

THE EDIFIER

Church of God (Seventh Day) Australia

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CHURCH OF GOD (SEVENTH DAY)

From the Pulpit

Who Was Job?

A Heart for the Lord

The Impostor Syndrome

A magazine dedicated to uplifting
and transforming peoples' lives
through the uncompromised Word of God

THE EDIFIER



The truth will make you free

3 Intercession

4 Who Was Job?

6 Australian General Conference

7 Absent gods

8 The Abundance of the Heart

9 A Podium to Ponder

11 Q&A Dear Reader

12 The Armour of God

14 The Impostor Syndrome

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Photo of hand built podium featuring a steel base, 3D printed adjustable feet, and a laminated teak top. Hanging banner sewn by Rebecca Klassek from fabric purchased in Texas, USA, specifically for this purpose. (Messageweek photo.)

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From the Pulpit

We read from the book of Nehemiah that, "Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose."

Today, the podium or pulpit is a symbol for giving voice exclusively to the very words of God.

This bodes responsibility for everyone who speaks within the gathered, sacred assembly each Sabbath!

Paul reminded Christians of this responsibility when he wrote: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17 ESV)

So whether it is a scripture reading, a personal testimony, a sermonette, prayer or sermon, the voice emanating from behind that symbol of sanctity must only speak that which is given from above; in other words, the very oracles of God.

We are all recipients of His grace, and this is experienced by the free gift of the Holy Spirit. With prayer and preparation, according to their God-ordained roles, men and women in a spirit of holiness can and must convey the reality of Jesus' teaching of "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you..." (John 15:7)

As a result, we who are listening are edified, encouraged and empowered by the very Word of God.

Without a podium, of course, we can still speak, in the sense that each of us becomes a public pulpit for the Word of God. Whether over the back fence chatting with a neighbour, or being a voice of grace at a contentious work meeting, each of us has been given the divine power of edifying speech.

The podium pictured on our front cover was a recent gift from the Perth church to our congregation in Sydney. As brother Omar recently commented, "No more loose pages fluttering about..." [See Omar's article on page 9.]

May we take to heart and be mindful of the high calling we have in Christ, as well as the privilege and responsibility it entails, to always speak the very oracles of God. □

John Klassek

Intercession

A Pathway to Joy and Transformation

Intercession is a powerful spiritual discipline. It is a mission to stand in the gap, offering fervent prayers on behalf of others. Such intercession is transformative, and despite sometimes is a labour and burden, and has the potential to bring profound joy and positive outcomes to the life of the intercessor and those they pray for, including the Body of Christ.

Understanding Intercession

Intercession, at its heart, is an act of selfless love and sacrifice. One of the most renowned scriptures illustrating this is found in Isaiah 59:16 (NKJV), "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His own righteousness, it sustained Him." God, Himself, became our Intercessor. We, the body of Christ, are meant to be the intercessors regarding the world needs, and indeed the Church's needs.

The Joy Derived from Intercession

Often, intercession can seem heavy or burdensome, as the intercessor bears the weight of others' needs. However, it is important to remember that prayer can also impart joy. In John 16:24 (NKJV), Jesus encourages His disciples, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." We see a direct correlation between prayer and joy. As we engage in prayerful intercession, we can anticipate a deep and abiding joy derived not from circumstances, but from the intimate communion with God that prayer affords.

Positive Outcomes of Intercession

Intercessory prayer has an extraordinary power to bring about positive change. Intercessors are spiritual warriors, engaging in a battle against the forces of darkness and opening up possibilities for healing, restoration, and transformation in the lives of those they pray for. It is an act of deep love and mercy.

This idea is reinforced in the biblical account of Abraham's intercession for Sodom in Genesis 18:22-33 (NKJV). Although the city was not ultimately saved due to its pervasive wickedness, God listened to Abraham's pleas and would have spared the city had there been enough righteous people.

Intercession and Personal Transformation

Beyond the benefits that intercession brings to others, it also fosters personal transformation in the life of the intercessor. Not only does it deepen our relationship with God, but it also sharpens our spiritual sensitivity, and moulds our character to become more like Christ.

Intercessors often experience a deep sense of peace and satisfaction in knowing they are fulfilling God's will. In Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Concluding Thoughts

There is a transformative power in standing in the gap for others in prayer. It is a holy endeavour that brings about change in the world, fosters personal growth, and is marked by a deep and abiding joy. As we engage in intercession, we participate in a divine conversation, expressing God's heart for humanity, and reaping the joys of positive outcomes that come from a life committed to prayer.

