



BiBlos

A Teaching Resource of the British Bible School

**"Is anyone on
my side?"**

**Was this really
the holiest place?**



***Under the fig tree:
a favourable verdict***

**At the foot of the cross
- "I was there!"**

***Re-examining
our body parts***

**AI - A FRANK
APPRAISAL**



Issue 3 - March 2016

Welcome

This, our third offering, is finally ready for your consumption. Again, we hope you find this to be as useful and as encouraging as those that have gone before. If you missed either of the previous issues, then you should be able to find them on our web site.

You will again find an assortment of articles, word studies, reviews and other focus areas. The short articles are intentionally short and provide something of an introduction to the matters raised.

We have not intentionally focused on any particular theme, but a number of articles in this issue address the matter of sin and death in one way or another. Even our archaeological journey, which has continued further south and into the Negev, takes us into an arid land not far from the Dead Sea.

You might find it useful to consult our web site for additional information and a little background to some of the articles, along with some suggestions for further reading.

BiBloS is to be published in an online format, three times each year, and is downloadable from our web site.

We certainly welcome any feedback you care to give, and ideas of how we make it better - we just ask that you be gracious! And please do let us know if you might be interested in articles on a particular subject or theme.

Thank you for reading. Please feel free to share it far and wide. And may this be a blessing to us all, that we might be a blessing to the world in which we live.

Patrick

Contents:

Words and Deeds	3
All Free Today!.....	4
Nathanael	5
Sin of Achan	8
Big Black Dictionaries	9
Dismembering the Church	10
One Who Will Take Our Side	13
Aquila and Priscilla	14
Our Sin and Our Saviour	15
Tel Arad	18
The Death of Jesus	19

BiBloS is published three times each year by the **British Bible School** based in Corby, Northamptonshire, U.K.

www.britishbibleschool.com

study@britishbibleschool.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com> All rights reserved.

Quotations designated (GNB) are taken from the Good News Translation - Second Edition © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Additional **information and references** relating to certain articles may be found on our web site. If you have any further questions relating to any of these articles, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Thank you.

© 2016 **British Bible School**

Words and Deeds

Steven Whitehead

It was Benjamin Franklin who defined man as “a tool-making animal”, which is true without being the whole truth. Humans are not animals because we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) which means we are both like and unlike Him. One of our shared characteristics is the urge to create, which is where the tools come in. When God made the heavens and earth and all that is within them He spoke and things that previously had no existence came to be. We, like God, can speak and use words to communicate meaning. But we, unlike God, cannot speak things into existence. As I write these words the sun is setting and my study is getting darker. If I want light I have to stand up, step across the room, and press a switch on the wall and only then will there be light. Remaining at my desk and saying “Let there be light” will make no difference unless I have a voice-activated light switch or someone passing by is kind enough to help. We can all see that God's great act of creating light is infinitely above and beyond our switching on the light in a dark room.

As an aside, why did God create light first? Can He not see in the dark? Or could this be part of God's great plan from before the beginning of time because “God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)? Even before there were human eyes to see the light God had it there ready because He is light.

God - and those made in His image - use words. These words are more than mere sounds; words communicate meaning and can lead to action. God said and it happened - and it was good. If only this was always the case when humans speak. Yes, we can use words to praise our creator, to encourage one another, and many other good and noble purposes. But

there has to be a “but”. We can use words to gossip and grumble, to tear down, to destroy. As a poet has rightly said, “Sticks and stones may break our bones but words can break our heart”. Or, as James was inspired to write:



THE BEGINNING OF JOHN'S GOSPEL FROM P.75

No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:8-9)

When the Apostle John was inspired to start his record of the life of Jesus he chose to echo the opening words of Genesis: “In the beginning”. But John knew that this act of creation involved not only God the Father but also His Son. The word John uses to describe God the Son is significant: “In the beginning was the Word.” The word translated “Word” in most English Bibles is *Logos* which means - no surprises - word but with the understanding of word as a unit of communication, a word (or command) that makes things happen. As John goes on to explain, “the Word was with God and the Word was God”. He then devotes the following 21 chapters to showing just how Jesus the *Logos* truly was both Lord and God not only by what he said but also by how He acted.

All Free Today!

Patrick Boyns

Why can we find it so difficult to stop doing things we really do not want to be doing? Whether it is something like cutting down on the calories, stopping smoking or leaving a web site, why do some activities become so compulsive that we begin to feel as if we are being controlled by them?

Of course, the answers to these questions will be varied and sometimes very complex. There are all different kinds of dependencies with all manner of triggers that might set them off, but most likely these behavioural patterns have something of a common theme.

English translations of the New Testament Scriptures generally use the word “sin” to translate the Greek *hamartia*, which initially conveyed the idea of ‘missing the mark’ and so came to speak of ‘failing in one’s purpose’ or simply ‘doing wrong.’ Though it may no longer be a popular word, sin itself has never been so popular. After all, sin is enjoyable! At least it can be enjoyable – even if only for an instant. If there was no enjoyment in sin then the world would likely not be full of it and none would be lost in it.

Jesus once taught that “everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). He was speaking to the religious people who seemed unable to recognise the truth of God, even though they were being directly confronted by it. And it was this inability to recognise truth that had enslaved them, for Jesus had just said to those who believed in him, “If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32 GNB)

It seems that the addictive power of sin lies largely in its deception. The New Testament writer James teaches that “each



A FILM LOCATION IN ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER

person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14). The picture is perhaps of a fish being lured and enticed by a wriggling worm – but a worm that conceals a deadly hook.

