

ISSUE  
28/1

# PRESBYTERIAN NETWORK

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND & WALES



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**THE ATONEMENT:  
GOD'S DESIGN**

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**MARTIN LUTHER:  
THE MAKING OF A REFORMER**

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**STANDING  
TOGETHER**

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**Editor:** Rev. Dr Peter Naylor  
peter.naylor@immanuelcaerau.org.uk

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## “ EDITOR'S NOTE

In January, the Presbytery's annual conference for elders and ministers was held in Durham. The addresses can be heard online. Two of the articles in this issue come from that conference.

This year sees the 500th anniversary of the day when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, 31 October 1517, which is usually taken as the start of the Reformation of the Church. In this issue we have the first of a series of articles on Martin Luther.

In the UK, this year is also the 50th anniversary of the introduction the Abortion Act 1967. The Wikipedia entry currently reads: 'After a further heated political and moral debate, under a free vote it was passed on 27 October 1967, coming into effect on 27 April 1968.' Millions of unborn babies have been killed in the past 50 years, and guilt for their bloodshed lies on the UK. As a UK church, we have a responsibility to speak against this slaughter. ◦

### Note of errors in issue 27/2

The previous issue was incorrectly dated 'Winter 2017'. It should have been 2016. On page 30, the two plates are incorrectly labelled: Codex Sinaiticus is shown on the left and Codex Vaticanus on the right.

## » SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

### » BARRY

On 20 December, we held a service of lessons and carols, and were encouraged to be visited by Christian brothers and sisters, but also, we had the joy of seeing some people from the community join with us. We pray that the visitors will have left the service with a greater understanding of the Christmas message.

In January Rev. Drew Goodman and family travelled to the US and stayed for approximately four weeks. Rev. Goodman had a busy itinerary, and we give thanks to God for his goodness to them and his granting of travelling mercies.

The 'Toddler Time' meetings continue to be well attended, and we pray for opportunities in speaking to the mothers, grandmothers, carers, and even fathers, about the Lord Jesus Christ. It has given us great encouragement to see visitors come to the church, and although some are sporadic in attendance, we rejoice in making new acquaintances. Pray that God may draw them to the Church that they may here the gospel preached.

Rev John Cook has begun a series of studies in the epistle of James in our Bible Study, and is preaching through the John's gospel on the Lord's Day.

» **Brendan Hope**

### » BERLIN

'God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Cor. 1:9). As church in Berlin, we can confess that our God is faithful. He called us into fellowship of his son. We see God at work. He is adding to the church. On 8 January we baptized one of our covenant children. We pray for the parents, that they are able to raise her and her sister in faith and repentance. God is bringing people to the church.

We welcome visitors almost every Sunday; most of them are tourists or they are staying in Berlin for short term work or study. We also see some new people who continue with us and we hope might possibly become new members. Please pray that our church in Berlin will become a spiritual home for those who are looking for a new church.

» **Johannes Müller**

### » BLACKBURN

'But David encouraged himself in the LORD.' This was a text that our minister took for the first Sunday morning of the New Year. The winter season has been difficult for us as a church. Two months ago, two members

 **SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

of our congregation were diagnosed with serious illnesses, and the wife of one of our deacons passed away unexpectedly. Please remember this in your prayers. On a more positive note, even these adverse circumstances and dark providences have cast us more upon the Lord.

Whilst we have not grown numerically as we would have liked, we have seen a number of strangers coming into our meetings. We are also conscious of a deepening sense of the Lord's felt presence in our midst, and of the help received in both the preaching and hearing of the Word. With the coming of the spring we hope to recommence our open-air work and door-to-door outreach. We are thankful for the Lord's longsuffering and sustaining grace towards us. One thing is sure, the Lord has not finished with us yet.

 Judith Green

 **BURY ST EDMUNDS**

The last few months have been a time of ongoing outreach, new arrivals, and expected departures. We have had the joy of studying God's Word regularly with small groups of unbelieving teens who are connected with the church. In addition, God has recently brought into our evening service, on a number of occasions now, a group of the teens who normally hang around the shops adjacent to where we meet. Please pray that the truths of Scripture and their need for Christ will impact all of these young people.

In December, two new covenant children arrived - Theodore Scott Jolley and Grace Esther Guthmann. We rejoice with these families and pray that the Lord would bring these little ones to Himself at a young age.

Amidst these joys, we also expect the departure of a few much-beloved American military families. We are thankful for their service to the church and pray that God will bless them in their new assignments while also raising up others here to fill their shoes.

 Benjamin Wontrop

 **CAMBRIDGE**

Since November we have been without a minister. We're thankful to other churches in the presbytery for providing us with good ministry and to our elder, Donald John MacLean, for preaching regularly. Remember him and our other elder, Peter Leverton, as they search for a new minister and carry increased responsibility for our congregation.

After a term's hiatus, we've re-launched our children's club, 'Adventurers', at a new venue, Queen Emma Primary School. We would like to attract pupils from the school and locality. Give thanks for the new leaders: Mary, Amy, Abigail, and Marietta, and pray they will work together well.

We are thankful for a number of students worshipping with us. The Christian Union will be holding a mission in early February. Pray that students would have courage in inviting their friends to the talks, that the

 **SPOTLIGHT** on the Churches

gospel presentation would be clear, and for follow-up discipleship.

Daniel Glassey is now in Thailand working for Wycliffe. Pray for help in his work developing computer programmes to aid Bible translation, adapting to the culture and learning Thai.

Several of our members are suffering the difficulties of older age.

 Annabel Haylett

 **CARDIFF - BETHEL**

A women's craft evening proved popular, with six unbelievers attending, providing an opportunity for them to hear the gospel message.

In November we celebrated our 25th Anniversary with services led by Rev. Dr Hywel R. Jones and Rev. Richard Holst. Five members were invited to give a history of 25 (years) in 25 (minutes). Needless to say, it ran over! We were delighted to welcome visitors from local churches and friends who had a long relationship with Bethel.

Building work is currently taking place with the removal of a central pillar from the fellowship room already completed and allowing more room for outreach events. Work on the frontage of the building is

underway with an aim to making the House of God more prominent in the area.

Our minister, Mark Johnston, continues with studies in Luke during the morning services and has begun a whistle-stop tour through the book of Isaiah in the evenings. Robert Letham has also begun a study of Genesis on the evening occasions that he preaches. We are grateful to God for the constant faithful ministry of His Word.

 Patricia Stowell

 **CARDIFF - IMMANUEL**

By God's great grace, we are in good heart, delighting in the worship of God, hearing his Word with attention, and enjoying warm-hearted fellowship.

Our last report (Winter 2016, 27/2) mentioned our need for future elders and deacons. Anticipating the need, we inquired in our congregation if any men had a desire to serve the Lord and so we began a year of preliminary training with five men who responded. Some of these have read the Scriptures and participated in prayer and the church has been encouraged. We continue to pray that the Lord will provide for the future ministry, eldership and diaconate of this congregation.

We expected the youth work to suffer from the loss of valued workers but, facing the need, we adopted a new format, and some new helpers have stepped into the gap.

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

We have been pleased to invite to the pulpit some of the men who are training for the ministry, and this helps us to pray for them.

Ministry is currently from Deuteronomy (mornings), on Eschatology (evenings), and introduction to the Bible books (mid-week).

We are planning a 'retreat' in Sidmouth, 29 May-2 June. Better to call it an 'advance' – it is an opportunity for Bible Study, fellowship, and refreshing rest, in the company of brothers and sisters from other congregations.

Praise God for his love: 'Our help is in the name of the LORD who made heaven and earth.'

 Peter Naylor

### CHELMSFORD

In November we hosted James Cary's play 'The God Particle', performed by a touring group of actors. This is a light-hearted but serious-minded play about faith, evidence, science and the importance of keeping an open mind. Over a hundred people attended and as a result some signed up for Christianity Explored.

A Saturday morning event for families was held before Christmas, and it was encouraging to see some Tiny Tots families come with older siblings. They enjoyed crafts and games and heard the Christmas message clearly explained. Three of the families came to our carol service.

