



TOWARD THE MARK

*“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE
OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”*

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

*A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS
OF ALL AGES*

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Dear Reader,

“The end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Peter 4:7).

Let us wake up to the seriousness of the hour in which we live, dear young Christian. Someone has recently said, “The world is at the end of its tether, we have too many men of science and too few men of God. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience and man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness.” And are we, who are Christians, going to slumber on complacently in the midst of this state of things? God forbid! Let us rather obey the exhortation and be sober. With the New Year upon us, dear young Christian, **be right in the sanctuary if you would be right in school or at work. Be steadfast in prayer if you would be calm in the time of stress and trials. Start your day’s race in the presence of God if you would run well.** Everything depends upon God being real to us, and each one of us must prove this for himself in daily life. How thankful we ought to be for having the word of God, the Bible, wherein we can read of Him who encourages us to draw near to Him and to trust Him at all times. May the fact of His soon coming be to us a source of power and encouragement in our pilgrimage. May we be a brighter light in this dark world in the New Year.

It’s hard to believe this is the 10th year for Toward the Mark.

The Lord is faithful! I would like to acknowledge those faithful ones who have been a source of help and encouragement to me in its production: the Lord knows them and He will reward them. Also, I want to thank all of you dear readers for your overwhelming response to the magazine. I trust that you will enjoy this issue, and please keep praying for the Lord’s blessing on Toward the Mark. **“Even so, come Lord Jesus”**

Yours in our soon-coming Lord,

Emil S. Nashed

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I have the pleasure to inform you that a mailing list has been set up for Toward the Mark. If you would like to receive an electronic version simply send an e-mail to toward.the.mark@gmail.com or visit www.towardthemark.org to be added to the mailing list. If you also want a copy of older issues, please mention it in your e-mail.

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or the J. N. Darby translation.

MILK

“The truth shall make you free”

ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

REVELATION 2 AND 3

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Revelation shows how God will bring His ways on earth to a fitting climax, for His glory and for the honor of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Both blessing and justice will be universally manifested in the world to come. For these reasons, the text of the book, and the concepts involved, are replete with many sets of “sevens,” each one indicating the completeness or fullness of some concept or process; usually in a good way, but occasionally for evil. There are well over fifty “sevens” in the book. Seven spirits, stars, angels, letters, churches, seals, trumpets, vials, are important examples.

Revelation 1:1-3

The book was written to suffering saints at the end of the first century A.D. There were relatively few scholars; no bibles as we now know them. As in the days when Samuel was born, “the word of the Lord was precious (rare) in those days” (1 Sa. 3:1). We can thus understand the significance of the expression: “Blessed is he that readeth.” As in 1 Timothy 4:13 (“give diligence to reading”) this refers to the public, audible reading of scripture. How strange! The only book which carries a specific promise of blessing to the reader is also one of the most neglected.

“Read” – this might be a dying habit, even perhaps amongst some of the Lord’s people, but it is certainly a good habit. We tend to be creatures of habit. Let us cultivate the good habit of reading aloud the text of Holy Scripture.

“they that hear” – the audience, the congregation, those in whose hearing the reader reads aloud. Thank God there are still those who are willing to gather together to hear the reading of the word of God. We read in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of

the word, that ye may grow thereby.” The constant challenge is, have we still as avid an appetite for the word of God as when we first believed the gospel?

“they that keep” (observe, guard, prize, treasure, obey, act upon) – This is directed to both reader and congregation. It is not automatic by any means. It requires exercise, faith, and a preparedness simply to obey both the spirit and the letter of what the Lord makes plain to us through His word. Blessing and blessedness are promised to the one who reads (audibly), they who listen to the reading, and particularly to they (reader and hearer) who are prepared to obey the word read. This promise was specifically and especially made to the suffering saints at the time it was written. Just as clearly, it continues to have a special voice to suffering saints in any day.

“the time is at hand” (near) – If so then, almost two thousand years ago, how much more so now?

The Book readily splits up into 3 major sections, as defined in 1:19: “Write”:

- “the things which thou hast seen” — chapter 1: the vision of the Judge
- “the things which are” — chapters 2 and 3: the seven churches (to be considered as we proceed)
- “the things which shall be after these things” — chapters 4-22: judgment (embracing the great prophetic events that will take place after the church period is closed).

The present exercise is to meditate on the addresses to the seven churches in what was then called Asia, but now forms part of Turkey. What is in mind is not a comprehensive exposition, but one or two pointers. The diligent student of scripture will follow up the detail.