Intercession fulfills 1 John 3:18-19, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." Intercession is an act of love for others and for God that ultimately also brings great joy to those who carry the burdens of others before the throne of grace. □

*Susan Heming
Newcastle, NSW*

Who was Job?

Recorded in Genesis 46 are the names of all those in Jacob's family who went to join Joseph in Egypt during the famine. There were about 70 in all.

Issachar was the fifth son of Jacob from Leah (after Judah), and his third son was called Job. There are no other Job's mentioned in the Bible, apart from the man who is the subject of the book of Job.

Job is mentioned as being "a man from the land of Uz" (Job 1:1). Who or where was Uz?

The area of Mt Seir is where Esau settled, and "Seir the Horite" and his descendants are mentioned in Genesis 36:20. He had six sons, the youngest being Dishan, whose eldest son was called Uz.

It seems that Seir could have been a contemporary of Abraham, and part of his territory could have been named after his grandson, Uz (who may have been a bit older than, or contemporary of Esau and Jacob). We are told that Esau displaced the Horites, and took over that area (Deuteronomy 2:12).

The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which the LORD gave to them.) (Deuteronomy 2:12 ESV)

Uz's family, being Horites would have been displaced. If Job's move there was after this event, then there would have been incentive for Esau to allow "kith and kin" to help them occupy a recently vacated land.

If Job, from the book of Job, was Issachar's son, why did he move to "the land of Uz", which would have been to the north of Midian, but south east of "Mt Seir"? Job was a righteous man, and would have been uncomfortable with the ingress of the false religion and "the gods of Egypt" that his fellow Israelites were being taken in by. He would not have been comfortable in the society of idolaters, and this would have been a motivation to emigrate to a region occupied by descendants of Abraham, not caught up by this idolatry from Ham.



After Sarah died, Abraham had another wife, Keturah, and had six children by her. Her fourth son was Midian, and youngest was Shuah. We are told Abraham gave all his other sons gifts and sent them away from Isaac to the east, that is, of Canaan (Genesis 25:5-6)

One of Job's friends was "Bildad the Shuhite" (or Shuahite), a descendant of Shuah.

Esau took several wives; the first was Adah "the daughter of Elon the Hittite" and his firstborn son by her was called Eliphaz (Genesis

36:2, 10). The firstborn of Eliphaz was Teman.

The first of Job's three friends was called "Eliphaz the Temanite". It seems probable that Teman would have called one of his sons Eliphaz after his father (being the firstborn of Esau).

Esau started his family before Jacob, so Issachar's son, Job, was two generations from his grandfather. A son of Teman who could have been "Eliphaz the Temanite", would have been three generations from Esau. This would place him in the same sort of age-group as Job.

Abraham's brother, Nahor married his brother Haran's daughter Milcah (she was Lot's sister). We are told Haran died before his father, in Ur (Genesis 11:27-29). Nahor and Milcah had eight sons. Buz was their second, and Bethuel the youngest, the father of Rebecca (who became Isaac's wife).

Another individual we hear of talking to Job is Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram. He was the youngest of his friends. Elihu could have been a descendant of Nahor, Abraham's brother, from the family of Buz. These descendants of Abraham and his family would have been worshippers of his God.

God said this of Abraham: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." (Genesis 18:19)

Midian was a son of Abraham who would have received instruction in God's ways from his dad, and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law was probably Midian's grandson or great grandson. (The wilderness of Sinai of the Bible and Mt Horeb [Mt Sinai] are in the land of Midian. The present day "Sinai Peninsula" was not called that back then; it was Egyptian territory, as it has reverted to now.)

We are not told how long Job's trial lasted or when it took place. Job and his wife had seven sons and three daughters. The minimum time they could have had these would have been over ten years; more like over twenty years. Say fifteen, if they started when Job was 30, they would all be around when he was 45, and the eldest of them would be 30, and independent, living in his own house, when the youngest was 15. They would be old enough to be looking after themselves, with the youngest looked out for by the eldest when they were all killed (Job 1:18-19). This would have made Job around 60 when his trial started.

We are told after his troubles, "God restored the fortunes of Job" and he lived 140 years more, and saw his offspring to the fourth generation. That would make him living to around 200 years, certainly old for that time (Job 42:17), but a few generations before, they were living much older (Genesis 11). We are not told much about Job's

wife, apart from the derangement from her grief (Job 2:9). It is possible she could have died, and Job remarried, but if she had borne ten more children for Job, it would have made her close to 70 or 80 at the last birth, which is in line with some women at the time (and God's intervening blessing).