Over thirty international students attended a dinner organized by Zoe Newby and held at the Fergusons two weeks before Christmas. It was very interesting to see which countries were represented – Syria and Palestine to name but two – and to know that as well as sampling the delights of sprouts and pudding, students from those countries heard the gospel.

In January we were sorry to say goodbye to Angela and Alastair Stevens who have moved to London. We will miss their contribution to church life and Alastair's preaching.

 Ruth Fergusson

### CHELTENHAM - NAUNTON LANE

As in previous years, the church held a week of prayer in January. The members were encouraged to gather together in fellowship and prayer morning and evening to thank God and to seek his will for the year ahead.

Sally and Seb and James Hurcombe were blessed with the arrival of Joshua Sebastian on 17 November 2016. We thank God that Joshua has recovered very well from a bad chest infection soon after his birth.

Anne Marie Christensen and Jeremy Brown announced their wedding on 13 May in London. Also, Gaynor Rahman and Stephen Robey announced their engagement recently. We rejoice with them and pray

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

that they will know blessings from above in rich measure.

Our minister, Rev. Andy Young, is on a 10-week sabbatical until the end of March. In his absence, Rev. Doug McCallum has taken on most of the preaching as well as the pastoral duties with the support of the elders. We look forward to Andy's return after a time of study, reflection, refreshment and rest.

 Tai-Tuck Yu

### CHELTENHAM - WHADDON ROAD



We were very encouraged by our outreach at Christmas. We had a good number attending the 'Whaddon Road Lights' Choir Concert, as well as our carol services. Ffion Grace Pfeiffer was baptised on 8 January, with 20-25 unbelievers attending. We pray that the Lord would be working in the hearts of these people. There may be an

opportunity to begin a 'seekers' group – prayer for the timing and content of that would be valued.

Larry and Mandy Wilkes are preparing to come to work among us. They are currently raising support in their home churches and have now reached more than 50% of their target. We were able to Skype them at a midweek meeting and were encouraged in our time together.

We are also planning to have a group of young people from the Netherlands come in the summer to help in our outreach efforts. Pray that the Lord would bless this and give us wisdom in how to best deploy our energy and resources.

 David Pfeiffer

### DURHAM

Much has happened since the last Network here at Durham. We have had a funeral, two baptisms and welcomed a new member by transfer from Naunton Lane, Cheltenham.

On 25 December, between our two services, over 40 people stayed for a fellowship lunch. This was a blessed time together. 2017 is our 30th anniversary. We began the year with a trip for our young people to the Discovery Museum in Newcastle. We learned about bridges, played games and heard about God, the greatest engineer.

We then hosted the Presbytery Conference. This was a truly excellent conference

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

with interesting papers and encouraging preaching. It was a great delight for us to host the event and meet elders from across the country.

This year has seen the Lord send us students, and a regular picnic in the chapel has been established on the last Lord's Day of each month.

A number of our congregation have suffered the loss of loved ones in the past months. Please pray for the Lord's comfort for them. Our minister continues to preach through Numbers and has started a new series in 1 Peter.

 Phil Baiden

## GATESHEAD

We have enjoyed a season of rich blessing for which we praise the Lord. On Sunday 5 February we held a Fellowship Lunch to



give thanks for our eighth anniversary as a church. We are currently running our ninth season of Christianity Explored, and pray that the Lord would work in the small group.

The birth of Felicity Richards in December was a delight and a reminder of God's covenant faithfulness to us. We eagerly anticipate the arrival of three more babies this year, and pray often for their physical and spiritual nourishment from the womb.

Ongoing encouragement has been found in the Young People's group. Children from four northern churches meet monthly and have been led by Nathan Hilton in studying the Law of God.

At the start of the year, Nathan joined Florian Weicken as a full-time employee of the church, working part-time as a ministerial assistant and studying with Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary UK. Please pray for both men as they further test a call to the ministry.

 Nathan Hilton

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

### HEXHAM

Hexham Presbyterian Church has had a good holiday season. At the end of November the Riegers hosted a Thanksgiving dinner. This is the second year the church has done this and it is very popular. We had 15 people gather to celebrate and give thanks together. It was a good time of fellowship. At Christmas the church put an effort into inviting people for our carol service. There were several visitors from the community and we were thankful to have 33 at the carol service. We are coming to the end of studies in Genesis and John after two years. These have been fruitful and it is almost like saying goodbye to a friend, but we are thankful for our time in these books. As we approach March we are beginning series in Ruth and the Psalms of Ascent.

 Joshua Rieger

### HULL

The Lord has encouraged us during the past few weeks. New people have been coming for both services on the Lord's Day; it is possible that we might receive new members. On the second Lord's Day of this year, when Drew Goodman was visiting to preach, attendance was the highest that it had been for at least a year.

We continue to hold a monthly service in an old people's home. About 25 residents and staff attended the Christmas service there, and heard the gospel.

Men from the presbytery, Rev. Barry Shucksmith, and local men, are supplying valuable ministry while we wait for the Lord to raise up a minister for us. Our need for a pastor is still a high priority in order that the work may go on in a biblical way and with clear vision.

One more encouragement is that this wonderful building with which the Lord has blessed us was recently repainted following an accident, when a vehicle hit the building.

 Christopher Lawson

### OXFORD

The EPCWE in general, and Naunton Lane Church in Cheltenham in particular, has been looking to start something in Oxford for several years now. The need for a distinctly Reformed and Presbyterian Church in Oxford has become increasingly obvious. Contacts have been developed and, in the summer of 2016, the timing was thought right to actually do something. And so 'Re:Con' was born as an initiative that would push on the door of what God might do in Oxford itself. One term and three meetings later, we are very thankful to God. Attendance at the meetings has been encouraging, discussion on the Westminster Confession of Faith lively and fruitful, and new contacts are being made all the time. Please pray for the meetings planned in 2017 as we look to our Sovereign God to guide into what may happen in Oxford in the future.

 Andy Young

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

### SHEFFIELD



The current Lord's Day sermon series is on the Song of Songs in the morning and the Book of Revelation in the evening. The catechism class on Lord's Day mornings is currently focusing on teaching through the Heidelberg Catechism.

Perhaps the main area for prayer is that we should receive planning permission to extend Hill Top Chapel. We have a building committee composed of six men from the congregation. Each month progress is made in improving the site. We are working towards extending the current car park, prior to the extension of the Chapel itself. It would be wonderful if all of this could be completed by the end of the year. We need a more comprehensive space for worship, with additional toilets, space for mother and toddlers, and a larger kitchen area. We seek to be flexible currently because

we have a single room with kitchen and a toilet, with a temporary building adjacent to the Chapel. We would anticipate that the additional space will in due time lead to additional people coming.

It is always a pastoral challenge to disciple all people, including new people. Paul Brown has settled very well into the role of ruling elder. In the coming years we pray for more elders and deacons, but all in good time. Please pray for peace and unity during the further development of the church and the church facilities.

 Kevin Bidwell

### SALFORD - MANCHESTER CHURCH PLANTING WORK

Monthly church planting studies are continuing and Chris Statter is encouraged with the number of new people who have contacted him regarding this church planting work in the last few weeks. Subject to Chris being licensed by Presbytery in March, he is anticipating taking on the call by the Sheffield session to be the church planting minister for this work and Rosemary and himself moving to Manchester in the Summer. Chris will complete his theological studies in June and formally begin the frontline work in Salford in early September 2017. In the meantime Chris will have his church placement in Salford in early March and this will provide the opportunity for frontline evangelism and the development of more contacts.

 Kevin Bidwell

## SPOTLIGHT on the Churches

### SOLIHULL

We were delighted to receive into membership, by transfer from churches elsewhere, Susan Dancer's mother, and the Umpleby family from Cambridge. We are blessed as Stephen ministers the Word from Mark's gospel (morning), Hebrews (evening), and Ezra and Nehemiah (prayer meeting).

Over sixty people attended our Christmas carol service, including many newcomers. We were encouraged doing carol singing in the streets nearby for two Sunday afternoons beforehand. The locations we stopped to sing linked with the ongoing door-to-door visitation. We called on particular contacts, took their carol requests and gave out invitations. Several have said how much they appreciated this. Chris Statter led the carol service, preaching from Luke 2:11; he is now going through the licensing process for ministry. Leading up to Easter, we intend to distribute several hundred evangelistic DVDs, which focus on the resurrection, within the community and personally to friends and neighbours.

