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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

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AND SAINTS

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The Man to Whom Christ
Reveals His Burden



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A BLAMELESS LIFE

An unblameable life must be the aim of every child of God (Tit. 2:5, 8; 1Tim. 3:2; 5:14) because the adversary is eagerly looking for an opportunity to blaspheme God and His people. Whenever evil is spoken of believers, God's name also is blasphemed among the unbelievers because they consider the failed life of the people as the failure of their God.

Exhort and Pray

Leaders like Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, etc., were concerned about this reality and counselled their people to live right, and pleaded with the Lord to be merciful on them (Exo. 32:11; Num. 14:15b; Josh. 7:9; Neh. 5:9). God also took such a blasphemous life seriously and warned His people. Nathan's words to David explicitly reveals it, "because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die," (2Sam 12:12).

The Godly Reproached

Nevertheless, we should not forget that even the most devoted people, whom the LORD Himself testified as blameless, have been reproached. The enemy found some reasons to make false accusations against them (cf. Gen. 39:17–21; Job 1:1, 8, 9). Even the Lord Jesus Christ who led an impeccable life was not spared (Luke 6:7; 11:53, 54; 20:20; Matt. 26:59, 60).

We are well aware of the hardship both Joseph and Job went through as a result of this diabolic act. Throughout history, we see that one of the major causes behind the arrest, imprisonment and even execution of Christ and His followers was false accusations.

So, even as we aim a perfect, blameless life, the opponent will find something or other against us. What shall we do against these merciless acts inspired by the evil one?

Be Vigilant

Be conscious of this reality and give no occasion for the adversary. Maintain a clear conscience before the Lord and His people. There should be no substance in the charges the adversary makes. We should be able to say with Apostle Paul, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns?" (Rom. 8:33–34a)

Many saints took such occasions to pray and cry before the Lord. That in turn led to not only their deliverance but even to untold other spiritual experiences and blessings (Psa. 120:1, 2). Beloved, mysterious are God's ways. Trust the Lord who is able to change the present painful and shameful situations for the good of many as in the case of Joseph. Aim a blameless life at any cost; at the same time, be vigilant against the evil designs of the enemy. Never be tired or troubled by the schemes of the enemy.

NTK

SLANDER, SATAN AND SAINTS

Storytelling and listening to stories are fascinating experiences for all age groups. Nevertheless, we need to be very careful to ensure what we communicate or hear are not false narratives against somebody. Because our sinful nature prefers lies to truth, we may end up spreading false information about someone and that would destroy their reputation.

Slander vs. Gossip

A slanderous attitude is part of our sinful human behaviour and it's more dangerous than gossip, (Rom. 1:30). Gossip is spreading stories about others which may or may not be true whereas slander is sharing false stories with the intention to discredit and destroy another. Though both are wrong, the effect of slander is far reaching, for it destroys the victim, the listener, and even the speaker himself (cf. Psa. 31:11–13; 69:20).

Satanic Nature

Our Lord said, 'the devil is a liar and the father of lies, there is no truth in him' (John 8:44c). Naturally, anyone who is influenced by the devil will be marked by all forms of falsehood. Also, we read in

Revelation 12:10, the main mission of Satan day and night is to accuse the brethren, (cf. Job 3:1; Zech. 3:1). In fact, one of his names 'devil' ('diabolos') means slanderer or false accuser. Never forget that when we pass on an unverified story that could damage the reputation of someone, we are assisting Satan in his mission. Hence, it's a diabolic attitude.



Slander and Saints

Throughout the scripture we see many godly people have been affected with this evil. The devil blamed Job and Joshua in the presence of God (Job 2:5; Zech. 3:1). David's psalms reveal the pain and anguish he went through as a result of the reproach of his enemies (Psa. 31:11–13). False allegations were made against the Apostles as well. On the day of Pentecost, the Jews alleged the disciples were full of new wine (Acts 2:13). Stephen was stoned

to death based on false accusations (Acts 6:13, 14; 7:60). About Paul they said, ‘he is a plague, ring leader, creator of riots,’ etc., (Acts 24:5). However, it was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who faced slander in the most ignominious way. He was called a glutton, drunkard, and demonic. They accused Him of forbidding taxes, misrepresenting and misleading people, etc., against the empire (John 7:48; Luke 23:2 etc.).