It is interesting that Job gave his daughters inheritance with their brothers, which is quite a departure from the male dominated inheritance custom of the time.

When did all this happen in history? (If we read the Bible in strict chronological order, parts of the book of Job are read concurrently with Genesis.) If one takes the date of the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt as being 1446 BC, then their arrival there would be in 1661 BC, then Job's trial would have been somewhere around 1600 BC, and his death just before the Exodus around 1460.

There is something that could be of relevance with the timing of these things, because Job's trial would have come on him about the time when God was allowing Satan to corrupt his fellow Israelites, and tempt them into serving the idols of Egypt.

God inspired this in Psalm 135 verse 4, "For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure."

Satan is most interested in the people God is working with; the rest of mankind are under his sway and influence (they are "in his bag" so to speak). Much of his efforts are directed towards God's people but only as God permits, and furthermore we also must not give him opportunity (Ephesians 4:27). Similarly, we need to be aware of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11) as well as resist him (James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9).

As we see, there are a lot of threads that can build a case for Job, Issachar's son departing from Egypt early on and establishing himself in a land occupied by Abraham's descendants, south-east of Mt Seir and North of Midian, a land that could have been called "the land of Uz".

Individually, these observations don't necessarily have much strength, but put together they seem to make quite a case. □

*Michael Evans,
Tapitalli, NSW*

SAVE THE DATE
20-23
MARCH, 2024

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SEVENTH DAY
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You are invited to the Australian General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) on 20-23 March 2024. An exciting schedule of events is being planned. The venue for the conference is at the lesser hall at 1470 Stoneville Road, Mundaring, Western Australia

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A HEART FOR THE LORD

Our heart beats around 100,000 times a day. Our emotions swell in our heart. We develop heartburn when our emotions are tried with difficulties. Our chest “burns” as we weep with sorrow. When we see our first child or grandchild for the first time, our heart flutters as the thrill of love races through us. When witnessing something awful or wonderful, our heart may leap with emotion, or ripple with fright. So, what of our heart for God?

“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.” (Proverbs 16:1 KJV).

Is our “heart” for the LORD? Are we preparing ourselves to speak His gospel of the kingdom of God, in Christ, from our heart? Is our tongue telling our world about the love of Jesus? Does our heart burn and yearn for God?

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weighs the spirits.” (Proverbs 16:2). Do we judge ourselves in our heart as clean from sin? God says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We may do well to also remember the prophet Jeremiah who lamented, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Is our heart right with God?

Are we daily preparing our hearts for the worship of God and for His service? Have we dived so deeply into scripture that all we want to do is His will? The author of Proverbs also says, “A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9). Allow Him to guide and direct us in all things. Our heart must be so on fire for God and His saving grace that our tongue speaks of Him all the day long.

Prepare yourself and allow God to speak through you to share His word in our everyday lives. May we have the heart to testify to the gospel message of our Lord Jesus Christ, for, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks!” (Matthew 12:34) □

*Mike Wallace
Montana, USA*



Absent gods

If there really is a loving Creator God or gods, would we expect them to leave us alone, give us no clear instructions and hide themselves throughout history? Of course we wouldn't expect that.

Or would we expect them to leave clear and verifiable footprints in history of their existence and activity, and to appear to humanity in personal and powerful ways? I think most of us would expect that.

A multitude of alleged gods out there sadly fail to meet these reasonable expectations. However, the God of the Bible meets them marvellously. He spoke to the patriarchs and the Hebrew prophets over the centuries, and then personally revealed Himself, as the prophets predicted He would, in the person of Jesus Christ walking this earth in human flesh with us.

Jesus publicly and verifiably did all we'd reasonably expect the Creator could do including healing multitudes, controlling the elements, raising the dead and loving us selflessly. God did reveal Himself in an extremely personal and loving way. Jesus Himself said, “If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father.” Christ's heroic and radical sacrifice to reconcile sinful humanity to God and His resurrection were so profound and moving they've never been forgotten.

Christ's impact has been as we'd expect. Multitudes from all nations follow Him. Christianity is more widespread than any other religion and its book containing God's expected instructions for us, the Bible, has no near rival in terms of inspired prophetic brilliance or distribution.

