

The Young People's Magazine

Vol 68

May 2003

No 5

At Peace with Their Maker?

Britain, America and Australia are now at war with Iraq. After weeks of waiting in Kuwait, their troops have launched an all-out push for Baghdad and control of Iraq. *Time* magazine described the last days of their wait: "Even the training seems to be winding down. . . . They spend their time checking and rechecking equipment, packing and repacking bags and contemplating the coming firestorm." And then, from an officer in the Marines, comes what is a most surprising quote in today's godless society: "They want to know that they've made peace with their Maker".

Nothing could be more important for a soldier about to go into battle – recognising the possibility that he may fall victim to an Iraqi bullet or grenade or missile. If he dies, he must go at once to meet his Maker. How important then that his Maker should be his friend, not his enemy! On that one fact depends the hugely important question: Will he spend eternity in the blessedness of heaven or in the awfulness of hell?

It was because battle, and the dangers that go with it, seemed so close that peace with God appeared so important to at least some of the soldiers. But is the question any less relevant to the rest of us? Do any of us know that death is more than a few days away – or even more than a few minutes? But whether we meet death expectedly or unexpectedly – whether we meet death almost immediately or many years in the future – the important question for us all is: Am I at peace with God?

The fact is that we have sinned. And our sins have provoked God to be angry with us. How then can we expect to escape being punished for our sins eternally? Paul explains: "We have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1). No matter how religious we may become, no matter how hard we may try to keep God's commandments, no matter how much we may try to imitate the people of God, we cannot turn the anger of God away from us. In fact, even our best deeds are polluted by sin. If God did not Himself provide salvation, there could be no hope whatever. But what we cannot do – no matter how long or hard we try – Christ has already done. He has met the anger of God; He has endured the punishment for sin. So all who

believe on Him will have peace with God; they will never meet the anger of God; they will be brought at once to heaven when they die.

In January 1942, during the Second World War, a German soldier called Sim wrote to his sister from the increasingly awful conditions the Germans experienced on the Russian front. He was afraid that he might soon be killed in that scene of fearful ruthlessness and savagery – that God would not pass him by “with the bitter cup of death”. But he clearly believed that he had found peace with God. He told his sister: “As soon as you receive the news [of my death], you can relay this letter as my farewell greeting above all to Lotte, but also to all the others. . . . Believe in Jesus Christ; there is no one else who can remove the sting of dying. God knows how very close I am to Lotte and Klaus. It feels like a sword piercing my heart when I think about you all, and that I may not see you again, and what distress Lotte and you will feel – what bitterness and grief! But I know that if we do not see each other on Earth again, we will see each other when Jesus Christ summons us to the last judgement. I need to say all this to you, both to remind and warn you not to dismiss this message out of hand, never betraying our Lord, and living according to how the Lord of life and death revealed in the Scriptures. If this is not the case, then we will never see each other again. Then death will really be a hideous face, and then one’s entire life will have been a pointless self-seeking struggle.”

But death need not have a hideous face – and that, of course, is what the letter tells us. For believers, death loses its sting. However awful – even gruesome – it may be, it is the way by which they enter into the blessedness of heaven. And they will never need to return to the awfulness of a sinful world. Nor need life be a pointless self-seeking struggle. Life has real meaning for believers. They have begun to live, not for themselves, but for the glory of God. If we can keep this in view, life does not lose its purpose – no matter how difficult it may become, even in scenes of fearful ruthlessness and savagery. At least we will have Someone to go to who is well able to support us in the most difficult of circumstances. How wonderful it is to be able to pray at any time – even just to say, “Lord, help me”!

After their weeks of waiting in Kuwait, the soldiers had to move on into Iraq; they could not delay. Will we have weeks, months, or years of waiting before we are called to pass into eternity? Of course, we cannot tell. But one thing is sure: it is vitally important to be ready to go. It is vitally important to be, through Jesus Christ, at peace with God our Maker. In the end, we may not have even a minute’s warning; death may come very unexpectedly. So how very relevant are the words of Christ: “Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44).

“The Lord Was with Joseph”

4. Tempted but Triumphant

Rev N M Ross

This paper was given at the 2000 Youth Conference. Last month's instalment dealt with Joseph's dreams, because of which his brothers hated him.

When *Joseph arrived in Egypt* and was sold as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, he must have felt sad when he thought of himself in a foreign land. He later spoke of it as “the land of my affliction”. Egypt was probably the most advanced nation in the world at that time, but it was a dark, idolatrous land. Godly Joseph's heart must have sunk when he looked at the heathenism all around him, and the people's ignorance of the living and true God.