I am not sure that I would be so easily lured and enticed by a wriggling worm, but then I am not a fish and that would not be my “own desire.” However, I am sure that were the fish to know the truth of the matter – that this would be its last supper – that it would not be so eager to take a bite. Wriggling worms really can be so terribly deceptive.

Several months ago I found myself at a location associated with what had been a rather frightening childhood experience. It was the spot where the evil Child Catcher lured and enticed the children with “lollipops .. cherry pie, cream puffs, ice cream and treacle tart .. all free today.” If you have not seen the film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* then you really ought to, even if only for this scene. The following probably ought to be prefaced with a ‘spoiler alert’ but if the children had known the real nature of the horse-drawn wagon, then they are unlikely to have been so enamoured with its supposed contents.

The thing is that as long as we think that sin might yet have something to offer, we will continue to be lured and enticed by its deception. We must open our eyes and see it for what it really is. The truth really will set us free.

Nathanael: the man who saw for himself

John Griffiths

First impressions are always the most important. The impression that we form of a person at our first meeting is often the impression that stays with us the longest. John chapter 1 records a series of first impressions that some formed of Jesus the first time they met him. John the baptist identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). This was the first impression of Jesus given to two of John’s disciples who then started following Jesus. One of those disciples was Andrew. After spending some time with Jesus, Andrew went to find his brother, Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah.” Andrew had come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah, and so he wanted to share this good news with his brother. The following day Jesus decided to travel to Galilee when he met Philip and called Philip to follow him. Philip then went to find his friend Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:45). These were the earliest impressions formed by these men who would spend the next three years with Jesus.

“Come and see”

Who was this man Nathanael whom Philip went to find? John is the only writer to record the name “Nathanael.” It is a Hebrew name meaning, ‘Gift of God’ or ‘God has given’. But it is not a name that is included in any of the lists of the twelve disciples recorded in the other Gospels. However, one name that is included in those lists is the name “Bartholomew” and many consider Bartholomew to be the same person whom John calls “Nathanael.” Another possibility is that Nathanael became a disciple of Jesus but

was not one of the twelve, for Jesus had other disciples in addition to the twelve. Nathanael makes a second appearance in John 21:2, where he is included in a list of disciples who saw the resurrected Christ by the Sea of Tiberias. There he is called, “Nathanael of Cana in Galilee.” So we know that like Philip, Andrew and Simon, Nathanael was from the region of Galilee, and specifically he was from the town of Cana.

We are not told the circumstances of Jesus’ meeting with Philip, or whether Jesus already knew Philip when he called him to follow him. The first impression that Philip had formed of Jesus was that he was the Messiah, the one who had been spoken of by Moses and the prophets. Philip was acquainted with the scriptures and knew that they spoke of a coming Messiah, one who would bring deliverance to God’s people and establish God’s kingdom and he now believed that Jesus was the fulfilment of those promises. Philip was excited about this discovery and wanted to share this good news with his friend Nathanael. When Philip found Nathanael he said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). However, Nathanael was not impressed. He asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” What caught Nathanael’s attention was not that Philip thought he had found the Messiah, but mention of the town of Nazareth. As far as Nathanael was concerned, nothing good could come from a place like Nazareth. It was a small, insignificant town, not renowned for anything great. Surely the Messiah, the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets, would not come from such a place.

Philip responded to Nathanael's scepticism by inviting him to, "Come and see." This was the best way to deal with Nathanael's prejudice. Philip did not seek to get into an argument with Nathanael, he did not try to persuade him that he was wrong and something good could come from Nazareth. He simply invited him to "Come and see" for himself. He could then make up his own mind about Jesus. Today when we seek to speak to people about Jesus we may often get a negative reaction. The best way for us to handle such responses is to do the same as Philip did – invite people to come and see or investigate matters for themselves. We cannot argue people into having faith in Jesus and winning debates won't necessarily bring people to Christ. It is not clever arguments that will convince people, but simply telling others what Jesus means to us. People must be able to see that Jesus has made a difference to our own lives before they will be willing to come and see for themselves.

"An Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Despite his doubts and presumptions about Nazareth, Nathanael was willing to accept Philip's invitation to come and see Jesus. Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" In this statement Jesus assesses and commends the character of Nathanael. There was no

deceit, fraud or treachery in Nathanael. He is a genuine Israelite, a descendant of Jacob who fears and obeys God. This was what Jesus saw in Nathanael. Perhaps Jesus was drawing a contrast between the character of Nathanael and the character of his forefather Jacob. Jacob was a man who was renowned for his guile. After Jacob had tricked his brother Esau out of his blessing Isaac said to Esau, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." Esau replied, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing" (Genesis 27:35-36). It was only later, when he stopped using deceit, that God changed Jacob's name to "Israel." But Nathanael was an Israelite, a descendant of Jacob, in whom there was no trace of deceit.

Taken aback by this favourable estimation of his character Nathanael asked, "How do you know me?" Nathanael had never met Jesus before, so how could he have formed an opinion about him so quickly? Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (John 1:48). In Jewish thought the idea of sitting under a fig tree was an image of peace and security. 1 Kings 4:25 pictures the peaceful conditions of Solomon's reign, "And Judah and Israel dwelt in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man



NAZARETH FROM THE SOUTH

under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.” A man could sit under his fig tree, undisturbed and untroubled, praying and meditating upon God’s word.