If you feel God has been absent, look again, for “He is not far from any one of us.” (Acts 17:27) □

*David Kidd,
Pastor, New Zealand*

Out of The Abundance Of The Heart

On the day of judgement, people will give account of every careless word they speak (Matthew 12:36-37). As followers of Christ, we are accountable for the things we say. Yes, even in careless moments! And if we doubt whether something we are saying is acceptable, we should not say it. As with all things, we should never act contrary to our highest convictions in Christ, and when in doubt, always err on the side of caution. For whatever does not proceed from faith, is sin (Romans 14:23).

There is potential for careless words in every remark we make. Let's explore this topic!

We must always speak the truth. Note what God says about lies (Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 6:16-19). Scripture teaches us not to curse or utter misfortune on others (James 3:10). Strong admonition is given against swearing on something or someone, especially God (Matthew 5:34-37). Let what we say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil.

Avoid foolish talk. Never speak something which we are unsure of or have not properly investigated. We exercise care in posting on social media, never having to later delete a comment. There is no room for spoken filthiness or foul language (Ephesians 5:4).

We learn to never over-speak or unjustly interrupt others in conversation. Scripture forbids gossip and negative talk about others, (2 Corinthians 12:20), or sowing discord among brothers (Proverbs 6:16-19). Followers of Christ never teach or encourage something that is false or contrary to the Word of God. This is especially important as those who teach will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1). We're careful not to repeat common or worldly euphemisms, such as, "Oh my goodness". Remember Jesus said, "no one is good

except God alone" (Mark 10:18)! May we never utter a crude joke or convey offensive sarcasm and humour (Ephesians 5:4). An anathema to the Holy Spirit is anything that is rude, dirty, or mean-spirited. Likewise, blaspheming the name of God is strictly forbidden (Jude 1:8).

Every word we speak reveals something of our heart. Our words will either justify or condemn us on the day of judgment (Matthew 12:37).

In Matthew 15:10-20 Jesus drew a sharp contrast between the tradition of the time which involved ritual hand washing prior to a meal and the words that we speak. Concluding that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is that which comes out of the mouth that defiles a person, Jesus boldly exclaimed that these evils come from our innermost nature. They aren't accidents or mere "mistakes"; they reveal how corrupt we are on the inside.

Murders do not begin with the dagger, but with the malice of the soul. Adulteries and fornications are first gloated over in the heart before they are enacted by the body. The heart is the cage from which these unclean words and actions emerge.

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45)

We must control the words that come out of our mouths and bridle our tongue, otherwise we are religious hypocrites (James 1:26). As one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), self-control offers essential safety in avoiding those sins that can easily ensnare us in living a Christian life.

Paul aptly sums it up when he wrote: And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17) □

*Michael Surnak,
Adelaide, SA*



A Podium To Ponder

“And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose.”

(Nehemiah 8:4)

Even the sleepiest become more attentive. Instead of looking down on a table and mumbling, one can look to the audience and project their voice more adequately. With eye contact and a clear voice, the audience keeps from resting their eyes.

For presenters who are nonlinear in their presentation style, multiple pages can be spread out at the one time, allowing them to jump to points and scriptures at will, based on audience response. Scattered and disjointed? Not at all, more like fluid and inspired.

Feeling parched or tickle in the throat? Don't worry, podiums often come equipped with convenience cup holders to quench thirst and keep your voice clear.

Aesthetically, a podium also provides a place for an attractive decorative material runner, which provides an added level of elegance, respect and dignity for the worship service.

Presenters can sometimes be lost on stage or pace back and forth. A podium keeps them grounded and focused, a place to call home and location of stability. It also signifies the authority of the Word of God, commanding respect and attention.

Not sure how to effectively gesture with your hands? No need! Just rest them on the podium. Or, for the even less experienced, simply grip the podium.

For these reasons and more, a reliable, consistent podium offers a welcome companion to our church services.

On behalf of the Sydney congregation, we would like to thank the Perth brethren for their kind thoughtfulness in providing us with our much-appreciated podium. Maybe we can bring back those longer Ezra type of sermons after all? ☐

*Omar Afiouni
Sydney, NSW*

Without a podium, the questions arise: Do I read from my phone? Maybe hold a sheet of paper? Should I fold the piece of paper to give it more stability? How do I juggle a Bible and notes? Notes on a table are too far to read! I shouldn't keep looking down. I should have produced those presentation slides after all!

Thus, are some of the challenges in presenting a message at church. However, not so anymore with a brand-new podium featuring a cup-holder as well! I don't know if Ezra was the first to have a dedicated presentation space, but he sure has been an inspiration ever since he gave that half-day message when he presented.