Result of Slander

In the human point of view, the arrest and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was the outcome of false accusation. The enemy successfully turned the public support against the Lord; same with the arrest and executions of the disciples of Christ. Slander and false narratives destroy the name and reputation of the one against whom we speak. It breaks friendships, relationships, and spiritual fellowships (Pro. 16:28). No wonder slander broke the heart of David (Psa. 31:11–13; 69:20). Brethren, do not forget that when we enjoy discussing stories about another, it is possible they are weeping.

What the Bible Says

Various scripture passages tell us how seriously God views slander:

- **Exo. 20:16:** He prohibits false testimony, as one of the 10 commandments (cf. Lev 19:16).
- **Psa. 50:19, 22:** God hates the slanderer and threatens to tear him into pieces (cf. Psa. 101:5; Pro. 6:16, 19)
- **Pro. 10:18:** The slanderer is a fool, for God knows all the secrets and reveals

them at the right time.

- **Pro. 20:19:** He prohibits association with talebearers.
- **Ezek. 22:9:** Slander kills the innocent men
- **Eph. 4:30, 31:** Put away all forms of evil speaking, for it grieves the Holy Spirit (Colo. 3:8).
- **Tit. 3:2:** Speak evil of no one

Such plenty of verses unequivocally declare the ugliness of slander and God’s response to this evil behaviour. It is not fitting for a child of God to speak evil of another to harm him falsely.



Why is Slander so Serious?

1. It is against our own brethren, James 4:11.
 - ▶ It is Satan’s strategy against the Lord’s people (Rev. 12:10).
2. It is against the law of love, James 4:11b
 - ▶ A slanderer has no love for God or man (cf. Rom. 13:8; Matt. 22:37–40).
3. It is against the law-giver, James 4:12
 - ▶ It is rebellion against God who is the true Judge of all.

4. It grieves the Holy Spirit, who indwells a believer, Eph. 4:30, 31.

As mentioned earlier, the bad consequences of slander are extensive. It's robbing the good name one has gained through many years of effort. Not only it kills the character of another, it also disturbs the fellowship among Christians.



Response to Slander

1. Make sure that we are right with God (Psa. 31: 10 cf. 1John 1:7, 9).
 - If there is any sin or failure, confess it and find cleansing.
2. Trust in the Lord, when we learn of the whisperings of the enemy (Psa. 31:14).
 - God knows all the truth; He will not believe a slanderer as man does!
3. Remember, we are not alone.
 - Not only David, many other saints and even the Lord Jesus faced it.
4. Do not pay attention to the slanderer.
 - Listen to God's Word; refuse to hear the words of the enemy. Remember, it's a fight against the evil forces (Eph. 6:12).
5. Cry to God, Psa. 120:1, 2
 - Ultimately God alone can save us from lies and its destructive power. Call upon the Lord to deal with the liars. As the Psalmist testifies, He will hear and deliver us at the right time.

Our Lord is the best example. He suffered silently committing Himself to Him who judges rightly (1Peter 2:23). Let us patiently wait for His timely intervention as we face similar situations.



Judgement of words

The Lord Jesus reminds us that we are accountable for every word we utter (Matt. 12:36, 37). Never make a false statement against someone to put them down. Do not even try to assign imagined negative ideas on others to harm them. Speak truth and truth alone, that too in love (Eph. 4:15). Any form of evil attitude hinders our own spiritual growth, (1Peter 2:1). If we happened to hear a story, never make a conclusion without proper verification. Never encourage a slanderer by relaying his message. Always deal with the slanderer within us because of the inherent sin nature. In all our conversations let us reflect the characteristics of God. Be away from slander; be close to truth (Psa. 15:1–3; Jer. 9:3). **G&P**

WHEN WORDS BECOME WEAPONS

“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

Psalms 141:3

Words are among the most powerful gifts God has given us. With our words, we can encourage the discouraged, comfort the brokenhearted, teach the truth, restore the fallen, and strengthen the church. Yet the same tongue that can bless can also wound. A few careless words can damage a reputation, destroy a friendship, divide a family, weaken an assembly, and leave wounds that may remain for years.

Among the sins of speech that Scripture takes seriously are gossip and slander. These are so common that many people hardly recognize them as serious sins! We may condemn gossip in principle while

actively participating in it. Sometimes it enters our conversations almost unnoticed: “Did you hear about him?” “Someone told me...” “People are saying...” “I am not supposed to tell you this, but...”



The danger is not merely in the words themselves. Gossip and slander reveal something about the heart of the person speaking. They can arise from pride, jealousy, selfish ambition, resentment, or a desire to feel superior to another person. Therefore, the Bible does not merely teach us to control our tongues; it calls us to examine our hearts.

