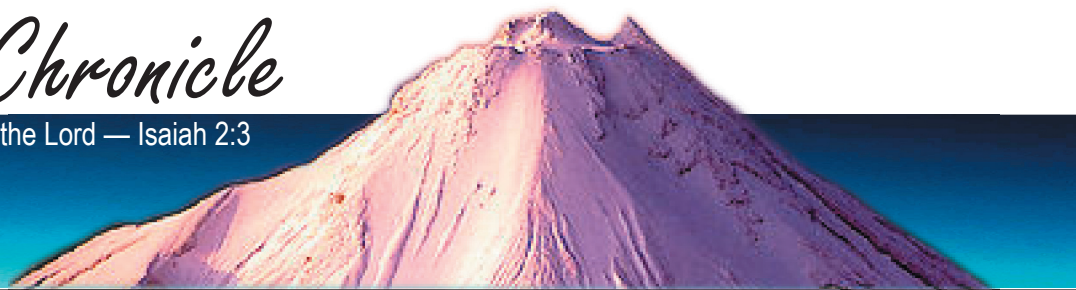


# The Summit Chronicle

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord — Isaiah 2:3



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### Contributing Writers for this Month's Articles

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### Scripture of the Month

"Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God."

— Ecclesiastes 5:19

### Contact Us

If you have any questions that you would like answered by any of our writers, please feel free to contact us via email on:

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## DAVID'S WARRIORS

by Jaracz J. Heather

The Scriptures record one of the most fascinating accounts of mighty warriors in action in 2Sam 23.

In verse 8, we are introduced to a special group of valiant warriors who served King David with unreserved loyalty—freely giving of their lives to the service of the King and to the causes of Israel.

1. The first one we are introduced to is a man by the name of Adino the Eznite. The Holy Spirit notes that he was chief among the captains. In the same verse, we are told that he *"... lifted up his spear against eight hundred whom he slew at once."*

2. Second we have Eleazar, the son of Dodo the Ahohite who was counted among the three mighty men of David. In verses 9-10, the record shows that he stood his ground against the Philistines (the men of Israel were gone away) who were gathered for battle and he *"... slew them until his hand was weary, and his hand cleaved unto the sword."*

3. Third we have Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. Again the Philistines were gathered in a troop for battle against Israel in a lentil field.

Shammah stood his ground while the people fled from the Philistines. The Scriptures record that *"...he stood in the midst of the ground and defended it and slew the Philistines."*

Then in 2Sam 23:14-16, we read of how David was situated in a hold while the garrison of the Philistines were in Bethlehem. And David became very thirsty and uttered his longing for water from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate.

The three mighty men heard the King's longing and opted to go and get him water from the well of Bethlehem—even though it was the very place where the garrison of the Philistines were gathered!

In verse 16, the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water from the well of Bethlehem—by the gate—for the King and brought it to him.

David, however, did not drink the water but instead poured it out unto the Lord and said: "Be it far from me O Lord that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

Those were the acts of the

three mighty men of King David.

But the warriors of Israel did not stop there. In fact, the Holy Spirit records more in the same chapter.

4. We are then introduced in verse 18 to Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah who lifted up his spear against 300 men and slew them all.

5. Then there was Benaiah in verse 20—who was the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel by the name of Jehoiada—whom had done "many acts" according to Scripture.

He slew two "lion-like men" of Moab and also went down into a pit and killed a lion... in the time of snow! And he also killed an Egyptian warrior who was armed with a spear while Benaiah had only a staff in his hand. He disarmed the Egyptian and killed him with his own spear.

It's obvious that these men were valiant warriors who were loyal to their King and God. And they had no reservation concerning their lives while fulfilling their duties to Israel.

So what lessons can we learn from these great warriors of the Lord to apply in our lives today as

modern Israel? What examples did they leave behind that we can emulate to improve our daily walk with God? There are perhaps many but here's some I've come up with...

**Lesson 1 LOYALTY**

When David became King, the Scriptures noted in 1Chron 11:10 concerning his supporters: *"Now these are the heads of the mighty whom David had, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him King, according tot he word of the Lord concerning Israel."*

As Christians, we have been called out of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1: 13), we follow the King of kings (1Tim 6:15) and our service to Him is to the death (Rev 2:10).

These mighty warriors gladly gave of their lives freely because of their strong support for the anointed of God. Lord Jesus gives the ultimatum in Matt 12:30 when He said: *"He who is not with me is against me"*. Where do your loyalties lie in your Christian walk? The identification of a Christian lies not merely in the word "Christian" but especially in the deeds that prove that Christianity to be so.

I find it interesting how the brethren in Laodecia were referred to by the Apostle John as the Church—yet graphic language was used to express the Lord's disgust in their lukewarm behavior. Their "sitting-on-the-fence" attitude was rejected by Jesus. The Christian who has that kind of attitude is not exactly someone who gives "strong support" to his King. Loyalty to the King of kings starts right from baptism until the breath of life is taken. The decision to follow Jesus is only made by those who are serious enough to go all the way NO MATTER WHAT. If you're going to die for that faith, so be it! The question is: Will YOU be loyal unto death as these warriors were?

**Lesson 2 STANDING YOUR GROUND**

In both 2Sam 23 and 1Chron 11, we find evidence that when the Philistines gathered for battle—the people of Israel fled in fear.