Regardless of how inspired a speaker may be these days, longer oratory messages are not as well received as they used to be. A presentation platform on the other hand is an excellent idea. How so, you ask? Allow me to share why:

A podium helps notes to no longer fly away, but stay organised at the perfect angle. Too steep and the notes slide down, too flat and reflection from light make it difficult to read, not to mention the breeze of overhead fans sending them drifting into the audience.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

(Galatians 5:22-25 ESV)

“

The richness of God's providential care is ever evident in the story of our lives – often played out over decades. Our response becomes one of thanksgiving, praising God for His masterful and supreme care – as woven even in times of doubt and despair, suffering, ill-health or persecution. We have much to be grateful for, and at the top of that list are the precious relationships we form, especially as brothers and sisters in Christ.

”

CAN YOU FIND THE WORDS?

A P M S U I Z R P I X L R Y C S Y P T M
 O T E U P X B A S O S U S S F P M U C A
 C C M F E U I O A B V D A A A A B M U V
 F O Z F A C B B C L J T L B F T V E N C
 O C J E C N L I V O N Z V B I I Z V J A
 N Z X R E Q E S C V N Y A A G E D M E D
 U S W I J F O C Y E V R T T D N P E S T
 E R N N R M Z C F S Z S I H K C E N U R
 E P Z G S I E O X W Q J O E I E U G S U
 W S W M K G Y U Z E L V N L N I P D V T
 R A Z C M P M F A T H E R L G K G Q M H
 J V B F W M J A B L B T H Z D X T W N W
 U I D R L M H C H R I S T R O L X H P P
 P O D T O B E D I E N C E B M Q M U L E
 G U G T C G C K P E L F A I T H D R L D
 U R O Q M T R I G H T E O U S N E S S I
 E S S H N K A P J F O D J H N T G K X E
 A S P C L I D W O Z B R C H U R C H R B
 C Q E I X H R G Y U D G R A C E T A S A
 D S L B H W G C X K O U K B V T U U I W

OBEDIENCE
 LOVE
 FAITH
 RIGHTEOUSNESS
 JOY
 SUFFERING
 SABBATH
 JESUS
 PEACE
 KINGDOM

TRUTH
 GOSPEL
 CHURCH
 FATHER
 GRACE
 SAVIOUR
 CHRIST
 SALVATION
 BIBLE
 PATIENCE

Exploring essential Biblical doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in this new video series.

This We Believe

cog7.au/believe

Q&A

Dear Reader,

So delighted that you are reading the Bible daily, and to know that from within its pages you're experiencing the "wow" factor. It is, after all, the oldest, most printed, published, translated and distributed book in all of human history!

Some read it for its literary or historical content; others for inspiration. Others wilfully ignore it as a mythological appendage long since abandoned. The latest generation of youth have never heard of it! Consider this: you didn't find the Bible; the Bible found you!

A sincere and open reading of it provides first a compelling and then irrefutable case to believe that there is a Creator God, who manifested in and as the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is essentially His "instruction manual", providing teaching, counsel, comfort, rebuke and instruction. It embodies the parable, the prophetic as it does the poetic. It tells us who we are, where we came from, and just what is on offer.

The Bible is an invitation to spend a lifetime seeking truth. It's convicting narrative then compels us to always speak truthfully and reflect truth insofar as it is possible in all we say and do. We soon discover that the personification of that Truth is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Reader beware, though! There are some beliefs and constructs within the Christian tradition that don't find support from the scriptures. One of them is the notion of a pre-tribulation "rapture."

While the "rapture" is an interesting construct, it is not a term or idea found in the Bible. It is an attempt by well-meaning theologians, however, to understand and outline what it might be like when

Jesus returns amidst the prophecies of a world on the brink of annihilation. Jesus said that He would return, and any serious student of scripture awaits that apparently surprising, even unexpected moment.

A better understanding, however, of meeting the Lord in the air and being with Him for eternity, is the Biblical term "resurrection." The theme of "resurrection" appears consistently throughout the pages of the Bible. In fact, in a letter to the Hebrews, the author tells us that many righteous people lie asleep in their graves as of at this time, having not yet received their reward, but are awaiting Jesus' resurrection call. Jesus says that when He returns, He will call the righteous from their graves.

So, the question of course is: will Jesus return in the imminent future? Quite possibly; we certainly hope so! There are numerous passages in scripture that tell both of the suddenness of His return and the conditions that precede it.