Understanding Gossip and Slander

Gossip is a negative report about another person who is not present to respond whether the report is true or false. Slander goes further because it even involves the intention to damage that person's reputation or standing in the eyes of others.



This distinction helps us to understand why simply saying, “But what I said was true,” does not necessarily make the conversation righteous. Truth can be communicated in an unrighteous way. There are situations in which a negative report must be communicated. A dangerous person may need to be exposed. Serious sin may need to be addressed. Church leaders may need to be informed. A victim may need protection. But Biblically, the question is not merely, “Is this information true?” We must also ask, “Why am I saying it, to whom am I saying it, and what am I seeking to accomplish?”

A truthful statement spoken to protect someone or to restore a sinner is fundamentally different from a truthful statement shared to humiliate, discredit, or destroy someone.



Why Gossip Appears Attractive

Gossip often does not arrive looking like a serious sin. It frequently comes disguised as information. We want to know what happened and understand the situation. Someone gives us some information, and because it seems interesting or important, we listen. But the problem begins when that information becomes a “morsel” that

we enjoy passing from one person to another. Proverbs uses language that pictures such information as something swallowed and enjoyed. A small piece of information enters the mind, takes root, and can grow into suspicion, speculation, exaggeration, and eventually falsehood.

That is why gossip can spread so rapidly. One person says, “I heard that he had a problem.” The next person says, “Apparently he has serious problems.” Another says, “I heard that he cannot be trusted.” Eventually, the original statement may bear little resemblance to what was actually known. Gossip does not require complete facts. It feeds on incomplete facts. And when incomplete facts are combined with assumptions, emotions, and personal opinions, relationships can be destroyed.

Gossip and the Culture around Us

The Bible gives us a sobering description of a society that has rejected God. Romans 1:28–30 describes people who have been given over to a depraved mind and lists among their characteristics, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, and slander.

These are not merely private sins. They are relational sins. Envy, strife, malice, gossip, and slander affect relationships. This is important because Christians live within a culture where these behaviors are normalized. We hear them in conversations, see them in entertainment, encounter them on social media, and sometimes experience them even within Christian communities.

Therefore, believers cannot simply assume that we will naturally avoid them. We must actively resist them. If the culture around us constantly rewards criticism, outrage, suspicion, and the exposure of other people's failures, Christians must deliberately cultivate a different way of speaking. We are not called to drift downstream with the culture. We are called to live according to the Word of God.

Proverbs Gives Us Discernment

Proverbs not only tells us not to gossip but also teaches us how to recognize the character of a person who habitually gossips.

Proverbs 10:18 says: "Whoever utters slander is a fool." This should cause us to examine ourselves. Am I becoming a fool by the way I speak about others? But there is another dimension. When someone repeatedly brings slanderous information to us, Proverbs teaches us to exercise discernment regarding that person. Proverbs 11:13 says: "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered."

The contrast is between a slanderer and a trustworthy person. The trustworthy person knows how to protect what should be protected. He does not feel compelled to reveal every secret, does not treat another person's weakness as entertainment, nor does he use private information as social currency. A person who constantly reveals the failures and secrets of others is demonstrating

something about his own character. We should therefore ask ourselves: If this person speaks this way about others when they are absent, what will he say about me when I am absent? That question alone can give us wisdom about the relationships we cultivate.



Gossip Separates People

One of the most destructive consequences of gossip is division. Proverbs 16:28 says: "A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends." Notice the progression. A whisper may seem insignificant, but it can become strife. Strife can become conflict. Conflict can destroy relationships. Many friendships do not collapse because of one dramatic event. Sometimes they deteriorate because of repeated whispers. Someone says something about a friend. The friend hears about it. Trust decreases. Another comment is made. Suspicion increases. Eventually the friendship is broken. The whisperer may move on to another conversation, but the people affected may carry the consequences for years. This is why Christians must take gossip seriously. It is not harmless conversation. It can become an instrument of destruction. **G&P**

To be continued (DV) ■

The Man to Whom Christ Reveals His Burden

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we have an evaluation of the seven local Churches in Asia by the risen Lord Jesus Christ. In these seven letters we see the burden of the Lord Jesus for the local congregations. What made the Lord Jesus to reveal His heart's concern to apostle John? Even today, He has a burden for the local churches. He is still carefully watching the activities of the assemblies. With whom shall the Lord Jesus share this concern? What kind of person shall He use? Remember, God doesn't use just anybody. He is looking for the right person, (2Chr. 16:9). The following are some of the pre-requisites found in this chapter:

1. Humility, Rev. 1:1, 9

John was an Apostle, and one among the inner circle of Christ along with Peter and James. He has served as an elder of a local church. Yet this senior most servant of God introduces himself as a 'servant' and 'brother'. That is 'humility'- power under control - the ability to be 'nobody' when actually one is 'somebody' indeed! He is willing to come down without any show of position or greatness. Remember, a bond-servant has no claim, no right because he is fully surrendered to the

Master. The world may appreciate the flaunting of power and wealth but God will never. God will bless and use the humble ones. Psalmist says, "The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way" (Psa. 25:9).