- 2Sam 23:9 *"... and the men of Israel had withdrawn."*
- 2Sam 23:11 *"... and the people fled from the Philistines."*
- 1Chron 11:13 *"... and the people fled before the Philistines."*

Yet we find that David's mighty men had a totally different attitude unlike the rest who fled. **They stood their ground** against the enemies of Israel.

- *"But he took his stand (Shammah) in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines ..." (1Sam 23:12)*
- *"And they took their stand in the midst of the plot, and defended it, and struck down the Philistines ..." (1Chron 11:14)*

As a Christian, do YOU stand your ground against evil... against the world... against the enemies of the cross? Or do you flee with the cowards that we read about in Rev 21:8?

The Apostle Paul reminds us in his letter to the Ephesian brethren in chapter 6:10–20—concerning the armor of God—and what it does for us. I find it interesting in that the repetitious number three appears yet again in the admonition of the Apostle in verses 11, 13 and 14.

- *"Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil."*
- *"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**."*
- *"**Stand firm** therefore, having girded*

*your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness"*.

Note carefully the subtle, yet divine repetition of the Holy Spirit's inspiration in those verses to STAND FIRM!

When I look at David's mighty warriors, I see heroes of the Lord's people in the Old Testament. Men who were defiant against the enemies of God's people and as such, they stood their ground without wavering. Are YOU standing your ground against that which is evil in today's society?

I saw a brochure the other day from a denominational catalog that had a book which was entitled: "They Love Jesus But Not the Church". It outlines how people don't like the "judgemental attitudes, homophobia, restriction placed on women in worship" etc. that the "Church" imposes—which in turn points the finger to the divinely inspired words that we read from the Word of God. In today's politically correct society and one which is infiltrated by situation ethics, post modernism, new age and every other "let's-all-get-along-whatever-seems-good-to-you-is-ok" concept out there—sometimes the Christian get's influenced and perhaps confused as to what exactly is demanded of him by the Almighty God, simply because the standard has now become murky.

And before you know it, we're dancing around the golden calf of toleration, and allowing what we formerly knew was an abomination unto the Lord. Because all of a sudden, it's no longer "that bad".

Remember brethren, all it takes for evil to reign is for good men to sit back and do nothing. The sin of doing nothing will result in the rampant growth and toleration of that which is evil.

As David's mighty warriors stood their ground—you too can stand your ground and be counted among the

mighty warriors of the Church—the modern Israel.

### Lesson 3 DETERMINATION TO WIN THE BATTLE

The Holy Spirit records that Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, who was counted amongst the three mighty men of David—fought against the Philistines “... *until his hand was weary and clung to the sword.*” (2Sam 23:10)

I personally believe that one of the saddest things to witness in the Lord’s Church today is a pure lack of determination to do God’s will. Complacency is rampant throughout the Church worldwide. You only have to pick up evangelistic publications to see how very few workers there are out there while the harvest is plentiful. Everyone is “too busy” with their personal things... too busy with work... too busy with things that just do not have any heavenly relevance. It’s sad that our determination is geared mainly towards material things... things which benefit us physically somehow... or things which give us some sort of entertaining pleasure. Yet we sing “*This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through*” along with “*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*” but our actions sing a much louder, yet sad song, of a lack of determination on our part.

What would it be like if God had the same attitude? We can only be thankful that He isn’t like us. He stuck to the Plan of Salvation right through along with the Son and the Holy Spirit. He was determined that you and I be saved from eternal destruction brought about by our ancestor Adam. He loved our souls enough to send His only begotten Son. Even if it meant that He had to die an excruciating death on the cross. It didn’t matter. God was

determined that you and I were to be saved. And He demonstrated that love through Jesus (Rom 5:8-9).

But here’s the question: “If you were engaged in a real life battle, would you be determined to stay alive?” You’d probably answer with a resounding “Of course I would!”

Are you SURE about that?

Because right now, you ARE engaged in a fierce battle—a **spiritual battle**. The Apostle Paul reminds us that such is the case in 2Cor 10:3-5 and Eph 6:12

- “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculation and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*”
- “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*”

How determined are you to stay alive spiritually? Are you determined enough to fight for your soul? Are you prepared to fight the good fight of faith (2Tim 4:7-8) and are you prepared to hold on to the Sword of the Spirit?

There’s an old Chinese saying and it goes like this: “*The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war*”. How often do you study your Scriptures—that is, how often do you sharpen your Sword? Have you actually got it unsheathed or is it still tucked away? You either win or you die in battle,

there’s no inbetween. Eleazar was not about to lie down and let the enemies of God win the fight. No way, he was determined to fight hard and never let go of the sword. How hard are you prepared to fight the good fight?

### Lesson 4 THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD

While these mighty men of David were valiant warriors, they were nothing without the Lord. They knew very well that they have to do their part but the battle belongs to God. Again, the record shows clearly who was behind all the victories of Israel in 2Sam 23:10,12 and 1Chron 11:14 with these words: “*And the Lord brought about a great victory*”.

All the mighty men of Scripture won because the Lord was with them. Even the great Samson with his strength was not an exception. Every time he fought against the Philistines and slaughtered them, the Scriptures always reads: “*...and the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon Him mightily*”. Without God, Samson was nothing.