When Jesus said, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you,” Nathanael’s reaction indicates that there is more to this than Jesus simply seeing Nathanael sitting under a fig tree. Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, you are the



A FIG TREE IN GILEAD, OR TRANSJORDAN

Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49). There was something in those words of Jesus that had a tremendous impact upon Nathanael. It is not just that Jesus saw him sitting under a fig tree that caused Nathanael to proclaim him to be the Son of God and the King of Israel. It may be that when Nathanael heard these words he recognised that Jesus possessed a clear insight into the things that Nathanael was thinking about under the fig tree. It is Jesus’ intimate knowledge of the thoughts and meditations of Nathanael’s heart that produced this reaction. Nathanael realised that Jesus had seen into the depths of his heart and Nathanael concluded that Jesus must be the Son of God and the King of Israel. By using these titles Nathanael expressed his conviction that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus now raises Nathanael’s expectations of seeing even greater things, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You

shall see greater things than these” (John 1:50). Here is a promise that because of his belief in Jesus as the Messiah Nathanael will be blessed to witness greater evidences of Jesus’ deity and Messiahship. As a disciple of Jesus Nathanael must have witnessed many of the miracles that Jesus performed, and then the greatest thing would have been to witness the appearance of the resurrected Christ. Jesus tells Nathanael what he will see, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:51). Jesus seems to be referring to the incident from Jacob’s life, recorded in Genesis 28:10-17, when Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway stretching from earth to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on that stairway. Jesus suggests to Nathanael that he is that stairway between heaven and earth. The thought of the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man implies that communion between heaven and earth is established through Jesus Christ; he is that connection or mediator between mankind and God. Nathanael will be privileged to witness these things by becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Nathanael’s first impression that nothing good could come from Nazareth is shown to be a false first impression, for having met Jesus he declared him to be the Son of God, the King of Israel. By accepting Philip’s invitation to “Come and see” Nathanael had come to his own conclusion about Jesus which had led to this expression of faith. In this he is an example to all who are willing to investigate matters for themselves. His response in declaring Jesus to be “the Son of God...the King of Israel” anticipates what the appropriate response to Jesus should be once a person has come into contact with Jesus and seen for themselves.

Sin of Achan

Mark Hill

After the fall of Jericho, Joshua's fame spread rapidly through the country. The next place to attack was Ai, as it blocked the passage into Canaan's centre. Read carefully Joshua 7, noticing the elements of failure, and then let us take note for ourselves that there are consequences of disobedience to God.

A plain warning was given in Joshua 6:17-18 that everything was to be destroyed and nothing taken that was meant for destruction. Only Rahab and others in her house should be spared.

In the following chapter we see deliberate disobedience against this command. To sin is to disobey God (see 1 John 3:4), and in this instance all of Israel was affected by this act of disobedience.

The result is that Israel were soundly defeated at Ai and they became paralysed with fear. Sin weakened them. They did not seek God's counsel, but rather relied on their own strength. The effect was that their courage melted away.

Joshua then called on the Lord, speaking of himself, the people, and then God's honour. Jesus would later teach that we are always to seek FIRST the Kingdom of God (see Matthew 6:33).

God points out to Joshua that:

Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. (Joshua 7:11)

Yet wasn't it only ONE person who had sinned? God uses the word "they." Could it be that one person's sin has weakened the whole nation? Might the message for each one of us be that the church - the

people of God are not as powerful as they could be due to your/my sin?

Verses 12-15 record the remedy. There has to be a separation. There can be no toleration of intentional sin among God's people. To be cleansed of sin we need to confess it (1 John 1:9) otherwise judgment is unsparing and complete, bringing only death (see Romans 6:23).

There was sin in the camp of Israel! The sin of the one affected the whole nation, making them helpless before their enemies. What must have been the feeling as the search narrowed itself down to Achan? We would do well to heed the warning, "be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). And if not in time, then in eternity!

Look at Joshua 7:20-23 and notice the steps in Achan's sin:

1. He saw (see Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16).
2. He coveted (see 1 Timothy 6:9-10).
3. He took.
4. He hid (see Hebrews 4:13).

The punishment is seen in Joshua 7:24-26. The fate of Achan is very solemn, but it was surely a much needed lesson. If we are not getting the victory over sin in our lives, do not blame God, but search your own heart.

If we truly believed that sin will be punished, would it be so prevalent in our lives? Do we really think the church can be powerful and effective whilst sin is merely hidden out of sight? The lesson of Achan tells us that we and our congregations and the church as a whole have our witness weakened when sin is unconfessed and not dealt with. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

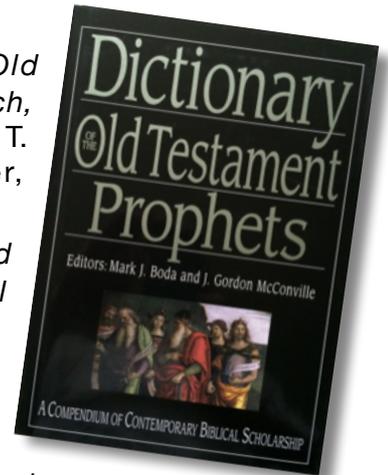
Big Black Dictionaries

Steven Whitehead

Over recent years the way many of us use reference books has changed. If I cannot remember whether Thingummy was the father or so of Whatsisname, or how many Ls there should be in Maher-shalal-hash-baz, or how many miles there are to Babylon I no longer turn to my trusty Bible dictionary and, I suspect, neither do you. Instead I use my electronic Study Bible or preferred search engine and click for the answer rather than turn pages. Publishers have noticed this trend and have moved much of their reference material into newer formats (e-books, CD-ROMs, etc.) or started to redefine what reference books are and how they should work.