Not only should we prize the privilege of being brought up in a Christian environment; we should also be careful not to go unnecessarily to live where we are out of reach of the true preaching of the Word. And we should be conscientious, when we are away from the restraining influences of home, to follow the Christian teaching we have been given. Joseph, like Moses, had the opportunity in Egypt to “enjoy the pleasures of sin”, but he stuck steadfastly to the moral principles which he had learned. No doubt Moses in pagan Egypt, and Daniel in pagan Babylon, had their eye on Joseph as an example to be followed. Let us follow the same example when, in the providence of God, we find ourselves in circumstances which are hostile to true Christianity.

But what was the secret of Joseph's preservation and prosperity in that pagan environment? He had *the gracious presence of the Lord*. Acts 7:9 tells us that “the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him”. Of course God is present with everyone because He is everywhere, but He is present with His believing people in a very special way. He is with them to help them, to lead them, to keep them, and to give them a multitude of spiritual blessings. Because God was with Joseph in this special way, all went well with him, as Genesis 39:2 says, “The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man”. Potiphar took note of the fact that God was with him. Genesis 39:3 tells us that Joseph's “master saw that the Lord was with him”.

We need nothing so much as to have the Lord with us in that special way – but this is not possible if we are not reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Do not rest until you can hope that, by grace, you have believed in Christ and so, through Him, are at peace with God. Then God will be with you, and all will be well.

Few of the words of Joseph are recorded in Scripture, and it seems to me that his godliness was made evident more by his *actions* than by his words. Potiphar took careful note of Joseph's good conduct; he "saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand" (Genesis 39:2). Therefore he "made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand" (Genesis 39:4). Joseph now occupied the very important position of manager of Potiphar's home and estate – a position where he would have learned much about public life in Egypt. He would thus be prepared for more important work later.

We can be sure that if we make a profession of religion, the world will take careful note of our conduct. If we live according to our profession of Christianity – which includes doing our duties conscientiously and faithfully, in our employment and our studies – we will bring honour to our profession and to the name of Christ. Even atheistic Communist leaders have said that committed Christians make the best employees. Scripture says, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Proverbs 22:29). At the same time, Joseph was in a vulnerable position. It is not only when we are struggling to overcome difficulties and attain success that we have to watch and pray, although that must, of course, be done. It is even more necessary when success has been attained. As someone has said, "It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup; it requires a good head to stand upon a lofty height".

We now come to an important lesson about *resisting temptation*. Joseph, in his prosperity, was strongly tempted by Satan to break the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery". The temptation came through Potiphar's wife, and it was all the fiercer because she was his superior and was very persistent. But by the grace of God he successfully resisted the temptation. In his book, *Joseph the Prime Minister*, William Taylor rightly labels this period of Joseph's life as "tempted but triumphant". When he was pressurised by that wicked woman, he quickly repulsed her. "There is none greater in this house than I," he said; "neither hath he [Potiphar] kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). His refusal was also very determined. As someone has said, "There was no 'Yes' in his 'No'." But Potiphar's wife was so determined and shameless in pursuing her base desire that one day she took hold of Joseph by his clothing. He immediately escaped, leaving his garment behind.

In Joseph we have a shining example of someone who resolutely heeded God's warnings against immorality. The Word of God contains many warnings against breaking the Seventh Commandment. And if ever there

was a day when such warnings are needed, it is today. Take heed to the warning, “Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). This sin brings misery to many homes and is the cause of most broken marriages. Well did Joseph know its seriousness. He called it “great wickedness”. In our time, writers make light of immorality in books, magazines, films and plays; it is portrayed as civilised and acceptable, and is given names which make it appear attractive and normal. But let us never forget that it is indeed “great wickedness”.

Joseph at first firmly refused to commit this sin, but he reached the stage when refusals were insufficient – he had to run for his life. “He left her,” we read, “and got him out.” One writer says, “What a glorious flight, what a victorious retreat was that! He conquered by flying. He left his garment but he kept his innocency.” And, as Matthew Henry neatly observes, “It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience.” If we are assailed by temptation, let us not hesitate to resort to flight when it appears that fighting against it is ineffective. Let us get away, fast and far, when we are cornered by moral danger – whether it be in connection with immorality, drunkenness, drug abuse, Sabbath desecration, dishonest practices or whatever.

You should study what the Larger Catechism teaches about the Seventh Commandment: “The duties required in the Seventh Commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labour in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto” (answer 138). The answer to the question, “What is forbidden in the Seventh Commandment?” is even more detailed.