The great end to our story as Christians is the fact that God has ALREADY won the battle, we only have to hold on to the unchanging hand of the Lord. This is why the Book of Revelation constantly encourages the Church with the words “*he who overcomes*”. All you have to do is hold on to the Lord for the victory is His.

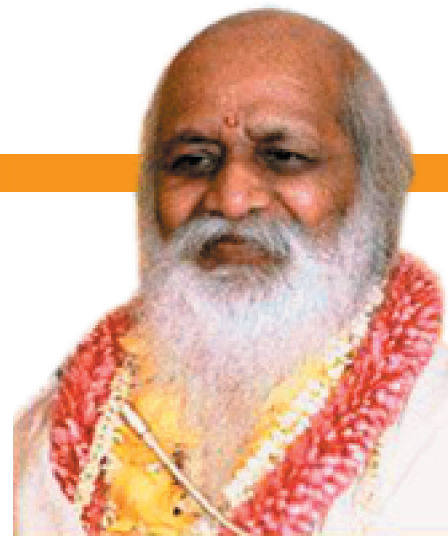
Being a warrior for God is a HUGE privilege. But you can only be of any use on the battlefield if you’re determined to fight the good fight and hold on to your Sword without letting go—and having the faith that God is fighting on your side. Like Paul said: “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Rom 8:31) It’s a rhetorical question because who can fight against God?

Jaracz Heather is a preacher and teacher residing in New Plymouth, New Zealand with his wife Jessica and daughters Maya and Aniya



# THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT: Part 1

by Rex Banks



**Maharishi Mahesh Yogi**  
**Founder Transcendental Meditation**  
**and New Age Guru**

It was part of the Great Deception, it was a lie crafted by the “father of lies” (Jn 8:44) and it succeeded in turning God’s good world into a tomb. Satan assured Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would bring enlightenment, (“your eyes will be opened”) and that enlightenment would bring transformation, (“you will be like God”) and this seductive falsehood has appeared in many different forms since. Man has always been ready to thrust from his mind the knowledge that he is a dependent, contingent being designed to glorify his Maker, and this has exposed him to the temptation to place self upon the throne and to locate the purpose of human existence in self-fulfillment rather than in submission to God.

A graphic contemporary example of man’s willingness to dethrone God is seen in the so-called **New Age Movement** (NAM) which has come to have a profound influence upon almost every area of Western thought over the past few decades.

Almost everyone who studies the NAM acknowledges that it is difficult to define it in precise terms, and this is due to the fact that what has been called a “movement” is really an amorphous collection of beliefs and ideas which share certain themes and presuppositions. Variations upon these themes are many and varied which makes neat categorization of New Age teachings impossible. However it is possible to identify predominant trends and common assumptions within NAM, and in the following paragraphs I have attempted to

do so, keeping in mind that these general comments are neither exhaustive nor descriptive of every New Age devotee.

## NEW AGE PANTHEISM

Under the heading monism and pluralism we have the following in The Oxford Companion to Philosophy:

“Monism regarding the kinds of substances holds that only one such kind exists, whereas pluralism admits a multiplicity of kinds.”

By way of illustration, the materialist who denies the existence of anything apart from the physical realm, is a monist for whom the one substance is matter-energy. He affirms that there is no such thing as a spiritual realm. On the other hand the theist, (e.g. the traditional Jew, the Christian and the Moslem) is a pluralist in this context, since he believes in the existence of both the physical and the spiritual realm. God is the Creator of the physical universe, but He is a spiritual being and as such He is separate from that creation. Now the NAM is grounded upon a monistic world view known as pantheism, a view which asserts that God is the universe. Dr. Norman Geisler writes in his book: *Creating God in the Image of Man*

“Pantheists believe all is God and God is all. They insist that the universe (reality) is all there is, and God cannot be more than all there is... Creator and

creation are two different ways of viewing one reality. God is universe (or, the all) and the universe is God. There is ultimately only one reality, not many different ones. Pantheism is represented by certain forms of Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, Christian Science, and many New Age religions.”

Clearly then at this very basic level the NAM rests upon a view of reality which departs sharply from those views which have traditionally dominated in the West. After all the God of the pantheist is certainly not the God of the Christian theist and the monism of the pantheist is quite different from that of the modern Western secularist. On the other hand, as Henry Morris points out in his book, *The Long War Against God*, the NAM rests firmly upon the theory of evolution “as viewed in a pantheistic context.” Morris adds:

“The revival of ‘spiritualism’ in the mid-nineteenth century followed soon after by Madame Helena Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society and then by Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, stimulated a significant resurgence of

ancient occultism. At about the same time, Mary Baker Eddy was developing her “Christian Science,” which in many respects was an esoteric form of Buddhism. All of these systems were very similar to many aspects of the modern New Age movement.”

It is difficult to say just how much these peripheral movements contributed to the development of the NAM, but it is clear that the movement was shaped by many of the ideas and influences which emerged from that turbulent, rebellious decade of radical and rapid change which we call the ‘60’s.