In 1992 a big black dictionary appeared. It is a hardback with 934 pages, 260 x 185 x 55 mm in size and weighing in at over 1 kg. The title makes its terms of reference clear: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* and it does what it says on the cover with articles from "Abba" to "Zion". (Actually the first and last articles are "Abiathar" and "Zechariah's Song"; if you want Abba you have to look under "God", "Prayer", and "Son of God" and for Zion see "Mountain".) These examples should, I hope, start to give you an idea of the range of topics that can come under the heading "Jesus and the Gospels" and if you cannot find what you are looking for there are three sets of indexes: "Gospel References", "Subject", and "Articles". There had not been a project like this since the pair of two-volume set edited by James Hastings at the beginning of the twentieth century and Hastings was never the most reliable of guides, so there was a positive reception for this new project. There are now eight big black dictionaries available which I list below in what I think is the most logical order:

- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, David W. Baker and T. Desmond Alexander, eds., 2002, 954pp.
- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, Bill Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson, eds., 2005, 1060pp.
- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, Tremper Longman and Peter Enns, eds., 2008, 967pp.
- *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, Mark Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds., 2012, 965pp.
- *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, eds., 1992, 934pp.
- *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Gerald Hawthorne, Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid, eds., 1993, 1038pp.
- *Dictionary of Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Ralph Martin and Peter Davids, eds., 1997, 1289pp.
- *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, Craig Evans and Stanley Porter, eds., 2000, 1328pp.



All are published by InterVarsity Press and while none are cheap all are nevertheless excellent value. Since 1992 Jesus studies have moved forward, particularly through the work of Richard A. Burridge and N. T. Wright, and so *Jesus and the Gospels* is now in its second edition, still edited by Joel Green but now with Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin so I now have to ask myself whether I want this instead of the first edition or as well as. Whether the other seven volumes will be upgraded in the near future is not known but whether they are or not, all will serve Bible students very well for many years to come.

Dismembering the Church

Patrick Boyns

When a family member leaves this life or maybe simply moves away, things are never going to be the same. The idea that he or she might be replaced by another, new member should be seen as absurd. It doesn't matter how young or old the individual might be, each member is as much a part of the family as any other and has a particular place and part to play within that family. All are certainly not equal, but all are unique and together they make up what we understand to be the family.

The same is true of the family of God, to which all in Christ belong, and should be the experience of each family of believers or local group of disciples. Each individual disciple is unique, loved by God, and has a particular place and part to play within the whole. Perhaps the best analogy of this is that of the body, as used by Paul in a number of his letters to groups of believers.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

We are here introduced to a term which may well be familiar to us, but which nowadays is so often used in a different sense. We are, as individuals, members of the body of Christ. But more than that, being called from independence to interdependence, we are also “individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)

Membership

The concept of membership is generally used today in the sense of the collective, and not in the sense used in the New Testament writings. Mathematically, numbers might be members of a set; we may be represented by a Member of Parliament; we could be a member of a sugar-wrapper collecting club and so on.

However we are not, and should never speak of ourselves in this fashion, ‘members of the church.’ To do so would suggest that we are simply a unit of a whole, simply one of many, and the Scriptures never speak of membership in this way.

To be a member of the body of Christ, in the Biblical sense, is one thing; to be a member of the church, in the sense most often used, is something quite different. And it really does no good suggesting that as we are ‘members of the body’ and as ‘the body is the church’ so ‘we are members of the church.’ We might as well say that as we are living stones in the temple of God (1 Peter 2:4-5), so we are living stones of the church - and that really makes no sense. We simply shouldn't be mixing our metaphors.

Collectivism and membership

At first glance it might be easy to confuse the idea of collectivism with that of membership of a body and think that they are much of the same thing. Both are essentially made up of groups of people, but both are fundamentally different in nature. Both might be presented as alternatives to individualism or even solitude, but one through an assumed or even enforced equality, the other through recognition of diversity.

Perhaps this is seen little more clearly than in George Orwell's satirical *Animal Farm*, in which the animals' seventh commandment clearly stated that: “All animals are equal.” That may not have stood the test of time as some became “more equal than others,” but the idea of the collective was prevalent. In his essay on Membership, C. S. Lewis sees the collective idea carried to its extreme when

a convict is given a number in place of a name. And ironically, he suggests, a man may also lose his name in his own house when he is known simply as 'Father.' Both have lost their names in departing from isolation, one lost to the collective, the other to membership of the family.

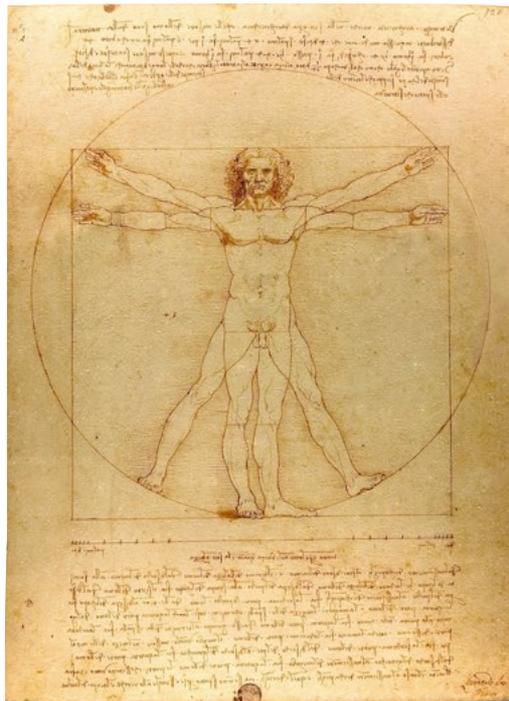
Where the collective disregards personal identity and considers all 'members' as being equal and identical; membership, in the true sense, regards each as unique both in identity and in contribution to the family or body as a whole. To put it simply, the collective is made up of lots of the same, the body is composed of lots of different parts – body parts, or members.