Remember also your own weakness and your inability to keep yourself. So you must pray to God to keep you at all times and in all circumstances, especially when you are exposed to temptation. David prayed: “Lord keep me, for I trust in Thee”. Let us do the same, always remembering the warning of Christ, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation”.

Notice also that physical attractiveness and beauty can be a disadvantage. Genesis 39:6 states, “Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured” – that is, he was handsome. And this, says John Calvin, “was the occasion of great calamity to holy Joseph”. “Hast thou beauty?” asks George Lawson. “Trust not in it, but be modest and cautious. Dost thou lack beauty? Be content, and thankful that you are free from those snares which often attend it.” Scripture tells us that “beauty is vain”. The beauty which we should really desire and pray for is “the beauty of holiness”.

Darkness and Light

Zuza was an old man who lived on our farm when I was a child. He was gentle, patient and hard-working, and he liked children very much. Whenever we were in trouble, we were glad to find he was around to help. As we had no toys, we used to make our own out of wood. And Zuza was always willing to help us when a task was too difficult for small hands.

There were no books on the farm either. In the evening Zuza would tell us stories. I remember us sitting down in huddles to listen to him; we were frightened of the dark. There was no electricity on the farm; so the nights were very dark indeed. Darkness brings feelings of fear and confusion. But the truth is that, as we listened to Zuza's stories, we were sitting under another kind of darkness – spiritual darkness – because we knew nothing about spiritual matters. We did not know we were sinners under the wrath of God; we did not know we had never-dying souls; and we did not know that God had provided a remedy for sinners.

Many people in different parts of the world live and die without knowing that God is holy and that they are sinners. They do not know that everyone is just as David describes in Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me". They do not know that by faith in Jesus we can inherit eternal life in glory. They may hear about other ways of getting into heaven, but these are the fruits of man's imagination. God has prescribed the only way by which He will accept sinners, and any other way will bar people from entering heaven. If you read the Bible you will know that the only way to be accepted by the holy God is through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself said: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). He was sinless; yet He paid for the sins of others so they can enjoy a life of glory in eternity.

People in many countries know nothing about their souls and are therefore living in darkness. While some have the light of the Scriptures, others sit in darkness and never hear the good news of peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Worse still, they will be cast "into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). If we are living in the light of the gospel we should be mindful of others who do not enjoy this privilege. And we should remember to plead with the Lord that His Kingdom would be extended to all corners of the earth.

What about you? Maybe God has blessed you so that you were born and grew up in a country which has known the beautiful light of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. You may have the privilege of being brought up by God-fearing parents.

But are you making the most of your privileges? A few months ago a minister said something very solemn about those who die without hearing the gospel. When they come before the great Judge, they may say, “I never knew I was such a sinner!” But could *you* ever say this before the Lord? If you have known that you are a sinner – maybe since your early childhood – you will be speechless if you have not made use of your privileges. Have you ever thought about that? People who live in countries where the light of the gospel does not shine are passing into an eternity of darkness because they do not know otherwise. But you have no excuse for sitting in darkness. Do not be like those described in John 3:19: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”.

Jesus is calling you out of the darkness – darkness that will condemn your soul eternally. He is calling you into His marvellous light. But you may be thinking: “I cannot come; I have no strength; I prefer to be in darkness”. Yet you may go to Him and tell Him: “Lord, Thou dost call me, but I have no desire or strength to come. Do Thou bring me to Thee.” O will you not plead with the Lord today, even *now*? He can bring you from the awful kingdom of darkness into His beautiful kingdom of light. “Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isaiah 2:5). *C Johnson*

The Book of Ruth

62. Promising to Marry

Rev Keith M Watkins

Ruth 3:13. Then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth.

When Boaz promised “to do the part of a kinsman” to Ruth, he was promising to marry her. There was a nearer relative who had the right of first refusal. Provided he did not want to marry Ruth, Boaz certainly would. This was a promise of the greatest importance. As far as your life in this world is concerned, committing yourself to marry someone is one of the most important steps that you will ever take. It must never be done lightly.

Boaz understood this. That is why he added to his promise these words: *as the Lord liveth*. Does the Lord of heaven live? Of course! Can He stop living? Of course not! Boaz was telling Ruth that his promise was as certain as that. He had made up his mind and would never go back on it. She could be as sure of his promise as she was sure that the Lord God was alive.

Boaz was using an *oath*. This was to assure Ruth of his sincerity. He was supporting his promise in the strongest possible way. The Bible says that

among men “an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife” (Hebrews 6:16). It is as if the oath settles the matter once and for all that people are telling the truth. Perhaps you might doubt a man's word. But if he swears an oath that he is telling the truth, it is more likely that you will be persuaded to believe him.

