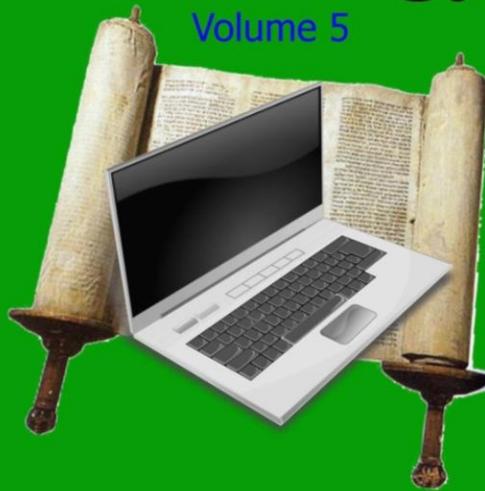


The Scrolls Anthology

Volume 5



A collection of writings
by Peter McArthur

A collection of spiritual writings by Peter McArthur

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The Issachar Scroll Writings Volume 5

These writings and the other Volumes in this series are some of the monthly teachings that have appeared on The Issachar Ministry web site (issachar.org) over the past 10 years.

I felt it helpful to compile the writings into easy-to-access volumes rather than just have them listed on the web site and singularly at other sites. So, here they are. I hope they may help you grow in the Messiah and the Father's grand purpose for us all.

Peter McArthur

Issachar Scroll Writings Volume 5

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That Good Part



Peter McArthur

“One thing is needed, and Mary (Miriam) has chosen that good part...” (Luke 10:41-42).

What is this “one thing” and what is “that good part”? The text reads “*agathen merida*” sometimes translated as “that good portion”. Today in Jewish scholarly circles the phrase refers to the blessing of studying the Torah. Did Jesus the Rabbi possibly use it in the same way?

The Greek word *merida* is akin to the Hebrew word *helek* which means “a portion, share or lot,” and can metaphorically speaking refer to having a share of inheritance, or one’s lot in life.

The word appears in many Jewish writings in a similar context to the story of Mary at Jesus’ feet. When Jews gather to study, it’s traditional to pray this prayer before study commences: “*ten helkenu b’toratekha*” (God, please give us our portion in your Torah) and then when leaving aside the study you thank God for one’s “portion” in life, which was good because you had studied. See how David used a similar thought pattern.

(Psalm 119:57) **YHWH is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words.**

So in our story it’s obviously got to do with what Mary was doing. She was **sitting** at His feet. She was **hearing** His word. “Who **sat** at Jesus’ feet and **heard** his word.” (verse 39).

This sitting (or following) and hearing (or receiving) is mentioned by Moses in Deut. 33:3. "Indeed, He loves the people; All Your holy ones are in Your hand, And they **follow in Your steps**; Everyone **receives of Your words**."

To sit at someone’s feet or to follow their steps is a Hebraic way of submitting to another person’s teaching and authority – usually to a rabbi. Paul did this with his own teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, **educated under Gamaliel...**”

This was the ancient posture used by disciples or learners. They sat at the “feet” of their teachers - that is beneath them or next to them, stressing the idea of humility. When Scripture says that Mary sat at Jesus’ feet it means that she was acting as a disciple of his; that she listened attentively (lit: *went on listening*) to his instructions, because she was very keen to learn his teachings.

It’s also the position attributed to one who is grateful, respectful and wants to know. "When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, **sitting at Jesus' feet** dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid." (Luke 8:35)

We know the next part of our story so well as it's been the subject of thousands of sermons. Mary submits herself to Jesus and Martha gets upset and annoyed. Interestingly today people still get agitated with those who prefer to sit at Jesus' feet!

Now what is this "one thing"? Psalm 27:4 gives us the clue. "**One thing** I have asked from YHWH, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of YHWH all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of YHWH and to meditate in His temple."

This is single-mindedness. When Jesus said "**One thing** is needed..." he was referring to Mary's desire of single-mindedness; her singularity of thought. Jesus always went straight to the heart of the matter, to the very essence of things. He saw this portrayed in Mary and gave her credit for it.

Why then should we "seek God" and "inquire in His temple"? How does this apply to us today? Well clearly as New Testament people who have been Born Again (from above) "seeking God" and "inquiring in His temple" becomes figurative for us. We have already found God because He first sought after us. And we certainly don't need Temples or Sanctuaries in which to do any spiritual inquiring. We now have the Lord Jesus and the blessed Holy Spirit.

But there is a point to this seeking and inquiring. A principle that's important here is this: **Each spiritual breakthrough is preceded by a breaking down of old thought patterns.**

The place for this transformation is before God, at His feet. In that special place we become exposed to God's nature and character. We give time to Him. We invest quality time and attempt as far as possible to be real, true and transparent before the Throne. At that place, with that kind of mental and spiritual attitude our thoughts and ideas start to be re-adjusted to heaven's way of thinking. Certainly it takes time (and indeed some effort on our part) as we position ourselves at the feet of the Great Rabbi, our saviour. But the rewards are eternally satisfying.

It is a time of visitation, as it were. A "secret place" (Matthew 6:6) where wonderful things can happen to our inner man. It is not a time to withhold, but to receive – and to be extremely grateful!

Blessings to you as you learn to sit at His feet!

Peter McArthur
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Ephesians Baptism

The "One Baptism" according to Ephesians



A brief study by Peter McArthur

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Our most common understanding of "baptism" is that involving water. Others also see a "baptism in the Spirit" as a valid spiritual experience; some might even say "a necessity".

Let's declare right from the beginning that even when we talk about "water baptism" we should not infer that there is some sort of "regeneration" or magic of salvation associated with it. Some denominations like the Catholic Church see water baptism as an instrument whereby a person (usually a baby) becomes spiritually regenerated, and thereby acceptable to God. This is to make baptism a doorway into heaven - which of course is absolutely incorrect. It is repentance toward God, and faith in Jesus Christ, that is our way to eternal life, not a baptismal rite and ceremony.

"For you are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus". Gal. 3: 26

In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 5, when Paul refers to "one baptism" what "baptism" is he referring to: water baptism, spirit baptism, baptism in fire, etc?

A close look in true Berean style will unpack the fundamental meaning of the word "baptism" and begin to clear the muddy waters. To help grasp what "baptism" actually means, let's look at both the Biblical use and the non-Biblical use of this word as found in Scripture and general Greek literature. The family of words associated with "baptism" will prove enlightening.

Bapto (a verb meaning "to dip") commonly associated with water and consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence, and is used in Scripture the following way:

- it is associated with the meaning of both John's baptism and "Christian" baptism

- of the overwhelming afflictions and judgments to which the Lord voluntarily submitted on the Cross
- of the sufferings Jesus' followers would experience not of a vicarious character, but in fellowship with the sufferings of their Lord.

Baptizo (a verb meaning "to baptise") this word is primarily a form of *bapto*, "to dip," and was used among the Greeks in classical literature to signify:

- the dyeing of a garment by immersion
- the drawing of water out by the dipping of one vessel into another
- of the drawing of wine out by dipping the cup into a bowl
- used metaphorically, of being overwhelmed with questions
- to be overwhelmed with financial debt
- to be overtaken by some kind of tragedy or death.

Let's take a further look at how these words were used in ordinary Greek literature, for that will form a foundation for understanding just what "baptism" in Scripture actually stands for. In the Greek classic literature of Alcibiades ("The Epigram on the Comic Poet Eupolis") we find this phrase illustrating the use of the verb *bapto*:

"You **dipped** (*bapto*) me in plays;
but I, in waves of the sea, baptising,
will destroy you with streams more bitter."

The meaning is actually quite straight forward; the author is saying "*you made a fool of me but I will in turn kill you by drowning you in streams of bitterness.*" In this example we see how he uses various words associated with water ("dipped", "waves of the sea" and "streams") as a kind of pun. As well we can see that "dipping" (*bapto*) here is associated with a baptism resulting in death, which is part of its root meaning.

Similarly in Homer's "Odyssey" *bapto* is applied to mean a dipping of something into an element, such as cold water. In other classical Greek writings the word *baptizo* means a complete or great tragedy. Some instances show the calamity involved water, while others show it refers to destruction, suicide, debt and even drunkenness.

When we take all these considerations together it's easy to see that "baptism" is concerned with some form of decay, destruction, overthrow, etc.

It clearly highlights the fact that "baptism" had a very wide range of meaning, and wasn't always connected to "water" at all.

"Our ship, having been **baptised** (i.e. sunk) in the Adriatic sea, caused our number of men, about 600, to swim through the whole night." [*The Life of Josephus* section 3]

"And many struggling against the strong swell toward the open

sea, the billows rising high above us, **baptised** (i.e. drowned) them all." [*War of the Jews*" by Josephus, book 3, chapter 9:3]

"And he was **loaded** (*baptizo*) with a debt of five million drachmas" [*Plutarch's Lives*" volume 4]

"Stretching out his right hand, unseen by no one, he **baptised** the sword into his neck" [*War of the Jews*" by Josephus, book 2, chapter 18]

"These men, besides the seditions they raised, were the cause of the whole city's **destruction** (i.e. baptism)." [*War of the Jews*" by Josephus, book 4, chapter 3:3]

"I beseech you, before you are fully **baptised** by drunkenness, to return to soberness". [*Saint Chrysostom's plea to Theodorus*]

"The soldiers filled the marshes with blood and the lake with dead bodies, so that even now many bows, helmets and pieces of breastplates, together with swords, can be found **baptised** in the pools of the lake". [*The Life of Sylla*" by Plutarch, chapter 21]

All the above examples show the clear association of the object being baptised and the element in which it is baptised. This is the point of our study; to see the correlation between the **Baptiser**, the **Baptised**, the **Element** used, and the **Result** of that baptism.

In the cases we've just seen, the point is that someone (or group) did the baptising; someone underwent a baptism; there was some form of baptismal element involved, and there was a completely perfect result. So when we talk of "baptism" we're not simply talking about a partial ceremony, but everything linked to it. Now let's look at the same idea in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX) where it says:

And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, does fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, it must be **dipped into water**, and it shall be unclean until the evening, so it shall be cleansed.

Lev. 11:32

Likewise in Leviticus:

"And he shall **dip** (*bapto*) the living bird, along with the cedar wood and hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was slain over running water". Lev. 14:6

Here we have a picture of a redeemer who reclaims a leper through death, blood and water. In Biblical typology all this is symbolic of Jesus Christ, who paid the price for the "leprous sinner" who could not cleanse himself but required an innocent to die for him.

In these, as well as the many other instances found throughout both the OT and NT, we find someone doing the baptising, someone undergoing it in a selected and appropriate element, and some kind of long-lasting consequence as the result.

In Biblical Typology, when discerning the meaning of a "type" we need to keep in mind the four aspects already mentioned on the previous page, in relation to our subject :

- the **baptiser**
- the **baptised**
- the **element** used
- and the lasting **result**

It's necessary to grasp the intimate link between the **object or person** baptised, and the **element** in which it is baptised.