2. Sympathy, Rev.1:9

"Your.... companion in the tribulation" - Apostle John also identifies himself with the readers who suffer. He was saying indirectly, 'you are not alone'; 'I understand your sufferings', etc. He was concerned about their welfare.

Writing to elder Gaius, John wrote, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3John v. 2). Notice, his care and sympathy for the people of God. Similarly, Paul wrote to believers in Philippi "I have you in my heart", (Phil. 1:7). God is looking for such concerned men of God to share His feelings for the

churches. More than doing something as a duty, they need to feel the pain and frustrations of the saints. People are attracted to such sympathetic leaders. (Elders take a note, for good or bad, people get attracted to those who sympathize with them in all humility.)

When the Lord saw the desperate condition of the people He was moved with compassion, Matt. 9:36. Even today as a sympathetic High Priest He intercedes for us, (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

Sadly, today we have too much preaching, eloquent and powerful, but with very little personal touch.

3. Self-sacrifice. V.9

John doesn't just say a word of sympathy but actually went through severe sufferings. During the days of Emperor Domitian, he faced severe persecution and later he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos. That's why he says that he is a 'companion in tribulation and suffering'. Willingness to suffer is another prerequisite to be used for God.



We may have to spend our resources, time, and energy etc., in the service of the Lord. Many sleepless nights, false allegations and tears are also part of a leader's life. Any self-desire, selfish ambition and self-projection etc., ruins the work of the Lord.

4. Loyalty to the word. v.9

"For the word of God" -Apostle John suffered because of his commitment to the Word of God. He chose to stand for the truth. He did not dilute the truth or hide it. See his letters; he categorically declares what is true and who is genuine. He was a faithful defender of the truth. Notice some of his statements from his letters: -

- Disobedient and loveless believers are liars (1Jn. 2:4; 4:20).
- It is good that false believers leave the assembly (1Jn. 2:19)
- Do not even greet a false teacher, (2Jn v. 10)

How strong was his conviction and stand!

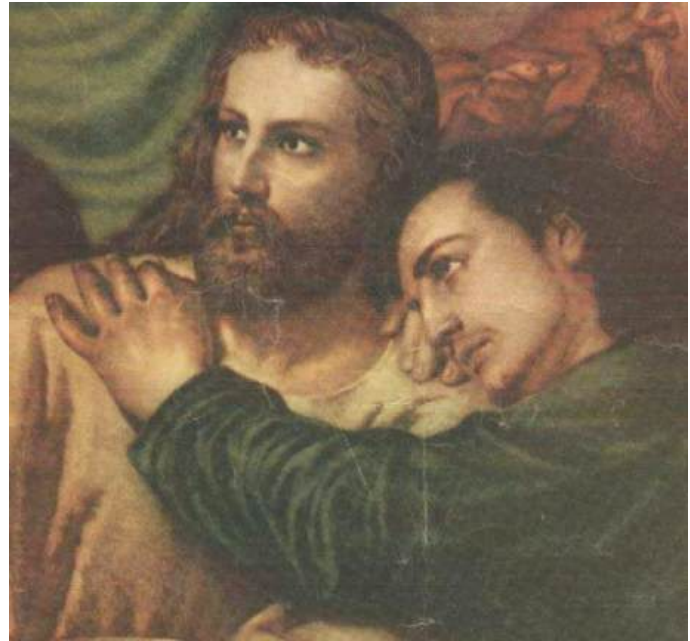
5. Fullness of the Spirit . V.10

"In the spirit" - Though all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all are filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5: 18). Fullness and control of the Holy Spirit are possible only when the Word of God richly dwells in our heart (Col. 3:16). Any ministry in the Church of God must be carried out by men full of the Holy Spirit, even if it is manual labor, (Acts 6:3; 11:24). God can use only those who are led and guided by Spirit. Often due to ignorance,

disobedience or even sin, the Holy Spirit is unable to work, (Eph. 4:30; 1The.5:19; Acts 16:6, 7). Many are not properly tuned to hear the voice of the Spirit of God (1Cor. 2:14). The Lord is looking for saints who will allow the Holy Spirit to take possession of them to accomplish His purposes.

