

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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A Bone of Him Shall Not Be Broken

“For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:36).

“There are pictures of the Church which represent her as participating with the Lord in his sacrifice; but the Passover type is not one of these. The Passover lamb represented our Lord Jesus Christ as ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). But the sin of the world has not yet been taken away. Our Lord has not yet applied his merit for the world, but only and expressly for the Household of Faith.

“In another sacrifice, which represents our Lord and the Church conjointly sacrificing, as head and members, the body of the animal was cut into various pieces and laid with the head upon the altar, thus typifying Christ Jesus as the head and the Church as his members (Exodus 29:15-18).

“But provision was made that the Passover sacrifice was not to be divided. It was to be eaten whole — not a bone was to be broken. It represented, not Christ and the Church, but Christ alone in his sacrifice (Exodus 12:46, John 19:36).” — Pastor C.T. Russell, *Sermon Book*, page 559.

It is painful to read the account of our Lord's crucifixion and sufferings in John 19:31-36. As we review the crucifixion as a turning point not only for the Jewish people, but for all mankind — and indeed for all the heavenly hosts — we find this explicit instruction about the Passover lamb's bones. The typical Passover (Exodus 12:46) was not to have a broken bone and this was literally fulfilled in antitype. So important was this detail that it was repeated in Numbers 9:12.

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of God's disfavor. God permitted his precious Son to have afflictions, even as he permits us to have afflictions. Both our Lord and we who follow in his footsteps learn obedience by the things suffered (Hebrew 5:8, R5879:4). “The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous,

but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones: not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:18-20 NKJV). In harmony with the Passover type, the New Testament writers clearly record the fulfillment of this promise from the Psalm 34 in John 19:36 (A58, R1205:2, R1394:5, R1817:4).

Our Lord alone bore the sin of the world. Our Lord had no partnership with other like-minded new creatures, and he was alone in daily taking up his cross (Mark 8:34). Our Lord alone had the assurance, even in the depth of trials, of his future life back with the Father. He maintained this hope, his spirit was unbroken even while his body was racked with pain, “not a bone of him broken.” This does not mean there was no breaking of the heart. Psalm 34:18 speaks of a broken heart and a contrite spirit even while giving the promise that not a bone would be broken. We are specifically told that the reproaches against Jesus broke his heart (Psalm 69:20). We can well imagine that his betrayal by Judas was heart-breaking.

What is the personal application of bones as a scriptural symbol?

BONES BRING LIFE

The first mention of bones in the scriptures finds them as the source of new life and companionship. “Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’ ” (Genesis 2:23). First, Adam needed

IN THIS ISSUE

- A Bone of Him Shall Not Be Broken 1***
- Forsaken Love, The Letter to Ephesus . . . 4***
- Pure Nard, Very Costly 8***
- Translating the Rosetta Stone 8***

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to recognize that human love and sharing required another being of his own nature — flesh of his flesh. To be sure, the animal creation was warm, affectionate, and obedient; the angels were kind, protective, and knowledgeable; Jehovah God Himself enjoyed “walking” in the paradise his own hand had planted in the cool of the evening and speaking with Adam; but how precious and personal is the relationship of husband and wife.

Where did this bone, the very support of the body, come from? What a lovely detail we find about this first recorded “almost” cloning. This bone is neither the head, that the woman should have rulership — nor is it the sole of the foot, that the woman should be trodden down. It is the rib that is nearest the man’s heart and protects it. This wonderful rib was not used to form a twin brother for Adam, something even the imperfect science of our day has managed to do at least with sheep, but to bring to life the unexpressed potential of perfect humanity.

Current medical knowledge investigates the complex design of the bone given us by the Great Design Engineer. Bone is a complex matrix that includes blood vessels. This matrix allows for nutrients, cells, blood, etc., to flow in both directions, in and out. The bone marrow produces stem cells that could be used to build an entire new body as was done with Eve, but these stem cells serve as the building blocks that the body uses every day and night to make the different blood cells — red cells, white cells, and platelets. “The blood is the life” (see Genesis 9:4). Healthy blood requires healthy bones. Bones bring life.

BONES — HOPES AND FULLNESS OF SPIRIT

In Ezekiel 37:1-14 we read of the vision of a Valley of Dry Bones. What do the dry bones symbolize in this vision? “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” (Ezekiel 37:11).