## **HUNGRY SOULS TURN TO THE EAST**

The so-called “Enlightenment” of the eighteenth century saw a movement away from dependence upon revelation. In fact “Much of the philosophy of the last 300 years is the story of the attacks on the Judaeo-Christian view and its replacement by a naturalistic outlook which completely dispenses with the theological explanations” (Oxford). But man simply cannot live like this. His whole being cries out against an existence emptied of ultimate significance. After all, he bears the image of the divine (Gen 1:26) and his Creator has set eternity in his heart (Eccles 3:11). Man was made to be restless apart from God.

Few generations have been as restless as the “baby boomer” generation which came of age in the 60’s. The boomers had enjoyed the benefits of an affluence society, and yet many of them were repelled by its shallowness and acquisitiveness. For the most

part they were better educated, better paid and more indulged than any generation before them, but they were also less satisfied. Disaffected and disenchanting they challenged almost all traditional values—but sadly their dissatisfaction did not, (for the most part) lead them to embrace the revolutionary teachings of Jesus Christ. Generations of attacks upon Scripture by modernists and liberal theologians, coupled with the dry formalism of much which passed for Christianity, had destroyed the credibility of the Bible in the minds of many. And so they turned elsewhere. They turned to mind-altering drugs, communal lifestyles and free love.

They also turned to the East, and to the swamis, the mystics, and the gurus. Film stars and pop icons traveled to Tibet and India to learn transcendental meditation and the sitar, while maharishis came to the West to bring “enlightenment” to eager students on our campuses. In 1967 the hit musical *Hair* captured the mood of a generation with its story about the pursuit of Yoga light, and a hit song from the show announced the dawning of a new age of liberation, truth, peace and revelation, the “age of Aquarius.” Eastern pantheistic thought was identified with the dawning of this fresh new age, while Christian theism was seen as a tired vestige of the dying “age of Pisces.” On the one hand the Bible was identified with the Establishment, while on the other the “sacred scriptures” of the East were increasingly linked to the counterculture of the time.

Now the tumult of the 60’s has died away and “flower power” is no more, but the pantheistic world view introduced from the East which was once associated

with youthful rebellion has now been absorbed into mainstream thought and is an integral part of NAM. However it is important to notice that New Age pantheism differs from traditional Eastern mysticism in at least one important respect. For the Hindu, the world is an illusion and its events are of no ultimate significance. The world is to be denied and its distractions renounced. On the other hand New Age pantheists are typically concerned with personal fulfillment in the here and now, and because they have definite views about the future they are often involved in such things as education, social issues, protection of the environment, promotion of world peace and the like. In short pantheism does not lead them to deny the world but instead to embrace it.

## **CONCLUSION TO PART 1**

In his “Mere Christianity” C.S. Lewis speaks of what he calls “vague religion” by which he means a spirituality which is “all about feeling God in nature” and which is “all thrills and no work.” Certainly the NAM provides our self-indulgent society with the opportunity to choose from a smorgasbord of feel-good experiences, but unfortunately it also repeats those same old falsehoods which have successfully seduced man since the beginning of time. Without questioning the sincerity or impugning the character of devotees, the Christian must gently and firmly insist that beliefs central to the NAM are incompatible with the great doctrines of the Bible. More about this in Part 2.

*Rex Banks is a researcher and teacher of the Lord’s work in Hamilton, New Zealand.*

# IMPORTANT UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MATTERS OF OPINION by Edwin Jones

## Introduction:

1. Those who specialize in conflict resolution observe that most disputes among Christians do not arise from so-called doctrinal issues.
2. When brethren do not get along it is most generally because they have different convictions in what we would style a matter of opinion or judgment.
3. Romans 14 is the one chapter in the Bible that deals most directly with those types of problems.
4. The problem isn't that we can't understand this chapter's instructions; the problem is that we are reluctant to practice its teachings.

## I. A Few Technical Points.

- A. The most significant phrase of the chapter is found in the first verse and is translated a number of different ways.

1. "Doubtful disputations" KJV.
2. "Decision of scruples" ASV.
3. "Passing judgments on his opinions" NASB.
4. "Disputes over opinions" RSV.
5. "Criticize his views" Berkeley.
6. "Judgment on disputable matters" NIV.

- B. The Greek of the verse helps clarify its meaning.

1. Diakriseis: "judgment, argument."
2. Dialogismon: "thoughts, reasoning."
3. Paul is telling brethren not to get into arguments or disputes about a particular kind of thinking certain brethren may hold.
4. Since the thinking does not deal with matters of faith, or Paul would not accept it in any form, the thinking must have to do with mere opinions.

## II. Apparent Contradictions That Help Us To See Exactly What Paul Has In Mind (Gal. 4:8-11; Col. 2:16-23).

- A. In Galatians and Colossians, Paul takes a very hostile view of observing days.
  1. In Galatia the problem was legalism—imposing human rules as though they were necessary for salvation.
  2. In Colossae the problem was a prenostic asceticism—forbidding the exercise of full Christian freedom.

3. The errors in both Galatia and in Colossae involved using human commands to insist that the observation of certain days was essential for salvation.
4. Because Paul's remarks in Romans have to do with matters not imposed on brethren, there is no conflict between Paul's comments in Romans 14 and those in Galatians 5 and Colossians 2.
5. Romans deals with the keeping of days in terms of what people elect to do as personal judgments; the other two Epistles concern themselves with the enforcement of an uncommanded keeping of days.