6. Intimacy. V.10

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” - Notice how he describes the first day of the week as ‘Lord’s Day’. Though alone, he is conscious of the time and days. He gave special importance to the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, the Day when His Lord rose again from the dead. That is the day when saints worship and remember Him collectively. It seems John spent much of his time at the feet of the Lord. Earlier too we read, he enjoyed a close, intimate relation with the Lord Jesus, (Jn.13:23). As a result, John was able to understand the mind of the Lord. When all the others fled, he was at the cross of Christ along with those sisters. It was to him the Lord entrusted the responsibility of taking care of his mother (John 19:26).



That is the way God always works. He speaks to those who are nearer to Him. He will use them, reveal His secrets and burden to them. Further, He will also reveal Himself to those who are closer to Him, (Cf. Matt. 17:2ff; John 14:23; Ps. 25:14)

Stay close to Him, enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ, know Him more personally, see His glory and greatness, and then He will entrust responsibility. Remember, no man or an institution can give us ministry. The Lord Himself equips, appoints and entrusts us with service when we are close to Him (Isa. 6:8; John 15:27). **G&P**

“It is sad to see the damage that is done to a local church when the wives of elders or deacons gossip and slander others.”

Warren W. Wiersbe

“Liars like to listen to scandal, slander, and a spiteful tongue. In that sense, the kind of talk a man feeds on is a barometer of what he is at heart.”

William MacDonald

THE ROLES OF ANGELS TOWARDS CHRIST

Angels were actively ministering during the Old Testament period. They also played a significant role in the ministry of Jesus Christ, serving as messengers, protectors, and ministers during key events in His life. We come across three specific roles of angels towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Role of Worshiping Christ:



In Hebrews 1:6 we read, “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him.”

A careful reader would find deep things and volumes of lessons from this beautiful verse. It takes the readers back 2000 years ago. The scene is in heaven; where the Triune God is on the Throne, surrounded by innumerable angels. The Son of God - the Lord Jesus Christ - the promise of the Seed of the woman which was promised long back in, Genesis 3:15, was about to get fulfilled. The Son of God was now ready to become Man and come into this world.

This verse reveals what happened in heaven just before Christ was about to leave the heaven. When Jesus first entered the world, born of the virgin, the Father called on all the innumerable angels in the heavenly host to bow down and worship Him.

Before Jesus was to enter into this world in that Mary’s womb, the innumerable angels bowed down in front of Him and worshiped Him on the Father’s command. What a beautiful scene that was to look at, the whole of heavenly host bowing in front of the Lord Jesus Christ. The earth

was not aware of what was going on in heaven just before Jesus came down to this planet Earth, but the heavenly host were bowing down in front of the Son - the first begotten. Why did the Father command the angels to worship Him?

It's a Proof:

The worship of Christ by angels is a testament to His divine authority and the recognition of His role in the cosmic order. It serves as a reminder of the worship due to Christ, both in heaven and on earth. It also calls believers to join in the eternal chorus of worship that exalts Him as Lord and Savior.



▶ OUTLINE

Bro. M. David Gandhi, Hyderabad

The Mount of Olives and Christ

Today, the world talks about the Strait of Hormuz because of wars, oil supplies, and global business concerns. But God's people should be thinking about the Mount of Olives, because it is connected with Christ's prophecies and His return.

It's an Example:

The worship of Christ by angels serves as a model for human worship. If heavenly beings are commanded to worship Christ, it highlights the importance and necessity of human worship directed towards Him. This worship is not only an acknowledgment of His divine nature but also a response to His sacrificial love and redemptive work on the cross.

It's a Reminder:

When God said “worship Him” - He reminded the angels ones again concerning whom to worship. Because in the past, one of the angels in heaven whose name was Lucifer desired worship from everyone. He wanted to go high and above God, so that he may be worshiped (Isaiah 14:12-14). God reminds even the angels ones again, “Worship Him,” and not any other heavenly hosts nor anyone on this earth.

From ages, Satan's one main desire is that others worship him. When Satan came to Jesus to test Him, Satan's last effort was to get worship from Jesus (Matthew 4:9).

G&P

To be continued (DV) ■

The Importance

The Mount of Olives lies east of Jerusalem and is at about 800 meters above sea level. From there, one can see the entire city of Jerusalem. About forty years after Jesus prophesied the Roman

commander Titus reportedly used this mountain to study Jerusalem before destroying the city.