Revelation 1:12-18 The Vision

Before the assemblies were addressed, we are first of all introduced to the Lord, the Righteous Judge (2 Ti. 4:8), in all His regal glory. This was done in a vision to the Apostle John, and is recorded in chapter 1:12-18. There is much in the detail to command our interest,

attention and, indeed, our obedience. A brief summary of the pertinent features will suffice for the kind of study we hope to pursue.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Meaning/Significance/Application</u>
Seven golden lampstands	Churches, local assemblies, bearing light on earth.
In the midst	He knows what is going on.
One like unto the Son of Man	Characteristic moral features. In His life on earth, the term Son of Man indicated the place of humiliation He willingly accepted in lowly manhood. Here, it is used of Him in His judicial glory.
Garment down to the feet	Priestly apparel.
Girt about the paps with a golden girdle	Divine constraint in righteous judgment
Head, hairs white like wool, white as snow	Veneration, wisdom (see Daniel 7:9)
Eyes as a flame of fire	Constant, penetrating scrutiny. ("Thou, God, seest me" Genesis 16:13). See also John 1:9: Light discloses the heart of God! Light exposes the heart of man!
Feet like fine brass	Shod for the execution of righteous judgment.
Voice as sound of many waters	Grandeur, majesty, relentless power.
In His right hand seven stars	Stars – giving light from heaven. Individual light-bearers – those who locally guide the assembly according to the will of God. We have no light independent of Him.
Out of His mouth a sharp, two-edged sword	His word will suffice. (John 12:48)
Countenance	as the sun shineth in its strength
Light of the World	relative to the world.
Sun of Righteousness	relative to Israel.
Morning Star	relative to the church

First and Last	Said three times of Jehovah in Isaiah (41:4, 44:6, 48:12). Said three times of Jesus in Revelation (1:17, 2:8, 22:13)
Angels	Someone in touch with heaven. Indicative of authority and power, rather than intimacy. Representative of the responsible element in any assembly. Leadership is local (carrying the burden of the meeting) but gift is universal. In scripture, leaders are always spoken of in the plural, except one reference in Hebrews 12:2 (JND) to Christ Himself as The Leader. In leadership, as in all things, He must have the preeminence (Col. 1:18)
Death – the (intermediate) destination/condition of the body, the material part of the person.	
Hell/Hades – the (intermediate) destination/condition of the soul and spirit, the immaterial part(s) of the person.	
Together, the immaterial and material parts constitute the <u>whole/entire</u> person. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23 – “your <u>whole/entire</u> spirit and soul and body.”	

The Addresses to the Seven Churches

The seven churches (local assemblies) may be viewed:

1. Preteritically (historically)

These addresses outline for us the history and spiritual condition of seven local assemblies, which did actually exist and operate at the same time in the first century AD in what we now know as Western Turkey. It is a sad fact that usually we are more likely to pay attention and learn any necessary lessons when the example under scrutiny is someone or something other than ourselves. The consideration of these churches, which were actual historical entities, is a lesson book in itself, but much, much more than merely a history lesson.

2. Personally (individually)

In addition, they can quite fairly be considered to be the spiritual and moral history (spiritual life cycle?) of an individual soul. Knowing

ourselves as we do, we recognize that we fluctuate in our interest and degree of commitment to the Lord and in the freshness of our souls. At any moment, or phase, in our spiritual history as individuals, we almost certainly compare with the state of one or other of the seven churches as they were discerningly described in these two chapters. We must, however, guard against gaining the impression that we can ever reach or achieve a high plateau of state or experience where we are beyond the need to hear the challenge of the Holy Spirit's call.

3. Parochially (locally)

In addition, they can legitimately be seen to outline the spiritual and moral history (spiritual life cycle?) of a local assembly. What is true of us as individuals is almost certainly also true of our local assemblies. What we are as individuals makes up what we are locally and collectively as an expression of the assembly.

4. Prophetically (panoramically)

A major valid interpretation discerns in these seven addresses the projected ecclesiastical and moral history of the whole of the church period (full dispensational life cycle?) from Pentecost to the Rapture. That is, they give us a panoramic survey as to how the Christian church has and will fulfill its responsibilities between when it was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost, and the Rapture, when its responsible history in this world will be brought to an end.