In the aforementioned examples we can readily see that the person baptised and the element associated with it brings about "death" or "destruction". The outcome of the association of the Baptiser with the Element, makes the two share a common identity and purpose. Where they were once separate, they now come to be entwined in a common purpose, through the action of the baptism.

The imagery of typology ensures that the symbolism of one conveys the importance of the symbolism of the other. We see this in the baptism performed by John the Baptiser. His baptism was unusual because he performed the baptism on others. According to Jewish law each individual had to perform their own water baptism of repentance. Hence the literal Greek meaning of "*get yourself baptised*" as often found in the New Testament.

Also the element John used, the River Jordan, was of great symbolic importance. John baptised in the very region that served as the entry point of the Tribes as they first came to the Promised Land. It was in this very locality that Joshua erected the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Joshua 4: 1-9).

So John's baptism was a kind of re-run in which Israel was to symbolically re-enter the Promises of God. It was a kind of wake-up call to Israel. A call to repentance, so that the Kingdom could be established on earth with its focus being the Promised Land.

The first crossing of the Jordan signified the birth of a nation in a very special way; John's baptism re-played this as a type of new-birth, a national awakening of their corporate soul. It required Israel to die-to-self (the typological meaning of "Jordan") and to live for Another.

If Israel had heeded John's call en masse, then the link between Baptiser, the Baptised ones, and the Element used (the Jordan) would've probably resulted in a corporate death-to-self, with the result being the Kingdom established in Israel.

It was an extremely powerful symbol with great consequences. True, it did involve water, although the tribes did once more cross a watery way on *dry* ground (Exo. 14: 22). There of course was an earlier similar powerful baptism which didn't involve entering INTO the water - it was the famous "dry" baptism of the Exodus. When Moses led Israel through the Red Sea to freedom it was on dry ground (Exo. 14: 21 and 29), for the water had banked up on both sides. When this episode is recounted in the New Testament note how Paul writes of this "baptism" :

"...all passed through the sea, all were **baptised INTO Moses** in the cloud and in the sea..." 1 Cor. 10: 1-2

See what he says - they were baptised into a NAME. We also see this emphasised in the Gospels :

"...baptising them (lit.) **INTO THE NAME** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....: Matt. 28: 18-20

We are beginning to see that baptism INTO something is vital, and that in need not involve water at all. What is important is that a Baptiser overwhelms the one needing baptism, that an appropriate symbolic element is present, and that the results of the baptism are immediate and effective, resulting in a death-to-self of some sort.

It is in this that the Baptiser and the Baptised are intimately linked and identified with one another with lasting consequences. What an astonishing thought!

When Paul says there is "*one baptism*" (Eph. 4: 5) he is NOT referring to "Christian water baptism" at all. What he is saying is that when we truly put our faith INTO the name of Jesus Christ, we are overwhelmed by a kind of death, a death-to-self. I am not saying that water baptism is unimportant, just saying that in context of Ephesians 4:5 there is a marked difference of understanding.

This immediate imputation is an act of Grace from God, and not something we do. Rather it is done to us by the Baptiser. It results in the New Birth as a lasting (everlasting) consequence. In the context of the Epistle to the Ephesians this is the ONE and only baptism Paul has in mind here.

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Prevailing End Time conditions



Peter McArthur

Just recently the Father gave me some insight about the End Times and Last Days as they begin to play out and unfold. He said **“It’s not how the story plays out, but how the individual plays out in the story.”**

I guess we’ve all heard the various scenarios of how the Last Days may unfold; some say it will be pre-Tribulation, others hold to a Mid-Trib and others to a Post-Trib viewpoint. I am not going to venture into a debate about all these, or when the Rapture will happen. How the story plays out is all in the Father’s hands anyway (although I do feel it’s important to understand as much as possible on the subject). What I would like to do in this article is spend a little time considering how the individual will cope with what is coming.

As the End begins its slow and steady pace toward fulfilling the Purpose of God, we can expect various peculiarities and conditions to rise up. This has always been the case when some dispensation or period comes to a close. Spiritual things begin to seem difficult to understand, quite a measure of upheaval and even conflict lifts its head, and those who have aligned themselves with the Father’s Purposes find themselves increasingly under direct attack – spiritual and otherwise.

For example recently I’ve noticed how the media is starting to get very agitated against the view that believers have in regard to Marriage Equality (same-sex unions) and our concerns over militant Islam. We’re in the firing line more and more. The enemy is lashing his tail at us, and the world is no longer affable towards us (if in fact it ever really was!). This questioning of our beliefs and attacks against our moral stance can easily make us frustrated because the world just doesn’t want to put up with us anymore.

Of course, the enemy’s strategy in all this is get some believers to cower and even abandon standing up for Truth. In some individuals it can even lead to spiritual paralysis. So we desperately need some Biblical encouragement from the saints of the past and how they held firm – what it was that kept them steadfast and true. Two such dear people were Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38).

Now even though THE very Last Days were not near for them, there was a concluding of an era, that of the Old Testament dispensation. Some of the issues they were faced with are applicable for us today. May we now learn from them!

Perhaps the first thing we notice is that they were both **servicing God** (verse 29 and verse 37). Part of our preparation to cope with the days ahead is to be in service to what the Father is about. This may or may not be the same thing as “serving in the church”. We must be about serving the Father’s business, not man’s finely tuned programmes.

The other thing we notice is that both Simeon and Anna were **expecting** something. Yes, this is a deliberate play on words! Both of them were in old age when a new-born was brought into the temple. An old man holding a newborn boy (verse 28). Then a widow advanced in years seeing all this begins to prophesy. Two old people with a focus on one baby. Can you see the picture? Here is an End giving way to a Beginning. That which is old and passing gives a blessing (verse 28) to the new which is coming to fulfillment. Just as something was about to go out, something else was ready to come in. This is a spiritual principle common throughout Scripture (e.g. Abraham and Isaac; Jacob and Benjamin; Eli and Samuel, Paul and Timothy, etc). In God’s grand economy this is never an end but always a beginning.

We also see that **timing** was a vital part of all this. Verse 27 clearly tells us that Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, came into the Temple just as Joseph and Mary arrived. The same with Anna; verse 38 says “at that very hour” indicating that she too was propelled by the Spirit to coincide with the visit of Joseph and Mary. God’s timing is always allied with our positioning. We could also add that obedience plays it part. Bear in mind that Joseph and Mary were just one couple amongst the many others that probably brought their newborn males for circumcision that particular day. Yet Simeon and Anna, both motivated by the Spirit, pick them out from amongst all the rest.

In terms of today’s Times we can see how the above principles will also be accommodated as the Lord’s Day draws closer - servanthood, a sense of expectancy, and accurate timing.

Next we find that what was being “**looked for**” (verses 25 and 38) would be the fulfillment of all that had been prophesied about from earlier generations. Simeon was “*looking for the consolation of Israel*” and Anna prophesied to “*all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem*”. This is important because it shows that there were others living at that time who also held fast to earlier prophecies and were expecting things to come to a fulfillment – just like Simeon and Anna.

There would be a movement from one era to another; the very stripping away of the old and the establishing of something new in God. In fact all the types and shadows that foretold the coming of the Messiah could now be put aside, because the Real had come into view. He was here, in the temple, the Creator being cradled in the arms of an old man, one of His creatures! What an amazing image!

Of course not too long after all this the enemy strikes out against this and through Herod kills the innocent ones (Matthew 2:16-18). Note how the hellish attack is directed, not against the Jewish faith, or the religious system, but against a living Person, against the Messiah Himself. When the days of the End fall on the face of the earth, the attack will not ultimately be against the “system” of Christianity, but against the Ones who have aligned themselves with the Living Messiah. The battle will be against that which is truly spiritual, and not against that which is just an insipid shadow.

This brings us to the next principle. The Father’s End Time purpose is about the things that are **spiritually true** and of importance. Hebrews gives us this very principle (12:27) and stresses that only the truly spiritual will not be shaken. If we have eyes to see we can already observe that the earthly is giving way to the spiritual. The entire earthly order that we’ve been so used to is being forced into a position where only the spiritual will stand. The sooner will realize this and align with it, the firmer and stronger our stand will be as The Day draws near. Flesh and blood will not be able to inherit what is coming (1 Cor 15:50), just as what is temporal cannot exist with that which is eternal.

Simeon and Anna, and “all those” others (Luke 2:38) knew this as a truth in their heart of hearts. They could sense it, feel it, and were anticipating it. That very same kind of expectancy is once more alive today in many of us.

One of the ways of God in the End Times is to bring about a concentration of spiritual values, a kind of fresh attentiveness to Truth and at the same time to bring to nothing the weakness of any religious system. Those who align with the Father’s Purposes in this hour will be compelled, even forced perhaps, to let go of all external things and seek only what is true and lasting. More and more we will ask ourselves “Do I truly have Him, or just things about Him?”

It’s been noted before by prophetic ministries that as the Day draws closer we will begin to reap the benefits from all the values that God has given in earlier days. All that the Father has given beforehand will heap up as an inheritance for the End Time saints. Strange as it may seem, as we get closer to the Fulfillment of the Ages there will be a tendency to look back to what was richest and solid in earlier church epochs. We will tire of the superficial, the trendy and the frivolous so apparent in much of today’s church. We will yearn for the Real and the True and even come to be ashamed and embarrassed for what once passed as “anointed”. It’s a principle that what is becoming new in God now, depends on the truth which was honoured earlier. Let’s not neglect the heritage of revelation and truth given to previous saints.

A superficial day cannot stand up to the things that are about to come forth in the Last Day. Why is there in the modern western church such little regard for the mature believers? You will notice in the African or Asian cultures a built-in appreciation (generally) of the aged, the grey-haired, and the seasoned believers. Not so in the West. Youth, freshness and vibrancy strive for attention more than the wisdom of tested believers. We see how it was to the wise and experienced ones in the temple who perceived the Messiah was before them in the arms of Mary - and not the exuberance zeal of younger attendees in the house of God that day.

By the way, we should not set one against the other in this matter. Both the mature and the youth will be needful for what is coming; neither should be in challenge to the other. The End Times come about because God has purposed that the wisdom of the past should now be experienced in the freshness of today. The coming new thing is constituted on what went beforehand; God’s history is cyclical in that kind of way. We keep an eye on the heritage of the past so that we can give our energy to what is purposed for the coming future event.

Next we note the importance of **prayer** in the lives of Simeon and Anna, and no doubt of the unknown “others” mentioned in Luke 2:38. Verse 25 tells us that Simeon was both “*righteous and devout*”. Anna we’re told served as a widow in the temple “*serving night and day with fastings and prayers*”. A resilient and focused prayer life sustained these two through the days of religion gone insipid. No doubt at that time much of the religion of the temple had descended into mediocrity and blandness. Nominalism and religious contentedness had taken hold, and relatively few had a vigorous spiritual life born of the vision from heaven’s throne. A bit like today perhaps?