Following the captivity to Babylon, Israel came near to annihilation under the Persians. Then a deliberate cultural war against the Jewish religion was waged by the Greeks, with a short period of partial independence. Then another conquest by the dreadful beast of Rome. That was followed by the establishment of a puppet monarchy of Edomites, and things got worse for the national hopes of Israel. After the first Jewish-Roman War (66-73 AD), two generations later a second Jewish-Roman War led to the defeat of the Bar Kokhba rebellion (132-135 AD). Forced into exile, Jews were dispersed and persecuted relentlessly across Europe, Asia, and Africa: “Our hope is lost” is the poignant expression of the prophet.



The Lamb’s Blood represented the life of Jesus.

We see here that bones, “dried” and unable to make blood, symbolize hopes — hence, we see why Joseph wanted his bones back in Israel. Israel was where his hopes were. Bones ultimately are the foundation of life and a symbol of hope. From Proverbs 17:22 we also understand that “a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

BROKEN BONES

The nation of Israel’s bones were not only dry (Ezekiel 37), but broken. Following the capture of Jerusalem by Babylon, Jeremiah writes of the loss of national hopes; “Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon hath

broken his bones” (Jeremiah 50:17). This was fulfillment of a prophecy given by Isaiah that warned Israel’s leaders against reliance on empty religious formalism and open idolatry. “The word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, *and be broken*, and snared, and taken” (Isaiah 28:13). Instinctively, if we fall forward we stretch out our arms to reduce injury. Here Isaiah speaks of falling backwards where no defense against injury is possible, resulting in “broken” bones.

Despite the ill treatment Jeremiah received from Jerusalem’s political leaders and false prophets, he took the pain of Jerusalem’s loss very personally. “I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath *broken my bones*” (Lamentations 3:1-4).

TEETH — HEALTH, HAPPINESS, BEAUTY, AND CONFIDENCE

Jeremiah speaks of a very special set of skeletal tissue, typically identified as bones important to our health, happiness, and beauty. When the Song of Solomon 4:2 describes the beauty of the bride we are told, “Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.” When we have a full set of healthy and clean teeth — like a flock of shorn sheep that have come up from the washing — we shine with confidence, but “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth” (Proverbs 25:19).

Teeth are special skeletal tissue closely related to bones that are the hardest part of the human body. Unlike

bones, to which they are closely related — and for Biblical symbolical purpose they should be considered as bones — teeth do not self-regenerate if injured. Hence, the grievousness of the permanent loss when Jeremiah adds, “He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes” (Lamentations 3:16). Such have been the experiences of even those who have been the Lord’s faithful. In Psalm 3:7 we find how much more so this injury to the teeth befalls the ungodly. “Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.”

HEALING BROKEN BONES — AND BLESSING OTHERS

Mankind often holds misguided hopes, and deep hidden sins. The grief caused by unrepentant sin makes them symbolically experience “broken bones” and “broken teeth.” Sometimes by divine providence this broken-bone condition persists so that the oppressor can never recover strength. “Son of man, *I have broken the arm* of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword” (Ezekiel 30:21).

Within ourselves we have no life, except as we abide in Christ (John 15:6). We do not have perfect hopes, an indomitable “right spirit” unless we have grown in Christ-likeness. In our own strength, we do not have a guarantee of health, happiness, beauty, and confidence. We who are running for the prize may find that, like Jeremiah, the adversities of life may leave us with broken bones. But Scripture speaks of how broken bones may be restored. “Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the *bones which thou hast broken* may rejoice” (Psalm 51:8).

In Psalm 51 we see the healing process. Seeking the Lord’s cleansing from sin must be the beginning (verses 1-2). There is no progress until the erring one acknowledges both the sin and the justice of the Lord’s judgment. For David, the Lord’s punishment followed him all the days of his life. There is a loss of holy fellowship even for sins that dwell within the heart and are not of a public nature (verses 3-4). We will remain aliens from God unless we acknowledge that we are fallen children of Adam (verse 5). The Lord desires that we have truth and wisdom in our inner parts, not merely the outward show of religious piety and speaking of the Lord with our lips (verse 6).