Some of our elderly sisters are struggling with health. Pray for guidance for their families and the Lord's enabling for their continuing worship and witness.

 Rosemary Statter

### TRANÅS - IMMANUELSKYRKAN

In January little Theodor Jäderberg was baptized and welcomed into the fellowship.

In the beginning of February two families from the Netherlands, who have moved to Sweden, joined as members in the church. They are Harry and Mariann Schot with four children and Jaap and Willy Meeuwse with four children. They are a very welcome addition to the congregation.

On a recent Saturday we held a Bible conference on the subject 'My sheep hear my voice'. The speakers were Rev. Phil Baiden from Durham – accompanied by his wife Kerry – and Rev. David Bergmark. The following Sunday, Phil preached in the morning worship service, partly in Swedish!

The planning for Ben and Heidi Thomas from USA to move here for work in the church continues. Ben is now applying for a work permit for Sweden. Thank you for keeping this whole process in your prayers.

 Sune Jäderberg 



# MARTIN Luther

## THE MAKING OF A REFORMER

 REV. PHIL BAIDEN

THIS IS THE FIRST IN  
A SERIES OF THREE  
ARTICLES ABOUT  
MARTIN LUTHER  
(1483-1546)

On 31 October 1517 – 500 years ago – an Augustinian monk nailed a piece of paper to the door of a German cathedral. It was not a great act of heroism. He was merely putting up a notice for a scholarly, theological debate. But this simple act had a massive impact on the religious life of the whole of Europe.

The 95 theses up for debate were printed and sent out throughout the German lands and beyond. They found an audience willing to question medieval Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. And so, using the means of the printing press, popular discontent, and the personality of this German monk, God ignited a spark that led to the recovery of the true gospel and the reformation of the church.

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Calvin referred to that German monk as a ‘most distinguished minister of Christ, my ever-honoured father’. His name was Martin Luther. (His dates are 1483-1546.)

In a series of three articles we examine his spiritual struggles that led him to break with the faith of his family, nation and continent, and be God’s catalyst for a revival that spread throughout Europe to England, Wales and beyond

### EARLY LIFE

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in Saxony. This German territory was part of the Holy Roman Empire, a collection of various states laying claim to the titles and honour of the old Roman Empire. His father Hans was the owner of copper mines. He was wealthy but not overly so. He had not reached the upper stratum of German society and wanted his son to aim high in life. Rather than follow him into the family business Luther’s father urged the young Martin to enter the legal profession. In preparation for this he studied at the University of Erfurt and received his master’s degree in 1505. After this he entered the law school.

### A LIGHTNING STRIKE

However, Luther did not remain in the law school for long. His life was sent in another direction when he made a vow in extraordinary circumstances. Looking back on this event we may wonder at the



providence of God and how he uses crooked sticks to accomplish his purposes.

Luther was travelling back to university after visiting his parents when the weather suddenly turned. A storm began and lightning struck close to the young traveller. Luther was thrown to the ground and cried out, 'St Anne, help me! I will become a monk!'

In this moment of terror, look what this future reformer relied upon: superstition. We see the medieval cult of the saints, which elevated dead human beings into mediators. We see how the institution of monasticism was seen as a way of cleansing oneself of sin and living a life which could make up for a sinful past. These influences combined in this terrifying moment to send Luther's life on a course that would ultimately renounce these things.

Luther's cry to Anne, the patron saint of miners, was to bring great sadness to his mine-owning father. Hans Luther had wanted his son to better himself by practising the law. He had not wanted him to renounce all worldly possessions and enter a monastery. Hans saw this as rebellion by his son and a breaking of the fifth commandment. But Luther felt that the lightning was a voice from heaven urging him to change his life. He sold his books and left the University of Erfurt and joined the Augustinian monastery in the same town. He was now a monk devoted to the daily routines of his order.

“ What if these things were insufficient to earn your salvation? What if the masses, the pilgrimages, and the prayers were not efficacious to salvation? What hope was there for a sinner like Martin Luther?

### FIRST MASS

In time Luther was ordained as a priest, which meant he could 'say the mass'. For many priests in the Roman Catholic Church this was a mere routine: say the words as quickly as possible and get it over with. However, for Martin there was no question of his taking this approach. He had a tender soul and he understood the consequences of the Roman theology of the mass. The mass was seen as a re-sacrifice of Christ upon the altar. They believed that although the elements of bread and wine may still look the same, by the word of the priest they were transformed into the very body and blood of Jesus.

Luther was a man who was very aware of his sins. He stood there at the altar saying those words; but how could he as a man of 'dust and ashes and full of sin' speak to the living and true God? How could he stand there at the altar and hope to live? He was gripped by terror.

This is one of the things we must get to grips with if we are to understand Luther and the Reformation. The medieval system of Roman Catholicism had become a system that relied on a lack of assurance. God the Father was a distant deity, full of wrath and terror. God the Son was the righteous Judge. The cult of the saints was therefore established to act as mediators to a wrathful God that needed placating. The church was the place where the merits of

Christ and the saints had been deposited, and where these merits were distributed. By engaging in the rituals of the church you could add merit to your scales in order to help you escape God's judgment. However, even if you could do as much of this as you could, you may not be safe. *Purgatory* was invented – a period of time after death for getting rid of remaining sin. For Luther and others this was a terrifying system that gave them no comfort in life or death.

### VISIT TO ROME

There was another element to the religion of the day which impacted Luther. In the cloister at Erfurt he was secluded from the world and the wider church scene. In 1510 he had the opportunity to see the abuses that were going on in the church. He was selected to go to Rome as part of an Augustinian delegation to the Pope.

While there he was disgusted by the behaviour of the Italian priests who would rattle through the masses while he diligently went about the task. These priests were hired hands who had a set number of masses to say in a day for paying customers.

Luther had the chance to engage in a pilgrimage to the holiest sites of Rome. He prayed at the bones of saints. He sought out a painting of the Virgin supposedly by Luke the evangelist. He climbed the Scala Sancta, a set of steps that were thought to have been brought to Rome from in front of Pilate's palace in Jerusalem. On each of the 28 steps you were required to say the Lord's Prayer. If you did this then a soul would be released from purgatory.

In Rome doubt began to creep in. What if these things were insufficient to earn

your salvation? What if the masses, the pilgrimages, and the prayers were not efficacious to salvation? What hope was there for a sinner like Martin Luther?

### BIBLE TEACHER

On his return he was transferred to Wittenberg and came under the influence of Johann von Staupitz, whom he wore out with constant confession. Staupitz urged the soul-sick Luther to study the Bible. He entered the University of Wittenberg and received his Doctor of Theology in 1512. Then he began to lecture. He started with the book of the Psalms and then he moved on to Paul's letter to the Romans. In this letter he found a great balm for his soul. Luther had been terrified by the righteousness of God, which he equated with God's judgment and wrath. That righteousness could not be placated by his own works of confession, pilgrimage and prayer. But here in Romans he read that 'the righteous shall live by faith' (Rom. 1:17). This was the key! He wrote:

'Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of all Scripture showed itself to me. And whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven' (Martin Luther, 'Preface to Latin Writings [1545],' *Luther's Works* 34:336-37).

A change had come; and the edifice of Romish religion was beginning to crumble. Where would Luther go next? He would pin up a notice. And God would change the world. ○



# STANDING TOGETHER

Philippians 1:27-30

A SERMON PREACHED  
AT THE PRESBYTERY  
CONFERENCE, DURHAM,  
28 JANUARY 2017



CHRIS STATTER



We are parachuting into Philippians where Paul is sharing his Christ-centred perspective. In particular, he focuses his hearers' minds on one concern. 'Only', he begins verse 27. Here is the matter at hand, a subject of tremendous importance. Here is an appeal to Christians for increasing gospel unity, which flows from a common identity.

There are two aspects to this shared identity that we shall briefly consider. The first is that we are fellow-citizens, an idea that lies beneath our English text and so requires some digging. The second aspect, which is immediately visible, is that we are fellow-soldiers.