The prayer life of Simeon, Anna and “the others” in Jerusalem was certainly not something they conjured up by themselves. They didn’t have a meeting and decided what Israel needed was a city-wide transformation or a fresh revival. Their prayer life, their fasting and single-mindedness was borne out of heaven. The purpose, the vision of and from God, gave impetus and strength to their prayers. Often it is true in any great move of God that a heaven-sent vision precedes earthly-prayer. There is in fact no other way. Vision comes before effectual prayer. So often today there’s a tendency for people to start praying to get a vision. It doesn’t work like that! God must first initiate the vision, the purpose, and the reason. Then, saints whose hearts are desirous and obedient will rise and start to pray the thing into being. Why do we so often kick against the goad?

Finally we see that although there were three groups mentioned in Scripture (Luke 2:25-38), Simeon, Anna and the “others”, they were actually **a collective**. They were ALL looking and waiting for the next move of God, something big and earth shattering; the coming of the Messiah! Each of the three was in fact a company of the Greater. You see, when God does a work He nearly always chooses individuals who have the same heart attitude. They may or may not know each other, or even be aware of the others existence. But He has looked for ready hearts and elected them to be part of the incoming event. Their election to be part of this move came about because they were single-minded and obedient. Their obedience enabled their election as it were.

As the End Times and the events leading up to it gather momentum, we can expect to see people whose hearts are focused on the Father’s business, whose willingness to obey and act, and whose steadfastness has been proven, to come into their own. They will perhaps not be well known or big names. Outwardly they may have gone through a lot of difficulties and seen by others as being no-one of particular note. In fact you might say about such individuals that they have undergone some unusual types of discipline by the Lord, of adversity even, and been seriously misunderstood. In other words, they might be seen to be “spiritually unbalanced”. After all some will say, if they are so devoted to the Lord’s will and ways, why have these ones been knocked around so much? Why have they been perplexed about such seemingly trivial things in church life like the style of music?

The issue here is that we should not judge simply by the outward person until we have seen their inward heart attitude. Yes, certainly how a person acts on the outside can be a sign of inner turmoil, but it’s also true that someone who’s been through much testing and discipline by the Lord can evidence an outer life that sometimes doesn’t measure up to what we think should be the Christian “norm”. True and effective testing by God is nearly always a hidden inward work, and often misunderstood by others. True discernment will be an End Time characteristic much needed in this matter.

As all this happens there comes about a **great refinement**, a stabilizing of the individual before an establishing of the greater. In no way will this be a mass movement or a great gathering – in contrast to what is popularly taught in some prophetic circles. Rather it will be manifested through a much smaller company. They will not see themselves as elite, nor think that they have some special connection to God in the matter. Humility will be a paramount thing with them. God will bring about a reduction in order to have a greater fulfillment. It has been like this many times before, and it will certainly be like this again at the End of All Things. Watch for it!

So we come to the conclusion of all this. Simeon and Anna have shone like beacons for those whose hearts are like-minded. There is yet to come a great intensifying and even upheaval of both earthly and celestial things. We will need to be in preparation NOW for the things yet to come. It will be too late to try and “catch up” when things begin to get worse. The best time to prepare for the future is to prepare now!

Let’s remind ourselves that ultimately all of God’s works are essential spiritual. He is always acting that way. This is done because for the truly spiritual to come forth there must also be a removing and shaking of the non-spiritual. The intensifying of the non-spiritual is a process to bring about the establishing of the really spiritual. Hebrew 12:27 indicates this so clearly:

“Now the words "Yet once" make clear the removal of the things being shaken, as having been made, so that the things not being shaken may remain.”

Be assured that the earthly is being gradually forced to give way to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal. As and when this happens the Great Shaking will show just what we held dearest and just how much we actually aligned ourselves with the Father’s Great Business. Are we ready for that?

Peter McArthur

Individual Maturity and Corporate Unity



By Peter McArthur

In the New Testament one of Paul's' greatest concerns is his desire for both the individual believer and for corporate believers to grow. For the individual he desires that **maturity** should prevail; but for the Corporate Body he desires that **unity** should be practiced.

You can see the very same theme in Jesus' words of John chapter 17, the so-called "High Priestly Prayer". So let's consider this for a moment.

For the individual believer maturity should be a clearly recognized aim. This is one of the most obvious themes found in Proverbs for example. Over and over in that book we find the three-fold sequence of "**Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom**" repeated. Look through Proverbs yourself and you will see this as a constant factor.

It all starts with Knowledge which is basically the acquiring of facts, which in due time leads to Understanding which is the interpreting of those facts. When all this is properly and regularly carried out we should arrive at the ultimate, Wisdom, which is the application and living out of all those things. It's a progression of spiritual development, something that should (daily) require our attention. We have been given "Life" through the New Birth as a gift. Theologically speaking it's a **finished** work once received. However the rest of our earthly life is a **continuous** working out, wherein we are constantly receiving more from the Father.

Looked at that way it's easy to see that the Father is continually enlarging us inwardly so that by applying His Truths we will arrive just where He wants us; in a state of maturity and wisdom. As this happens, usually over many years of obedience to and intimacy with Him, our conception and appreciation of God develops. Instead of simply being concerned with the Saving aspects of God (Jesus as Saviour for example) we grow to recognize God's Sovereignty (Lordship). Then after due time we begin to grow into a broader appreciation of God wherein we appreciate His Fatherhood.

Now of course those three aspects are all intertwined, and I'm in no way trying to set the aspects of Saviour, Lord and Father against one another. I'm simply trying to establish an overview, which is that our conception of God develops as we mature. It is NOT a lessening of Jesus over against the Father or any such thing. I still believe in the Trinity!

A warning though: attempting to grow into maturity without humility, obedience and discernment can easily lead to introspection and self-interest. It could take you down the rabbit hole of self-focus and inward looking, resulting in you actually getting further away from maturity rather than nearer to it!

To counteract this tendency the Father has placed in Scripture (particularly the NT) the need for the Individual to also be concerned about the Body. When these are in harmony we will neither become too entrenched in our own spiritual development, nor be over-zealous in trying to create unity by man's endeavours.

In fact we can't have true maturity unless we're also truly concerned about unity amongst the brethren; and the reverse is also true – true Holy Spirit led unity requires quite a measure of individual maturity!

In regard to Unity, it's clear that we are not meant to chase after "church unity" and try to make it happen, to create it. Paul tells us, not to manufacture unity but to maintain it ("**being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**" Eph 4:3).

This word "**preserve**" originally meant "*to make haste with diligence*". So we not meant to create unity but to maintain it, to preserve with all diligence the fact that God has already initiated it for us. Wonderful thought!

When we give due attention to our own individual growing into maturity, we will find it easier to also develop a greater fondness and love toward the brethren as a whole – as a Body. These two things are inter-locked and even dependent on each other. The point to realise is that individual developing of our personal maturity is never to be directed by man, or the hidden carnal desires of the soul. In past ages men and women ran off to monasteries and nunneries to try and accomplish this; all to no lasting avail. They lived in deserts, in caves, subjugating their flesh and attempting all sorts of "spiritual exercises". It leads to nowhere except frustration, and in some cases, spiritual delusion.

As we sense we are growing into maturity (by His grace more than our effort) we begin to understand why the Father has put us through so many experiences, trials, temptations and of course blessings. He uses such to progressively lead us into more expansive and fuller truths of His own Life. The purpose behind this is not to make us more "spiritual" in the religious sense, but to reveal to us more of His splendid purpose and grand intention. So the more we participate in letting the Father have His way in us the more we gain a fuller understanding of Him. This ultimately is the reason Maturity and Unity are so important to Him and so vital for us.

Have you ever noticed that when you go through some experience of God you don't always appreciate its importance, but later when maturity and wisdom begin to take a greater hold on you, you see more clearly how all the parts relate as a whole? That's a kind of relating to God in a very deep fellowship. It's a foretaste of that beautiful fellowship that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have enjoyed from the very beginning. And the time will come when we experience it in a very grand way indeed, throughout all eternity.

I would encourage you to give more due attention to your own individual spirit maturity, and at the same time to be more conscientious in working toward maintaining the unity of the Body. As long as both are firmly established on the Father's purpose we won't go astray. Too much focus on your self in regards to your maturity or too much stress and trying to make unity work amongst the brethren, will tire you out and make you weary in spirit and soul.

Let it all be God-breathed, God-inspired and intended only by God and then the priorities of the Father will take hold of your life. His blessed Holy Spirit will stand beside you (**John 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7**), the Son will continue to pray for its accomplishment (**John 17:20-23**), and at the end their will be a wonderful conforming to the image of Christ Himself (**Romans 8:28-30**). Beyond all that, not much else matters!

In Y'shua our Saviour and our Head.

Peter McArthur

Walk Accurately



Peter McArthur

I firmly believe that as the Last Days increasingly take hold, the books to the Ephesians and Colossians will be very important to understand. They are books of eternal wisdom and books of maturity for the End Time saints.

In Ephesians we find Christ depicted as **Lord of the Church**. In Colossians we find Him as **Lord of the Universe**. So why is the Book of Ephesians for example, so important to us? Because in it is summed up the **Conflict of the Ages**. In Ephesians we can find the issue of **The Truth versus The Lie**, as well as the **New Man versus the Old Man**.

The assembly/church of the One Body (the church of the Mystery that Paul refers to in Ephesians and Colossians) has been delivered from the authority of darkness and positioned (placed) into the Kingdom of God's Son. This very act repudiates "The Lie" that Satan so regularly spits out.

We've been lifted up from earthly things to heavenly things. This is the Father's Grace; hence it's called the Kingdom of Grace. But do we just rejoice in this wonderful truth and remain passive about it? No of course not, but there are actions and works to take – not in the religious sense, but in the spiritual, because of Christ's eternal working.

By Christ we have the Old Man to PUT OFF, and the New Man to PUT ON. This is done by the grace of the Lord and the in-working of His Spirit in us.

- We put off our former conduct (Eph 4:22)
- We put on a Righteous and Holy Conduct (vs 24).

Eph 4:25 says "putting away lying". In the Greek it literally has reference to "the putting away of **THE** lie". This was the lie spoken by satan in the garden and which permeates all falsehood from then on (John 8:44). So we see that truth and lying are in direct contrast. One truth to come from this is that the Body of Christ declares Truth as against THE lie that satan, religion and philosophy pronounce.

Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Our new life is to be one that affects our Mouth, our Actions, and even our Tone of Voice. All these "show up "the lie" and make it be seen for what it is. As we go on in Ephesians we're given practical truth by Paul. He expresses this as a WALK; in fact he uses this

imagery seven times in Ephesians (2:2 / 2:10 / 4:1 / 4:17 / 5:2 / 5:8 and 5:15). Let's look at three of the most important.

- Walk in love as children of **LOVE** (5:1-2)
- Walk as children of **LIGHT** (5:8)
- Walk circumspectly as **WISE** (5:15)

Concerning "**love**"; this contrasts with the works of the flesh (vss 3-4).

