham, the patriarch of faith, because of his own faith and trust in God.
- C. Zacchaeus was "restored" by Jesus.
  - 1. Because of his occupation, other Jews had stripped him of his place in Israel and cast him (in their thinking and treatment) with the Gentiles and other sinners.
  - 2. Jesus puts him back among the "people of God."
- D. Jesus' summation of the meaning of this whole episode (Luke 19:10):
  - 1. What Jesus was able to accomplish with the restoration of Zacchaeus was typical of His mission of seeking and saving that which was lost.
  - 2. For those who were watching and listening intently, Jesus was giving insight into the events of the next few days—His last days.

## **IX. Some Lessons We Can Learn**

- A. No one is too sinful for Jesus to save.
- B. Many unlikely persons want to "see" and "know" Jesus.
  - 1. Note classes of people frowned upon today.
  - 2. See the mistake of religious people then...and now.
- C. A sinner usually has to overcome some obstacles to "see."
- D. Curiosity by any sinner should be greeted warmly.
  - 1. We should use all opportunities to teach.
  - 2. A loving response can make much of curiosity.
- E. Our desire to "see" the truth, when combined with repentance, will gain for us much more than we expect.
- F. When a person wants to do right, they can overcome great obstacles.
  - 1. Wealth (often an impediment).
  - 2. Business concerns.
  - 3. Physical deficiencies.
  - 4. Past behavior.
  - 5. Reputation (even if despised).

### *Invitation*

- I. Is there a person here who wants to see Jesus and obtain salvation badly enough to repent and be "saved" or "restored"?
- II. Repentance requires humility—getting out on a limb—like Zacchaeus.
- III. The call of Jesus to salvation requires "haste."
- IV. And, as with Abraham and Zacchaeus, salvation is through faith.
- V. If Zacchaeus can be saved, so can you.

# Micah's House Of Idols

by Ron Roberts

## Introduction

- I. This is the second story in the book of Judges dealing with the contamination of Israel (Judges 17:1-6).
- II. Nothing is said about the genealogy of Micah.
  - A. He is not presented here because of his connection to the events or people in the rest of the book, but because he is a typical man of the time period.
  - B. His family is presented as the average for the period.
  - C. The problem is one of religious blending, a bit of this and some of that.
- III. These impurities often seep into our religion.
  - A. The contamination occurs slowly and almost without notice.
  - B. The "church fathers" record a gradual drifting from the New Testament pattern (name, organization and practice).
  - C. Many people today have a "form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5).

## Discussion

### I. Danite Migration

- A. From Zorah and Eshtaol to Laish (Judges 18:1-2).
  - 1. Earlier in period of Judges than placement in book suggests.
  - 2. Joshua 19:40-48 mentions such a migration.
  - 3. Perhaps due to the aggression of the Amorites (Judges 1:34).
  - 4. Moses grandson was a priest.
- B. Five men of valor sent to inspect Laish (Judges 18:2).
  - 1. They discover a very vulnerable city (Judges 18:7).
  - 2. No leadership, no organization, no reinforcements (Judges 18:28).
  - 3. 600 armed soldiers conquer the city (Judges 18:8-12).
  - 4. The city of Laish is renamed Dan (Judges 18:29).

### II. Micah In Ephraim (a typical family)

- A. Micah stole 1100 shekels of silver from his mother.
  - 1. She cursed the unknown thief (Judges 17:2).
  - 2. Micah returns the money to his mother.
- B. Religious blending is seen in his mother's behavior.
  - 1. She dedicated money to the Lord on behalf of Micah (Judges 17:3).
  - 2. Made graven and molten image (Judges 17:3-4).
  - 3. "The love of money made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her, and made her so unkind to her son, as to curse him. Outward losses drive good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her god, before it was made into a graven or a molten image. Micah and his mother agreed to turn their money into a god, and set up idol worship in their family. See the cause of this corruption. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."  
(Matthew Henry).

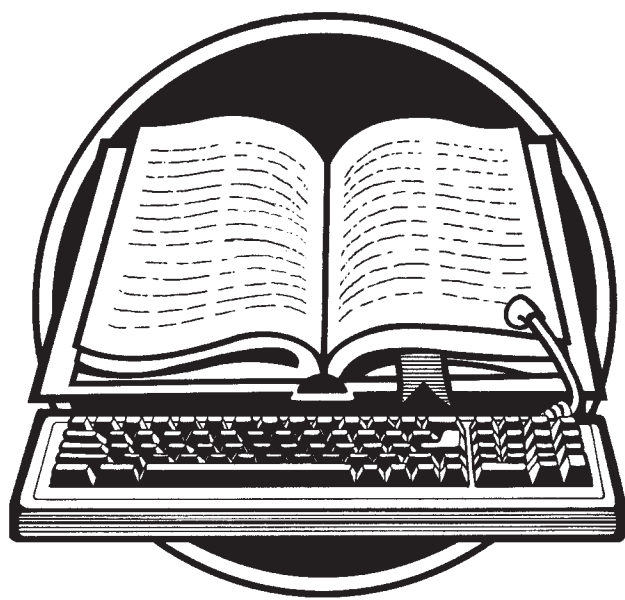
- C. Micah had house of gods (Judges 17:5).
  - 1. “Teraphim” is a household god.
  - 2. “Ephod” was priestly garment of Levites.
  - 3. “In those days there was no king in Israel” suggests that there was no common standard for men to follow (Judges 17:6).
- D. Micah hired a Levite to be his priest (Judges 17:7–13).
  - 1. Wandering without employment as Israel lost value (Judges 17:7–8).
  - 2. Deal made to provide for Levite for priestly service (Judges 17:9–12).
  - 3. Money was the only issue involved in agreement.
  - 4. Micah was confident of God’s approval (Judges 17:13).

### III. Danites Pass Through Ephraim En-route To Laish

- A. Five scouts met this Levite on the first trip (Judges 18:3–6).
  - 1. Ask priest to ask God about their successful journey.
- B. 600 soldiers met the Levite on the second trip (Judges 18:13–21).
  - 1. Five men tell the company of the idols in the house (Judges 18:14).
  - 2. Danites steal the idols and all (Judges 18:17–18).
  - 3. Persuade Levite to come with them also (Judges 18:19–20).
- C. Micah pursues Danites (Judges 18:22–26).
  - 1. Neighbors and Micah catch the Danites (Judges 18:22–23).
  - 2. Micah is forced to retreat from superior force (Judges 18:24–26).
  - 3. Micah’s idols were set up at Laish, while the tabernacle is in Shiloh (Judges 18:31).
- D. “The Danites determined to take Micah’s gods with them. Oh the folly of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them, that could not keep themselves from being stolen! To take them for their own use, was a double crime; it showed they neither feared God, nor regarded man, but were lost both to godliness and honesty. What a folly was it for Micah to call those his gods, which he had made, when He only is to be worshipped by us as God, that made us! That is put in God’s place, which we are concerned about, as if our all were bound up in it. If people will walk in the name of their false gods, much more should we love and serve the true God!” (*Matthew Henry*).

### Conclusion

- I. Micah owned a house of idols.
  - A. He hired a Levite to perform priestly duties before these idols.
  - B. In time an army of Danites stole these idols and set them up in their new home.
  - C. There is no condemnation stated against the idolatry in the entire chapter although there are a number of references made to the one true God.
- II. The blending of religious beliefs is alive and healthy in America as well.
  - A. Manmade churches boast of their service to God and their interest in His word all the while having doctrines and practices not contained in the word of truth.
  - B. We are called to obey the true gospel of Jesus Christ and become a part of the Lord’s church.



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