True members

It is only Paul who uses the Greek word *melos* to speak of believers as 'members' of the body of Christ. This is the common word for a 'body part' and is used in its more literal sense in passages such as James 3:5-6 where the tongue is spoken of as "a small member ... set among our members;" or Matthew 5:29-30 where Jesus says it would be "better for you to lose one of your members," such as your right eye or right hand, "than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." The idea of body parts is very clear here, and one would hardly consider the tongue, eye, or hand to be simply equal members of some organisation or club.

So when Paul uses the word 'members' to speak of individual believers, it is very much with the image of the body in mind. This is made very clear in passages such as this one which discusses the diversity of gifts among believers:

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. (1 Corinthians 12:14-20)



English translations tend to vary, using either "members" or "parts" (or both) to translate *melos*, some even occasionally adding either word in an attempt to add clarity.

That might well be useful, but it is less useful when translations then use the same word "members" in the more modern, collective sense such as when Joseph of Arimathea is spoken of as a respected "member of the council" (Mark 15:43) or Paul from Tarsus is said to be "a member of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1). In both of these passages – and there are others like these – the word has been supplied and is not present in the Greek text of the New Testament. Neither of these passages speak of membership in the Biblical sense, as neither councils nor tribes are made up of body parts, and if we cannot substitute the word "member" with the

phrase “body part” then we are not using the word in the Biblical sense.

Furthermore, it does not help when translators render the Greek *adelphoi* (brothers) as “members of the church” as does the NRSV in 1 Timothy 6:2. This is not only an unnecessary rendition, but it only adds to this misunderstanding.

A unique body

The idea of viewing body membership in the modern, collective sense becomes even more incongruous when considering the nature of the body to which we, as its parts, now belong. When we began following Jesus, devoting our lives to him and his teaching, we were dipped in water and made to be members of his body (1 Corinthians 12:13). We were added not to a collective, but to the Lord himself who is the head of his body of which we are now members, or body parts.

In another passage addressing the unity of the Spirit and the diversity of his gifts, Paul speaks of Christ as the head of his body from whom

the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love.

(Ephesians 4:16 NET)

The picture here is both beautiful and instructive. We are members, that is we are body parts: limbs, joints, ligaments, organs – each one different, each with its particular place and each with its part to play within the body as a whole. The modern, collective notion of membership tends to treat all ‘members’ as equal, a trend propagated by the contemporary obsession with so-called ‘equality’ in which even distinctions of gender are being undermined in a desperate attempt to make all individuals supposedly the same as each other.

The one body and the bride

Of course, it could be that the difficulty is not only with the use of the word

‘member’ but also with the misuse or misunderstanding of the word ‘church’ used in most English translations to represent the Greek *ekklesia*. This is not the place to discuss the validity or otherwise of such a translation, but to understand the *ekklesia* of Christ as being some sort of collective or society in which all are essentially equal ‘members’ is not at all helpful.

In the New Testament Scriptures the *ekklesia* of Jesus is viewed as a singular entity. That is to say it is seen as a body, not simply as a collection of members or body parts; it is viewed as a temple, not simply as a collection or pile of stones. As a chain is more than simply a plurality of links – albeit generally equal – and an orchestra more than a gathering of musicians, so the *ekklesia* of God in Christ is more than simply a collection of the saved.

The *ekklesia* or assembly of God is composed of individual believers who have been called by him and who have committed themselves to him in Christ, but as believers we do not belong to the ‘church’ as such, but rather to Christ himself. It is to him that we owe our allegiance and to him we are committed, and along with all others who have been immersed into Christ we are now the people of God in him – his *ekklesia*. And it is the *ekklesia* of God that is the body of Christ and which is to be his bride! (Ephesians 5)

In conclusion

So if I am asked: “How long have you been a member of the church?” I am likely to say that I am not, as I rather suspect that the word is being used in the collective, non-body-part sense. It would be far better if we asked something like: “How long have you been a follower of Jesus?” Or “how long have you belonged to Jesus?” For it is through being his that we are members or body parts of his body, the body that is his *ekklesia*.

One Who Will Take Our Side

Jon Galloway

Can you imagine what it would have been like to be Job? One minute he had been one of the wealthiest men of his area and the next he had lost everything. Then his friends showed up (at least they were friends enough to show up) to try to offer some comfort. Initially it seems they did not know what to say – after all, what do you say to someone who has lost everything he owned, his family and even his health. They sat with him for a week without saying anything (Job 2:13).

When they began to speak to Job, they tried to convict him of some great sin. In their way of thinking, if bad things happened to someone they must have done something bad. If he lost everything, then Job must have been the worst of sinners. Yet Job knew (and we know from chapter 1) that he was a man of integrity, one of the most faithful men alive. How do you defend yourself against accusations of things that you did not do? How can you prove you did not do something?