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. By the Levitical Law, “Hyssop” alone could cleanse from contact with a corpse (Numbers 19:18), or from the defilement of leprosy (Leviticus 14:4). David recognized that his impurity was extreme, and needed the remedy which has the greatest purifying power. Legally, this was hyssop, with its “blood of sprinkling” (Leviticus 14:6, 7); spiritually, it is the blood of Christ, which was thus symbolized (verse 7).



Hyssop plant (green stems with lavender flowers, in color).

“Joy and gladness,” the restoration of At-one-ment with God, heals even the broken bones (verse 8). The process of restoring a right relationship with God now is accomplished through Christ. Not only are iniquities blotted out, but from the now healthy and healed bones there is a renewal of a “right spirit within me.” This thought of “right spirit,” or better, “upright spirit,” is one that is in harmony with the perfect standard of righteousness (verses 9-10). From verses 11-12 we find that David’s loss of relationship through his sin was an especially serious case. What had been a healthy relationship with God had been broken and lost through his transgressions, hence the word “restore” is used. The spirit of this restored relationship now goes beyond being “upright” (verse 10). This restored relationship is aligned with that which is “holy” (verse 11), that which is a gift of grace, and it advances and becomes “free” (verse 12 KJV). This word (H5082), translated “free,” has the thought of “nobility.” Such a restoration to health of broken bones empowers the spirit.

BUT TO WHAT END?

“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (Psalm 51:13). Yes, even the worst defeats, experienced because of sin, may — if we are willing to change — become opportunities for blessing others. For this to happen we must honestly assess our sins and confess them before the Lord. We need to receive the atoning blood and then actually follow through on our good intentions, turning them into reality, and reform. We see in Psalm 51 the type of operation that will help mankind advance on the Highway to Holiness.

Even today, in an imperfect way, this Psalm 51 process has been shown to be effective in the so-called “twelve-step” programs like Alcoholics Anonymous

where attendees who were once lost in alcohol now are in “recovery,” where they mentor (“sponsor”) others early into their journey away from the bottle. Those well along in “recovery” are brutally honest in confronting the predictable lies, the excuses, the stressful times like family holiday gatherings, and the self-deception of those beginning their journey. There is an honest recognition that those making progress even for years or decades are in “recovery,” for “cure” is not possible while this outgoing dispensation maintains its control.

KEEPING OUR BONES HEALTHY

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones” (Proverbs 3:7,8).

Preventing ill health is better than healing disease. Keeping bones and teeth healthy is better than the lengthy process of healing up from broken bones, or painful visits even to a skilled modern dentist for broken teeth. While Israel’s lost hopes gave them dry bones (Ezekiel 37), the scriptures have a good deal to say about healthy bones with “marrow and fatness.”

David, like the unhappy dispersed of Israel in Ezekiel 37, was in a dry and thirsty land both literally and in his troubled spirit (Psalm 63:1). But David’s recognition and confession of God’s power, glory, and loving kindness led him to praise and bless the Lord. He had the assurance of God’s blessing. “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness” (Psalm 63:5). This refers not to David *eating* marrow and fatness, but rather to the *internal health* of his spiritual bones. “If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and *make fat thy bones*: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:10,11).

The closing chapter of Isaiah refers to bone health. “For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her [Jerusalem] like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your *bones shall flourish* like an herb” (Isaiah 66:12-14).

So, our Lord’s bones were healthy and never broken, even though he was weary and spent in his father’s service. Like him, we also want to hold to all the precious promises and walk as he walked, that our bones might flourish with marrow and fatness and that we, symbolically, would have life, hope, health, happiness, beauty, and confidence all with uprightness, holiness, and nobility of spirit.

— Bro. Richard Doctor

Forsaken Love, The Letter to Ephesus

“Thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Revelation 2:2).

Christianity probably came first to Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla when Paul made a brief stop there on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18,19). On his third journey he stayed in the city for about three years and the gospel spread throughout all of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). The city was a commercial, political, and religious center, the great temple of Diana (Artemis) being there. As a major trading center, it ranked with Alexandria and



The Ruins of Ephesus

Antioch. Under Caesar Augustus, Ephesus became the capital of the Roman province called “Asia” which today is the western portion of Turkey. (Pergamum had been the capital earlier.) It was the residence of the apostle John before and after his exile on Patmos.