Perhaps you are wondering why the Lord Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount: “Swear not at all” (Matthew 5:34). Did He mean that we should *never* use an oath? No. He meant that in our ordinary, everyday conversation, we should simply say *Yes* when we mean *Yes*, and *No* when we mean *No*. We should not use an oath often. Honest people will not need to do so. Their word will be enough. They will not need to be constantly calling on the name of God to prove that they are telling the truth. That would be taking the Lord's name in vain.

It is only in the most important situations that an oath is lawful. In a court of law, absolute truth is required, so witnesses swear an oath that they will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Again, when a man is being appointed to a most important office, such as the president of a nation, it is lawful that he should join an oath with his promise to serve faithfully.

If people are always using oaths, it is as if they are telling you that their words cannot be trusted. I remember one Saturday meeting a man in Kenya, near to our mission. He walked with me for a while. I soon discovered that he used to attend our church some years before, but for various reasons he had stopped coming. I encouraged him to return. At first he was reluctant, but in the end he said that he would come. Then, when our ways parted, he said, “I will come to church tomorrow, I swear”. As soon as I heard that, my hopes for his coming sank. Until this day, he has not come.

Boaz used an oath in his promise to marry Ruth. Boaz and Ruth could now consider themselves engaged to be married. They were not free to marry anyone else. They could not go back on the contract they had entered into. It is so important to realise this! Getting engaged is not a trial period which may or may not lead to marriage. Rather, it is a solemn commitment by both parties that they will marry each other. For this reason, in ordinary circumstances, engagements should not be for a long time. The parties should have made up their minds already.

Today it is obvious that many people look on marriage itself more lightly than they ought to look on getting engaged! People seem to think that they can leave their marriage for all kinds of reasons. God hates this (see Malachi 2:16). It is no wonder that engagement is treated even more lightly! But it ought not to be so.

Ordinarily, only the most serious circumstances can give someone who is engaged the right to break their promise to marry. Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married: she was his “espoused wife” (Luke 2:5). When Mary was found to be pregnant, he was ready to break the contract. It was because he was “a just man” (Matthew 1:19) that he felt justified in doing this. A lesser cause would not have justified his plan. Of course, Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and when the angel of the Lord explained this to him, he carried on with the engagement. He no longer had any just cause for going back on his promise to marry her.

The Westminster Confession reminds us of this long-forgotten, binding nature of engaging to marry when it says: “Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract” (chapter 24). In other words, lesser reasons do not usually give the right to withdraw from an engagement contract.

Marriage of course is meant to be a picture of the union between Christ and the Church. Especially is this true of the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz promising so solemnly and seriously that he would marry Ruth points us to Christ’s promise to marry His people. From all eternity, the Son of God entered into an unchangeable commitment to marry His Church. It was as if He said, “I will marry you. I will do the part of a kinsman to you. As surely as I live, I will do it.” Christ will marry His people as certainly as He has lived for ever as the Son of God. That’s how sure it has been from all eternity.

When God promised Abraham that he would have the Saviour of the world for his seed, He added an oath (see Hebrews 6:13-18). God’s Word in itself would be enough. But God is kind. He added an oath to His saving promise. Therefore, we have every reason to seek Christ. “By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:18). Will you flee to Christ to shelter you from the storm of God’s wrath? Will you lay hold on gospel hope through faith in Christ? Then you have two things to assure you of salvation: God’s word and God’s oath. He cannot change His word; that is impossible. But as if to make it even more impossible, He has added His oath. What encouragement you have to believe in Him! What excuse can you possibly give for failing to trust Him?

Ruth was greatly encouraged by Boaz adding his oath to his promise. Surely we should be encouraged to believe in the Lord, for He has added His oath to His promise to save believers.

The Church Bell

It was a lovely Sabbath morning. Eight law students were walking along the banks of the Potomac towards a quiet spot where they meant to spend their time playing cards and drinking wine. They were turning their backs on God. But each of them had a mother who prayed, and prayed for *them*. As they wandered along by the river, they heard the bell calling worshippers to a church two miles away. Suddenly one of the students stopped. He told one of the others that he was not going any farther; he had decided to turn back and go to church. This other student shouted to the rest of the group: "Boys, come back here. George is getting religious." He wanted to throw George into the river.