Concerning "**light**" we learn to discern what is acceptable to the Father; what please Him. In Ephesians 5:9 there is mention of "the FRUIT of the light". In the natural world light produces fruit, while darkness brings a lack of fruit, barrenness. So too in the spiritual.

Concerning "**wise**" (5:15-17) the context shows we are to be careful and make the most of our allotted time on earth ("redeeming the time") and to "understand what the will of the Lord is". That's quite blunt! Put together these verses indicate that the Wise Ones will know about time and timing. A very important requirement for these last of days.

I encourage you to re-read Ephesians SLOWLY and with an open heart. Let its wonderful eternal truths resonate within your heart. Try reading it through in one hit rather than just passages here and there. Note the eternalness of it, the profound insight and the glory it portrays. Join with Paul in prayer just as he wrote:

(1:18) I pray that **the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The highlighted text ("the eyes of your heart may be enlightened") actually means to come to a place of enlightenment AND REMAIN THERE! Oh wouldn't it be wonderful to live this truth out day by day; to come (by the Spirit) to a place of enlightened truth, and to actually REMAIN in it, living it daily, knowing it constantly, and experience its reality until our time here ends – and then, to abide in and within it eternally!

And why is this so very important? "**So that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints**" (vs 18).

What a stupendous truth! May it indeed be ours more and more!

Peter issachar.org

Sign of the Woman and Child

Is the Sign of Revelation 12 of any real prophetic significance this September 23?



Peter McArthur

The date of 23 September 2017 is another one of those speculations some have grasped hold off believing it has some prophetic significance regarding the End Days. Much of the foundation of this kind of thinking stems from the belief that in the past, before Moses committed God's words to writing, YHWH used the sun, moon and stars as the basic means by which He would communicate His fundamental truths to His people. So along with the emerging oral tradition went "signs" in the celestials, which could be decoded to reveal God's purposes.

The assumption at the moment is that the Revelation 12 sign depicts an apocalyptic event which will initiate the End Times tribulation period (also known as Jacob's Trouble) beginning on 23 September this year. This is based on the passage in Revelation 12:1 about celestial constellations aligning to herald that event.

"And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

The popular assumption of how this seemingly lines up with astronomy is outlined as follows: On 23 September 2017 the sun will be in the zodiac constellation of Virgo (the Virgin) — "a woman clothed with the sun". At the same time the moon will be at the feet of Virgo — "with the moon under her feet". Then the nine stars of the zodiac constellation of Leo, plus the three wandering planets of Mercury, Venus, and Mars, will be at the head of Virgo — "on her head a crown of 12 stars".

The planet Jupiter will be in the centre of Virgo, and as the next weeks pass Jupiter will leave Virgo heading east, past the Virgin's "feet", inferring — "She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she laboured to give birth". Jupiter being the largest of the planets, is often referred to as the "king" of the planets, hence — "She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod".

I must admit that when this assumption began to become popular recently, I took a breath and sighed deeply. "Here we go again" I thought. We've had the Blood Moon Tetrads, and then the Shemittah year theory, and last month the Total Solar Eclipse in the US – all of which have been eagerly grabbed by some people seeking understanding of the days we live in. None of those "signs"

amounted to anything; prophetically speaking they all failed miserably. I shudder to reflect on how much time, energy and money was poured into trying to legitimize those futile speculations; and how many believers were once more led astray after investing considerable spiritual and emotional vigour (let alone prayer) into all this.

Sadly there have been many prophetic theories over the years that have caused the saints to become disappointed, and for some, even to abandon studying Scripture at all to discern the times. I've been a Pastor for over 40 years and been interested in End Time events for almost 30 years of that period; and I must admit there have been quite a few occasions when false theories have high-jacked my thinking. But still I press on knowing that we can know something solid and true about how the end will work out. It's also caused me to be wary and more discerning about popular End Time teachings based on spurious "signs" and "events". We need more than that.

Overview

So what follows is (I hope) a fairly straightforward overview of why I believe the September 23 sign is NOT of any lofty prophetic significance.

At face value the above text does seem to fit because on September 23 the sun will actually be in the constellation of the Virgin (Virgo) with our moon near her feet. Also the planet Jupiter will be in Virgo's constellation with the three planets of Venus, Mars and Mercury to the right of Virgo in the neighbouring constellation of Leo. The proponents of this theory claim this and some other associated celestial occurrences are highly "unusual" or even "very rare", a once in 7000 years happening.

I wonder if by using the "rarity" card the supporters of this theory think it may convince others of its validity. You may recall the "rare event" card was also used to support the Blood Tetrad Moon assumption too; and look what happened – nothing! Just because something seems to be "rare" or "unusual" is NOT enough to claim the theory to be true to Scripture.

In fact there's nothing either "unusual" or "rare" about some of this. According to astronomers (www.stellarium.org www.skyandtelescope.com/online-resources/) as the earth orbits the sun each year, the sun does appear to move through the 12 constellations of the zodiac, spending about a month in each. Nor is it unusual to find the moon near the feet of Virgo because for one or two days every month the moon indeed appears near the feet of Virgo. Therefore for a day or two every September or October, the sun comes into view in Virgo with the moon resting at her feet - so this is not that remarkable.

The period of Jupiter's orbit is a little less than 12 years and so Jupiter will be in Virgo (with the sun and the moon at the "feet") once every 11 or 12 years. So you can see that the sun in Virgo, with the moon at her "feet" and Jupiter in the constellation, is in fact quite a regular occurrence.

So what is it that makes this regular occurrence a seemingly "rare" one? It's because this year Jupiter will be near what is supposedly the "womb of Virgo" apparently representing "the child" that the woman is about to give birth to (see Rev 12:1-2 and 5-6). The theory goes that as Jupiter exits the lower part of the Virgin's "womb" 42 weeks later, we can see a prophetic representation of the approximate length of the human gestation period – validating the scriptural text "She (the virgin) gave birth to a son, a male child..." (Rev 12:2 and 5). This symbol of a woman in labour is found in both Jewish and Christian scriptures and it's those texts together with the End Time association which proponents suggest is valid evidence for the September 2017 alignment's importance.

The supposed connection to Rosh Hashanah

As if to further support this there's the rather flimsy connection to the festival of Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year/New Year). That name as such is actually not used in Scripture but is referred to as Yom Ha-Zikkaron (Day of Remembrance) or Yom Teruah (Day of Sounding of Shofar/Trumpet). See Lev 23:24-25.

In attempting to make the Revelation 12 sign seem more legitimate some have tried to identify it with the Feast of Trumpets, as if that will make it more prophetically acceptable. The Feast of Trumpets is

the first of the autumn Feasts of YHWH and its timing is based on the first sighting of the new moon (from Jerusalem) which in 2017 is expected to begin on the evening of September 21 or 22 and end on the evening of the 23 (when the sign is supposedly fulfilled).

Rosh Hashanah/Feast of Trumpets in Jewish tradition is believed to be a day when the dead will be resurrected and YHWH begins His judgment. Many Christians believe the period describes the tribulation period (Jacob's Troubles) found in Revelation. Some are bold enough to say that the Rapture could well take place about this time! This of course makes the whole acceptance of this Revelation 12 "sign" as very urgent indeed, because if you don't accept the proposition you might just miss out on the Rapture! This is nothing more than emotional and spiritual blackmail.

Not that unusual after all

But this celestial event isn't that unusual as it also happened on 4 other occasions within the past 1,000 years, in the Septembers of 1056, 1293, 1483 and 1827. So if we want to be consistent we need to ask why those past 4 occurrences (let alone others before that) didn't have the same significance people are attaching to it for this year. Saints, we need some honest accountability in this please.

Now the issue here is that we cannot take a text out of its surroundings and its general, commonsense meaning, let alone any literal meaning it might have. True, symbolism raises another issue, but you still can't isolate it from its surroundings. Even symbolism (or Typology as it's more accurately known) has its own way of adhering to its neighbouring phrasing. And you certainly shouldn't take a verse away from the previous and following verses. In other words, please don't ignore or whitewash the framework or even the "straight forwardedness" of the text. So here we go! What do the following verses say?

(Rev 12:4-5) "And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne."

Now depending on your doctrinal slant, you'll either believe this "male child" to be Jesus (with faithful OT Israel being the woman bringing forth the Messiah), or the mature and fully perfected sons of God (the last day's church/christianity/religion being the woman out of who comes a last day's unflawed remnant).

I take it to refer to Jesus; the latter belief is connected to the false teaching of the Latter Rain (aka Manifest Sons of God) doctrine of early Pentecostalism. I was once caught up in this Latter Rain teaching but after some years of trying to make it realistically fit with Scripture I came to see it was in error. Not all my time was wasted while holding to it, because I did learn some very valuable lessons regarding discernment, sticking to the Word, and not taking things out of their obvious uncomplicated context. It all took some time but the Holy Spirit led me through it and then out of it!

The above verses clearly and straightforwardly point to the "woman" giving birth to Jesus, with His mother (Miriam/Mary) being the symbolic righteous woman of Israel. And quite plainly we see Satan tried to "devour" the child just after His birth when Herod attempted to purge the new-born king from amongst the young babes (Mtt 2:13 and 16).

"Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy Him...Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi."

Also Revelation 12:5 says this child will rule all the nations, and was caught up to be with God at His throne. The only one who fits this criterion is Jesus/Y'shua. He was and still is destined to rule over ALL nations (Mtt 28:18 and Rev 19:16) and is the One who has ascended into the celestials (Jhn

3:13). It is true that the End Times church will share in the ruling, overcoming and reigning (Rev 2:26-27 "And to the one who is victorious and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre ...just as I have received authority from My Father") but that just shows we share in His victory in due time – it doesn't displace Jesus as the forerunner of this in the verse being considered.

She gave birth to a "male child" can only refer to Jesus. The attempt by some to say that this refers to the Church, particularly the very End Time church, have a problem because Scripture doesn't refer to the Church as "male" but in the feminine gender, "the Bride" (Rev 18:23 / 19:7 / 21:2 and 9).

The Zodiac

Now we also have another problem, the issue of the zodiac constellations being actual God-given "signs". I admit I have trouble accepting that the zodiac is something God would use to show us things of great spiritual importance. Yes Scripture does refer to constellations (Amos 5:8 / Job 9:9) and of course God has used celestial signs before, but generally they have NOT been signs in the far-away heavenly constellations. Just because there's some reference to Pleiades and Orion in Scripture is hardly convincing proof that the zodiac contains hidden messages from God.

Whenever celestial signs have been used in Scripture, even if they have been stars, the sun or moon, they have all been things we could see with the naked human eye. They haven't been a far-off invisible alignment of far-away planets. They have all been sights in the sky an ordinary person could look up and see quite easily. There was no need for a telescope, star chart of the night sky, or computer programme. Heavenly signs should be obvious, not obscure! Otherwise what's the point if you have to rely on having a star-gazing buff to interpret God's messages to you?