Jesus’ message to Ephesus is in Revelation 2:1-7. The seven stars are the “angels,” or “messengers” to the seven churches (Revelation 1:20) while the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. The object of this letter seems to be to turn the attention of the church in Ephesus to some attribute of the Savior that deserved their special regard, a special reason for attending what he said. Jesus held the seven stars, symbolic of the seven messengers of the churches, in his right hand, and he walked in the midst of the lampstands, representing the churches themselves. They depended upon him, he had the power to continue or remove their ministry, and it was by his presence only that these candlesticks would continue to give light. He would impress these truths upon them in order that they might feel how easy it would be for him to punish any disobedience, so that they might do what was necessary to assure his continued presence among them.

DISTINGUISHED LABOR

The punishment threatened (verse 5) is that he would remove the candlestick representing their church out of its place. In Revelation 1:13, Jesus stands in the midst of the golden lampstands, so as to be encircled by them. Thus he walked in the midst of them, implying constant and vigilant supervision. He went from one to another, inspecting and surveying what was under his care. He went among them as a friend to bless them, showing his love and care for them (F401,2, Leviticus 24:2-4).

Revelation 2:2 show that Christ Jesus has a detailed knowledge of all the services of his people. First, there was distinguished labor, “I know thy works, and thy labor.” The church at Ephesus was a working church. It operated on the surrounding regions of depravity, darkness, and death. In its early life it was an active church. They were faithful in their service to the Savior’s cause, and especially in opposing error.

DISTINGUISHED PATIENCE

Second, the distinguished patience of Ephesus is referred to twice. This patience (*hupomonee* G5281) is an endurance of wrong with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the Divine Wisdom and Love. They patiently bore opposition to the truth, they manifested firm and meek endurance in fiery trials through the many attempts by their opposers to them to draw away from simple faith in Christ. This meekness of love was known to Christ who is mindful not only of the outward manifestations of spiritual life in many labors and many offerings, but also of the hidden graces of the heart.

Jesus saw the wounded and suffering, and said, “I know thy patience.” We are prone to attach high value exclusively to the conspicuous and the declarative members of the church. While these are necessary to defend great principles, there is also a crown for holy, much-enduring silent patience. It is often easier to fight than to be patient. Patience is undervalued by an excited world; but Jesus notes it in its long vigils, and whispers his word of commendation.

DISTINGUISHED ZEAL

Third, there was distinguished zeal to support doing right. The church at Ephesus had no sympathy with the doctrines or practices of “them which say they are apostles, and are not,” nor with those mentioned in verse 6 as the “Nicolaitanes.”

Ephesus sought to have a pure ministry, a ministry whose beliefs and practices were well-founded. They carefully watched and examined the claims of pretenders, and refused to recognize those whose manner of life did not show the work of the Lord Jesus. It is morally impossible that faithful Christians and anti-Christians can have any sympathetic fellowship. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 Paul said, “What fellowship hath righteousness with

unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial or what part hath he that he that believes with an infidel?”

There is, indeed, large scope for the exercise of Christian charity, and it is sometimes difficult to determine where the streams of love should pause. We should not presumptuously ascend the judgment seat, but it is needful to have a clear line that separates the sympathy of compassion from the sympathy of complacency.

DISTINGUISHED PERSISTENCE

Fourth, there was distinguished persistence in the right course. The Ephesian saints bore up under trials; they borne with the evils that assailed them. They had not given way to murmuring or complaints. They had not abandoned the principles of truth and yielded to the prevalence of error. They had shown that they could bear up under these things with patience — constant, cheerful endurance.

This is a repetition of what is said in verse 2, but in a different connection. There it speaks to the trouble that they had experienced because of the pretensions of false apostles, and the patient persevering and enduring spirit they had displayed. Here the expression is more general, denoting a patient spirit in regard to all forms of trial. The “labor” (G2873) was on account of Jesus and they had not become exhausted or wearied so as to give up.



Not a laborer in the vineyard goes unappreciated.

The Ephesians were right. They blended persistence with patience; and were extolled by him who knew the hardest toil, and exemplified the most unmurmuring endurance. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chronicles 2:9, 1 Corinthians 8:16). Not a service rendered in the Lord’s name escapes his notice. There is not a toiler in the vineyard on whose bent form the Master does not look upon with approval.

“NEVERTHELESS”

Such is the opening of the letter. It is full with commendation. We would like to linger here; but there is a “nevertheless” that we would gladly escape. We must consider the unwelcome second part, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee; because thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4).