The rest of the students surrounded George. But he replied calmly, "I know you have the physical ability to put me in the stream and hold me there, even till I am drowned and, if you choose, you can do so without me showing resistance. But before you do it, I have a few words to say. You all know that I am nearly 200 miles from home, but you do not know that my mother is a helpless, bed-ridden invalid. I cannot remember ever seeing her out of bed." It was only with great difficulty, he told his companions, that she had been persuaded to allow him to leave home for university. On the morning he left, she sent for him and asked, "Have you everything ready and properly packed?" He told her that he had indeed finished his packing. She then prayed with him. George believed that he would always be able to remember every word of the petitions she sent up to heaven.

She then spoke to George. She referred to her sadness at parting from him, her youngest son. She and her husband could not afford the expense of George travelling home for his holidays during his two-year course of study, and she did not expect to live for long. At university there would be no one to advise him when he met temptation. "You must therefore", she told him, "learn to say, No, when urged to do wrong. I cannot be with you, but I will daily commit you to the care of God, who is present everywhere, watching your evil acts as well as your good deeds. Every Sabbath morning, from 10 to 11 o'clock, I will spend the hour in prayer for you. Wherever you may be during this hour, when you hear the church bell ringing for the assembling of God's people and others, let your thoughts carry you to this room, where your dying mother will be agonizing for you in prayer. Commit to memory the eighth, ninth and tenth verses of the first chapter of Proverbs. Kiss me farewell. Now the last words you will ever hear from my lips are in the language of Solomon: 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.'"

Beside the Potomac, the church bell had reminded George of his praying

mother. And George's words impressed all the other students. They moved aside to let him go. Without saying a word, George walked away towards the church. And the others followed, also in silence. As they walked along, they all dropped their cards into the water, without letting any of the others see what they had done. And never again did they break the Sabbath as they had intended to do that morning by the Potomac. The prayers of George's mother were beginning to have their answer.

For Junior Readers

Epitaphs

Do you know what an epitaph is? You would usually find an epitaph on a gravestone or a monument. It tells about someone who has died. Often it sums up their lives or achievements in a few words.

In the Bible, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, you will find descriptions of the lives and reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah. Many are summed up in a few words, just like an epitaph. It might be: "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord", or, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord".

Which group do you think you would belong to? Could you be described as someone who does "right in the sight of the Lord"? Or would you have to admit in all honesty that you do "evil in the sight of the Lord"?

Notice the word *did*. That refers to their actions. It does not just mean their words and thoughts and desires. Perhaps you have vague desires and intentions to seek the Lord at some time in the future. But that is not enough. What about your actions? Do you truly seek the Lord? Do you obey His commandments? It is not enough to talk to others as if you do. Jesus said about the scribes and Pharisees of His time: "They say, and *do* not". Their words were not followed out by their actions. God, who is a righteous judge, will judge you according to your actions.

Remember also that all you do is "in the sight of the Lord". God sees everything you do, good or bad. You may hide many of your actions from your parents or from your minister, but you cannot hide anything from God. When David was confessing his sin to God in Psalm 51, he does not mention the *people* he had sinned against, although, no doubt, he was sorry about that. What he said was: "Against Thee, *Thee only*, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight". You should surely try to remember this every day, no matter what you are doing.

God, however, sees not just your actions, but also everything that goes

through your mind. If you are doing what others expect you to do – for example, attending church, or learning the Bible and the Shorter Catechism – that is all very good. But what about your thoughts, desires and motives? Are they right in God's eyes?

Look at your own life. Be honest. Can you not see that sin affects all that you do? Do you not realise that you have a heart that is "deceitful and desperately wicked", as the Bible tells you? Should you not pray in the words of Psalm 119:

"Look on me, Lord, and merciful do Thou unto me prove,
As Thou art wont to do to those Thy name who truly love.
O let my footsteps in Thy word aright still ordered be:
Let no iniquity obtain dominion over me"? (verses 132,133)

Then, with the Lord's help and keeping, it could be said of you as it was of young King Josiah, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 22:2). What a wonderful epitaph! *J van Kralingen*

Pray for Yourself¹

My Dear Katie Grant,

I was a little while ago at a meeting for prayer where a large number of ministers were gathered together. The subject of prayer was, *Our children*. It soon brought the tears to my eyes to hear those good fathers pleading with God for their sons and daughters. As they went on entreating the Lord to save their families, my heart seemed ready to burst with strong desire that it might be even so. Then I thought, I will write to those sons and daughters, and remind them of their parents' prayers.

Dear Katie, you are highly privileged in having parents who pray for you. Your name is known in the courts of heaven. Your case has been laid before the throne of God.