From the Mount of Olives, Jesus was not only looking at Jerusalem but prophetically viewing the future of the whole world. That is why He spoke about all nations and peoples witnessing His return.

The First Mention

The first major mention of the Mount of Olives in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel 15:30. When David's son Absalom rebelled against him, David crossed Jerusalem barefoot, weeping as he climbed the Mount of Olives.



David wept as he was rejected by his own son and people. Similarly, Jesus, the Son of David, also wept while looking toward Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. David wept because he lost his throne, but Jesus wept because He foresaw Jerusalem's future destruction.

The three-and-a-half-year earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ revolves around the Mount of Olives.

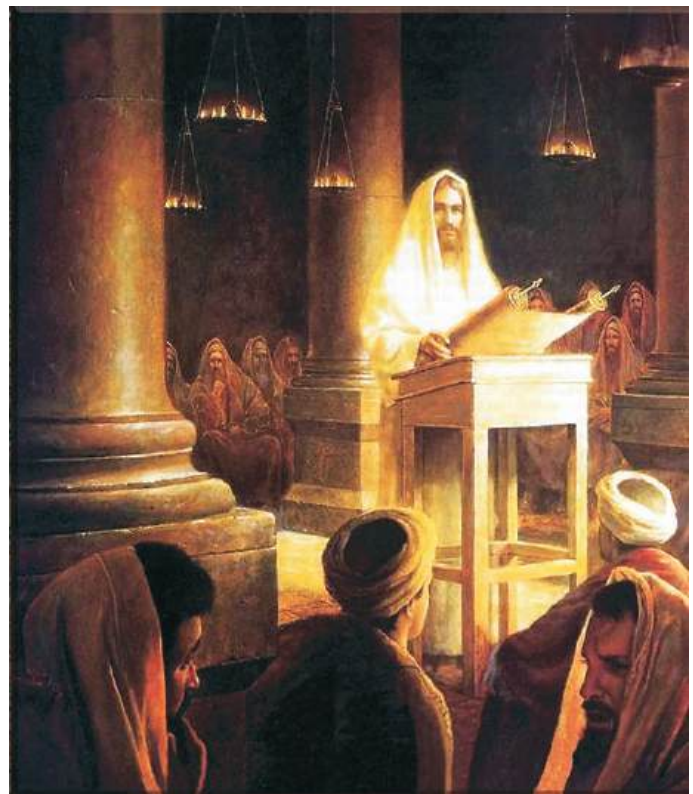
1. A Place of His Abode

At the end of John 7, people went to their own homes, but John 8:1 says that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Others had homes, but Jesus often spent His nights in the olive grove, praying and communing with His Father. It was a place of rest and fellowship with God.

This teaches believers that after the activities of life, they should seek God's presence.

2. A Place of His Announcement

According to Luke 21:37, Jesus regularly went to the Mount of Olives. It was part of His daily spiritual routine, just as attending the synagogue and teaching God's Word were. In Matthew 24:3-14, while Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him privately and asked: "When will these things happen? What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"



Jesus answered that many false Christ's and false prophets would arise and deceive many people. There would be wars, rumours of wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecutions. These would be only the beginning of sorrows. This prophetic message given by Jesus on the Mount of Olives is known as the Olivet Discourse.

3. A Place of Quiet Time Alone

The Garden of Gethsemane, located on the Mount of Olives, was where Jesus spent His final night before His crucifixion. His life began in the humble surroundings of Bethlehem, and His final night before suffering was spent on the Mount of Olives.

4. A Place of His Agony

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed repeatedly: "Not My will, but Yours be done." Even under great agony, He completely submitted Himself to the Father's will.

5. A Place of His Arrest

Jesus was arrested on the Mount of Olives. Soldiers came with swords, clubs, torches, and lanterns. When Jesus said, "I am He," His authority was revealed. He could have called thousands of angels to rescue Him, but He willingly surrendered in obedience to His Father's plan.



6. A Place of His Ascension

According to Acts 1, after His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with His disciples and then ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives.

7. A Place of His Arrival

According to Zechariah 14, when Jesus returns to the earth, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.

The mountain will split into two, and God will defeat His enemies. This location is closely connected with Christ's Second Coming.

A Call to Be Ready

Jesus warned that false prophets and deceivers would come before the end. Yet He also gave an important command: "Do not be troubled." Believers are encouraged not to fear but to prepare for Christ's return. The Bible closes with Jesus' promise: "Surely I am coming quickly."