“Left” implies an intentional, not accidental act. They had “relaxed” (Wilson Diaglott, G863) their early love; it was less glowing and ardent than it was at first. The love here referred to is evidently love towards the Savior, Christ. As a church, they had less of this love than formerly. Christ does not charge the saints at Ephesus with having changed their doctrinal views nor their attitude toward advocates of error, but placing a finger on the heart, he says, “There is a change here.”

This is not uncommon. Individual Christians often lose much of their first love. There is often an appearance of this that does not exist in reality. Some of the ardor of young converts is little more than an excitement that soon dies away. However, their real love may not be diminished.

When a son returns home after a long absence and meets his family, there is a glow, a warmth of feeling, a joy of emotion, that cannot be expected to continue always. Churches collectively may “relax” the ardor of their first love. They are often formed under the reviving influences of God’s holy Spirit when many are converted, and are warm-hearted and zealous young converts. Or they are formed from other Churches that have become cold, from which the new organization, embodying the life of the church, was forced to separate. Or they are formed under the influence of some strong and mighty truth that has taken possession of the mind, and that, at first, gives a peculiar character to the church. Or they are formed to promote some one great object in the cause of Christ.

Thus the early Christian churches were formed. Many centuries later, the church in Germany, France, Switzerland, and England came out from the Roman Church influenced by the doctrine of justification by faith. The Nestorians in former times, and the Moravians at a later time, were characterized by warm zeal in the cause of missions. The Puritans came out from the established church of England at one time, and the Methodists at another, warmed with a holier love for the cause of evangelical religion than existed in the body from which they separated. Thus many a church formed amidst the exciting scenes of religious revival, and in its early days puts to shame the older, slumbering churches around them. But this early zeal may die away, and that church, once so full of life and love, may become as cold as those that went before it.

What in Ephesus was “deeds” (verse 6) became in Pergamos a “doctrine.” The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, “conquerors of the people,” seems to be the theory of “lordship or headship in the church” (1 Peter 5:3). The



Paul's Third Missionary Tour began with three years at Ephesus.

Nicolaitanes held corrupt doctrines and indulged in corrupt practices, hence the Head of the Church commends the church at Ephesus for protesting against such depravity. While the saints were thus earnest in repelling a false theology, their own love for Christ waned. The head may be right while the heart goes in the wrong direction.

We should indeed maintain a sound, scriptural theology, and “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13). But we must remember that a technical theology alone will never save anyone; and that a mere verbal creed will never protect and increase our love for the Father and Christ.

DO THE FIRST WORKS

Revelation 2:5 warns, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Hebrews 10:32-33 encourages us to “Call to remembrance the former days” and the trials that followed. Observe the terrible consequences of heart alienation. The Church in its collective capacity may incur the Lord’s displeasure. There may be good wheat, yet the community as a whole may be under the frown of him who “walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks.” The Church in its collective capacity must repent, to change their mind and purpose, their conduct and demeanor. They were to do the first works. This means to engage at once in doing what they did in the first and best days of their piety, the days of their consecration to God.

The cry of our concerned Savior is, “Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly.” The meaning is that he would come as a Judge, at no distant period, to inflict punishment in the manner specified — by removing the candlestick out of its place. Christ will unchurch every organization that is unfaithful to his name.

He does not say in what way it would be done; whether by some sudden judgment, by a direct act of power, or by a gradual process leading to that result. What would remain after the candlestick is removed is darkness.

THE CANDLESTICK REMOVED

What then of the distinguished labor? The distinguished patience? The distinguished zeal? The distinguished persistence?

There is not the least evidence that the church at Ephesus did repent, and the threatening has been most signally fulfilled. Every memorial of there having been a church in Ephesus has departed. To quote from Frederic William Farrar, *The Life and Work of Paul* (1879) Volume 2, page 43, following his visit to the site of Ephesus: “Its candlestick has been for centuries removed out of his place; the squalid Mohammedan village which is nearest to its site does not count one Christian in its insignificant population; its temple is a mass of shapeless ruins; its harbor is a reedy pool; the bittern booms amid its pestilent and stagnant marshes; and malaria and oblivion reign supreme over the place where the wealth of ancient civilization gathered around the scenes of its grossest superstitions and its most degraded sins.”