## B. When Apparent Contradictions Are Resolved We Need To Be Sure We Profit From The Resolution.

1. We are to honor the insights gained from both teachings since they each have a separate, important lesson to teach.
2. Religious history and our contemporary times well demonstrate how easily one truth can be used to over-rule another rather than to allow for full Bible harmony.

## III. Some Things We Need To Understand About Opinions (Rom. 14:1-12).

- A. In matters concerning things that are not wrong in themselves and not in violation of a command addressing private concerns, private judgments and opinions are not to become occasions for divisions and disputes.
  1. As long as a decision is not inherently wrong or in violation of a commandment relating to private expressions, we may choose to refrain from any food or to esteem any day in our personal expressions to the Lord.
  2. Such things are, however, in no way to be forced on another.
  3. If you want to refrain from work on Saturday as a matter of private devotion, that is your business.
  4. If you want to refrain from eating meat as a personal matter of devotion, that is your business.
  5. These things being so, we can see how more commonplace opinions should never be allowed to disrupt fellowship.



- B. If a brother or sister in Christ feels the need to privately do anything that is not wrong in itself, even though such is in no way required, we are not to get into arguments about it.
1. Usually teaching about Christian liberty will bring a change with time.
  2. However, God sets no requirements on such a change.
  3. Some things we must acquire with time as we mature in Christ (Heb. 5:11-14).
  4. Other things might never be understood in a mature way and yet one could still face Christ in Judgment without fear (Rom. 14:10-12).

C. Additional Understandings:

1. The church as a body is not governed by the rules of private judgment; corporate worship and service have a God-given direction that is more specific than that for private expressions (I Cor. 11:17-34; I Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:11-12).
2. Within the context of authorized, corporate worship we may elect to have a variety of different expressions: when on the Lord's Day we assemble, how long services last, how many songs will be sung, how many prayers will be led, what the sermon, songs and readings will emphasize, etc.; but we cannot go outside the boundaries God has given to the church as a body (note that I Cor. 11:17, 18, 20 show a distinct "come together" aspect of church life that is governed by what the Lord has revealed, v. 23).
3. Even though the private expressions of individual Christians have more latitude than the corporate expressions of the body, individuals are cautioned about doing things that might be misunderstood as being immoral (I Cor. 11:5), or lead weak brethren into sin (I Cor. 8:4-7).
4. Balance must be maintained—being hyper-cautious can easily lead to legalism, being unconcerned can easily lead to liberalism.

Conclusions:

1. No opinion is worth division among brethren.
2. Liberty is the word when opinions are under consideration.
3. While there are opinions that can cause problems, a problematic opinion is not the same as a sin.
4. As the old adage says: In matters of faith—unity. In matters of opinion—liberty. In all things—love.

## Recent Visiting Teachers & Preachers from the US in New Plymouth...

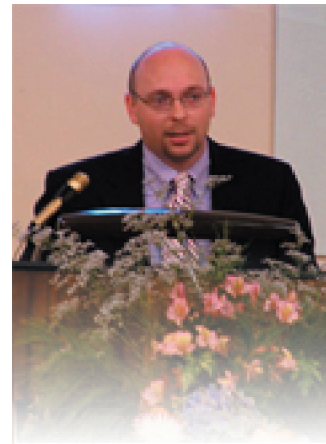


### Brad Harrub

*Brad and his lovely family were in New Plymouth during their New Zealand visit in which he was a guest speaker at various congregations of the Lord's Church in New Zealand. While Brad was in New Plymouth, he was featured in both the local newspaper and television, as well as national radio, talking about Creation Science.*

### Neil Richey

*During our traditional annual lectureship camp held on Easter weekend, we were fortunate enough to hear great sermons and lessons from brother Neil. He brought with him a unique preaching style that we have come to love. We are hoping that Neil will return again to preach and that he will be a constant overseas visitor.*



### Mike Vestal

*Mike is one of the most dynamic preachers we have ever heard. We first invited Mike to speak at our annual lectureship, and we were so built up spiritually that we have him back as a guest speaker as often as we can. Like Neil, Mike has a unique way of delivering his sermons in a dynamic and powerful way which has come to be appreciated by kiwis in New Zealand.*

### Edwin Jones

*The New Plymouth congregation has been so blessed in it's early stages to have had such a good influence and grounding from Ed Jones. Ed and his family were very instrumental in our growth in the mid 1980's and we were so blessed to have him again for the annual Bible Lectureship this year in New Plymouth!*



# ABRAHAM AND THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH by Allan Fowell

Genesis 15:1-6,(6)

To know how God dealt with Abraham in the Old Testament is to know the nature of saving faith. When we talk of works, law, faith and righteousness we can only see the meaning of these salvation words in the context of the trust and righteousness of Abraham; it is only then that we can understand the nature of saving faith. In grasping this concept then we can have the absolute assurance of our standing before God in faith (Hebrews 4:15-16).

To understand salvation we must see the Book of Genesis as having a major role in that it has one overriding purpose. The first part of which is a record of the universe and a relationship of this to a people called the 'Israelites'. The overriding intention of the Book of Genesis is the provision of a foundation for salvation history. That sin, in Genesis 3:15, was the cause of a separation between man and His creator and that God begins the formulation of a plan whereby He might once more renew the relationship.