The average person in the street would be very hard pressed to look at the night sky and point out the various constellations, with all their imagined symbols of Leo the lion, Aquarius the water bearer, Gemini the twins, etc. When I look up here in the South Hemisphere, I can fairly easily find the Southern Cross (Acrux and Gacrux pointing to the Southern Celestial Pole) because it actually does LOOK like a cross! But no way can I see any of the other imagined mythologies up there!

When God uses the sun, moon, stars and even comets as messages and signs for us to heed, then obviously (pun intended) He wants us to SEE them, for those very signs to be apparent. Earlier everyday saints, especially in OT times, generally had little knowledge of the wandering of the celestial constellations. Yes there were trained astronomers and astrologers who had a sufficient handle on how the zodiac worked, but I don't believe God meant us or the Hebrews to seek such specialized help in deciphering the "signs". They were for the common ordinary believer to look up from the earth and to actually see in the sky/heavens right above them. The Scriptures never claim that God designed the constellations as some kind of special revelatory purpose for us to probe into to get spiritual understanding. In fact you could say the very opposite is true.

Note these texts which stress that a person can literally look and see what's in the sky without the need for expert assistance in determining their meaning. No telescope or star-chart required!

- (Gen 1:14) Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years."
- (Gen 1:16) God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.
- (Gen 15:5) And He took him (Abraham) outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
- (Deut 4:9) And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them.

- (Job 22:12) Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!
- (Isa 40:26) Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name.
- (Ezek 32:7) And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon will not give its light.
- (Joel 2:10) Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.
- (Mtt 24:29) But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
- The meaning really couldn't be plainer; these are all objects you can see with the human eye. Signs should be OBVIOUS, not obscure.

Anyway we can be sure that the sun, moon, stars and celestials were all made and purposed by YHWH, but can we be absolutely certain that the zodiac constellations are from Him as they stand today? I know there are lots of books, You Tube videos and articles suggesting that God intended us to get a grip on how the constellations move and work, so we could decode them. But is that what God meant in the verses quoted above? I don't think so. He was speaking plainly about celestial objects we can see, like the glaring sun, the different phases of the bright moon, and the twinkling of stars (no matter how far away they might be from us).

Click [here](#) to read some good Christian research on how the Zodiac goes back to the Tower of Babel. All the solid evidence we currently have doesn't support the oft-held claim that the constellations are a kind of ancient revelation code, a type of "Gospel in the Stars" idea. I know it's very popular in some quarters but I think it's a long bow to draw to make it all fit.

The observable objects described in the verses above are the "signs" we're truly meant to see; and yes, they can have symbolic and parabolic meanings to them. But beyond all that they are natural and actual objects which don't require going beyond the Scripturally revealed typology already given. We need to avoid relying on those who supposedly have some special insight that the rest of the Body allegedly lacks. That is nothing more than an updated form of Gnosticism which feeds off people's gullibility because they're too lazy to study Scripture closely themselves.

Other accommodating data for this theory

Moreover some have looked for corroborating evidence to further validate the theory. They point out that September 21-22 is the 70-year anniversary of the resolution allowing for Israel to be recognized as a state. It's also 70 years from 1947 to the rebirth of modern Israel. And the 50th anniversary or year of Jubilee for Jerusalem. It is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Plus the 70th anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And finally 2017 is the 70th Jubilee since Exodus (1483 BC).

Now it might be that all these anniversaries are true by what does it prove? There are plenty of other dates important in the life of both Israel and the Church but they don't get a mention because they just don't fit the preconceived theory. It kind of reminds me of the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. These are words used by Bible scholars to highlight two conflicting approaches to Bible study.

Simply put "exegesis" is the the way you read a text and then get something out of it through careful objective analysis. The conclusions you arrive at are those you get by following the text as is. You draw out the meaning of the text but remain faithful to its meaning.

On the other hand “eisegesis” is the very opposite way to study. You might read the Bible say, and have some conscious or even subconscious bias, and through your subjective rather non-analytical study you inject your own ideas into it, making it mean what you want it to mean. You act selectively. Some of that eisegesis attitude can often be found in theories like the September 23 “sign”. We can so easily let the imagination of our minds fasten on whatever seems to validate our excitement and then run with it, looking for anything to support it. This is known as “Confirmation Bias”.

My conclusion

So where are we in all this? Christians today need to be very careful about being drawn into such sensationalist claims. These are days of mass media hype where we can be easily inundated with the latest prophetic fad, and of course it only takes a few clicks on the internet to find these.

Might I just state that I do believe there have been and still will be, signs in the sky. But I do not want to be led down a rabbit hole of false assumptions based on spurious use of Scripture overlaid with the imaginations of men. The former usual sorts itself as time passes, because wise people check out the Word and adjust to it. The latter though is often much harder to discern because man’s imagination can be a very deadly thing, spiritually speaking. Once it takes hold in a person’s unfettered mind, imagination will breed further and even wilder imagination. Then watch out! Sensationalism can so easily fall into the hands of the enemy.

However as in all things pertaining to the unknowable preciseness of the End Times we do need to still have a humble attitude. All this is just my “take” on it, from what I glean from the Word and Christian experience. We shouldn’t cease to interpret prophecies just because there’s some negativity and bad past experiences of failed “prophecies”. But how we need wisdom!

I guess what all this does is to wake us up to the times and seasons, and to get back to the Word of God. So it’s a good and wise thing to be attentive as possible, to stand up for Scriptural integrity when needed, but also to be alert to the leading of the Holy Spirit lest we think we know it all – that includes me of course!

The one thing we don’t want is that when September 24+ comes for there to be more contempt shown for the prophetic word. The issue really is; Will any of this make us wiser?

May the Spirit of God lead us into ALL truth, lest we miss the day of our visitation!

Peter McArthur

He will ride again



Peter McArthur

According to Scripture Jesus rides on a similar animal twice. The first recorded occasion was on a donkey (colt) as He entered Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44). The second occasion will be on a white horse at the End of the Age (Rev 19:11-16).*

No one had ever sat on that donkey/colt (Mark 11:2-7 and Luke 19:30) and it's quite likely that on His return the King of kings will also ride on an equine that's never yet been ridden. It's just speculation of course that I say this, but it would seem so appropriate that there's a white horse in the celestials that is solely reserved for one rider and one only, the King of kings and Lord of lords. A lovely and inspiring thought!

The first occasion we're looking at here is the so-called "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem when the crowd of His disciples, not just the general by-standers (Luke 19:37 & 39) accompanied Him with cries of "Hosanna". The second will be His next triumphant ride accompanied by the celestial armies, also on white horses (Rev 19:14). In both events He rides to His appointed place with His companions (disciples and armies) attending Him.

If however the dignitary rode on a horse (particularly a white one) he was indicating he was coming as a victorious warrior to claim possession of the city. This of course neatly fits in with Jesus' second ride yet to occur.

* Note that the rider on another white horse in Rev 6: 2 is NOT Jesus! The context of that passage makes it quite clear. That rider is a false messiah, in the spirit of antichrist. Some believers might also say Jesus "rode" (in Mary's womb) on another donkey heading for His birthplace at Bethlehem. The trouble with that is Scripture nowhere tells us how Joseph and Mary travelled; it may have been by donkey but we're not actually certain. It's more a tradition, a bit like there being three wise men when we're not actually told how many were present.

As an interesting side note, when the victorious British General Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem on 11 December 1917 after conquering the Turkish forces there, he deliberately dismounted his horse at the Jaffa Gate and chose to walk into the city. This sensitive symbolic gesture was in direct contrast to German Kaiser Wilhelm II, who when visiting the Holy Land in 1898, insisted on entering the Old City seated on his horse.



This December is the centenary of Allenby's victory. And quite amazingly that day in 1917 **happened to be the eve of the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah** (Hebrew for "dedication") **which is the celebration of the liberation of Jerusalem by the Maccabees way back in 163 BC. Quite amazing how often prophetic connections fit so neatly together like a heavenly jigsaw!**

There is evidence to suggest that Allenby was a Bible-believing Christian who understood prophetic scriptures. In June 1917 he was summoned to a meeting with the First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher. Fisher's secretary records that Allenby was told he would be God's instrument for the deliverance of Jerusalem. Taken aback by Lord Fisher's words, he asked him to explain. Fisher then spent several hours discussing the Bible with Allenby, showing him prophecies concerning the rise of Great Britain, plus prophecies relating to the deliverance of Jerusalem in 1917. Fortified by this prophetic insight Allenby sailed for the Middle East, but exactly how much of it he believed at that moment is debatable.

However it seems Allenby often consulted the Bible for geographical military guidance for an army fighting in the Holy Land environment, and would frequently ask his staff officers to bow their heads and join him in praying for success in battle, with as few casualties as possible.

It also seems that Allenby came across the work of Bible scholar Dr. H. Aldersmith, who had been studying prophecies regarding Israel for many years. Aldersmith explained in his 1898 book "The Fullness of the Nations," that he believed Jerusalem would be liberated by Great Britain and its allies in the year 1917. Aldersmith had become convinced from reading Isaiah 31:4-5 that Britain would have a major part to play in the eventual restoration of Jerusalem. And so it seems, it was.

Now let's dig a little deeper and have a look at some interesting parallels between the First ride on the donkey, and the Second ride, on that White Horse.

Both rides feature a future event as part of the scenario. On the donkey the Messiah was riding to a sacrifice that awaited Him on the cross. On the white horse He will ride to execute judgment and to wage war – but righteously, not in an outburst of anger. Often in Scripture we find the two-fold sequence of sentencing and execution going together (Rev 19:11). The rides on both animals represent a future event of monumental significance in both the natural and spiritual realms, for both are connected to the shedding of blood. For that reason it can be very helpful to look closer at some background.

According to the ancient Babylonian Jewish Talmud (compiled about the year 500 AD) the subject of the Messiah coming on a donkey was connected to Daniel 7:13 ("**I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him**"). The commentary says "If Israel behaved worthily, Messiah would come in the clouds of heaven; if otherwise, he would come humbly riding on a donkey."

This commentary was obviously a link to Zechariah 9:9 (“**Rejoice greatly Oh daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, Oh daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**”)

Another Talmudic commentary (Bereshith 56b) says, “If one sees a donkey in a dream, he may hope for salvation, as it says ‘**Behold your King comes to you; he is triumphant and victorious, lowly and riding upon a donkey.**’

Jesus knew He would ride twice. He also knew there was a royal association to do with riding on a donkey because He wasn’t the first king-in-waiting to ride on one. Long before Him Solomon had done the very same thing (David said... “**Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel.**” 1 Kings 1:33-34)

Solomon’s triumphal entry on the mule takes place as he goes to his enthronement. For Solomon this was not just a triumphal ride, but more a ride towards royal enthronement. Perhaps we have indulged church tradition far too much in calling Jesus’ ride into Jerusalem “the Triumphant Entry”. Scripture doesn’t refer to it that way, but church tradition does. Maybe, just maybe, in the Messiah’s mind He was thinking of it as a precursor to His royal enthronement! The Lord always sees things from the bigger, more panoramic viewpoint.