## YOU ARE FELLOW-CITIZENS

A more formal, wooden translation for verse 27 is found in the ESV footnote: 'Only behave as citizens worthy'. This is the same idea of citizenship found later in 3:20, 'our citizenship is in heaven'.

The Philippians would have understood citizenship, for Philippi was a Roman colony. While not living in Rome, they lived with Roman privileges and responsibility. Paul is saying, 'Take it to another level. Act according to your ultimate citizenship.' As one paraphrase puts it, 'Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven' (NLT).

Do we think of ourselves in those elevated terms? It is said that, from generation to generation, children in our Royal Family have effectively been taught, 'Always remember who you are. Wherever you are, whoever you are with, always remember who you are.' If that should be true for the British Royal Family, we have received a higher calling, a holy calling, a heavenly calling, and so how much more must it be true for us! Brothers and sisters, fellow-believers, we are citizens of heaven. Always remember who you are.

What is more, never forget how your citizenship was gained. Conduct yourselves in a manner 'worthy of the gospel of Christ'. What is this gospel? It is the work of Christ as sketched out in the following chapter. It is the work which the Son received from his Father and willingly undertook, sustained by the Holy Spirit, through humiliation to exaltation. It involved a lifetime's obedience culminating in death on the cross, the ultimate cost of the benefits we receive. Our spiritual blessings rest entirely upon this one who was crucified, our risen Lord Jesus Christ. He has paid for all our disobedience, and his obedience is what has been

credited to us. Now Paul can speak, in 3:9, of 'not having a righteousness of my own... but that which comes through faith in Christ'. So, every believer has been granted a right standing with God, given the status of co-heirs with Christ. We all possess heavenly citizenship, a marvellous gift at a staggering cost, and now our earthly lives must be reshaped accordingly.

How important is this heavenly citizenship to you? How central is it to your identity? When I am asked, 'Where is home for you?', I might say Birmingham, because it is where we live, or Manchester, because it is where I was born, but every fibre of my being should be crying out, 'Heaven!' It is where I truly belong now. As one bound to Christ, heaven is where the focus of my affections is located, and where my greatest loyalty should lie. How central is heaven to your sense of identity?

Put another way, with whom do you identify the most? Whatever our differences, are your family in the faith those with whom you have the closest of all bonds? May our relationships as Christians be determined fundamentally, not by our differences, but by our shared, God-given citizenship!

## YOU ARE FELLOW-SOLDIERS

Not only are we fellow-citizens enrolled together in heaven, we are also fellow-soldiers engaged in one fight. There is a great deal of battlefield language here: verse 27 'standing firm' and 'striving side-by-side'; verse 30 'conflict', and, looking ahead, in 2:25, Epaphroditus is depicted as a 'fellow-soldier'. Why are heavenly citizens described with such expressions? When must civilians be told of their military obligations? When it is wartime. Fellow-citizens, our country is at war.

Paul is, of course, speaking metaphorically. While, for the state, taking up arms is lawful and necessary, violence is not a means that Christ has given to his church. Paul is speaking metaphorically, but that does not mean the fighting is unreal.

There is exertion. It is not always easy even to be standing firm. To remain at our posts wherever God has put us, fulfilling our various callings without compromising our Christian convictions, not giving an inch, is hard work. We shall be pressurized to shift according to the world's shifting opinions.

It is not always easy to be striving side-by-side, supporting one another as Christians in the common objective of advancing the gospel. For that end, we are to learn to co-operate like trained armed forces working shoulder-to-shoulder.

Have you got a sense of what it can be like when military personnel work in harmony? Rosemary and I went to an open day at a naval base on the south coast last summer. There we saw a field gun display, with 18 men, against the clock, running, unhooking, lifting, hooking – a frenzy of co-ordinated activity, all to get a 500kg gun and carriage ready for action. What an astonishing degree of co-operation!

Learning to operate as if with one mind takes time, and there are particular hindrances in partnering for the faith of the gospel. Those words do not reduce the faith to the gospel, but they do put the gospel at the heart of the faith. As a result, we want to work with all those with the same gospel convictions, yet it is hard to maintain a broad catholicity and a properly well-defined orthodoxy. Another challenge for us, if we are committed to whomever shares the same faith, is that, given the church's diversity, some will be very different from us.

When we are close enough to be engaged meaningfully in one another's struggles, actually rubbing shoulders, at times we shall be irritating each other! It is not always straightforward to remain united in tight-knit gospel fellowship – just think of Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi – but we cannot afford to expend most of our energy fighting one another. We have enemies enough, without turning on our friends.

There are opponents for the church, as Paul reminds us in verse 28. There is always spiritual opposition, and often there are flesh-and-blood opponents too.

There will be suffering. Paul would say though, in effect, 'When you suffer, it is not a bad omen, at least not for you.' When you suffer and you are not scattered by your opponents, it is 'a clear sign [with reference] to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.' Enduring suffering for Christ's sake is not a bad omen, but rather a positive sign that you possess salvation.

This suffering is a gift. Paul says, verse 29, 'For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake'. Just as you know your faith is a gift from God, so too receive your suffering as God's gift. It might feel like an unwanted gift, and be a gift that we do not quite know what it is for, but it is certainly a gift which comes from the loving hand of our incomparably wise heavenly Father.

Our suffering is part and parcel of God's gift, and also is part of an ongoing war. Paul tells the Philippians that they are 'engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have'. As we read in Acts 16, the Philippians had seen Paul and Silas beaten with rods, and 'shamefully treated'

(1 Thess. 2:2). Paul is telling them, 'You have seen me suffer. Your battle belongs to one and the same war.'

If Paul, and supremely Christ, suffered, and there is the blueprint for our lives, we should not be surprised as Christians when we receive flak. Whenever we speak up and put our heads above the parapet, we can expect to be targets. However, while our personal suffering may become intense, let us not be so narrow-minded, absorbed in our individual struggles, that we miss the bigger picture for Christians. How conscious are you that we are all in the same war?

Not to grasp that would be like recalling the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, Tobruk and El Alamein, Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Midway, the sieges of Leningrad and Stalingrad, and never connecting those episodes together as battles of a single world war.

Once people realize that all the theatres of a conflict are connected, then extraordinary things begin to happen. You get actions like the Arctic Convoys, where sailors of different nations risked their lives again and again to supply the Soviet Union, which was bearing the brunt of the enemy's attacks. Those sailors ran the gauntlet to Archangel and Murmansk through the extreme cold, gales and ice, and the threats of U-boats, aircraft and warships, to get help to those whom they recognized were, in spite of many differences, on the same side.

How active will you be in supporting those on the same side? How willing are we to put ourselves out and give ourselves sacrificially for those in our local congregations, elsewhere in the Presbytery, and beyond?

What must we do to co-operate more and more? To be effective in mutually supporting one another, we should be prepared to admit from time to time, 'I could use your help with this.' Sometimes we have to be pro-active in offering help where no help was first requested. If we really grasp this message, then we shall be of benefit to those who could not join us at this conference. We will leave here actively seeking to help them, resolved to do what we can to be their best possible friends and allies. Let us be committed to the hard work of encouraging one another, discovering how we can intelligently pray for one another, and seeking to meet one another's practical needs.

It will be costly for us, if we are really committed to one another, just as it was for those Arctic Convoys. However, we

are involved in a war that will soon be won. It is the war that began in Eden, only now the woman's Seed, the Son of God born into this world, has struck the decisive blow to the head of the serpent, and we his people will soon be trampling Satan underfoot (Rom. 16:20). Christ will then give uninterrupted heavenly peace in his physical presence to all his people, to those who have kept on struggling. In the meantime, he has given us his Spirit, enabling us to taste the world to come, and empowering us to spur on one another. The fight is intense, but worthwhile.