As he reached the end of his defence, Job began to think of all the things he could have done that would have been terrible sins – sins which would have deserved the punishment he was enduring. He had not lusted after young women, walked in falsehood, committed any shameful act, disregarded other people, refused to help those in need, even placed his confidence in his wealth, or worshipped the sun and moon (see Job 31:1-34).

But even though Job was not guilty of any of those terrible sins, he was still being

accused of doing something like that. Although there was not even any evidence against him, because he was suffering his friends thought that he must be guilty. No wonder Job cried out, “If only I had someone to hear me!” (Job 31:35 NET)

And is this not what we all want (and need!)? Someone to listen. Someone to investigate. Someone to take our side. Someone who will stand up for us. Someone who believes in us.

For Christians, this is what we have in Jesus. Yes, he died and paid the price for our sins. But there is more: he is willing to be the one who stands up for us as well!

(My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.)

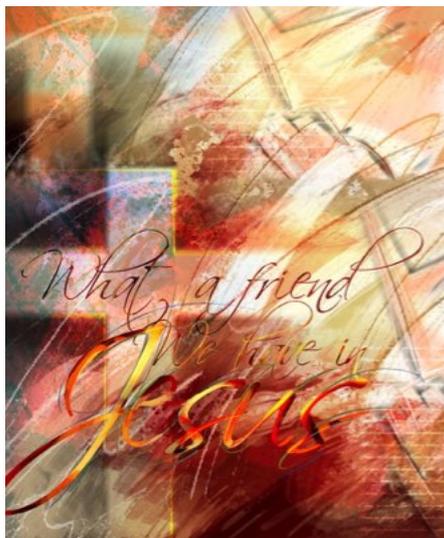
But if anyone does sin, we have an

advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

*We have an advocate. The Greek word is *paracletos*. Although this is the word used to describe the Holy Spirit, here it applies to Jesus himself. The word means, “one who pleads*

another’s cause before a judge” (Strong’s Dictionary of Greek Words). Our friends may accuse us (as Job’s did), Satan himself may accuse us, but we have Jesus standing up for us, saying to God, “This person is one of mine. My blood has washed away his sins. He is not guilty.”

That which Job longed for we have in Jesus. May we never take Jesus and his sacrifice for us for granted.



Aquila and Priscilla

Mark Hill

Aquila and his wife Priscilla were Jews and natives of Pontus. Pontus extended along the coast of the Pontus Euxinus Sea, from which the name was derived. It is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Acts 2:9; 18:2; 1 Peter 1:1). These passages show there were many Jewish residents in the district. Under Nero the whole region was made a Roman province, bearing the name of Pontus. It was conquered by the Turks in 1461, and is still under their dominion.

The name Aquila means ‘eagle.’ He most likely had a Hebrew name, but it is not known. It was a common custom for Jews outside of Palestine to take Roman names, and it is just by that name we know him. Priscilla means ‘venerable or ancient.’

Their occupation was tent making. They had fled from Rome to Corinth when the emperor Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave that city in AD 52. Suetonius states it was due to fanatical Jews persecuting Jews who had become Christians therefore causing tumults. So without investigation the Emperor fed up with it just made them all leave. When Paul came to Corinth, where Aquila and Priscilla fled to, he found them and stayed with them for some time, working with them at the trade of tent making.



A TYPICAL BEDOUIN TENT

Later, when Paul was opposed by the Jews, and perhaps to remove any obstacle to his reception by the Gentiles, he left the house of Aquila and dwelled with a man named Justus.

It is not clear when Aquila and Priscilla became Christians, but it was certainly before Paul left Corinth, because they travelled with him to Ephesus. Paul was able to teach them a great deal about Christ in a short time, because we see Aquila and Priscilla giving instruction to Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18). They appear to have been zealous promoters of the cause of Christ in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19).

And he [Paul] found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them. (Acts 18:2)

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. (Acts 18:18)

He [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:26)

Aquila and Priscilla later returned to Rome, and their home there was a place where the believers assembled (Romans 16:3ff).

Some years after that they seem to have returned to Ephesus, because Paul sends salutations to them there during his second imprisonment at Rome (2 Timothy 4:19).

Such brief mentions, yet so useful in the cause of Christ.

Our Sin and Our Saviour

Steven Whitehead

Pope Gregory I, also known as Gregory the Great, died in the year 604. You may not have heard of him, even if he was great but I am sure you have heard of something he invented.

It was Gregory the Great who came up with the ‘seven deadly sins.’ Of course he did not invent the sins; he drew up the list as a teaching aid - sort of “know your enemy” to help Christians in the war against sin.

For the benefit of those readers who are perfect and do not know sin I will give you the list. Gregory wrote in Latin so you may find that translations vary but I am sure we can get the gist:

- (1) *Superbia*: pride;
- (2) *Avaritia*: greed, also known as covetousness;
- (3) *Fornicatio*: lust;
- (4) *Invidia*: envy;
- (5) *Gula*: gluttony, which is usually understood to include drunkenness;
- (6) *Ira*: wrath, or anger;
- (7) *Acedia*: sloth.

Some years ago when teaching in a secondary school, I was introducing a unit on Christian teaching on right and wrong. As a discussion starter I asked several different classes what they thought were the seven deadly sins of today. We got an interesting selection. Murder came up in all the lists. Others gave drug dealing (but not drug use, interestingly), war crimes, and so on. But all the groups came up with lists of sin that were all actions and not attitudes and, so far as I was aware, all actions that none of them had committed. Therefore, in their opinions,



POPE GREGORY DICTATING THE GREGORIAN CHANT

they were not sinners. Here lies the great difference between modern attitudes and the list that Pope Gregory drew up and, more importantly, between how the world defines sin and how God defines it. Is sin an action or an attitude? Or both: an attitude that leads to action? We need to see what the Bible says.