Also of interest is the possibility that the highly regarded she-donkeys of Old Testament days were white (or at least white/grey) and not reddish-brown as we tend to think of them today. In ancient times white donkeys were often associated with persons of high rank and great dignity. “**You who ride on white donkeys, who sit on rich carpets, and walk by the way**” (Judges 5:10).

We’ve also been inclined to think of donkeys as dumb animals, beasts of burden, stubborn and rebellious. However this wasn’t how people of the Middle East necessarily thought. Reddish coloured donkeys were certainly used for domestic and business chores, but the more favoured white breed was used for ceremonial purposes. Being symbols of peace they were used by rulers when treaties were signed between warring factions.

However in Biblical Typology the donkey is often a symbol for wisdom, service, consecration and discernment, hence the imagery of a donkey for the tribe of Issachar “**who understood the times**” (1 Chron 12:32). Sometimes we need to re-examine some of our modern ideas about what we think Scripture is actually representing.

In Jewish tradition the crushing of Balaam’s foot against a wall (Numbers 22:22-35) is a metaphor indicating that the donkey on which he rode was YHWH’s attempt to get Balaam to pay attention to His laws. The reason? So that Balaam might become aware of the presence of an angel and so heed God’s word (verse 35). In this way Jewish thinking has the intriguing suggestion that a donkey can represent a medium by which messages from God will arrive. Note that Jesus the “Word of God” arrives at Jerusalem on a (white?) donkey!

Also in Jewish metaphysics a donkey is associated with seeking knowledge from Heaven, while a ox/heifer is associated with seeking knowledge solely from the earth realm; hence the prohibition of ploughing (meaning “to seek”) with a mixture of an ox and donkey – Deut. 22:10. In this way donkeys stand for divine revelation, or at least carriers of God’s messengers. All this suggests a connection

“White she-donkeys as mentioned in Judges 5:10 are a highly significant as a symbol because it relates to the prophecy that Messiah will enter Jerusalem on a donkey. In this sense the word denoting the colour of the donkey is significant.

White donkeys are related to the meanings ‘light’, ‘noon-light as something positive’, ‘ritual purity’, following the derivation of their semantics from the root word, as well as from the biblical context. That is why they are the prototype of Messiah’s donkey.”

Click [here](#) for reference.

between donkeys (or at least some chosen ones) and the voice of YHWH. However let's not make too much of this, because here we're bordering on the edge of abstruse (even kabalistic) insight – which needs very careful discernment indeed!

In the Old Testament we find that famous Biblical characters like Abraham and Moses used donkeys. **“So Moses took his wife and sons and mounted them on the donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt.”** (Exodus 4:20).

In Hebrew the definite article *ha* (*the*) in the above text supposedly infers there's something exceptional about this particular donkey. According to some Jewish teaching, the donkey that Moses used was the very same one that Abraham saddled as he set off to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:3). It's also believed the actual same donkey would be the one which the Messiah was to use to reveal himself according to Zechariah 9:9. Some have even stretched this to say that this identical animal was used by Mary to ride on her way to give birth to the Messiah. Further to all this speculation is the suggestion that this “reincarnated” donkey belonged to Jesus Himself and was kept aside especially for Him to ride into Jerusalem! How the mind of man can run wild with imaginative thinking.

So all this is a rather mystical way of looking at things, and it would require that THE same donkey be reincarnated as it were, four or five times! I'm no Hebrew scholar but I think the point to be made is that it's not the actual same donkey born over and over (rather ridiculous), but that the breed of donkey is a collective symbol standing for consecration to a divine task. In that way the symbolism makes perfect sense Scripturally.

Now while it's true we should seek out the treasures that are hidden as enigmas in Scripture (Prov 2:4), the balance to this is that the very essence of our God rests on the premise that there must always be something beyond man's understanding, that “something” to which we can never quite attain by knowledge. Mysteries are important, and sometimes we just have to bend to them, and allow them their part in God's overarching panorama. After all, this is what makes mysteries attractive and enthralling.

Now back to the White Horse and its Rider!

There are plenty of articles on the internet and many You-Tube videos all about this great event; but here I want to simply take a slightly different overview of it all – a kind of parallelism.

- ❖ We could say that this Second Coming on the white horse is really the true “Triumphal Entry”. Note that on Messiah's first ride the crowds shouted “Hosanna” and on the second ride a great multitude will shout “Hallelujah” (Rev. 19:1 - the very first recorded time in the whole New Testament!).
- ❖ On His first mission to earth Jesus usually walked. On His second mission He will ride.
- ❖ Walking is a slow thing; but riding is a very swift thing indeed.
- ❖ Crucified in weakness He will return in glory.
- ❖ Eyes that once shed tears will then glow with fire.
- ❖ He once was a lamb led to the slaughter; He will then come as a Lion initiating a slaughter.
- ❖ His first ride was a plod; His second ride will be speedy.

- ❖ A relatively few followed Him on that first ride; a great host will follow Him on the second.
 - ❖ He first rode on earth to go to heaven; He will ride again, but from heaven to the earth.
 - ❖ His was uncrowned on the first ride; but next there shall be many diadems adorning His head.
-

Some more things to ponder over.

His accompanying riders will carry no weapon to wage war, for from His mouth comes the only needed weapon, a sharp sword to strike at the nations. His robe is coloured by blood, yet the saints who ride with Him have “clean” robes (Rev 19:14). There is no need for them to wear blood-dipped robes or carry weapons. He and only He is marked by that blood, and only He needs the one vital weapon!

During His first ride He was called the “**king who came in the NAME of the Lord**” (Luke 19:38). On His second there is a NAME known only to Him (Rev 19:13). Interestingly enough, John says he “saw” a name written when heaven opened up, but yet could neither decipher nor understand it! I love how Scripture interplays with Scripture like this.

If you think about it, the “name” is perhaps not a name as such, but rather a set of divine attributes mentioned three times - “**Faithful and True**” (19:11), then “**The Word of God**” (verse 13), and “**King of kings and Lord of lords**” (verse 16). Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if His Name was somehow a spiritual combination of these three divine attributes?

Whatever it is, this unknown name seems to suggest there are some things that are so profound about the Rider, it's quite unfathomable to us – or at least until the event itself transpires.

So to conclude. When things will have seemed to reach their very lowest point, the Lord Jesus shall appear visibly from heaven to put an end to the whole course of the world and to Satan's scheming. Powerful natural phenomena shall accompany all this, both to testify to God's dominance, and also to capture mankind's attention. It will be a time of massive natural and spiritual upheaval. But amongst all this the glorious One will then establish His kingdom – and He shall reign!

It's been said that “**each of us must walk in the light we already have**”. So brothers and sisters let us be alert, watching over our souls, and make ourselves ready for His ride! Indeed, the Day hastens.

Blessings in the Messiah,

Peter McArthur

Under the Shadow



Peter McArthur

Under the Shadow of Thy wings! What a tremendous thought. This is where any teaching on the Last Days should focus. The Bible shows us in many places that the Lord is a shade and defence to those who trust in Him. The over-riding Biblical principle is that God rarely snatches His people **out** of tribulation but rather allows them to go **through** it – with Him as their refuge and shelter. He is their Ark of Shelter much like Noah’s experience. This is a consistent theme right through Scripture, and for me it’s the most obvious concept that challenges the escapism found in most modern end-time Rapture teaching. I just cannot see in the Word where God snatches His people away as commonly understood in today’s Pre-Tribulation teaching.

The general principle is that when God’s people are undergoing either judgment or tribulation, God stands **with** them through it and delivers them out of it. Below I’ve listed a few of the many instances where the Lord shelters His people and acts as their strength and tower of refuge. I think you’ll find these enlightening and encouraging. Scripture gives us an important principle: God delivers His people by protecting them **through** tribulation, not necessarily removing them **from** it!

Shelter in Tribulation

Gen 7	Noah	Noah and his family are protected <i>in</i> the place of judgment, not removed <i>from</i> it. Inside the Ark, while riding the flood, he finds safety.
Exo 2:3	Moses	Moses’ mother places him <i>in</i> the river, the very place where the Hebrew babies face death; but in the place of tribulation he is kept safe and finally delivered.
Exo 8:22 and 9:26	Goshen	During the plagues inflicted on Pharaoh the Israelites find total immunity in the land of Goshen.
Exo 11-12	Death of firstborn	As the Lord passes through Egypt at the killing of the firstborn, the Israelites are totally protected by the blood.
Dan 3: 1-27	Three young men	In the fiery furnace the Lord stands <i>with</i> them and “not a hair is singed nor the smell of smoke on them”.
Dan 6:16-23	Lion’s den	In the place of persecution Daniel is completely protected by the Lord “and no injury was found on him”.
Rev 9:1-5	Fifth trumpet	Locust-like demons are released upon the earth, but those with the seal of God on them are protected.

As well as these obvious examples of divine protection there are innumerable other texts that have the same theme. Put together they build a good case for the principle that God's usual pattern is not to take His people *out* of tribulation but rather to stand *with them* through it. If this is a general principle in lesser tribulation periods then surely it's also going to be the case when it comes to the Great Tribulation.

Some supportive texts are below – please don't skip them but actually READ the highlighted sections. It will encourage you to see God's pattern unfold.

(Exo 19:4) "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how **I bore you on eagles' wings**, and brought you to Myself."

(Job 5:19) "From six troubles **He will deliver you**, even in seven **evil will not touch you**."

(Psalm 17:8) "Keep me as the apple of the eye; **hide me in the shadow of Your wings**."

(Psalm 27:5) "For in the day of trouble **He will conceal me in His tabernacle** in **the secret place of His tent He will hide me**; He will lift me up on a rock."

(Psalm 32:7) "You are **my hiding place**; You **preserve me from trouble**; You surround me with songs of **deliverance**."

(Palm 34:7) "The angel of YHWH **encamps around** those who fear Him, and **rescues them**."

(Psalm 36:7) "How precious is Your loving kindness O God! The children of men take **refuge in the shadow of Your wings**."

(Psalm 57:1) "For my soul takes refuge in You and **in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge** until destruction passes by."

(Psalm 63:7) "For You have been my help and **in the shadow of Your wings** I sing for joy."

(Psalm 91) "He who dwells in **the shelter of the Most High** will abide in **the shadow of the Almighty**...and **under His wings** you may seek refuge... for you have made YHWH your refuge, even the Most High your **dwelling place**...no evil will befall you nor will any plague come near your tent... for He will give His angels charge concerning you **to guard you** in all your ways... I will **deliver him**... **I will be with him in trouble**; I will rescue him and honour him."

(Psalm 121:5-7) "YHWH is your keeper; YHWH is **your shade** on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day nor the moon by night. YHWH will **protect you** from all evil."

(Prov 3:25-26) "**Do not be afraid of sudden fear** nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; for YHWH will be your confidence and will **keep your foot from being caught**."

(Isa 2:10) "**Enter the rock and hide** in the dust from the terror of YHWH and from the splendour of His majesty."

(Isa 26:20) "Come my people, **enter into your rooms and close your doors** behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course."