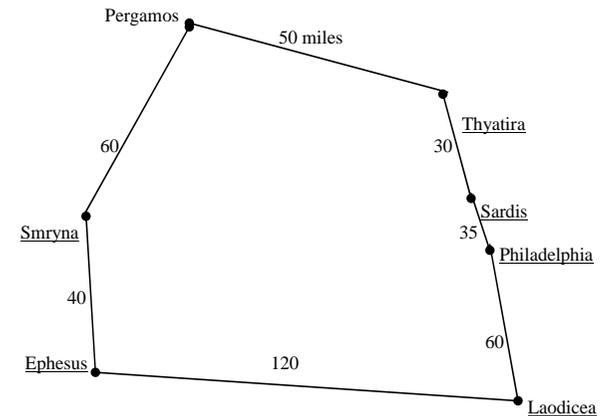
Relevance of historical and geographical data, and of some of the words in the text

Each of the seven places was the centre of a zip code district under the Roman administration. Postal services had their proper place even in those early days. Of course, brethren would use their own couriers to transmit these and other important letters. It is interesting, nevertheless, to see that the all-knowing, all-wise God had allowed men to devise and set up a system that would be useful to Him to do His own work, if He considered it expedient for Him to do so.

It is interesting that the seven assemblies lie on a circular route which can easily be covered in the same order in which the addresses are given. A courier delivering the letters would take the same route, in clockwise order, as presented in the text, beginning with Ephesus, and ending at Laodicea. Some of these localities have different names

now to what they bore in the first century AD, although some of the names persist to this day.

Relative positions (approximate)



There is breakdown in the churches, internally and externally. The addresses to these seven churches are to stimulate the affections now to hold on till He comes, and establish in their hearts that which will eventually be established universally by God Himself when He is all and in all.

The seven churches differed widely in their character and state. There are different failures and defects in each church, brought in by men. The remedy is the same in each case, in the hands of a divine Person – “hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Each address follows the same pattern:

1. Presentation of Christ Himself in one of the ways that John saw Him in chapter 1, particularly appropriate to the state into which that church had fallen. If known and appreciated, this would have preserved it from falling into that state. It will sustain the faith of the godly in their time of trial.
2. Assertion of the Lord's perfect knowledge (“I know”) of the conditions of each church leading to His approval or condemnation of what he finds.
3. Closing call from the Spirit to the church, giving special warnings, words of encouragement, and a special promise to the overcomer.

This sight of the Lord, if discerned, and the call of the Spirit, if responded to, will enable us to become overcomers. An overcomer is one who is willing to be obedient to the revealed will of God, no matter in what minority he or she finds himself or herself, and at whatever personal cost. As we trace through the details given relative to the various local assemblies, and see the progressive (general) decline, we shall see that whatever the general condition, there is always the opportunity for individuals to “overcome” on an individual basis. Significantly, overcoming is presented as an intensely personal and individual matter, although what we are collectively is largely dependent on and the result of what we are as individuals. We shall also have the opportunity to face up to the challenges involved, both as individuals, and in our local assemblies.

Ernie Brown

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. **How old was Eli the priest when he died?**
2. **Who named his son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz?**
3. **What was the name of the Roman centurion who was in charge of Paul on his voyage to Rome?**

MEAT

“Sanctify them by the truth”

THE CHURCH

PART IV

In previous papers we have considered the church of God in its general features. Built by Christ Himself it is an impregnable structure; it is of supreme delight and value to divine Persons, it is the house of God, “an habitation of God through the Spirit,” and it is the body of Christ united to Him as its Head in glory, and thus capacitated to be an expression of Christ down here.

In the epistle to the Corinthians Paul writes to “the church of God which is a Corinth.” It is evident that when Paul wrote the church of God in that city could be identified: in fact Paul clearly divides the inhabitants of Corinth into three distinct classes, “the Jews...the Gentiles...the church of God” (10:32). Thus a very great responsibility rested upon those who formed the church of God at Corinth, upon each one in his or her individual pathway as also upon the company as gathered together. The majority of these believers were doubtless Gentiles who had been converted to God, and were now, through grace, among theses who called “upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.” Gentiles, as steeped in pagan darkness and idolatry knew nothing of this Name, and the Jews as a nation hated that Name, and had rejected the One who bore it. What a privilege, and yet how great a responsibility, to bear testimony to that Name, a Name which is above every name, in such circumstances.