In the lead up to those events, the Bible tells us that some parts of the world will be cataclysmically engaged in horrific war, famine, deception and pestilence, and yet for others, life will seem like normal. What will it be like? "As in the days of Noah..." says Jesus, reminding us of an apparent large scale societal blindness of the things that really matter, as well as of a society characterised by violence, immorality and unbelief.

Continue to enjoy your journey through the Bible. Read it every day. Read it out aloud. Take to heart its counsel, wisdom, guidance, commandments, joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in Jesus that we experience the fullness of life, not only in this age, but forever in the age to come.

And, any questions that may arise, ask them first in prayer. The best thing we can ever do is to always have an honest, humble and enquiring heart! □

From the Editor



The Armour Of God

The belt of truth is the first item mentioned in Ephesians 6:14-18. This is because truth undergirds and holds the rest of the spiritual armour just as the belt around the waist of the Roman soldier holds the rest of his clothing together. Jesus Christ is our Truth (John 14:6).

Truth is a powerful asset when it comes to spiritual battle. It gives us confidence to move forward because it paralyzes Satan. The prime example of truth being applied as a weapon is by Jesus Christ when on the Mount of Temptation (Luke 4:4). We must boldly declare the truth of God's word in every area of our lives. Satan has no counter offensive to pure, unadulterated truth (Psalm 12:6). The truth inferred in Luke 4:4 is that deep spiritual hunger can only be fully satisfied by God. Life is more than just physical well-being.

The “breastplate of righteousness” is the next item in Paul’s defensive arsenal! As followers of Jesus, we do not operate by our own righteousness. We are to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. (See Matthew 6:33).

Jesus Christ is our righteousness (1 John 2:1). The breastplate as worn covers one of the most important organs in the body, the heart. With every beat, the heart gives life to the rest of the body. In a spiritual sense, the heart is where our earnest desires reside. It’s what we yearn for and treasure the most. Our intense desires can either be longing for the temporal and deceitful riches of the world or our focus can be the eternal life and riches in Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:21).

Just as physical, fierce battles are fought between opposing countries for territorial possession, so also is there an intense spiritual battle vying for our allegiance and worship.

Satan wants to entice and lure people into sinfulness so he can enslave them under his authority (2 Corinthians 4:4). However, the one true God in our Lord Jesus Christ wants to liberate us from sin into holiness and eternal life in the heavenly kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:1-5).

Paul wrote to those at Ephesus in AD 60-61, around the time he was in prison in Rome. It is likely that he was inspired to write about the armour of God by looking at a Roman soldier’s military attire.

Let’s look at the significance of each component part of the armour of God and how to effectively use it in spiritual warfare.

We will see that the armour of God is essentially Jesus Christ. We use the armour not in our own strength but in the power of God.

When we long for the standard of righteousness in Christ and habitually practice it on a daily basis, the falseness and pretentious nature of this world becomes alien and indeed distasteful. We then customarily shun all unrighteous activities just as the breastplate of the Roman soldier deflects any poisonous arrows.

Next, the feet shod with the gospel of peace is the part of the body that enables us to move from one place to another. In the spiritual realm we are encouraged to bring the good news to people who are in enemy territory. Jesus Christ is our Peace (John 14:27).

We must move beyond our comfort zone in order to bring the message of deliverance to people who exist in darkness and confusion. When we declare the good news of the salvation in Jesus Christ and people respond positively, it turns doom, gloom and anguish into one of hope, peace and gladness. It's like freeing prisoners of war.

The "shield of faith" is next. In physical warfare, the shield protects the uncovered body parts from fiery arrows. The Roman shield consisted of two slabs of strong wood tightly glued together covered with thick leather and doused with water to quench and deflect the arrows. In a spiritual sense, the shield of faith represents the strength of our convictions and the steadfastness of our faith in God.

Jesus Christ is our faith. This faith is built through intensive study, meditating and understanding the Word of God in its entirety. It is lived out in obedience. As we stand firm on God's Word, His Holy Spirit empowers us to withstand the fiercest of evil attacks. Paul tells us in Romans 10:17 that, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

The helmet of salvation is the next item in Paul's equipment. The helmet worn during war protects the head against deadly blows. In a spiritual context, the head is where the mind is located, where thoughts originate and are processed, as well as where decisions are made to act in a certain way. We choose whether to go in the path of holiness (Isaiah 30:21) or walk in the path of sin and destruction.