And so we fight on, joining forces, recalling what God has called us to be: fellow-citizens and fellow-soldiers. As Christians, let us think clearly and act accordingly. Brothers and sisters, fellow-citizens, fellow-soldiers, let us stand together for Christ. ○



**How willing are we to put ourselves out and give ourselves sacrificially for those in our local congregations, elsewhere in the Presbytery, and beyond?**



# THE ATONEMENT

## GOD'S DESIGN



REV. IAN HAMILTON

The atonement accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross is the glory and centrepiece of the Christian Faith. God's Son had come into the world, so he told us himself, to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Paul confirmed to Timothy that Christ Jesus gave himself 'a ransom for all' (ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, 1 Tim. 2:6). Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia, 'May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6:14). He wrote to the church

in Corinth, 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2). The cross, that is the sin-bearing, sin-atoning, wrath-quenching, death-defeating, Satan-conquering work of Christ, was God's ordained way to reconcile judgment-deserving sinners to himself, rescuing them from the 'wages of sin' which is eternal death (Rom. 6:23). He bore our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). This much every Bible-believing Christian believes and unceasingly blesses God for the

love which spared not his only Son but gave him up for us all (Rom. 8:32).

### FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

But throughout the history of the church, Bible-believing Christians have differed in answering the question, For whom did Christ die? Many Christians maintain that Christ died for everyone, the finally saved and the finally unsaved. Other Christians are equally persuaded that Christ died not for everyone but for a definite number given to him by his Father, God's elect. Both groups of Christians want to be faithful to God's word. Both groups want to honour what Christ did on the cross.

I should make it clear at the outset that I am writing as someone committed to what is often called 'limited atonement', that Christ died to save and reconcile to God a multitude no man can number, a multitude given to him by his Father, of whom he will lose not one.

(Actually every Christian believes that the atonement is limited in one way or another: either what was achieved, its intended design, is limited, or the number of people ultimately saved by Christ's atonement is limited).

Why do I hold the conviction that it is limited in the second sense? I could point you to a number, a large number of texts that specifically speak of the Lord Jesus giving his life for a specific group and number of people. However, my conviction regarding the specific extent of Christ's atonement rests not on isolated texts,

but above all on the nature of his death on Calvary's cross. Put simply, the question here is, Did Jesus Christ come to make atonement for sin, or did he come to make atonement for sin possible? By his sinless life and sin-atoning death, did Jesus make salvation potential and possible for everyone, or did he actually make atonement for sin, securing salvation for those he came to save?

The answer to our question will be found by us asking three related questions: Who was Jesus Christ? What did his death actually accomplish? How was the holy Trinity involved in the work of salvation?

### WHO WAS JESUS CHRIST?

It may seem too obvious to ask the question, Who was Jesus Christ? Every Christian knows he was, and is, the Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh. This is undeniably true. But the New Testament in particular highlights another significant truth about the God-Man, his representative nature. In Romans 5:12-21, Paul sees mankind represented by 'two heads', Adam and Christ. By Adam's sin, all sinned. By Christ's obedience, many are made righteous. How could that be possible? Because God had constituted Adam and Christ representative or covenant heads. In their persons and in their actions they would



**Did Jesus Christ come to make atonement for sin, or did he come to make atonement for sin possible?**

act for everyone they represented. When Adam fell, everyone whom he represented fell in him. In his representative headship Adam represented the whole of mankind. In his perfect obedience, even unto death, Christ represented, not the whole of mankind, but everyone who would ever believe in him. Paul underscores this foundational biblical truth in 1 Cor. 15:21-22: 'For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive'. Unless you are a universalist and believe in the salvation of the whole of humanity, denying in the process the Bible's teaching on hell, the 'all' who are made alive in Christ, are the 'all' of whom Christ is head.

Jesus' covenant identity as the appointed head of God's elect means but one thing – in the life he lived and in the death he died, he represented the people he came to save. The angel's declaration to Joseph put it simply and gloriously, 'He will save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). Thomas Goodwin, the English Puritan, put the matter memorably: 'The whole of humanity is either tied to Adam's or Christ's apron strings'. Whose apron strings are you tied to?

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### WHAT DID HIS DEATH ACCOMPLISH?

Alongside his representative or covenantal identity, it is the nature of Christ's work on the cross that insists he died not for everyone everywhere, but for a definite and

“ God's Son was not sent to make salvation possible, but to accomplish and secure salvation.

“ By his life and death, our Saviour actually saved sinners. Our faith does not complete or add in any way to the salvation achieved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

defined company of men, women, boys and girls. The Scriptures nowhere explain Christ's death in terms of potentiality. God's Son was not sent to make salvation possible, but to accomplish and secure salvation. Salvation is not completed when I believe; it was completed on Calvary's bloody cross. Faith is not insignificant, but it is not my faith that saves me. My faith receives the finished work of Christ, or better receives Christ as the accomplisher of God's salvation. This is the uniform teaching of the Bible. Reflect on these verses: 'When he had made purification for sins' (Heb. 1:3); 'You shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21); 'The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53:6 - the whole chapter is worthy of careful reading); 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21). The cry of triumph, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), signalled the perfection, not the potential, of Jesus' sin atoning death.

The teaching of these verses is not that the Lord Jesus removed the sin that separates us all from God, placing everyone in a state of 'salvability'. By his life and death, our Saviour actually saved sinners. Let me say again, our faith (and it is our faith) does not complete or add in any way to the salvation achieved by the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is a receptive grace; it receives, it does not create. Horatius Bonar put it memorably: 'Upon a life I did not live, a death I did not die; Another's life, Another's death, I stake my whole eternity'.

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### PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY PERSON

None of this means that we are not to preach the gospel to everyone without exception. God commands everyone everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Jesus said, 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matt. 11:28-30). In this open-hearted appeal, Jesus is not defining conditions for coming to him, but stressing that everyone, no matter who or what they are, can come to him. We are not in a position to reconcile the truth of Christ making propitiation only for God's elect, with the no less biblical truth that we are to call, appeal to and compel as we are able, the whole world to come to Christ and be saved. No more can we fathom the two foundational truths of the Christian Faith, the Threeness and Oneness of God, and the mystery of the hypostatic union. Christians are not rationalists, for 'who has known the mind of the Lord?' (Rom. 11:33-36). On the cross, our Saviour achieved, accomplished once and for all, the work of salvation. That salvation, or better the Saviour himself, we are commanded to hold out and offer to everyone in the world, without exception. We do not offer Christ to awakened sinners, convicted sinners, burdened sinners; we offer Christ, in God's name to all sinners (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

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### THE TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

One final question needs to be answered: What was the involvement of the holy Trinity in Christ's saving work? This is a huge

problem for Christians who deny definite or limited atonement. If the Father sent his Son to save everyone, why did the Son not save everyone? If the Son gave himself on the cross to save everyone, why does the Holy Spirit not bring everyone savingly to Christ? Are we to posit some kind of internal disjunction within the holy Trinity?

Never. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God and always act in complete and perfect harmony. If the Holy Spirit does not apply Christ's salvation to everyone it is only because this was not the will of the Father, nor the intention of the Saviour. If you are tempted to reply, But it is our unbelief that resists the Spirit, refuses the salvation won by the Saviour, and frustrates the will of the Father, you forget two things: nothing and no one can frustrate God's will, and unbelief was a sin Christ paid the price for on his cross.

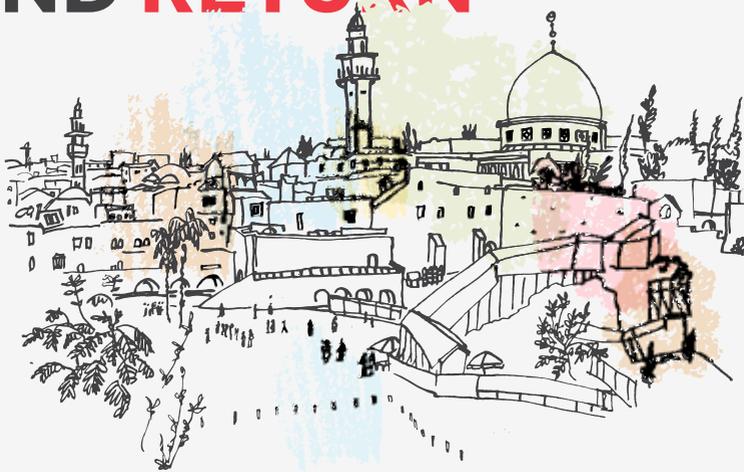
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### PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

However, just as the Bible speaks more about the duty and necessity of faith than the grace of faith, so we must speak more about the glory and grace of the atonement than its divine design to save the elect.