For the world, the coming judgments may be frightening news, but for believers, Christ's return is a blessed hope! Jesus promised in John 14 that He would prepare a place for His followers and come again to receive them to Himself.

We, the believers who study Matthew 24, need to watch the signs of the times, remain faithful, and be ready for the return of Jesus Christ. **G&P**

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Study: Part 10
Preparation Before Battle, Josh. 4 & 5

The Israelites could not possess the land as soon as they crossed over the River Jordan. They have to fight against the inhabitants of Canaan before they can occupy the land. Even though the Lord has already given them the land, these enemies will not allow them to possess it. So, they have to conquer them first. Israel knew this, so they crossed the river well prepared for war, Jos. 4:13. Even when they journeyed through the wilderness, they had to face several enemies. But here, not only are the enemies more in number but also more frightened, aggressive and united (5:1; 11:1-5).



Fight Inevitable

There is a lesson for us in this. When we plan to go forward and appropriate all what the Lord has planned for us, evil forces with all their resources will work against us to frustrate our effort.

Never forget, salvation is free, but victory and enjoyment of spiritual possession demand meticulous labor and real fight. The more we long to go forward, the more the enemy will fight, and the fight will be more severe.

Often, we neglect this aspect. Many think, Christian life is very easy and entertaining. Notice Apostle Paul's exhortations,

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, you may wage the good warfare" (1Tim. 1:18).

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2Tim. 2:3).

How much are we aware and ready for this battle?

How successful are we in this conflict?

Sadly, many have been careless and seriously suffering as a result. But the Israelites were ready for battle — 40000 men. If the soldiers are ready, and the enemy too is gathered together against Israel and that too in the enemy territory, what shall Israel do now? Start the fight!

Not Ready Yet

But the Lord says, “Wait”. You have to do something more before you will be ready to fight against the enemy to conquer their land and possess it. Remember, God is never in a hurry. It took around four thousand years to send the Seed of the woman to redeem man. Now more than two thousand years have passed since He ascended to Heaven, still the Lord is waiting to return.

Our hurry often reveals our impatience and pride, and it ends up in waste. Let us slow down and listen to the still small voice of the Spirit. The Lord spoke through Isaiah, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15).

Before rushing into action, make sure that we have fulfilled God's requirements. More than fight and activities, keeping faith and loyalty to the Lord are important. As far as Israelites were concerned, five things needed to take place before they could move forward and fight. All these five things teach us valuable lessons on how to prepare for our spiritual fight.

1. Erect two memorials, 4:2, 3, 9

One in the midst of Jordan and the other in Gilgal, the first camping site.

Why memorials?

These had two objectives, one as a sign for the future generation (vs. 6, 7, 21, 22). The Lord wants the fathers to teach their children of the wonderful works of God, using this monument as a sign.

But there was another objective, a testimony for the gentiles, (v. 24). Anyone who sees this huge heap of stones will remember the mighty works of Jehovah. Unbelievers must be challenged when they look at the mighty works of God for His people.

Remember, earlier when Israel crossed over the Red Sea, there was no such command to erect a monument.



Notice the contrast:

At the Red Sea: There was no requirement from people; Moses said ‘stand still and see’ (Exo. 14:13). It was God's own work, on His own initiative.

Whereas at Jordan: Many requirements were there like faith and obedience before the Lord would do a mighty work among them.

One thing is obvious, crossing the Jordan was unique, and they should often remember it. What could be the spiritual meaning of these monuments?

a. Stones in the middle of Jordan, v.9

It was the place where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark stood, while the people crossed over. There, their self-life, rebellion, and wandering all came to a stop. The defeated, disobedient life of wilderness was buried there. Thus, it was the place of their death — death of the old man, self, etc.

Crossing the Red Sea is a picture of Christ's death for us. On His own initiative, He died to redeem us; we have no part in that work other than believing it. But to enter into the rest and for possession, we also should recognize our death with Christ.

That is what crossing the Jordan signifies — our death with Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). We don't need to crucify ourselves to get rid of our flesh. God has already done it in Christ. We ought to be aware of this truth and yield to Christ (cf. Rom. 6:6, 11, 16).