So, the mind then is the primary battlefield where Satan directs his attacks, attempting to take control of our attitudes and emotions that lead us away from the path of salvation.

As we wear the helmet of salvation, we rest in the salvation of Christ that God imparts to us. We experience life-giving truth that helps nullify Satan's influence or any stronghold in our minds.

Thus, we surrender every thought to the obedience of Christ. In turn, our mannerisms, behaviour and attitude become God-oriented. In other words, we train our mind to think the way that God thinks.

What does the sword of God mean? The sword is used for both attack and defence. It is sharp and can pierce armour. Similarly, the sword of the Spirit, being the word of God, is used in cutting through Satanic lies and deception. This sharpness is so highly refined that it is analogous to being able to separate joint and marrow. That is, the accuracy and convicting nature of God's Word. In fact, His Word is so deep that it lays bare the thoughts and intents of our heart.

Jesus Christ is the sword of the Spirit – the very Word of God (1 Corinthians 4:5). There are several things we can do to ensure that the armour of God holds up defensively against Satan's wiles. Study and memorise the word of God so we can make it a part of our thought process (2 Timothy 2:15). Meditate on the word of God to have readily available spiritual fortitude (Psalm 119:151). Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). And, declare the relevant truths of the Word of God when we come against temptations to sin.

Put on the armour of God. Pray earnestly. Look to Jesus. Entreat the help of God to overcome sin, self and Satan. Victory is assured! ☐





The Impostor Syndrome

Do we truly realise the power of faith and belief as opposed to doubt and fear? What is the highest, transcendent possibility for you beyond where you are today? Where would you like to be?

Living in a less-than-ideal world, we can at times be beset by persistent voices of uncertainty, fear, distrust that often manifest in a negative condemnation. "You can't do it. You're a failure. Just give up, fake!"

You've probably heard the motto of "fake it until you make it." While on the surface it may sound courageously aspirational, it is in fact, the very opposite.

Words of affirmation say, "Stay with it. Don't give up. Believe in that which is higher than you. Deny the nay-sayers!" But the deceptive mask of a "fake it" persona outwardly manifests success, triumph, prestige when in reality inwardly lesser, undermining voices still persist.

"Fake it until you make it," does have a better cousin. "Faith it until you make it," places our aspirations not on a deceptive inner mask, but on an unflinching belief in a higher, transcendent truth as personified in Jesus Christ. Anchored in Jesus, a believer isn't easily thwarted or manipulated. It is that unswerving faith that reassures us we are not alone. It is the voice of faith knowing the story ends well, no matter how difficult and unyielding the

terrain might be. It is a faith not so much in the self, but in the I AM of the higher good - Jesus!

Impostor syndrome is the negative whisper that we are less than we could be, and worse than we are. But an anchoring in the transcendent Logos of truth does not allow that subversive voice to speak.

The voice of truth says, "Yes, you were sinner with an enormous death debt, but Someone has paid that debt for you, lives to intercede for you, and will never leave or forsake you."

Paul said it aptly in encouraging those in Rome some two thousand years ago. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

The devil, on the other hand, is known as "the accuser of the brethren." His guises are subtle to the point that if we're not careful, we can fall for them. "You're not good enough. You'll never make it. You're a fake..."

In an epic battle between good and evil, we read of such an accusatory encounter high on a mountain. Jesus had just fasted for forty days. He was not only hungry, but malnourished to the point of death. It is estimated that the human body can endure seven days without water and forty days without food. After that, organ failure leads to death. At that point the devil entered the scene and asserted: "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread."

There are two things happening here. The first assertion questions Jesus' identity. In other words, how can a beloved Son be in such an emaciated and malnourished mess? Are you sure you are who you think you are?

The lesser demons, on the other hand, have no issue with Jesus' identity, crying out, "You are the Holy One of God. The Son of God!" But the devil is far more deceptive than his subordinates. He began with the assertion, as he did with Jesus, that we are less than our worth.

And secondly, he then tempts us with the weaker option of self-determination. "You can have those loaves of freshly baked bread right now. You can find strength in my solution; subordinate yourself to my realm, and reign in my domain. Jesus, [or your name] there is an easier way out!"

If our Lord was tested as he was, we can be sure that at times, we too will be tested via this broken, deceptive world's narrative. Yet, even in this, Jesus' model prayer intercedes for us with, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

We can take a life-giving lesson from Jesus' example. He countered the devil with the written word. "It is written," He said, "man cannot live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Case closed. The highest transcendent Truth has spoken. It is written! And likewise, we too must establish the "playing field" by in faith relying on Christ - that which is written and then spoken in truth.