Genesis 12:1-3 is the beginning point of a promise made to Abraham that not only contained a physical and national promise to the Israelites, but also an 'end blessing' for all humanity via Abraham. Genesis 12:3, "In thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" is the universal promise made to Abraham that through his seed the Messiah would come, thus establishing that relationship bringing about salvation for all men. Abraham becomes the

central figure in the working out of God's plan. So enormous is this promise that we see Christ as the 'coming One' to bring blessings through His work on the cross, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5). "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9). However, along side these passages are those that teach the response that man must make in being saved (Acts 2:37-38, 8:35-40).

We come now to Genesis 15: 6 "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." This is one of, if not the most significant, verses in the Bible. It puts before us the concepts of trust and imputed righteousness. Its full significance is not seen until viewed in the context of Romans 4:4, Gal 3:6 and James 2:22. These are the passages that deal with justification by or through faith. The application of these is seen in Genesis fifteen to events and incidents in Abraham's life. Look at the fact in Gen 15:6 and see that Abraham would father a child in his old age. Then with Romans 4 making application to Genesis 15 to those thoughts found in Genesis 17 and 18 where Sarah is told that she would bear a child in her old age as well. Then we connect James 2:22 with Gen 15: 6 and Gen 22

concerning the sacrifice of Isaac, the Son of promise, being a type of the sacrifice of Christ.

Four key words in Genesis 15: 6, believed or faith, reckoned or imputed, counted or credited and righteousness or right standing, are all interconnected with the nature of saving faith. The problems that many have in understanding 'justification by faith' are simply the misrepresentation of these verses to a proper interpretation to what God intended. Abrahamic faith stands forth as a beacon in the night of the religiously divided world, setting forth the truth on the planned purpose of God for the redemption of mankind.

Let's look at the passage in Romans chapter 4. In this great chapter the Apostle Paul deals with several things. The first being: that Abraham was justified by faith and that he and Sarah would bare a son through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The second point: God would count Abraham faithful because he implicitly trusted God. Genesis 15: 1-6 demonstrates that God was a faithful covenant keeper because of the faith of Abraham. His faith in God reckoned him righteous or credited righteousness to him. Paul also points out that Christianity is not a Jewish thing. It makes circumcision of "no avail," thus making Abraham not only the father of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, (Romans 4:9-12).

When we look back into history every Jew would know two things: 1) that the Torah came 400 years after Abraham was declared



righteous based on his obedience of faith. 2) Abraham's covenant sign of circumcision came later, than his being made righteous, Gen 15:6, 17).

Because of the promise that God made to Abraham, we find that God is not only the God of the Jews but also of the gentiles, (Gal 3:8, Rom 4:13-17). Abraham is the father of all because he is the father of the faithful, (Romans 4: 16). What an example we have in father Abraham. Yes he did stumble from time to time, but we are to understand that he was defined more by his faith than lack thereof.

James chapter two: As already noted Romans 4 deals with fact that we do not merit our salvation but rather, we are justified through or by faith. James is now going to deal with another aspect of faith. We are justified by faith and not by works alone. James is dealing with works of obedient faith. We know from the Word, (Ephesians 2:8-10), that we are saved by grace and that it cannot be earned or deserved. Why? "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," (Rom 3: 23). Works do have a place but in the complimenting of faith.

In our text of James 2:20-23, Abraham is called upon as the example to be used, that faith without works is dead. It is an obedient faith that is required to be counted righteous before God. In verse 20, the question is given that challenges many today to think that there is a contradiction in Scripture, but is there? This writer is stating that the 'profession of faith, without the accompanying attendant works, is inoperative. Faith that has no action is idle, lazy and useless. This is shown to be the case in 2:21-23 of James. God accounted Abraham righteous

when he believed and obeyed to the point of sacrificing his only begotten son (Genesis 22).

Spiros Zodhiates best reflected upon this by stating: "Now, what are we supposed to see so clearly as a result of the argument presented by James? That faith was helping by the means of his works; and as a result of the works faith was brought to its goal. Obedient faith is the absolute goal of God. "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, (Rom 1:5). Consider, along with this Rom 16:26.

Robinson reflects upon this and say's, "... unto obedience of faith, (eis hupakoen pisteos). Subjective genitive in both passages, in other words, obedience which springs from faith (the act of assent or surrender). "

James does not contradict other passages but compliments them. James says, faith plus works equals obedient faith, the only way we can understand our own justification or right standing before God. We are saved by grace through working obedient faith, this having been achieved by the Grace of God in the sacrificial death of His son, Jesus Christ.

In Christ we do not have the burden of having to be saved by sinless perfection. We are saved by grace through a working, obedient, ongoing, growing faith; an imperfect person heading in the direction of heaven pointed to by and through faith. I can now know the important part that Abraham played relative to the nature of the faith that saves. To have the faith of Abraham, we must have a faith that, not only works through obedience, but also love. What we see in Abraham, Genesis 15:1-6, is

how faith allows for the assurance of deliverance from the bondage of sin. "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

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# FREEDOM FROM LAW

by Edwin Jones

There are some rather curious statements made about law in the New Testament. Consider, for example, how in Romans 6:14 Paul clearly states that we "... are not under law." Notice, however, that in I Corinthians 9:21 "... not being without law, but under the law of Christ ..." is what Paul declares. What is going on here?