The first sin is recorded in the first book, in Genesis 3. If you remember, God had given a clear instruction not to eat from one specific tree. Eve was misled by the serpent or, to use religious language, she was tempted. (There is nothing wrong with being tempted: it happens to us all. It is when we give in that the problems start.) Eve gave in. She disobeyed even though, in her heart of hearts, she knew that she should not and then she persuaded Adam to follow her bad example. He does not seem to have agonised over his decision so both were guilty. Sin always has consequences. Even when we think we have got away with it, God sees and God knows.

Adam tried to pass the buck. He blamed the woman and then tried to blame God. After all, it was God who had made the

woman. Eve blamed the serpent. And we reach one of those great what-might-have-been moments in human history. Instead of hiding from God, what might have happened if Eve and Adam had run to Him and confessed? Or, when God confronted them, if they had said sorry? As the poet said, Nothing is more painful than what might have been. So from that point on, sin was a reality. Enoch managed to avoid it (Genesis 5:24) but the rest of us have sinned. As Paul was to point out many years later: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That's all of us with no exceptions. So redefining sin so as to include only things that most of us have never done, such as commit war crimes or sell arms to oppressive regimes, is not accurate even if it makes us feel better. Sin is all encompassing and is an attitude as well as an action. Remember what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:21-30.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a

woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

That is how serious sin is: it is better to cut off a hand or pluck out an eye than to commit sin.

And sin happens inside as well as out. Our attitude has to be that of one of the men in a story Jesus told. Read it here:

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

The greatest challenge in confronting sin is having the grace to see ourselves as we really are. Sinners. Failures. All of us. No exceptions.

Saul of Tarsus was a good man, a strict Pharisee who tried his best to keep all of God's laws. He was respected by his fellow Pharisees and, he believed, he was

someone who pleased God. But he was wrong. One of the key chapters of Paul's theology is Romans 7. (Paul, if you do not remember, was the name that Saul took when he became a Christian). In Romans 7 Paul explains why God gave the Law: so we can truly understand sin. But we cannot truly keep the Law. Even a pious Pharisee such as Saul failed in this. So we have a problem. All of us. But Paul then goes on to reveal the answer to the problem. Pause now to read Romans 7:

However Paul did not stop at the end of what we call chapter seven. Paul did not write chapters, he wrote letters. So we need to turn the page. Romans 8 opens with a small but significant conjunction: *Ara* in Greek; "Therefore" or "It follows that". So we must read on:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not

have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:1-11)

Thank you for explaining this Paul. I cannot add to this; no one can. So, to summarise, we have all sinned. Sinned by God's definition, which is the only one that counts. Our friends and neighbours might think we are good but, when judged by God's standards, our good is not and can never be good enough. So we have a problem. How can we get ourselves back into God's good book? It does not matter how hard we try, we cannot do it. But we do not have to and this is the Good News: God has done it for us. Adam and Eve sinned and all the children of Adam and Eve have done the same. All have disobeyed God. Except for one of their descendants, the Man Jesus. He lived a perfect, sinless life. And died. Died? Was murdered, more like. So Jesus shares in our death but because His was a sinless death He was raised again and those of us who believe this can share in His resurrection. The symbol for this is baptism. By going down into water we are symbolically buried with Jesus and then born again as we emerge from the water. Put like this it sounds too good to be true but this is God's good plan for us. He does not want any of us to be lost so He sent His Son to save us.

He did what He needed to do and now He offers us an invitation. We can choose to trust and obey or not. He will not force us to follow but He welcomes home all who make that decision and rejoices like the forgiving father in the story Jesus told in Luke 15:11-32.

Tel Arad

Patrick Boyns

Standing in the ‘Holy of Holies,’ I had this strange feeling that I really ought not be there. Indeed, I thought also that it really ought not to be there either, for I was about 30 miles south of Jerusalem at Tel Arad.

Not far from the southern end of the Dead Sea, and just six miles away from the modern town of Arad, the tel preserves the finest example of an Early Bronze Age town known to exist. The site is on two levels, divided between a lower city and an upper citadel which commands excellent views across the Negev to the start of the Judean mountains.

The lower city

It was first inhabited during the Chalcolithic period, around 4000 BC, but the main Canaanite Bronze Age settlement was occupied between approximately 2900 and 2700 BC and became an important post on key trading routes. It is the best example in Israel of an Early Bronze Age city with visible evidence of deliberate planning of streets and water conduits.

The site appears to have been abandoned for about 1,500 years and not reinhabited until the 11th century BC, after Israel had taken possession the land, when occupation centred on the upper level of the site.

The citadel

The upper citadel was constructed during the reigns of David and Solomon. For the Israelites, Arad served primarily in a strategic role, guarding the eastern Negev



IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES AT TEL ARAD

from nomadic peoples and being in a commanding position on the frontier road to Edom and Elath. A fortress was built on the summit along with a sanctuary, and it is this which I found particularly interesting.

The sanctuary at Tel Arad may well have been modelled after that of Solomon in Jerusalem. An inscription found here, reading “House of Yahweh,” may have referred to either temple, and there are similarities. It was oriented towards the east, had a sacrificial altar, and two incense altars in its ‘most holy place.’