This was the apostolic method in preaching and teaching. Too often Reformed Christians have been more concerned to contend for the truth of limited atonement, than to be known as men who glory in the cross of Christ and who speak of the atonement out of lives captivated by the wonder and inexplicable grace of the atonement. 'We preach Christ crucified' ought and must be the defining mark of a gospel minister. May it be so, for God's glory, our people's blessedness, and our own usefulness. o

# JUDAH'S EXILE AND RETURN



 PETER J. NAYLOR

*This article is based on an address which I gave at the Presbytery conference in January. That address can be listened to online. But now I have taken the opportunity to rework the material and correct one inaccuracy concerning the age of Nebuchadnezzar when Daniel stood before him (Dan. 2).*

The Promised Land was situated between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Egypt was 'the gift of the river' (Herodotus). Similarly Mesopotamia means 'between the rivers', the Tigris and the Euphrates. Water was essential to life. Not only were cities built near the rivers, but also roads followed their courses. If you wanted to go from Babylon to Egypt, you would follow the Euphrates upstream towards the region of Carchemish before turning south and passing through Palestine (following the 'Fertile Crescent').

This was probably the route that Ezra followed, when he came to Judah in 458 BC. His journey took him four months (Ezra 7:9).

You would not choose to cross the Arabian Desert unless there was a dire emergency.



Canaan was the LORD's gift to his covenant people. Before they entered it and took possession, Moses reminded them of the covenant with its promises of blessing and its curses on covenant breaking (Deut. 28). Persistent disobedience would bring progressive judgment: eventually, foreign powers would rule over them, they would be besieged, and carried away to foreign lands (28:47-68). When Judah reached that point, Egypt and Babylon were the instruments of God's chastisement.

## Empires of the Exile and Return

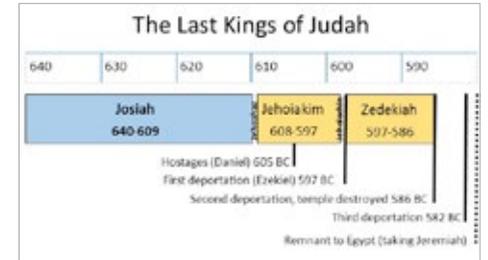
Neo-Babylonian	Deportations	Men of God
Nabopolassar 626-605		Zephaniah, Jeremiah
Nebuchadnezzar II 605-562	605 / 597 / 586 / 582	Josiah's Law Book 622 Ezekiel, Daniel
Amel-Marduk 562		
Neriglissar 562-556		
Labashi-Marduk 556		
Nabonidus 556-539 (Belshazzar was crown prince)		
Medes and Persians	Returns	
Cyrus II 559-530	Zerubbabel 538	Haggai, Zechariah
Cambyses II 529-522		
Darius I 522-486	Esther	Mordecai
Ahasuerus = Xerxes I 486-465		
Artaxerxes 464-424	Ezra 458 Nehemiah 445	

### 640 - 420 BC

We shall focus on the period 640-420 BC. During this period, Judah passed through three phases. 1. The kingdom of Judah came to an end. 2. They were deported to Babylon. 3. Many were allowed to return, but many remained scattered - the 'diaspora'.

### BIBLE BOOKS FROM THE TIME

In this period, at least 13 books of the Old Testament were written: 2 Kings (22-25),



2 Chronicles (34-36), Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Psalm 137 and perhaps some other psalms were from this time (Note 1). These writings are all connected and it helps us to understand them if we study them together. Similarly, the lives of God's servants who lived in these centuries were interwoven.

In this article, I want to focus on a few 'moments' in this history, and attempt to draw out some of these links. This is only a rough sketch.

### 605 BC - NEBUCHADNEZZAR

The year 605 BC was a turning point of history. Keep that date in mind. Not long before, Assyrian power in the region had been broken. Nineveh fell in 612 BC. Soon the Assyrian remnant was holding on in Carchemish, helped by Egyptian troops. The Egyptians were 'clinging on' to Palestine, but that was about to change. In the summer of 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, then aged 29, led the armies of Babylon to victory over the Egyptians garrisoned in Carchemish. He pursued them, and took control of Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. He besieged Jerusalem and Jehoiaquim surrendered.

At that very moment, news came from Babylon that, on 15 August, his father,

Nabopolassar the king, had died. It was urgent for him to secure his succession. Consequently, he sped back to Babylon, crossing the Arabian Desert, and by 6 September he was on the throne. Before leaving Jerusalem, he demanded from Jehoiakim an oath of loyalty, and he chose some of the young men of Jerusalem as hostages, to be taken to Babylon by the longer route. Daniel and his three friends were among them.

Later, Nebuchadnezzar would order three further deportations from Judah (in 597 BC, 586 BC, and 582 BC, Jer. 52:28-30); and then, finally, the destruction of Jerusalem's temple and city walls (2 Chr. 36:17-21). But before any of this was done, Daniel, and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (whom we know as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), were taken to Babylon (Dan. 1:3-7). It was these four who stood firm and refused to be defiled. Their resolve was outstanding; they were determined to please the LORD, even in an alien land.

We are not told their exact ages but we can attempt an estimate. They were at a suitable age to be educated in the 'wisdom' of Babylon. And 66 years later, when Cyrus reigned, Daniel was still alive and in a position of honour (Dan 1:21). If he had been 12 when taken to Babylon, he would have been 78 when Cyrus came, and about 80 or older when he was cast into the lions' den (Dan. 6). These estimates cannot be far out,

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### 604 BC

The prescribed period of training for the young boys of Judah was three years. But the LORD did not wait for that to be completed. In the following year, the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign,

the king's dream became the occasion for God to raise up Daniel to a position of great honour. It must have astonished Nebuchadnezzar that this young lad could tell him what he had dreamed and what it meant. The effect was staggering: the mighty despot, who had the power of life and death in his empire, prostrated himself before this Hebrew child (Dan. 2:46-49). Daniel was careful to ascribe all honour to the LORD, but the LORD was working to elevate Daniel, as he had done to Joseph long ago in Egypt (Gen. 40-41). Truly those who honour me I will honour and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed' (1 Sam. 2:30). But notice exactly where Daniel was placed: 'he sat in the gate of the king'. So did Mordecai years later (Esther 2:21). He had access to the king and he was able to petition him (Dan. 2:49).

This promotion had consequences for others.

- » Daniel immediately petitioned for his three friends (2:49). But this may not have been the only time that Daniel could influence the king for the sake of the Jews.
- » John C. Whitcombe writes: 'It is just possible that Nebuchadnezzar refrained from destroying Jerusalem at this time [when Jehoiakim rebelled] because of the intervention of Daniel, who five years earlier had been established in the court of Babylon as the supreme interpreter of dreams' (Solomon to the Exile, page 149). Should we dismiss this as speculation? At least two considerations support Whitcombe. First is the fact that Daniel's heart was always for Jerusalem and everyone knew it (Dan. 6). Could he remain silent if destruction was being contemplated? Second is the

fact that ancient Near Eastern rulers always sought guidance from their 'wise men'.

- » Later, in Shushan (Susa), Mordecai sat in the gate of Ahasuerus (486-465), as Daniel had done. After that Nehemiah was cup bearer to Artaxerxes (464-424). But Daniel had gone there before them (Dan. 8:2).

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### JERUSALEM WHEN DANIEL WAS A CHILD

What made Daniel so strong? Where did his resolve come from? What shaped him and his three friends? Who taught him to pray three times every day (Dan. 6:10)? Clearly the Holy Spirit creates faith and gives wisdom but he uses means. Let us look at Jerusalem in Josiah's reign.

In 640 BC, Josiah became king, when only eight years old. His predecessors, Manasseh and Amon, had been very wicked (2 Chr. 33). At 16, Josiah began to seek the LORD, and at 20 (adulthood), he began to purge Judah of its idols (2 Chr. 34:1-7). In the following year, 627 BC, Jeremiah began to prophesy, although still a youth (Jer. 1:1-7). In 622 BC, the Book of the Law was found in the temple (2 Chr. 34:14-33). In the same year, the priestly house of Buzi rejoiced at the birth of a son, named Ezekiel. About four years later, Daniel and his three friends were born.