First, let us understand that in Romans 6:14 Paul is not intending to say that we are not under the Law of Moses. Now it is true that Christians are not under that law (i.e. Heb. 8:1-13); but it is also true that this is not what Paul is discussing in the context of Romans 6:14. Paul's point in Romans is that we are not under law as our only hope for salvation. In other words, both Jews and Gentiles are out from under the burden of having to earn our salvation by "works of law" (cf. Rom. 3:9-21).

Before the Law of Moses, there was both law and sin (Rom. 5:12-14). From Adam to Moses sin was committed and people were under God's condemnation because of this (Rom. 6:23). The idea, therefore, in the forefront of Paul's argument is that law cannot bring salvation by itself, "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law" (Gal. 3:21b). Or as is said in Galatians 2:21, "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through law (no definite article in the Greek), then Christ died needlessly."

There is no mere law system, neither Patriarchal, Mosaic, nor Christian, that can save us. Mere "dos" and "don'ts" are not enough. We are sinners. We cannot undo our sins by law keeping alone. Law demands perfect obedience

(cf. Jas. 2:10). When we sin but once, we have no hope in mere law. Therefore, we must find a way to be out from under the "curse" of law. That way is through faith—faith in Christ (Gal. 3:8-14).

Through faith in Christ, God does not take into account the sins of Christians (Rom. 4:7-8). Such people as these have been taken out from under the demand of law for sinless perfection (Rom. 4:14-15). But does this mean that law is no longer to be part of a Christian's life—absolutely not!

Law is not "nullified" by faith, law is "established" by faith (Rom. 3:31). As Christians, while we are not under law as the basis of our salvation, we are under law in a different sense. We are under law as the only authorized guide to the expressions of our faith (cf. I Cor. 9:21; Rom. 10:17; Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:20; Jas. 2:14-26). It is not, therefore, the case that law is bad, for it most certainly is not (Rom. 7:12, 14). The case is that unless we serve law through faith, we do not establish it in its rightful relationship to faith and grace. Served by itself, law nullifies both faith and grace because it acts by itself.

In every age, law alone has killed. In every age, law served in faith has brought life. In the Christian Age, the basis for both forgiveness and grace has been revealed—Christ and Him crucified. We are thus free from law and its curse, but alive to law as our only key to acceptable expressions of faith.

*Ed Jones is a teacher at the East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions. He and his family were instrumental in the work in New Plymouth, New Zealand*

# THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT

by Al Horne

Remember the pop-song of a bygone day called "Wimowey?" The first verse set the scene: "*In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight.*" The lion, the king of the beasts, has always been a fascinating creature of God's menagerie.

Lying under a tree in the noon-day shade, the black-maned lion may resemble a docile, gentle oversized kitten. But don't be deceived! That lion can change into a ferocious predator in just seconds.

Dirk Brink (58) was the private owner of the Krugersdorp Game Reserve which included lions. His lifestyle included going into the lion enclosure. He did it often. He became calloused to the danger of the carnivores. A few days ago, his daughter gave this hapless man a digital camera.

He ventured into the danger zone to try it out. He probably did not spot any lions in the immediate vicinity as they camouflage well in the tall yellow grass. His attention was on the camera but the lions' attention was on him.

Before he could snap a photo, a jungle-wise lion snapped its jaws around him! The lion dragged him under a bush where with his cubs, he made a meal out of him. There were five lions in the pride. Game wardens and emergency services personnel were summoned to the area.

However, they were unable for more than an hour to disperse the lions from the mauled remains of their victim. The irony of it all was that this tragedy happened in a major metropolitan area where you would never expect it.

Many people foolishly and illegally disembark from their vehicles in the national Game Reserves to "take a close-up. *"Foolishness is bound up in heart of a tourist, but the snap of the lion's jaw drives it far from him."* (Proverbs 22:15 with apologies to Solomon).

Some years ago at the London zoo, a young man clutching a Bible scaled a seven-meter fence into a lions' den. He made the painful discovery that he was no Daniel.

Perhaps his motivation was his mistaken idea that a Bible as the Word of God had supernatural powers, rendering him immune to immanent danger. Since the lions had not read the Bible about loving one's neighbor, they might have considered he had been delivered into the cage for their dessert! If he had stayed away from the lions, he would not have been mauled. He was rescued but has a terrible story to tell.

Jesus is the Lion of Judah and protects us as the King of His Domain. The Devil is "a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour", 1 Peter 5:8. He deceptively **camouflages** himself as "the lion of Judah" to render us insensitive to the danger of his malevolent spirit. He wants to lure us into a false sense of security.

He wants to distance us from Jesus. He is intent on our complete destruction. He even takes pains to get us to think he is just a myth. But note the word "devour." Would you like to be mauled by a hungry lion? Just enter the devil's enclosure and you will discover the peril and suffer the consequences.

On the other hand, "Draw near to the Lord, and He will draw near to you", James 4:8. Then we could quote the final words of yesteryear's pop song: "Hush my darling. Don't fear my darling. The Lion Sleeps Tonight." The Lion of Judah, our Preserver and Protector, never slumbers nor sleeps!