They had been taken up by God for that very purpose, and He had had given to them all that was necessary in order that they might be His witnesses in Corinth, which was noted for its corruptness. They were “sanctified (or set apart) in Christ Jesus”; the grace of God was given to them in Jesus Christ; they were “enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge”; and they came “behind in no gift.” Further, they formed in all utterance, and in all knowledge,” similarly blessed, those who “in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.” Their resources and all that they needed were in God Himself.

In the first nine verses of the first chapter, which verses form a kind of preface to the epistle, God is mentioned no less than six times, the last reference calling their attention to the fact that He “is faithful.” His will, His grace, His peace, His faithfulness were all at the disposal of these believers who formed the church of God in Corinth in order in order that they might rightly represent God in that city. Later in the epistle we find Paul suggesting the possibility of an unbeliever or a simple person coming into their gathering and falling down on his face worshipping God, and saying “God is in you of a truth.”

Before we speak of the failures which marked these believers let us notice the wonder and blessedness of verse 8. From the divine side, and in the operation of divine love, features of faithfulness and devotion to Christ will be maintained in His church right on to the end of the dispensation, and there will be that in the sight of God which is “blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Perhaps there is a link here with the fact that an overcomer is in mind right through the public history of the church from Ephesus to Laodicea (Rev. 2-3).

Having spoken of the truth from God’s side (and it is always well for us to approach divine things in that way), Paul in verse 10 refers to their practical condition. Alas! The simplicity and unity which would have marked them had they realized their resources were in God, were completely absent. “My brethren...there are strifes among you” (v. 11). Men were before their eyes instead of Christ. How near this feature of strife is to us as believers; Midian, which means “strife,” was a son of Abraham.

The history of the church at Corinth is alas the history of the church in responsibility all through the centuries. Schools of opinions, human wisdom, all resulting in a “puffing up” of the flesh. Four times the apostle speaks of the Corinthian believers as being “puffed up.” In chapter 4 verse 6 he speaks of them being “puffed up for one against another”; in verses 18 and 19 of the same chapter he refers to those who were puffed up in their speech, apparently against the apostle himself; and in chapter 5 verse 2 he has to reproach them for being puffed up when they should have mourned over the conditions prevailing amongst them. Is it not blessed to notice that, as moving in the “more excellent way” of love this feature will be absent? “Love is not puffed up” (13:4).

We do not dwell further upon the failure of these saints of God except to notice that occupation with men, and resorting to their own opinions, seems to have seriously impaired their views of the Lord’s Supper itself (see chapter 11, verses 20-22). Let us thank God that in spite of the introduction of men’s thoughts and methods, this precious ordinance has been preserved to us in our own day in all its simplicity and yet profound meaning. May we value it more and more, and constantly face the challenge (and yet the encouragement) of verse 28 in chapter 11.

The apostle meets the conditions at Corinth by the “preaching of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18). This verse could read “the word (logos) which speaks of the cross.” The Lord Jesus in the first chapter of John’s gospel is introduced as “the Word” (Logos). In Him was the full expression of the mind and thoughts of God, God has made Himself perfectly know in Christ. Thus the “word” of the cross is the full and complete thought of God in relation to man after the flesh. That man is removed from God’s sight for ever, and can have no place at all in the things of God. How much, beloved brethren, we should have been preserved from in our local gatherings if the “word of the cross” had had its right place in each heart! We have valued, and rightly so, the wonderful blessings which have reached us through the cross (1 Pe. 2:24, etc.), may we also be ready to hear the “word of the cross,” and seek help not to bring the features of the man whom God there set aside into the gatherings of His people.

In the last verse of chapter 1 the apostle sets out in one verse the true position of the Christian. He has shown that no flesh should boast before God, and now he says, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” As we understand in some measure the blessedness of such a position, and the resources which are available to us in that position, we would surely agree with what is written “He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

There is a priestly touch in Paul’s two letters to Corinth. He was skillful in the first letter in the use of the “snuff dishes” (Ex. 25:38). His letter would have the character of trimming the lamp, removing all that would hinder the light from shining clearly, and in his second letter he is, by the richness of his ministry, pouring in the oil. That his

labors were effective is seen in his commendation of the Corinthians in the second epistle, chapter 3:2-3. These verses imply that their testimony was no private matter only, known just amongst themselves, but it was well-known, read of all. How blessed to know that this could be the testimony of every local gathering today.