Such language may well make us pause. Organization is not spiritual brotherhood. Let us not speak of skillful arrangements, committees, of feverish activities, or projects. We may have been energetic and zealous in our labors for the truth, patient under trial and opposition, discerning as to maintaining a pure ministry and a pure doctrine. We may have had all these in an unparalleled degree, and yet “Ichabod” may be written on the church doors. “Ichabod” means “the glory has departed” (1 Samuel 4:21).

What is our spiritual life? Has our religion become polluted? Has it degenerated into a mere profession of words? Adherence to dead formalities? Is it church-going? A routine, word splitting, and an elaborate system of trifling and refining policies? Is this the expression of our heart? The eye of Jesus is marking everything. There is a limit to his forbearing meekness. Those who continue to offend him will be removed.



“I will give to eat of the tree of life” (Revelation 2:7).

GRACIOUS CLOSING WORDS

In Revelation 2:7 the Head of the Church has the richest blessings in reserve for all who overcome their spiritual enemies. That our spiritual life is a fight, we need not be reminded. Every day we are in the battlefield, but, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

To “eat” speaks of our desire for more of God. This desire shall increase as the ages roll on, and yet increasing desire is but another way of saying increasing satisfaction (John 17:3). “The tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God” signifies immortality. “The paradise of God” is the entire universe including the restored and perfected earth. The Church with Christ will be in the midst of this universe as life-givers and blessers. They will be used by God as His dwelling (Psalm 132:13-14).

The word translated “tree” (G3586 *xulon*) is the same word used of the cross (Acts 5:30, Galatians 3:13, 1 Peter 2:24). What can we say concerning such a tree?

No worm is gnawing at its root, no serpent coils around its stem, no withered leaf trembles upon it as the prophet of the coming winter; its every leaf is jeweled with purer dew than ever sparkled in the morning.

A tree! It is but another name for beauty for beauty walks forth in ever-varying manifestations. A tree! It is but another name for progress, for the circling sap bears through every fiber life and fruitfulness. A tree! Can we assemble around that central tree? We cannot do so until we have assembled around the Cross.

The Cross is at once our tree of death and our tree of life; no, the Cross is but the earthly name of yonder tree — the New Jerusalem. The Cross, is that dreary tree in the dark winter night of sin and death, shaken by the savage storms of life, bereft of every leaf, the throne of all-conquering death. And yonder “tree” is but the Cross in his summer-time of the New Jerusalem, bursting into leaf, blushing into blossom struggling into bulging fruit; but we can never stand beneath its branches until we have touched the Cross! Having faithfully done so, we shall eat its precious fruit and that fruit will be all the better for having been plucked and offered by the hand of our Savior and Bridegroom.

— Adapted from a discourse by Bro. David Skein

Note: Articles based on Bro. David Skein’s discourse notes have appeared frequently in *Beauties of the Truth* (see Laodicea, February 2017). For over three decades until 1995, Bro. Skein served as a deacon in the Chicago Bible Students. He led a very simple life, never married, and lived frugally. He bore the loss of the dearest family ties when he converted from Orthodox Judaism to Christianity. It is clear that he took joy in preparing his discourses, and his articles are enriched by his fluency in both Hebrew and Greek as well as his extensive reading of history. He finished his Christian race shortly after health issues caused him to retire from deacon service. When his name appears in *Beauties of the Truth* he is sometimes mistaken for Bro. David Stein, who is a different individual and a current editor and author for *Beauties of the Truth*. — rdd