(Isa 43:2) "When you pass through the waters **I will be with you** and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire **you will not be scorched nor will the flame burn you.**"

(Isa 49:2) "He has made my mouth like a sharp sword, **in the shadow of His hand He has concealed me**; and He has also made me a select arrow, **He has hidden me** in His quiver."

(Isa 51:16) "I have put My words in your mouth and have **covered you with the shadow of My hand**, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"

(Joel 2:31-31) "The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of YHWH comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of YHWH **will be delivered**; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem **there will be those who escape**, as YHWH has said, even among the survivors whom YHWH calls."

(Joel 3:16) "YHWH roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But **YHWH is a refuge** for His people and **a stronghold** to the sons of Israel."

(Nahum 1:6-8) "Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken up by Him. YHWH is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and **He knows those who take refuge in Him**. But with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site, and will pursue His enemies into darkness."

(Zeph 2:3) "Seek YHWH all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. **Perhaps you will be hidden** in the day of YHWH's anger."

And note how this very same theme is extended in the New Testament period when the Messiah Himself was "hidden away" from danger by the Father until the appointed time had come. It indicates that the shadow of YHWH is Jesus Himself! He is our Rock, our safe shelter, our Holy of Holies, the place wherein we find refuge from the storm.

(John 7:30) "**So they were seeking to seize Him (Jesus); and no man laid his hand on Him because His hour had not yet come.**"

(John 8:20 and 59) "**These words He (Jesus) spoke in the treasury as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him because His hour had not yet come... Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.**"

Of course there are plenty of instances when the Israelites *did* suffer at the hand of their persecutors, when God *didn't* deliver them. But in such cases it was because of their sin and rebellion: it was a judgment they received as part of their chastisement. Remember that God's chastisement upon us is to bring us back to Him, not to drive us away. It is always for correction and not just as punishment.

Some might ask the question "What's all this go to do with something as important as the Rapture?" I have included these texts and examples to highlight that again and again the Bible shows God normally doesn't lift His people *out* of a threatening situation, but *comes to* His people and enables them to know His protection *through* it.

If this is the case throughout the Bible it knocks the escapist theory of the Rapture on the head. This is not to deny there won't be a rapture, it just shows that protection, not escapism, is God's norm.

Therefore we should be preparing ourselves now to live under “**the shadow of His wings**”, learning to “**abide in Him**” daily. As the Day of Tribulation approaches we will find *He comes to us* and protects us *through the persecution*. Of course there will be some who die as a result of persecution and tribulation, even when the Great Tribulation comes upon us. Those are the ones who have been destined to die as martyrs, and even then they’ll find supernatural grace to go through what lies ahead.

I therefore conclude from the recurring pattern found in Scripture that the Ecclesia will enter the Great Tribulation. Some will die as martyrs in that period, others will come to maturity as a result of the persecution – and others will have come to the place of maturity.

Believers, irrespective of the End Time destiny and role they’ll play, will not be raptured physically off the earth to escape prior to persecution or tribulation. They will remain here right up to either the mid-way point or throughout the entire Tribulation itself. You may well have a different End Time perspective than me, but this is where I am in my current Biblical understanding. Let us bear with one another in patience (Eph 4:2). God will be their defence and shield, and many supernatural acts of protection and deliverance will happen just as it did to Noah, Moses and Daniel.

For me this is the revolving point of all End Time understanding. It is a recurring theme that is hard to counter; that the Lord will shelter His people during persecution and tribulation. This of course doesn’t deny the fact that there will always be some believers who die as a result of persecution. But in relation to the Great Tribulation the general theme that keeps on coming through is that the Lord will keep His saints throughout the testing. It is God’s purpose to lead us **through** testing not always to deliver us **from** it.

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” (John 17:15)

God wants Overcomers. He wants us to mature to the point that we can prevail against all those things that attempt to hold us back from reaching perfection, maturity. All of God’s chastening works and His corrective rod have been for one purpose; to deliver us through to maturity.

(Heb 12:5-6) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

(Heb 12:10-11) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The principle is that God will keep us in the day of testing. But right now He is sifting the Ecclesia to sort out the chaff. Remember that Harvest time is always a time of sifting.

(Mat 13:40-41) “Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend.”

The protection of the Lord’s shadow is awesome. He speaks many times in His Word of providing this shelter. The first mention of “shadow” is in Genesis 19:8 when Lot protects the two visiting angels. It’s

interesting that of course the angels didn't need any protecting, but as Lot acted out the principle of hospitality and protection, so it return to him when the angels in turn sheltered him!

(Gen 19:8) **"See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."**

Strong's H6738. tsel, tsale; from H6751; **shade**, whether lit. or fig.:--**defence**, shade.

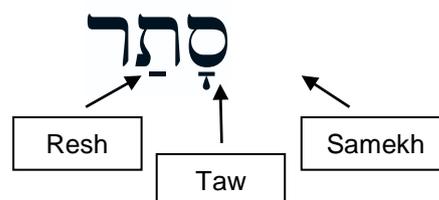
We can see that "shadow" is the same as "defence" or "shade". To be under His shadow is to be in the protected place of shelter. This is why Psalm 91 is important to understand. However it's not an automatic process, but one that requires our personal positioning. We need to learn to dwell in the secret place in Him and thus receive His sheltering. This is what the psalm says.

(Psa 91:1) **"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."**



Let's look a little at the **Secret Place** as mentioned in this Psalm 91. The word used for "secret place" is **sathar** ("sether" or "cether") and most modern translations render it as *shelter*. Interestingly in the Hebrew it could also be rendered as "secret things". So we can ask ourselves "What is this shelter, where is the secret place, and what indeed might be the secret things of YHWH?"

As we often do, let's unpack the Hebrew word **sathar** to get some deeper insight. "Secret place" in Hebrew means "to cover." Its verbal root means "to hide" so it's a hiding place, or a shelter – not just some "secret location". Although it may well be an actual site during the Great Tribulation (see Rev 12:14-16). Often Scripture has a wonderful way of giving two meanings at the same time; one for the every day issues of life and the other for a specifically appointed time in the future. Interesting thought! Let's continue on.



In Hebrew *sathar* is spelt Samekh, Taw and Resh (remember that Hebrew is read Right to Left). Hebrew letters are often associated with an image, a pictorial description if you like.

The first letter **Samekh** (or Simketh/Sin) looks a little like a shelter, a small round vessel with a cover or roof. Jewish tradition sees this as the heart of YHWH wherein you find shelter. So when Psalm 91 speaks of those who dwell in the *sathar* of God it's referring poetically to those who find shelter in the very heart of God Himself. This letter can also have the meaning of a shield, just as shepherds built walls of thorns around their flocks in the wilderness to keep them safe within. In very ancient pictographs the imagery was that of something sharp, like a thorn, so there's probably a play on words here.

The next letter of *sathar* is **Taw** (or Tav/Taf) which represents the truth of knowledge about God. Along with it is the inference of adjustment, fixing and restoration (*tikkum*). When we enter this shelter we enter into the very knowledge of God which will repair and restore us. It's doing an action which will put something right, and fix it in place for good. There's also the connotation of guidance associated with Taw. It's so interesting to see that the Hebrew mindset (Middle Eastern) is more about right action than just knowledge, while the Greek mindset (Western Culture) is more about correct knowledge, even if you don't apply it!

In ancient Semitic writings the Taw was depicted as a picture of two crossed sticks. This letter has the meanings of "mark" "sign" and "signature" which is quite fitting when you realize that knowledge about God is a kind of sign or signature that often sets us as believers apart.

So putting these two words together we already get the idea that in the heart of God you will find knowledge of the truth and in so finding it you'll gain guidance and restoration. Added to this is the concept of spiritual revelation that can be found in the secret place. If you reflect on it for even a moment it will make sense that it's in the very heart of God that we find true guidance and complete restoration. Quite obvious really!

The final letter in the word *sathar* is **Resh**. The word *resh* is usually assumed to have come from a pictogram of a Head (of a man) or sometimes as Chief, or Beginning. The *resh* represents the Head, and its very shape looks like someone who has bowed the head, bent over as it were to serve (Mark 10:45). Jesus the Messiah came down, bent Himself in humility to pay the penalty of our sin. Humility is also the basis for spiritual revelation, for without humility the pride of your intellect will always hold you back from arriving at maturity in Christ. Therefore it seems fitting that *resh* can also represent the revelation of God's thoughts through speech, and of course Jesus is the Word of God who expresses His Father's thoughts/will through His words/teachings.

Conclusion

So we find that the "secret place" is actually a hiding place, or a shelter. The Song of Solomon 2:14 equates this "secret place" to "*the clefts of the rock*." It's an obvious reference to the Lord Jesus for He is the Rock of Ages. If you've walked with God for any length of time you'll know how often He's been there for you. So just reflect on the occasions He's sustained you, and give thanks. You've been in His "secret place" of communion and fellowship. Now while every believer is positionally in Christ and hence in the Secret Place, our goal should be to daily learn to live more experientially, more really, in that "Place". And although we might refer to it poetically as a location, a "place", it is in fact a POSITION. Gradually our place, our position in Christ becomes a regular daily truth that develops into practice, what the Greek writers called "orthopraxis" meaning "correct conduct and action". It's out of that position in Messiah that we come to a lifestyle of correct action to act as a living testimony.

By experience David knew how to live in this Secret Place with YHWH by going through various temptations and trials. Also we find Solomon reminding us (Prov 18:10) that the Name of YHWH is a Strong Tower and when the righteous run to it they are safe (literally = *lifted up*). Remember that our true security and safety is not simply being in the absence of danger, but it's the presence of Christ in us and us in Him (our position) regardless of the danger. Note this was Paul's experience in 2 Tim 4:16-18.

As we enter the Last Days it will be vital for us to learn how to dwell in the secret place. Jesus said we need to keep on abiding in Him. This isn't just something we do by simply "believing in God". It's a practical thing we have to acquire. It's learning how to habitually abide in Christ, the Anointed One.

We can start by appreciating and honouring all those moves of God that bear His anointing on them. Whenever we see a truly anointed ministry or participate in a legitimate anointed move of God (not some of the fleshly counterfeits of recent years) we are learning to abide in the place of the anointing. Those who reject such anointings will find it difficult to discern where to abide when Tribulation comes. That's why those who are now rejecting some of the valid expressions of God's anointing may find themselves out of the covering in the Last Days, unless they repent.

The Word tells us that intimacy with the Lord is the greatest antidote for preservation during Tribulation times. Keeping close to Him, abiding in His presence, and learning to lean on His breast as John did with Jesus (John 13:23), will serve as our greatest asset as we enter the Last Days. It won't necessarily be correct doctrine, or a right knowledge of eschatology or even being "spirit filled". As vital as all these things are, there'll be many who won't possess all these characteristics, but who will still find protection under the Wings. Why? Because their heart condition was right. They understood what it is to truly and experientially "know" the Lord.