Do you not pray for yourself? If you do not do so, why not? If other people value your soul, can it be right for you to neglect it? All the entreaties and wrestlings of your father will not save you if you never seek the Lord yourself. You know this. You do not intend to cause grief to dear mother and father: but you do. So long as you are not saved, they can never rest. However obedient and sweet and kind you may be, they will never feel happy about you until you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so find everlasting salvation. Think of this. Remember how much you have already sinned, and no one can wash you but Jesus. When you grow up you may

¹A letter from a well-known London minister who died in 1892.

become very sinful, and no one can change your nature and make you holy but the Lord Jesus, through His Spirit.

You need what Father and Mother seek for you, and you need it now. Why not seek it at once? I heard a father pray, "Lord, save our children, and save them young". It is never too soon to be safe, never too soon to be happy, never too soon to be holy. Jesus loves to receive the very young ones. You cannot save yourself, but the great Lord Jesus can save you. Ask Him to do it. "He that asketh receiveth." Then trust in Jesus to save you. He can do it, for He died and rose again so that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Come and tell Jesus you have sinned; seek forgiveness; trust in Him for it, and be sure that you are saved.

Then imitate our Lord. Be at home what Jesus was in Nazareth. Yours will be a happy home, and your dear father and mother will feel that the dearest wish of their hearts has been granted them.

I pray you to think of heaven and hell, for in one of those places you will live for ever. Meet me in heaven! Meet me at once at the mercy seat. Run upstairs and pray to the Great Father, through Jesus Christ.

Yours very lovingly,
C H Spurgeon.

For Younger Readers

Enough to Eat

A huge crowd of people followed Jesus. He healed lots of people who were sick. And He spoke to them. He must have spoken to them about many wonderful things. Nobody ever spoke more wonderful things than Jesus. He told people about how they could get to heaven.

Why was that? Because Jesus knew far more than anyone else. He knew far more than you do. He knew far more than I do. He knew far more than any of the disciples who went with Him everywhere – men like Peter and James and John. These disciples were good men and they knew the way to heaven, but Jesus knew far more than any of them.

You see, Jesus was not only a man. He was also God. Perhaps you are going to say now: This is something I cannot understand. How could Jesus be both man and God?

This is something so very wonderful that none of us can really

understand it. But it was why Jesus was able to do something else that was wonderful.

After Jesus had been speaking to the people all day, they were hungry. They must have been very hungry indeed; they had nothing to eat since morning. They had no food with them. And there were no shops near them. There was nowhere they could go to buy food.

What could Jesus do? He had no food to give them. But he knew all the time what He would do. He was going to look after the people who had spent all day listening to Him.

Andrew, one of Jesus' other disciples, told Him about a lad who had some food. But there was only a very little. The lad had only five little loaves and two small fish. Remember there was a huge crowd of people who needed food. Yet it was not long before everyone had enough to eat.

Jesus told all the people to sit down. He thanked God for giving them food. He first took the loaves, He broke them up and gave the pieces to the disciples. The disciples passed it out to the people. Then He did the same with the fish. Each of the people got some bread and some fish. Indeed all of the people got enough to eat. No one was hungry any more.

You see, Jesus was not just an ordinary man. No ordinary man or woman could do wonderful things like this. Jesus is God.

Looking Around Us

Blasphemous

“The birth, life and death of Jesus is to be re-enacted in a huge new open-air play to be set in the grounds of a Scottish country estate as part of what is likely to be one of the largest theatrical events of 2003.” In this way a newspaper introduces a plan for a week of performances near Edinburgh.

One of the organisers claims that they will show a Jesus who is wholly God but also fully man. But they cannot possibly succeed in this. The actor who will try to portray Jesus will indeed be fully human but, obviously, in no way will he be God. Any attempt to act out the part of Jesus is impossible. No one can enter into the feelings and the attitudes of One who is altogether holy. After all, the actor, like the rest of us, will be a sinful human being.

All acting is an attempt to enter into the personality of someone else. It cannot be sincere. Inevitably it breaks the Ninth Commandment. To try to act out the part of Jesus is even worse. It is blasphemous.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2002-03

Exercise 3

All answers from overseas should be sent to *Mrs N M Ross, F P Manse, 10 Achany Road, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV15 9JB, Scotland*. The correctors should have your answers before the end of June. These exercises are based on Genesis 24 to Exodus 34 and Matthew 12 to Mark 16.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Miss S M Gillies, 5 Balnabeen Drive, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV15 9LY*.