In closing we might refer to Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. He speaks of them not as the church which is in Thessalonica, but as "the church which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." Actually they were in Thessalonica, but Paul is stressing their place of intimacy in relation to divine Persons. They were babes of Christianity, and John tells us in his epistle that the portion of the babes was that they "know the Father." It is our portion and privilege to know nearness to divine Persons, and to enjoy in intimacy the blessedness and sweetness of divine love. Surely as we are in the good of this we shall be better fitted to fulfill our responsibilities in the localities in which God has set us.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2

"One of the seven angels...talked with me saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Revelation 21:9

We have already thought of the church as the body of Christ. As such, and as united to her Head in heaven, she is capacitated to be the expression in the present day of the graces and features of Christ. This is the normal function and testimony of the church as a body.

In the thought of the bride and of the wife, we have that which is for the joy and satisfaction of the affections of Christ Himself.

The words of John Baptist in John's gospel, chapter 3 would indicate something of the peculiar joy which fills the heart of Christ as He looks thus upon His church – "He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom" (verse 29). She is His own possession.

Whilst the "bride" and the "wife" are both mentioned in the same verse (Revelation 21:9) a careful consideration of the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit would help us to distinguish between the two thoughts. As "wife" she stands related to Him as "the Lamb". This is seen in the title given to her of "the Lamb's wife", and also again in Revelation, chapter 19:7-9 "The marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready". The moment of display is not seen until chapter 21, and she, as His wife, will be seen as "ready" for that day. But in chapter 19 she is made "ready" for Himself. He, who as the Lamb has trodden a path of humility and suffering even to death, will, in His exaltation, have by His side

in the administration of the kingdom, one who is in every way morally fitted to share His throne. The "Lamb's wife" would suggest that she has herself known the path of suffering in sympathy with the Object of her affections. It is a principle of Scripture that suffering precedes glory. The church as "wife" is therefore mentioned in the portion of Revelation 21 which refers to the reign of Christ in the world-to-come. The whole of that sections, from verse 9 to the end of the chapter, is worthy of the most careful attention. As reading it one cannot but be impressed with the beauty and dignity of the vessel secured for the glory of God through the movements of divine love. She is referred to as the "holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God" (New Translation). The words "that great city" should not be there, the word "great" is properly applicable to the system of iniquity called the "great harlot", but would be completely inconsistent with she who is the "wife of the Lamb", for the word used for "Lamb" throughout the book of the Revelation indicates a "little Lamb". John saw the glory of the church is this presentation as "in the Spirit" and "on a great and high mountain". Such thoughts are beyond the mind of the flesh and possess a glory and an elevation unknown to the world.

In the history of Joseph we have a wonderful allusion to the thought of "the wife". Joseph had trodden a pathway of suffering; hated and rejected by his brethren, falsely accused and imprisoned. As exalted, Pharaoh decreed that the whole scene should be regulated by him and placed under his absolute control. In the exalted position a wife, Asanath, is given to him, and we may be assured that the monarch was careful to choose one who would be in every way fitted to share the supremacy which was given to Joseph. So the church, as the gift of the Father to the Son, is in every way suitable to be the "helpmeet" of the exalted Lamb, and to share with Him, as Head to the Church, in the administration of the day of display.

There is a challenging thought in verse 121. The "shining" which will mark the saints as the wife of the Lamb in the day of which we have spoken, is the "shining" that should mark us now. Paul in writing to the Philippians says in chapter 2 "That ye may... shine as lights in the world" (verse 15). These are the only places in which this word for shining is used. What privilege indeed is ours "in the midst of a crooked and perverse" condition of things to display the characteristics which will illuminate the "day of Christ", when the whole universe will be lighted up with the purity of the light shining in the church as the Lamb's wife. It is the brightness of "a most precious stone", the words used in reference to Christ in I Peter 2:4.