Imagine growing up in Jerusalem at that time. Priests were active in the newly restored temple, the rediscovered law was taught and discussed, Passover was being kept, and Jeremiah was prophesying, Zephaniah too. Such were the good influences that surrounded these five young

men, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Does it seem strange that Josiah's reformation did not avert God's judgment? Before Josiah's reign, God had already decided to judge them because they had provoked him to wrath (2 Chr. 34:22-28). And when we examine Josiah's reforms, we can see that the king ordered reformation but the hearts of many were not with him (2 Chr. 34:33). **Reformation without revival is not enough.** Jeremiah called them to turn and seek the LORD with their whole heart (Jer. 29:13; cf. Deut. 6:4-6).

In God's mercy, while the shadow of impending wrath was over them, the LORD was preparing his chosen servants, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These five boys grew up under the sound of the Law and the Prophets. They were taught of God to love him and to pray to him. And then the LORD placed them where they should serve him and would help to bring his covenant people through the dangers of exile. **Great service to God depends on great piety of heart.** They learned piety in childhood and so they served.

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### THE GOLDEN STATUE (DAN. 3)

The dedication of the golden image was a big event. For the occasion, Nebuchadnezzar summoned the high-ranking officials from every province of his empire. That involved considerable planning and effort, hardly something that would happen often. When did it happen? No date is given in Daniel 3. But consider four indicators. 1. It seems connected with the king's dream, perhaps in defiance of it. Was Nebuchadnezzar saying, 'I will not be the head of gold only, and give up my kingdom to others; my kingdom will be great and

endure – the entire statue is me’? 2. The three children had become men, so several years had in fact passed. 3. It is unlikely that it happened late in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, since we must allow time for the king’s humbling and restoration. 4. In January 594 BC, there was a revolt in the army, which Nebuchadnezzar had to subdue. There were worrying signs of disloyalty. Perhaps this is why, in the following year, 593 BC, Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon, a notable occasion (Jer. 51: 59-64). It is possible that Zedekiah’s visit was part of the great gathering of leaders mentioned in Daniel 3.

If so, then, when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow to the golden image, there among the assembled dignitaries, their own king had his face to the ground. (And if not he, then someone from Judah was there.) How disheartening, how weakening. But often believers must take a stand for the Lord in face of unfaithfulness within the church.

### EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was born in 622 BC, the year in which the Law Book was found. When he was 25 years old, he was taken to Babylon in the first of the three deportations (597 BC). Five years later, when he was 30 years old, God called him to prophesy among the exiles.

The book of Ezekiel is arranged in three main sections: chapters 1-24 are prophecies of the judgment of Jerusalem, all spoken in the four years between 592 and 588 BC; chapters 25-32 contain oracles of judgment on the surrounding nations, especially Egypt; and chapters 33-48 contain prophecies of the restoration and glory of Jerusalem and the house of God, which Ezekiel began to give in 585 BC.

So then, in 592 BC Ezekiel saw visions of the glory of the LORD, but that glory was departing from the temple in Jerusalem. He foresaw the siege and destruction of the city. This ministry began at the very time when Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. On 15 January 588 BC the Babylonians put Jerusalem under a siege that lasted 30 months (Note 2). We read, “Son of man, write down the name of the day, this very day – the king of Babylon started his siege against Jerusalem this very day.”... ‘Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. Sigh in silence...” So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died, and the next morning I did as I was commanded’ (24:2, 15-18). Many of God’s servants have suffered in their service for him. What a price Ezekiel had to pay that day. He was 34 years old, and his young wife was taken from him, in order to teach Judah a lesson.

On 18 July 586, Jerusalem fell, and one month later, 15-18 August, the Babylonian captain, Nebuzaradan, burned the temple and destroyed the city (Jer. 52:1-16). How the hearts of the Jews in Babylon must have grieved when they saw the returning army carrying what was left of the temple treasures, and they met the survivors who witnessed their neighbours fall by the sword, and they saw Zedekiah, bound in fetters of bronze and his eyes put out. They would have realized that nothing was left of that temple which was designed to shadow on earth the highest courts of heaven (Exod. 25:8-9). Were their hearts so hardened that they felt nothing? Was Jeremiah speaking to them, when he wrote, ‘Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which

has been brought on me, which the LORD has inflicted on me in the day of his fierce anger’ (Lam. 1:12)? If they were callous, Jeremiah was not. He lived through it all and he saw it.

But, in Babylon among the exiles, if there was lamentation (as there must have been, see Psalm 137), the LORD was astonishingly swift to comfort them. The temple was destroyed in August 586 and by the end of the year the facts would be known throughout the exile. In 585 BC, Ezekiel’s ministry entered an entirely new phase. He was charged with preaching God’s new covenant and his love even towards sinners (chapter 33). Their shepherds had failed and they were scattered but the LORD would come and shepherd them through his servant, David (34). Israel would be restored (35-36), the dry bones would live (37). How timely were the LORD’s comforting words of hope!

Fourteen years later, came the climax of Ezekiel’s prophetic service. The hand of God was on him and he was transported in vision to Israel where he saw the glory of the temple that would be built (40-48). The final words of the book are THE LORD IS THERE. As we read these things, does not our heart burn within us?

### JEREMIAH’S LAST DAYS

The LORD appoints very different paths for his servants. When Daniel was taken to Babylon as a youth in 605 BC, it was undoubtedly a great sorrow to him, and yet, by it he was

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Israel would be restored, the dry bones would live. How timely were the LORD’s comforting words of hope!

“

Jeremiah chose to remain in Jerusalem. His heart was broken by its desolation, but he preferred to suffer with it than to enjoy the ease of another land.

spared the many miseries of the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, of siege, and the sight of the temple in flames. Ezekiel also was spared much, but not Jeremiah. He remained in Judah to the bitter end. He really suffered!

Nebuchadnezzar gave strict instructions that Jeremiah must be given liberty and treated well (Jer. 39:11-40:6). Was this, once again, a result of Daniel’s presence in Babylon? Jeremiah chose to remain in Jerusalem. His heart was broken by its desolation, but he preferred to suffer with it than to enjoy the ease of another land (like Moses before him, Heb. 11:25). What happened next, however, recorded in Jeremiah 40-44, is truly appalling.

The Babylonians appointed Gedaliah as governor in Judah. But a man called Ishmael murdered him. Johanan the son of Kareah fought with Ishmael and so became the leader of the remnant. They now faced uncertainty: would the Babylonians punish or protect them? Jeremiah delivered to them the LORD’s promise that if they remain in Judah they will be safe but if they go to Egypt they will die. Their response to Jeremiah? ‘You speak falsely’ (43:2). In unbelief and disobedience, they left for Egypt, compelling Jeremiah to go with them – to a place called Tahpanhes. One more task remained for Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: to prophesy to the Jews in Egypt. ‘Why do you commit this great evil...you provoke me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt...?’ (44:7-8).

But the men knew what their wicked wives were up to, and their wives were watching and listening to all this. They refused to listen to God's Word through his servant Jeremiah.

So, Nebuchadnezzar's work was not yet done! He would invade Egypt and execute the wrath of God on these idolatrous covenant-breaking Jews. And he would bring back a remnant to Judah. Jeremiah was then in his 60s. Did he die in Egypt or was he taken back to Judah? We do not know. But in all his affliction his hope was set on the LORD (Lam. 3:19-33),

### THE RETURN

As Daniel had been shown, the Babylonian empire fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. (They in turn would be overcome by Alexander the Great (336-323), and in 63 BC the Romans would conquer Palestine.) Cyrus was the LORD's servant (though he did not know it) to send the exiles home and command that the temple be rebuilt (Isa. 44:28-45:7). Thus in 538 BC Zerubbabel of David's house, and Jeshua the high priest, led them home. The second temple was finished in 516 BC, 70 years after Solomon's temple had been destroyed. Many Jews did not return, and Jewish communities continued to exist in Babylon, Egypt, and elsewhere.

But Satan had not given up seeking to destroy the covenant people of God. In the reign of Ahasuerus (486-465), the Jews' survival, throughout the 127 provinces, was again in jeopardy. Haman plotted their destruction, but God used Mordecai and Esther to overthrow his scheme and bring his evil back on his own head.