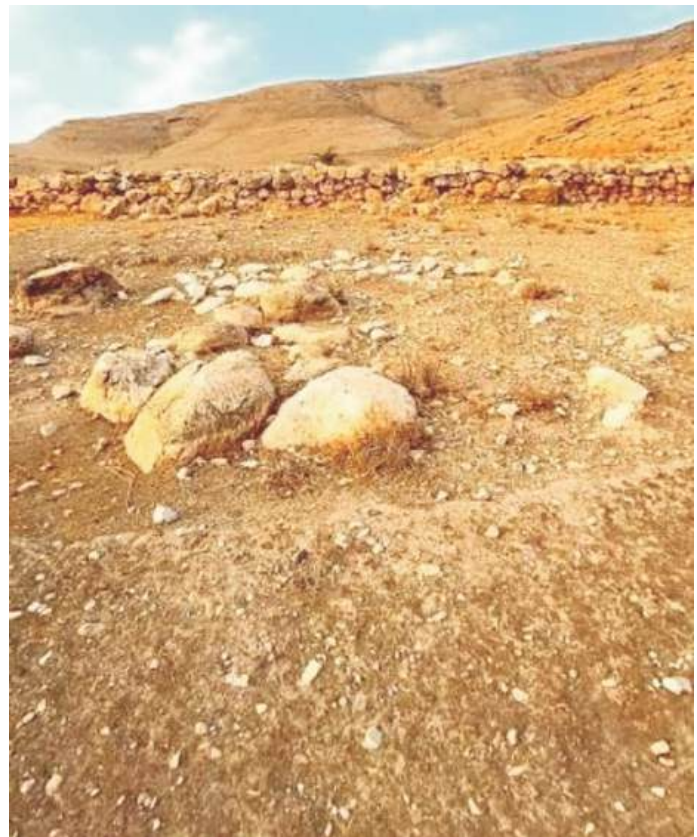


Each time Israel would see this monument, they would remember the end of their old life through Jordan. Similarly, we too should always think of not only Christ's death for us but our death with Him as well. Thus, we need to refuse to

respond or yield to the old sin nature, (cf. Rom. 6:12; 2Cor. 4:10–12; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:8–14; John 12:24). So, in preparation to fight, conquer and possess, we need to die to self—reckoning ourselves dead.

b. Stones at Gilgal, 4:20

Anybody can easily recognize the twelve smooth stones that were taken out of Jordan and placed at their first camping site. This heap of stones testifies Israelites' new life. They not only died to their self-life but also got a new life in Gilgal. Israel had to ensure to remind themselves these things often (cf. Josh. 10:15, 43; 1Sam. 7:16). So it is in the life of a believer. Not only have we died with



Christ but we are also alive in Christ (Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3, 4). To succeed in our spiritual battles, we need to keep both these aspects - death and new life - always in our mind (Rom. 6:13, 14; Eph. 1:19, 20; 4:24). **G&P**

To be continued (DV) ■

▶ Anecdote: 1

DEATH TO SELF



One sister was about to leave for China for missionary work, when one friend said, “What on earth are you going to bury yourself in China for? You will never stand the climate; you will be dead in six months.”

She replied, “My dear girl, I want you to know five years ago I died. When Jesus called me to China, I bowed my head at the cross and died to everything except God and China”.

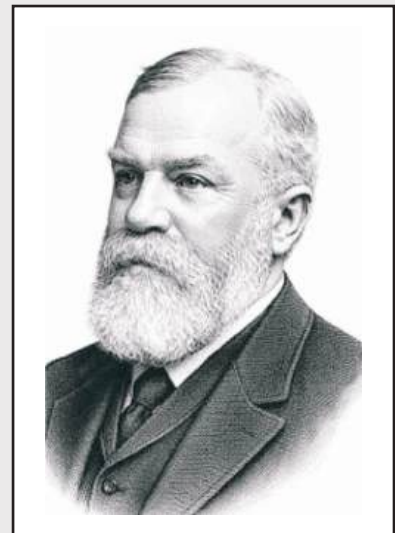
▶ Anecdote: 2

Moody's Prayer

Well known revival preacher D. L Moody, as a small boy overheard somebody saying, ‘The world has not seen what God can do in and through that person who is committed fully to the Lord.’

It is said that immediately he sought for a place to pray, gave Himself to the Lord, saying, ‘Lord let me be that person.’ We know that the Lord honored his prayer, commitment.

Someone commented, ‘Moody kept one leg in America and the other in Europe and moved both the continents with his ministry.’ Still the same Lord is alive and seeks such to glorify His name.



▶ Anecdote: 3

DEATH TO PASSIONS

Fourth century Church Father St. Augustine got saved reading Romans 13: 13, 14. The next day his friends came to call him to go out to play as usual. He did not come out of the room, but loudly replied to their repeated calls, ‘*Augustine died yesterday*’.

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