Old Testament

1. Explain the importance of the following two places in the experience of Jacob:
 - (a) Bethel
 - (b) Peniel.(4)
2. Later in his life, Jacob is reminded by God of these two places. Read Genesis 35 and give two reasons why you think this reminder was necessary. (2)
3. The following quotations are from the book of Genesis. In each case state:
 - (1) who spoke the words and (2) to whom they were spoken:
 - (a) "Bless me, even me also, O my father."
 - (b) "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."
 - (c) "Do not interpretations belong to God?"
 - (d) "See that ye fall not out by the way."
 - (e) "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."
 - (f) "I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed."
 - (g) "Fear not: for am I in the place of God?"(14)
4. Explain the significance of the following two places in the experience of Moses:
 - (a) Horeb
 - (b) Meribah(4)

New Testament

1. In the Gospel of Matthew we find the following two short prayers. In each case state:
 - (1) whose prayer it was and (2) the occasion on which it was offered:
 - (a) "Lord, save me"
 - (b) "Lord, help me".(4)
2. Describe briefly how the following people were involved in events surrounding the death of Christ: (a) Simon Cyrene (b) Joseph of Arimathaea (c) Mary Magdalene. (5)
3. On what two occasions described in the Gospel of Mark did God's voice from heaven acknowledge Jesus as His "beloved Son"? (2)
4. In the Gospel of Mark, we read of many people who came to Jesus for healing, either for themselves or for others. In what way did the following people show their faith in Christ's power to heal?
 - (a) The leper (chapter 1)
 - (b) The woman with the issue of blood (chapter 5)
 - (c) The Syrophenician woman (chapter 7).(6)
5. The disciples, on the other hand, sometimes showed their lack of faith in Christ. Give two examples of this from Mark's Gospel, and say in each case how Jesus dealt with their unbelief. (6)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 98 in the Shorter Catechism: What is prayer? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hymers, Achavarn, Thurso, Caithness, KW14 7YH*.

Old Testament

1. Read Genesis chapters 37-50.
 - (a) Why did Jacob love Joseph more than his other sons? (chapter 37) (1)
 - (b) Give two reasons why Joseph's brothers hated him. (chapter 37) (2)

- (c) What did they do to "get rid" of him? (chapter 37) (3)
 (d) In what way did they deceive their father? (chapter 37) (3)
 (e) What did Joseph's master think of his work? (chapter 39) (2)
 (f) How is Joseph described in this chapter? (chapter 39) (2)
 (g) (i) Which statement proves that all was well with Joseph? (chapter 39) (2)
 (ii) How often is this statement repeated in the chapter? (1)
 (h) What age was Joseph when Pharaoh appointed him governor of Egypt? (chapter 41) (1)
 (i) In what way was Joseph used by God to "save much people alive"? (chapters 41,50) (2)
 (j) Give any lesson you could learn from the life of Joseph. (2)

New Testament

1. Read Matthew chapter 18
 (a) What caused Jesus to set a child in the midst of His disciples? (2)
 (b) What should we learn from this? (2)
 (c) Who are described as "little ones"? (1)
 (d) What great encouragement is given for those few who gather in His name? (1)
 (e) How many times should we forgive a brother? (2)
2. From your reading of Matthew, what lessons can we learn from:
 (a) the parable of the wicked husbandmen (chapter 21) (2)
 (b) the parable of the vineyard (chapter 20) (2)
 (c) the parable of the marriage feast (chapter 22) (2)
 (d) the parable of the ten virgins (chapter 25) (2)
 (e) the parable of the talents (chapter 25)? (2)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 98 in the Shorter Catechism:
 What is prayer? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to Mrs C M Sutherland, Hawthorn Cottage, Main Street, Lairg, Sutherland, IV27 4DB.

Old Testament

1. Read Genesis chapters 25 and 27. The following statements are true of *either* Jacob *or* Esau. Say which of them it is and write down the chapter and verse which proves your answer.
 (a) He was Rebekah's favourite. (1)
 (b) He was a cunning hunter. (1)
 (c) He sold his birthright. (1)
 (d) He was the elder twin. (1)
 (e) He deceived his father. (1)
 (f) Isaac asked him for venison. (1)
 (g) He hated his brother. (1)
 (h) His father blessed him and said, "Let people serve thee and nations bow down to thee". (16)
2. After Jacob left home, how many years passed before Esau and he met again? (Genesis 31) (1)
 3. How did Jacob feel when he knew they were soon to meet? (Genesis 32) (1)
 4. What did Jacob do to try to make his brother his friend? (Genesis 32) (2)
 5. What happened when they met? (Genesis 33) (1)