It is well known that the earlier verses of Revelation, chapter 21, refer to the eternal state. Peter refers to this as “the day of God”, and Paul speaks of it as characterized by God being “all in all”. It is not difficult for us to accept these verses as referring to the eternal state. The fact that God Himself is alone referred to is consistent with the expression “God all in all” and “the day of God”. Then the mention of “new” four times is significant. Further we read “there was no more sea”. It is obvious that the sea did not exist at the judgment of the great white throne – for we read “the sea gave up the dead which were in it” (chapter 20:13). In connection with the world-to-come we read of “a river of life”; whereas here in the eternal state we reach the “fountain of the water of life”. That is, we are led to the very source in God himself. It is in relation to this scene, filled with the glory and presence of God Himself, that the details of the “bride” are given to us. There is no mention now of the wife, nor of the Lamb. It is a “bride adorned for her Husband”. She comes “down out of the heaven from God”. As coming from God she must of necessity be suitable to the glory of God, and none but a vessel suitable to, and expressive of, the glory of God could be morally fitted to be the “bride adorned” for such a Husband. Thus the glorious end of God is reached. The church “all of His eternal love in a scene from which every element contrary to the holy nature of God has been banished for ever. John saw these blessed things; we too are to be occupied with them, for they are the very essence of the “depths of God” which are searched by the Spirit who reveals them to us (I Corinthians 2:10).

Finally let us ever remember that while the enemy of God has succeeded in producing a great counterfeit system filled with the glory of man, we are not called to view it except as we see it judged of God. John was invited to look directly upon “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”, but he was invited to see not the “harlot”, but the “sentence of the great harlot” (Revelation 17:1).

May the glory of that which God has secured for the joy of His own heart and for the glory of Christ fill our hearts to the exclusion of all that man and his world are occupied with.

F.A. Hughes

Exercise

“Exercise thyself unto piety”

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

This wonderful clause from Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in three places in the epistles of Paul: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. In each New Testament reference an emphasis is placed upon one phrase, thus bringing into focus the matchless wonder of the grace of God and the fulfillment, though now in part, of the prophetic word.

By the grace of God Habakkuk was instructed to write of God’s response, in deliverance, to injustice done to His people by the very oppressor whom God had used to judge the people for their departure from Him. God holds all accountable for their actions. The promise here is to those who exercise faith. The immediate torment of His people requires patience but the righteous (just) must pass through this to learn to trust in God in all circumstances: he must live by faith. God has promised and He will fulfill. “Because **it** will surely come, **it** will not tarry” (Hab. 2:3).

When we arrive at the first New Testament quotation the emphasis is on **the just** shall live by faith. **The book of Romans** sets before us the Gospel of God. That God is righteous, and how, in His righteousness, He has provided through our Lord Jesus Christ and His work, a basis upon which faith may lay hold upon life. Sin and death are the part of man in this world until the salvation by faith is provided by God. Those who have been made **the just** who formerly were the unjust are by faith made alive Godward; they have life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reference in Galatians contrasts **by faith** with *works* of law. By law men come under the curse and die, Galatians 3: 10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in

all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” All are condemned by the law and can only be justified, or cleared of every charge, by (or on the principle of) faith, and that in our Lord Jesus Christ, as He was made “a Curse for us” and bore the condemnation of a righteous and holy God. (Read Romans 8: 1-4).

The final reference in Hebrews emphasizes **shall live** by faith. The thought here is not that we are justified by faith, but that faith is the power for **living** here in this world, in anticipation of the coming of our Lord Jesus, “**He** that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Note the change in the pronoun from Habakkuk 2:3 from “It” to “He,” as a result of the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in manhood here in this world, and the promise of His coming for and with His saints. This provides a solemn warning for those who are professors of salvation but who do NOT really believe. The believer in our Lord Jesus Christ goes on to the full enjoyment of salvation, the saving of the soul, those who do not “draw back unto perdition.”

Let us be those who are **the just** and who **by faith, shall live**. The promises of God are sure, it is God that justifieth (Ro. 8:33), it is God who gives faith (Eph. 2: 8), and the gift of God is eternal life (Ro. 6:23).

JAP

ANSWERS TO SCRIPTURES SEARCH!

1. 98 years old (1 Sa. 4: 15)
2. Isaiah (Is. 8:3)
3. Julius (Acts 27:1)

Rest

“Shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?”

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know unto God. And the peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6).

This is a familiar passage, but how many have we seen in the power of it? How much do we know about it? It is well enough to read it in the Word, but how many who admire it there have translated it into practical experience? You say, I have been to God about a matter and have come away quite resigned about it. But that is not it. This passage does not propose to give you resignation, but a peace that passeth ALL UNDERSTANDING, the peace of God. You make your request known to Him, and you are no more troubled about it than He is. You do not know how He will arrange the matter for you; you are no longer burdened about that. He who loves you perfectly has the matter in His hands now, you have put it there. He will not forget it, nor neglect it, and in dealing with it He will bring forth the issue according to His own knowledge of what will be for your present and eternal good.