Don't let the *wrong lion* get you.

Lions are mentioned in Scripture numerous times both in literal account as well as symbolic reference.

Despite their incredible strength, men of God have fought them and killed them.

- Samson killed one bare handed in Judges 14:5-6
- David killed one when it attacked his sheep in 1Sam 17:34-37
- Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, killed one in a pit during the time of snow in 2Sam 23:20 and 1Chron 11:22

The Scriptures uses the lion for metaphorical imagery because of it's strength and position over all other animals. Hence why we see Jesus as 'The Lion of Judah' and Satan likened to one as well—symbolically showing the two opposing powers.

Security is of no concern because He is always watching over us day and night.

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; They rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.*

And His providence is never far from us. His blessings flow down from heaven upon His people.  
*Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

The Old Testament demonstrates many time over just how easy it is for the people of God to forget Him as well as forget what He can do for their benefit.

The Lord brought them out of the land of slavery, performed many miracles before their eyes, provided food and water for them and paved the way for them to enter the Promised Land. Yet they complained many times over and wished they hadn't left Egypt in the first place.

Does this sound like you at times? When exciting things happen you join in the excitement and joy and then after a while, you tend to take it for granted and forget to give thanksgiving unto the Lord for all you have. And then when the trials and tribulations come, which are designed to build your faith, you start to 'remember' the Good Shepherd and once again you start praying to Him.

God takes care of us throughout everything in life. The Good Shepherd will NEVER let you go. He will care for you and nothing will ever be able to stand in the way of His love (Rom8:38-39)

## The Good Shepherd

by Jaracz Heather



When we take a closer look to Psalms 23, we truly see just how the Lord is our Shepherd and that we have everything when we have Him at our side...

All of our physical needs are taken care of so that we are not in want.  
*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

Our mental and emotional needs can be soothed by the Great Shepherd as He calms us inwardly.  
*He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.*

All of our spiritual needs are met as He guides us on the true path.  
*He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*



# HOW GOOD IS THAT?

by Dave Bell

Have you ever stopped to think about how good God has been to us through His Son Jesus Christ? I think that perhaps we do not ponder this question as well as we should and this can sometimes leave us a little worse off than we could be. However, we have the Word given to us borne by the Holy Spirit, and that shows us some truly amazing things about how God sees us. Let us look at some of the pictures describing God's view of His children. Ephesians 1:3 shows us that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Then in verse 4, we see that we have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. The picture here is one of God searching for a precious jewel much like a man seeking a jewel in the city dump. God loved man that much. Surely this tells us that we are worth a lot to Him. Now we will put a few verses together to enhance the picture further—these are Ephesians 1:3, 1:20 and 2:6. And they read as follows. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ.”* Take a moment or two to fully digest that picture, isn't it marvellous? We who were once lost are now seen as sitting in the heavenly places with Christ Himself. If we ever get to thinking that God doesn't care for us, or we are worthless, listen to me now. We cannot be since we have been chosen by the best. God sifted through the earth until He found us and that has to be the greatest act of love that we have been shown. Another picture God shows us is found in the Book of Revelation. Again it is a multifaceted one, but one that again shows us how awesome Christ is. Revelation chapter 1 shows us this. In verse 14, Christ's head and hair were white like white wool, like snow. His eyes were a flame of fire, and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace. Not only does this picture for us the power of Christ, the purity of Christ and the all seeing eyes of Christ. It also holds within it the unstinting mercy of Christ. *“His feet were like burnished bronze.”* Remember back in Daniel 3:25 how three men were placed in a furnace? When the king looked into that furnace he stated, *“I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth*

*is like a son of the gods!”* This shows us that He does care, He hears us, He is concerned about our trials and troubles. This picture of the feet of Christ in Revelation is showing us that Christ will walk with us in our trials. How good is that? Listen, the Bible has so many pictures like this in it that comfort us in hard times, in trials and temptations. Let us now flip over to Revelation 3:21. *“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on his throne.”* What a Saviour, what a picture! We will sit with Christ on His throne. You know, I like to put this picture as one of us sitting with Christ on His throne while God takes a snapshot for His family album. What a thought and what a day that will be. To finish let us look at a couple more “pictures.” In Psalm 130:1 we read *“Out of the depths I have cried to Thee O Lord.”* Then in Psalm 137:1 *“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.”* Here is a sad picture, yet it shows us what can happen if we forget God and go our own ways. It also shows that we can have sad times in our own lives. However, if we turn to Psalm 30:5 we find there that *“... weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.”* That shows that things do pass, and also that repentance brings a shout of joy from heaven and from us. How can we live up to these pictures God has shown us? Well, in Psalm 131, we are given our final picture. This Psalm has only three verses yet they are powerful and healing to us. It reads: *“Oh Lord my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. O ..... (put your own name in here and personalise it) hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.”* The bold words here show us what we need to do to complete the picture for ourselves. It is, I think, the best stress medicine we can have. This all goes to show us that one of the greatest pictures we are given is not only true but it is free for us to have. *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”* (John 14:27). How good is that? Next time you feel down, just pick up God's word and look at the marvellous pictures we have that can lift us up, calm us and bolster our faith in the Lord.

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