New Testament

1. Read Matthew 17:1-9.
 (a) What did Peter, James and John see on the Mount of Transfiguration? (3)
 (b) What did they hear there? (1)
 (c) How did they feel when they saw and heard these things? (1)
 (d) What words did Jesus speak to them? (1)
 (e) When were they permitted to speak about this vision? (1)
2. Read the parable of the sower in Mark 4:3-8 and the meaning of it given by Jesus to His disciples in verses 14-20.
 (a) What is the seed? (1)
 (b) What three types of thorns choke the seed? (1)

- (c) To what is Satan compared in the parable? (1)
 (d) Why did the seed on stony ground spring up quickly? (1)
 (e) What caused the seed on stony ground to wither away? (1)
 (f) Using the answer to Shorter Catechism number 90: "How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?" list four things we should do when reading or hearing God's word. (1)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to question 90 in the Shorter Catechism:
 How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Miss C MacQueen, 32 Fraser Crescent, Portree Isle of Skye, IV51 9DR.*

Old Testament

1. Read Genesis 28:10-22.
 - (a) What did Jacob see in his dream? (2)
 - (b) How did God describe Himself to Jacob? (1)
 - (c) Write down the great promise God gave Jacob. (verse 15) (1)
 - (d) What did Jacob say when he wakened? (1)
 - (e) Why was the place a dreadful one? (1)
 - (f) What new name did Jacob give to this place? (1)
 - (g) What do you think this ladder was a picture of? John 1:51 may help you. (1)
2. Read Exodus 19:18 to 20:17. We read here of another dreadful place.
 - (a) What happened on Mount Sinai when God came down? (3)
 - (b) Say what God said just before He gave the Ten Commandments. (1)
 - (c) Write down the First Commandment. (1)
 - (d) Write down the commandment which tells us to obey our parents. (1)
 - (e) Write down the first four words of the last commandment. (1)
 - (f) Look up Matthew 22:37-39, which is a summary of the Ten Commandments. Write down (a) our duty to God, and (b) our duty to man. (3)

New Testament

1. Last time you answered questions about the birth of Christ. But Christ was born to die. Read about His death in Matthew 27:24-54.
 - (a) How did Pilate describe Jesus? (1)
 - (b) What did the soldiers put on His head and in His hand? (2)
 - (c) What was written above the cross? (1)
 - (d) What happened between the sixth and ninth hours? (1)
 - (e) What did Jesus cry at the ninth hour? (1)
 - (f) What happened in the temple when He died? (1)
 - (g) What did the centurion say? (1)
2. Christ rose from the dead. The Saviour is alive. Read Mark 16:1-8.
 - (a) On which day of the week did the women go to the grave? (1)
 - (b) What did they see in the sepulchre? (1)
 - (c) What were they told about Jesus? (1)
 - (d) How did the women feel? (1)
 - (e) What did Jesus tell the disciples to do? (verse 15) (1)
 - (f) Did they obey? Write down the verse that tells you this. (2)
 - (g) Write down a verse near the end of the chapter which describes those who believe and those who do not. (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to question 21 in the Shorter Catechism:
Who is the Redeemer of God's elect? (3)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs R J Dickie, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Lewis, HSI 2NP.*

Old Testament

1. Moses saw a bush that was burning but did not burn away. Who called to him out of the bush? (Exodus 3:4)
2. What was Moses told to take off? (Exodus 3:5)
3. What did Moses hide because he was afraid to look upon God? (Exodus 3:6)
4. God told Moses that he would bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt to a good land, a land flowing with ____ and _____. (Fill in the missing words.) (Exodus 3:8)
5. What did the children of Israel call the food that God gave them in the wilderness? (Exodus 16:15)
6. How many days did they gather it each week? (Exodus 16:26)
7. Was there any to gather on the seventh day, the Sabbath? (Exodus 16:27)
8. Who gave them twice as much on the sixth day so that they could rest on the Sabbath? (Exodus 16:29)

New Testament

1. The disciples were in a ship. Who went to them walking on the sea? (Matthew 14:25)
2. Who said "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water?" (Matthew 14:28)
3. What did Jesus say to him? (Matthew 14:29)
4. When he began to sink, what did he cry out? (Matthew 14:30)
5. Did Jesus save him? (Matthew 14:31)
6. The disciples in the ship worshipped Jesus. Who did they say he was? (Matthew 14:33)
7. When Jesus was transfigured, who did he take with him up the mountain as well as Peter and James? (Matthew 17:1)
8. Jesus' clothes became white like the light. What shone like the sun? (Matthew 17:2)
9. Who appeared and talked with him? (Matthew 17:3)
10. What did the voice from the bright cloud say? (Fill in the missing words.)
This is my beloved ____, in whom I am well _____; hear ye _____.
(Matthew 17:5)