The altar and temple were deliberately disbanded at some point, most likely during the reforms of Hezekiah who “removed the high places ... and altars” at the end of the 8th century BC (2 Kings 18:4,22) or possibly during those of Josiah in the 7th century (2 Kings 23). Its presence reminds us of the need for these reforms, as the people of God had lost sight of their God and forgotten his words, and the reason for its later destruction by the Babylonians.



THE UPPER CITADEL FROM THE EAST

The Death of Jesus

Steven Whitehead

I don't do crucifixions, for which I am grateful. It's a Roman job so I don't have to do it. My jurisdiction ends once I have passed the prisoner over to the death squad. Personally I have no problem with the death penalty. It's the means of death that I don't like. The Law of Moses permits the death penalty and legislates for the means. It is death by stoning. There is a curse put upon those left to die on a tree and even if a prisoner deserves to die I'm not so sure that anyone should die under a curse. Stoning should be quick, over in a matter of minutes but crucifixion drags on for hours, days even. So I leave all that to the Romans.

Until the incident of the carpenter from Nazareth I had not had a great deal to do with executions. They happened and if the Romans were involved - and they usually were - then execution was by crucifixion. So if one of "my" prisoners was to die on a cross I left it to the Romans. But the case of Jesus was different in some way. I suppose you could say he had got to me. I had been part of the arresting squad and saw how he conducted himself when he was brought in. And then the trial: I was there for most of it and I know a stitch-up when I see one. Jesus had been tried and condemned long before we brought him in for questioning. I think he knew it and yet he conducted himself with perfect dignity throughout unlike, it has to be said, the High Priests and their yes-men and their dodgy witnesses. It left a bad taste, I can tell you.

So I admit that something about this prisoner had caught my attention and I wanted to see how it would finish. So later that day I took a walk up to Golgotha or Skull Hill, if you prefer. The place where the Romans held their public crucifixions. I

was off duty by then as most of the Temple employees were starting to stand down before Passover started, other than those working within the precinct of course. But even though I was off duty I kept my distance from the crowd. I had seen and heard how volatile things had become since Jesus arrived in Jerusalem the previous week. Crowds can easily become mobs so I wanted to keep my distance just in case things got out of hand and the Romans over reacted.

When I reached the top of the hill I saw the centurion in charge. His name was Longinus and I had a nodding acquaintance with him. We had worked together once or twice and he was not a bad sort. He caught my eye and nodded to me. "What's up?" he asked, "Your High Priests changed their minds or something?"

I told him that I was off duty although I was certain that there would be no change of mind from our authorities. Longinus nodded and said the same for his superiors. "Once the last nail goes in there is no reprieve."

We looked up at the three victims. Jesus was between two burly hard cases, one of who had fainted while the other had his eyes fixed on the horizon while he muttered to himself.

"I didn't think your lot would change their minds" said Longinus, "Not after the way they carried on earlier."

I asked what he meant and he told me that a party of priests had come to observe the nailing up and had been notably cruel in their comments. "Strange thing was," continued the Centurion, "Your King of the Jews did not say anything except to forgive them. Or us."

“You what?” I asked.

“‘Father, forgive them; they don’t know what they are doing’ is what he said. The other two up with him gave us the usual mouthful of abuse but your king just bit his lip and kept quiet. he didn’t take the juice either.”

“Juice?” I asked.

“The condemned get a swig of wine and myrrh. It’s meant to deaden the pain a bit.”

I did not want to stand at the foot of a cross gawping up at a dying man but I could not stop myself. He was a mess. There was more blood than flesh visible; whoever had done the whipping had not wanted to stop. Through his wrists and ankles were cruel, hard spikes. Flies were swarming on his left wrist. which had bled the most. But he was still alive. His eyes were scanning the crowd, looking for someone. And then he found them, a little group standing apart from the remaining hecklers, an older woman who looked close to collapse being supported by two younger ones, one of them very pretty. And then just behind them a youngish man. He was weeping. Jesus looked at the older woman and spoke to her. Just one word at first: “Mother.” His voice was quiet but clear enough to carry. He took a breath and spoke some more: “Mother, he is your son now”. His tone would make a stone weep. Then he spoke a little louder, this time to the man: “She is your mother.” The man nodded in acknowledgment, took the older woman's arm, and led her away, the two of them leaning on each other.

Jesus shut his eyes. I could see tears running down his cheeks. Then he took another deep breath and spoke, this time to us. “I am so thirsty.” I did not know what I could do but the Centurion pointed at a wine flask propped against a boulder a little to our right. “I let my lads have as much to drink as they want when they’re

on crucifixion duty” explained Longinus. “It’s a hellish job and the wine helps a bit. Give him some.”

I asked how and he pulled out a sponge from his kit bag.

“Soak this in the wine, put it on a spear and let him suck from it,” he explained.

So I gave Jesus a drink, His last one. He nodded, in thanks I believe, and then spoke again. Loud and clear this time but I am not sure to whom.

“Finished.”

Then he said something strange, Well, perhaps not so strange when you think about it. he said a little prayer. One of those prayers we all learn as children: “Father, please look after my spirit.”

And then he breathed out. A long, controlled breath out, like an athlete preparing for a race. But there was no breath back in. His head went forward at an impossible angle. He was dead. It was finished.

The Centurion could not take his eyes off Jesus either. He spoke softly to me: “You know, perhaps he really was the son of your God.”

Shalom.

P. S. You can read a little background to this article on our web site [here](#).