Remember, we are now a new creation in Christ. The apostle John knew how the scales are now balanced. He wrote: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Whoever you were in the past, it is not who you are becoming today! John, who often described himself "as the disciple whom Jesus loved," reassuringly articulated a higher reality he understood well.

His testimony for us today is powerfully reassuring:

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God. (1 John 3:19-21 ESV)

Has your heart occasionally condemned you? Are you wrestling with guilt or inadequacy? Has the memory of old, forgiven sins resurfaced again? Paul's reminder is very reassuring: "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ."

We can take a life-giving lesson from Jesus' example.

The impostor syndrome will always persist when we are outside God's transcendent grace and truth. Yet, in listening to a higher voice than our own, the devil's denigrations simply fall on deaf ears. In fact, scripture triumphantly tells us to "resist the devil and he will flee from you."

In other words, the devil has no power over us, unless of course we give him that power. Never grant those lesser, malevolent and weakening voices an audience. After all, there is a higher claim on our lives. "Fear not," says the Lord, "for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine!"

Firstly, do not be afraid. Secondly, forbid those lesser voices to speak, even if they come from your best friends. "Get behind me, Satan," chided Jesus to one of his closest disciples Peter, "for you don't have the things of God on your mind."

Know that you are not an impostor. Your life and calling have intrinsic value. You are of the truth. You are the light of the world. In Christ, we can do all things in our LORD who strengthens us. We do not have to live in a darkened, subversive narrative.

Trust in the grace and the providence of Christ to dispel those former voices of mediocrity and condemnation.

Former dark shadows have long since fled in the grace and truth of God's final Word. For indeed, the just do live by faith! ☐

*John Klassek
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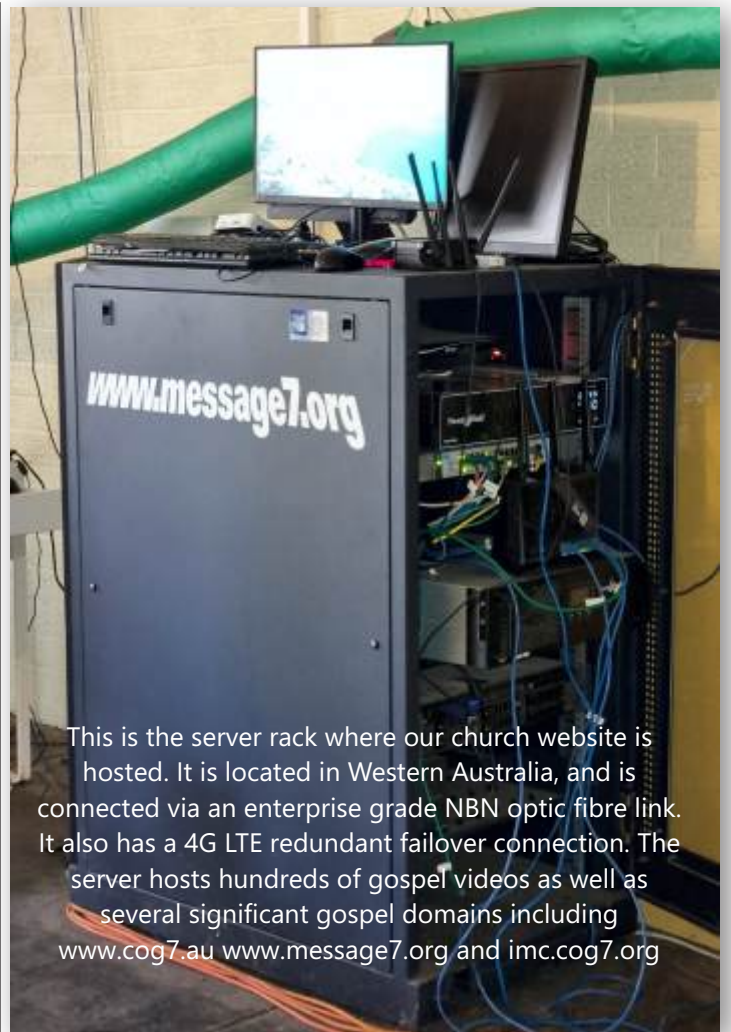
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7:30pm NSW/VIC; 7:00pm SA time.

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