Pure Nard, Very Costly

John 12:2-11, Mark 14:3-9, Matthew 14:3-9

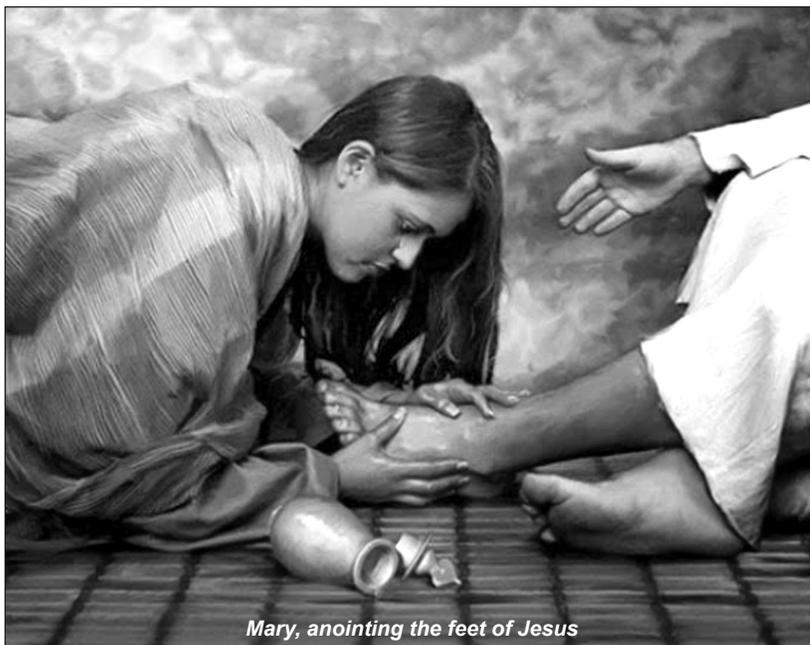
It was Jesus' last Sunday on earth when he and the twelve disciples arrived at Bethany, to the home of Simon the leper. ("Six days before the Passover," John 12:1. That would be Sunday, six days before the Passover feast the following Saturday.) It is thought likely Simon the leper had died, and his heirs lived there: Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus.

Martha was serving the meal to the guests and Lazarus at the table. The normally-quiet Mary came in among them with an alabaster box of pure-nard ointment, containing perhaps twelve fluid ounces of it, very costly. She went to Jesus and poured it first on his head, and then on his feet. She let down her hair to rub it in gently. It was gratitude of the highest order!

But there was another way someone could look at it. Judas assessed the value of the nard at 300 days' wages of a day-laborer — a full year's wages. Perhaps three thousand hours near minimum wage would be around \$20,000 in modern U.S. money. Could that have fed two hundred poor people for a week?

But Mary viewed things differently. Three hundred days' minimum wage might be the cost today of going to a hospital for an appendectomy. But her brother did not have an appendectomy. Lazarus was dead! Jesus brought him back from the dead. And the great physician Jesus asked for nothing in return. "She hath done what she could"

— Bro. James Parkinson



Mary, anointing the feet of Jesus

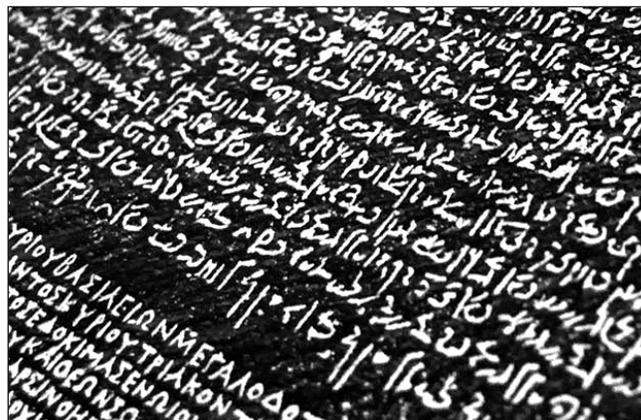
Translating the Rosetta Stone

The right help, at the right time.

As Thomas Young was struggling to decipher the Rosetta Stone, a traveler gave him a parcel of Egyptian manuscripts. Among the baffling hieroglyphics he noted three names written in Greek: Apollonius, Antigonus, and Antimachus. As he was puzzling over the rest, a friend gave him some papyri he had purchased at Thebes in 1820. Two of these contained some Greek characters, and Young began to examine them impatiently.

"He could scarcely believe that he was alive and in his sober senses when he saw the words Antimachus Antigenis [*sic*] and, a few lines further back, Portis Apollonii. It was a Greek translation of the very Egyptian manuscript he had been wrestling with!"

"I could not, therefore, but conclude, that a most extraordinary chance had brought into my possession a document which was not very likely, in the first place, ever to have existed, still less to have been preserved uninjured, for my information, through a period of near two thousand years: but that this very extraordinary translation should have been brought safely to Europe, to England, and to me, at the very moment when it was most of all desirable to me to possess it, as the illustration of an original which I was then studying, but without any other reasonable hope of being able fully to comprehend it ... This combination would, in other times, have been considered as affording ample evidence of my having become an Egyptian sorcerer."



The Rosetta Stone contained three languages; here two are visible.