Nothing may be altered. God may leave you the trial or difficulty, or may let the sorrow run its full course, as in the case of the Bethany sisters. The circumstances are not changed, but you are; and you live through the trial as one who dwells within the circle of the arms of God. In Old Testament language we have it, “In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me” (Ps. 27:5), and “Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues” (Ps. 31:20). But greater still is this that the New Testament proposes, and God is able to make good His word to us all.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. In John 8:51 the Lord Jesus says that whoever keeps His Word will not see death. In John 14:3 the Lord Jesus says I will come again and receive you until Myself. Based on these two Scriptures, can the phrase “not see death” mean that when a Christian dies, they will not see death, but instead will see the Lord Jesus? If this is so, then in the phrase the Lord uses, death is personified. Could that be? Winston Hatt

A. Dear Brother
I would like to suggest that there are primarily two expressions used in scriptures, to describe saints going into death:

- **See death.** This is also found in Luke 2:26 where the expression might indicate that we will witness the dominion of its sting. I believe John 8:51 pertains to the second death (see Rev. 20:14).
- **Taste of death.** In particular, we see this in the three gospels before the transfiguration of the Lord on the Holy Mountain (see 2 Pe. 1:18). It seems to me this indicates the necessity to assimilate the awfulness of sin (Rom 5:12).

In the death of Christ we don't read that he saw death but faced it and annulled it (2 Tim 1:10) and thus has full dominion over it (Rev 1:18). We also have no reference that he tasted of death but that he tasted death for every one (Heb 2:9). Only Christ could fully comprehend the awfulness of sin and its stain that stamped death upon the whole creation.

Having said this, it is of interest to understand now that the believer does not die as a result of the wages of sin, since Christ paid them for us, but now it is a matter of glory to God (John 21:19). Indeed it is encouraging to the saints to know that scriptures presents us with a new expression “them also which sleep in Jesus” (1 Thes 4:14) which, some have suggested, in the original means to be rocked to sleep, an act of a gentle Savior who brings us through death to Himself. Blessed be His Name. In closing, death in the word of God is described often as a condition of separation, but also in some occasions death is personified. For example in Job 18:14, he is “king of terrors” and also when the saints will address death when Christ comes to bring us to Himself “O death where is thy sting” (1 Cor 15:55) and previously in the same chapter (vv. 25-26) we understand he would be the last enemy that Christ will destroy.

No wonder the psalmist has declared “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” (Ps 23:4).

Much love in Christ
JA

GOD IN THE WILDERNESS

RISE, my soul, thy God directs thee;
Stranger hands no more impede;
Pass thou on, His hand protects thee -
Strength that has the captive freed.

Is the wilderness before thee -
Desert lands where drought abides?
Heavenly springs shall there restore thee,
Fresh from God's exhaustless tides.

Light divine surrounds thy going,
God Himself shall mark thy way;
Secret blessings, richly flowing,
Lead to everlasting day.

In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found -
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy;
All His grace shall there abound.

Though thy way be long and dreary,
Eagle strength He'll still renew;
Garments fresh and foot unwearied
Tell how God hath brought thee through.

There no stranger-God shall meet thee -
Stranger thou in courts above -
He, who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greets thee with a well-known love.

J.N.Darby

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

More than 2000 years ago there was a man born contrary to nature. He laid aside his purple robe for a peasant's tunic. He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. This man lived in poverty and was raised in obscurity. He received no formal education and never possessed wealth or widespread influence. He never traveled extensively. He seldom crossed the boundary of the country in which He lived. But this man's life has changed the course of history.

In infancy He startled a king. In childhood He amazed religious scholars. In manhood He ruled the course of nature – walked on stormy waves and hushed the raging sea to sleep. He healed multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never practiced psychiatry. Yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near.

He never wrote a book. Yet His life has inspired more books than any other man. He never wrote a song. Yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all songwriters combined.

He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students. He never marshaled an army. He never drafted a soldier or fired a gun. Yet no leader ever had more rebels surrender to Him without a shot fired.

Herod could not kill Him. Satan could not seduce Him. His enemies could not destroy Him. The grave could not hold Him. After three days He rose from the dead, alive forevermore!

He is the ever-perfect One. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This man stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed by God, acknowledged by angels, adored by His people, and feared by demons as the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What the Bible says about the incomparable Christ: in Philippians2:5-11
“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Would you receive Him as your Lord and Savior today?