In 458 BC, Ezra came to Judah to teach the law of God. Nehemiah arrived in 445 BC to

rebuild Jerusalem's walls and collaborate with Ezra. It seems that, at that time, Malachi also prophesied in Judah,

### LESSONS FOR US

The LORD is a covenant keeping God. He was righteous in judgment, according to the curses of the covenant, and he was merciful and gracious according to his oath. He never abandoned his people. And he did not permit the line of Abraham and David to be extinguished. Satan wanted to obliterate Judah and the house of David but the LORD kept them. The return from exile created a restored Jewish community in the land and a diaspora, scattered in Egypt, Babylon and elsewhere. In this way the ground was prepared for the advent of the Messiah and the spread of the gospel among the nations.

Among the nations today, we in our turn are called to faith, piety and service. We have seen that great service depends on great piety. We have also seen that reformation without revival is destined to fail. We ought to be reformers, but we also need tender hearts that love the LORD. In our lives as Christians, and as local churches, we inevitably affect one another. Let it be for good. Let us seek the prosperity of the bride of Christ. ○

**Note 1.** In addition to these, Habakkuk, Nahum, Obadiah, and Joel, may also be closely related to this period (the view of C. Hassell Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books).

**Note 2.** Two calendars were in existence at this time: Judah counted the year from the first month (Nisan, in the spring); whereas the Babylonian new year was in the autumn. Because of this it can be difficult to reconcile dates. See Whitcombe, Solomon to the Exile, pages 150-1.



#### **BARRY**

Wilberforce Chapel  
Barry Rd  
Barry CF62 8HE  
Sun. 11am & 6pm  
**Minister:** Rev. W. John Cook  
☎ 01446 408086  
✉ wj.cook@hotmail.co.uk  
🌐 baryepc.org.uk

#### **BERLIN**

Droysenstrasse 15 10629 Berlin  
Sun. 10am & 4.30pm  
Treseburger Ufer 44b 12347  
Berlin. Wed. 7pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Johannes Müller  
☎ +491763102904  
✉ johannes.mueller@epkd.de  
🌐 epkd.de

#### **BLACKBURN**

Fecitt Brow, Blackburn  
Lancashire BB1 2AZ  
Sun. 11am & 6.30pm  
Wed. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Norman Green  
☎ 01254 260388

#### **BURY ST EDMUNDS**

Newbury Community Centre  
St. Olaves Rd, Bury St Edmunds  
IP32 6RW, Sun. 11am & 6.30pm,  
Wed. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Matthew Jolley  
☎ 01284 706123  
✉ matthewjolley@mac.com  
🌐 bse-pc.org

#### **CAMBRIDGE**

Queen Emma Primary School (am)  
Resurrection Lutheran Church,  
Westfield Rd (pm)  
Cockcroft Hall, Clarkson Rd (Thu)  
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm, Thu. 7.45pm  
☎ 01223 212370  
✉ peterleverton1@gmail.com  
🌐 cambridgepres.org.uk

#### **CARDIFF - BETHEL**

Michaelston Rd, Culverhouse  
Cross, Cardiff CF5 4SX  
Sun. 11am & 6pm, Wed. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Mark Johnston  
☎ 029 2059 5000  
✉ revmjjohnston@gmail.com  
🌐 bethelpcr.org.uk

#### **CARDIFF - IMMANUEL**

Heol Trelai, Caerau,  
Cardiff CF5 5LJ  
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm,  
Wed. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Dr Peter Naylor  
☎ 029 2040 5750 / 07773 093738  
✉ peter.naylor@immanuelcaerau.org.uk  
🌐 immanuelcaerau.org.uk

#### **CHELMSFORD**

Hall Street Methodist Church  
Chelmsford CM2 0HG  
Sun. 11.30am & 6pm, Thu. 8pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Darren Moore  
☎ 01245 690559  
✉ darrenmoore@chelmsfordpres.co.uk  
🌐 chelmsfordpres.org.uk

#### **CHELTHENHAM**

23 Naunton Lane, Leckhampton  
Cheltenham GL53 7BJ  
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm Wed. 7.45pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Andrew Young  
☎ 01242 231278 / 07963 139683  
✉ revandrewyoung@yahoo.co.uk  
🌐 cheltenhampres.org.uk

#### **CHELTHENHAM - NORTH**

Whaddon Road E.P. Church  
Rear of Claremont, Whaddon Rd,  
Cheltenham GL52 5LZ  
Sun. 11am & 6.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. David Pfeiffer  
☎ 07846 858766  
✉ drpfeiffer85@hotmail.com  
🌐 whaddonevangelicalchurch.org

#### **DURHAM**

The Chapel, Laburnum Avenue  
Durham, DH1 4HA  
Sun. 10.30am & 3.30pm,  
Thu. 7.45pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Phil Baiden  
☎ 01916 700972  
✉ philbaiden@yahoo.co.uk  
🌐 depc.org.uk

#### **GATESHEAD**

Lobley Hill Community Centre  
47 Scafell Gardens, Gateshead  
NE11 9LS, Sun. 10.30am & 6pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Dr Bill Schweitzer  
☎ 07939 071404  
✉ contact@gatesheadpres.org.uk  
🌐 gatesheadpres.org.uk

#### **HEXHAM**

The Torch Centre  
Corbridge Rd (near hospital)  
Hexham NE46 1QS  
Sun. 10am & 5pm, Wed. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Joshua Rieger  
☎ 07930 016785  
✉ joshuamrieger@gmail.com  
🌐 hexhampres.uk

#### **HULL**

Rear of 336 Holderness Rd  
Hull, HU9 3DQ  
Sun. 10.30am & 6pm  
**Minister:** Vacant  
**Contact:** Rev. Dr Kevin Bidwell  
☎ 0114 2431720 / 07954 546487  
✉ kevinjbidwell@me.com

#### **SHEFFIELD**

Hill Top Chapel, Attercliffe  
Common, Sheffield S9 2AD  
Sun. 10am (SS), 11am & 5pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Dr Kevin Bidwell  
☎ 0114 2431720 / 07954 546487  
✉ kevinjbidwell@me.com  
🌐 sheffieldpres.org.uk

#### **SOLIHULL**

37 Faulkner Road  
Solihull, B92 8SB  
Sun. 11am & 5pm,  
Thu. 7.30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. Dr Stephen Dancer  
☎ 0121 707 1826  
✉ info@solihullpres.org.uk  
🌐 solihullpres.org.uk

#### **TRANÅS**

Höggatan 8,  
57333, Tranås  
Sweden  
Sun. 10am & 4:30pm  
**Minister:** Rev. David Bergmark  
☎ +46 70 244 7241  
✉ d.bergmark@erkis.se

#### **CLERK OF PRESBYTERY**

Rev. Chris Kavanagh  
24 Homespa House  
37 Christ Church Rd  
Cheltenham GL50 2NY  
☎ 01242 576808 / 07724983959  
✉ Fax: 01245 330071  
✉ cjkanavagh@btinternet.com

# STEM 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING EDUCATION MODULE

 **MONDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> (1.30PM) -  
WEDNESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> (12PM) APRIL 2017**

 **LONDON SEMINARY**

## WHAT?

Intensive teaching on Reformed Theology. There will be five seminars and a group discussion on 'Preaching and Preachers'.

## FOR WHOM?

Men training for, and involved in, Christian ministry.

## Topics & Speakers



**A REFORMED  
UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE LAW**

Rev. Dr Peter Naylor



**CULTIVATING  
EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATION**

Hugo Heij



**THE BIBLICAL  
BASIS FOR  
BAPTISM**

Rev. Dr Robert Letham



**THE BIBLICAL BASIS  
FOR PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
GOVERNMENT**

Rev. Matthew Jolley  
and Others



**WOMEN  
AND THE  
CHURCH**

Rev. Dr William  
Schweitzer



**GROUP  
DISCUSSION  
ON 'PREACHING  
AND  
PREACHERS'**

Group Discussion



**MORE INFORMATION:** REV. ANDREW YOUNG  
E: REVANDREWYOUNG@YAHOO.CO.UK T: 07963 139 683.