Remember the mind-numbing verses when Jesus said:

(Mat 25:11-12) **"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'**

(Mat 7:23) **"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**

(Luke 13:27) **"But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'**

So, if being "*known*" by the Lord (and therefore knowing Him in return) is a prerequisite here, how much more so will it be necessary as a lead-up to the Day of the Lord!

Note this in Strong's concordance G492 **eido** (*know*). This word has the meaning of "**behold**". In other words, to truly *know* the Lord means you behold Him. That means to continually keep Him in mind and in focus. He becomes the habitual focal point of your daily life. By this you get to actually know Him in an intimate manner. He becomes your bosom friend; not in a soppy way but in reality. You will know Him as "friend" and intimately, but still retain the fear of the Lord reverentially.

So may God's Spirit grant that in and through the unavoidable times of testing that await us, we may learn the secret "*of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need*" (Philp 4:12) so that we may confidently declare with Paul "*I can do all things through Christ who continually strengthens me*" (4:13) . He is the very same One who also preserves us safe in the "Secret Place" (Heb = *Hiding Place*) of His presence when the days of tribulation and trouble come our way.

And since God "hides" Himself in this world (Isa 45:15) we must humbly seek His face and find Him in the place of concealment – the Secret Hiding Place. The question we should constantly place before ourselves is: *Do I really **know** the Lord from my heart?* If not, perhaps we had better get desperate.

Peter,

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Perfect Perfection Preferred

The certainty of this truth as found in Hebrews



Peter McArthur

*"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,
let us go on unto **perfection...**" Hebrews 6:1*

PERFECT?

"Can I really be "perfect"? Is that at all possible? After all, nobody is perfect are they?" No doubt you've heard that kind of talk before; perhaps you've even believed it. Well Jesus says this about Perfection and us. "**Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**" (Mtt 5:48).

Alongside of this truth there's a lot of popular misunderstanding about what "perfection" is or might be, and when you add the Scriptural meaning to that it only increases the confusion – at least to unbelievers. Hopefully any sincere follower of Jesus Christ will not have a wayward or populist view of perfection. So as in all things, let's stick to Scripture for our meaning.

Now having said that, it really isn't as straightforward as you might imagine. There's plenty on the internet about Christian Perfectionism and the many ideas associated with it. Just Google it and you'll quickly see what I mean. In fact the topic is quite overwhelming and even after a short look through some of the writings on the subject you'll easily be forgiven for wanting to abandon your study. There are numerous definitions, man-held doctrines, variants of truth, denominational ideologies, etc.

However because I tend to see things from a Grander Panoramic viewpoint, I'll focus here on what the Epistle to the Hebrews says about being perfect. You always have to start somewhere and I reckon Hebrews is very good place to begin.

In Hebrews the theme of '*perfection*' is mentioned so often that any sincere student of the Scripture should want to investigate the topic fairly deeply. So then, what does it really mean, and more importantly how can we apply this truth?

As usual, let's go into the background of the Scriptural meaning behind the Greek word for Perfection. *Telios* is defined as follows: *completion, consummation, finish, conclusion, reaching the goal*. Originally this word was used to apply to a piece of mechanism, as a machine that is complete in all its well-fitted parts. Applied to people (especially the redeemed), it refers to completeness of parts where no part is defective or wanting – all by the grace of God.

We could put it this way: it's a completion of a work given to be done; a fulfilment of a declared purpose; and a realization of a set goal. In the book of Hebrews this sequence or progression is a message to encourage the Believers, so it's for the Saved not necessarily for the Unsaved. That's why this epistle is often referred to as the Book of Better Things. The word "*better*" appears 13 times in Hebrews, and the term "*more excellent*" twice.

This gives us encouragement that there is something better, something greater, and far "more excellent" than what we normally see as "good". The Father is inspiring us not to drift along with uncertain goals, or to try and advance spiritually without His declared purpose in mind. How many times have we as the Redeemed, done our own thing, manufactured our own goals, and chased after our own desires – and then dared to call it "God's directing". What a waste of time, what an arrogance to construct our own plans and then pretend (to others and even ourselves) that God ordained this or that. No wonder the church is still quite infantile in its understanding of the mature things, and while we're still "blessing-centred" rather than "purpose-orientated".

So it is that this lovely epistle speaks boldly of the theme of Perfection. But before we can arrive at "perfection" we need to leave something behind (Heb 6:1). **"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..."**

This "leaving" is a Greek verb that means to do some quite definite with an effective action. It entails the idea of a concise and definite action to be performed by one's choice of will. It doesn't mean to just "let go" of things you once believed or held dear as a spiritual infant. It means to decide to move on to maturity in Christ, and to take accountability for beginning that process. Of course this doesn't mean we can just choose to be mature as an act of our own will. No, it requires the grace of God and the empowerment of the Spirit. But it certainly doesn't let us off the hook; we are partly responsible for our own spiritual growth, so we should get on with it.

The Father has given every single redeemed saint the ability (by His Spirit) to desire progress. We are to move from just being Children of God to become Sons of God. He will do His work while we do ours. Thankfully He does most of it for us, but we certainly are required to buckle under and discipline our lives. There is a human side to the pressing on towards spiritual maturity, and that is what the writer to the Hebrews is trying to get across.

In the epistle he's focussing on the need for the Jews to let go of the "shadows and types", the symbolism used in the temple, feasts, etc and to see the "real" as portrayed in Jesus the Messiah. But for us in the New Covenant today we can extend this call to let go of the infantile stage of growth, and to now embark on a very real walking with Christ.

Further to all this is another wonderful insight about this word "*leaving*" (6:1). The word has the connotation of deliberately separated yourself from something infantile and no longer necessary, in order to then advance to something better (meaning, more mature). Now this "leaving" doesn't mean you dismiss or stop believing the elementary and basic teachings of Scripture. Of course not! They are still vitally important, but they are only foundational. There is more, much more which is important and needs our attention, just like we move from kindergarten, to primary school, onto high school, college, university, etc.

In the spiritual life of a believer there will always be higher endeavours to attain. This is what some writers have called "Christ-likeness" but really what the Church has always called Sanctification. Now that's a whole new study in itself but simply put it starts when we place our faith in Christ's work at the Cross and keep our attention on Him thereafter. We set our eyes on Jesus and keep on going.

This is a process that the Father desires for us, the Son prays for us, and the Spirit enables us to complete. Our part in this sanctification is to "press on" (6:1). Spiritual growth doesn't come by our self-striving and self-effort but by the cooperation we give to God to willingly fulfil His will. If we limit our co-operation with Him then we should expect to "reap what we've sown".

An old adage says **"The new birth only takes a moment, but the growth of a saint will take a lifetime."**

We should note that our spiritual progress toward maturity is both expected by God and commanded by Him. The writer of Hebrews repeatedly alludes to the idea of "perfection" as accomplishing or reaching God's intended goal for His children. How sad then to find that many young converts today hardly ever hear a message on this magnificent theme. They therefore don't expect it to be neither achievable nor overly important. Even more "mature" believers tend to dismiss it somewhat and relegate the idea to the sidelines as something for the more "spiritual" or "devout" in the church.

If in the natural realm Growth is proof of life, then Death is proof that life isn't present. Does that fit your spiritual experience? Are you going on for Christ? Do you endeavour to reach for perfection? Is your goal the very highest for Him? Are we aiming for nothing less than the most excellent life of faith? Anything less is simply a safe way out; anything more is surely worthy of our full attention.

Peter McArthur

True Looking



Peter McArthur

Proverbs 4:25-27 (NASB)

- *Let your eyes look directly ahead and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; turn your foot from evil.*

Hebrews 12:2 (NASB)

- *Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Christians need to have a CLEAR OBJECTIVE. Sadly it's too obvious in today's society that many believers who claim to be "led of the Spirit" live their daily lives without any discernment, without understanding the grander purposes of the Father, and who are either just waiting for the Messiah to return, or to die and go off to enjoy heaven. The direction of our spiritual gaze is VERY important for our spiritual growth and development. Scripture gives many warnings about the hazards we face when we look at the wrong thing, take the wrong direction, admire the wrong person, get jealous about the wrong situation, etc.

So let's spend a little time delving into some precious truths about the dangers of wayward looking. Here are some "lookings" we should try to avoid, as much as possible.

- The **backward** look
- The looking **around**
- The **short-sighted** look
- The **self-ward** look
- The **inward** look

Instead of these earth-bound lookings, we can and perhaps, should learn to cultivate this:

- The **upward** look (toward the heavenlies).
-

The BACKWARD look

Psalm 78:40-41

How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert. Again and again they tempted God and pained the Holy One of Israel.

- Israel spoiled the whole course of their natural and even spiritual objectives for 40 years. So it was that others actually received their blessings, all because they kept looking back to how life was in Egypt.
-

The looking AROUND

Numbers 13:33

There also we saw the Nephilim and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.

- The spies in the land only saw themselves as grasshoppers and the enemy as giants. That mental image robbed them of their inheritance and so it was given to others. What an awful price to pay.

Matthew 14:30

But seeing the wind he became frightened and beginning to sink, he cried out "Lord save me!"

- Outward circumstances took Peter off balance when he focussed on the stormy conditions. What might've happened if he didn't; just imagine it! He would've actually kept on walking with Jesus on the water! Maybe, just maybe the rest of the disciples might've got out of the boat and started walking as well.
-

The SHORT-SIGHTED look

2 Corinthians 10:7

You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's so also are we.

- Being spiritually short-sighted leads to a narrow horizon. It can actually lead you to NOT want more! You end up being content with only what you can see. The word "looking" is *blepo* and it means to "observe with (wrong) desire and longing".
-

The SELF-WARD look

Philippians 2:4

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others.

- Don't be governed by what's happening only to you. The principle of spiritual progress is to "forget self". The Kingdom is more important than "You". The Body is more than "Me". Sadly today we see many "Christian" songs reflect a Me-My-I mentality.
-

The INWARD look

Romans 7:18

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

- Introspection (worrying and fretting) of the soul is the opposite of TRUE FAITH because it tends to deny God's ability to act and cause change.

Psalms 25:15

My eyes are continually toward YHWH for He will pluck my feet out of the net.

- This text is the Scriptural antidote to introspection and self-centredness. Christianity is a religion of DEPENDENCE on God's faithfulness. We should learn to cultivate this as a spiritual habit, a habitual looking away to the Father. Easier said than done of course, but we can do it.
-

Now we come to the good and very necessary part. This is the TRUE looking!

The UPWARD look

Genesis 15:5

And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

- Abram kept "looking up" at the stars and hence he kept moving spiritually. This was his FIRST looking so to speak.

Genesis 22:17

I will greatly bless you and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

- His SECOND insight was in reference to both the stars and the sand. A second time YHWH enforces Abraham's destiny for him and his seed. He had learnt the earlier way of looking and now was rewarded with further truth. There's a principle for us in this.

For any momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- Whatever earth throws at us is NOTHING compared to the glory yet to come. Practice keeping the ETERNAL in view!

So to re-cap all this we come to some wonderful insights and encouragements. We find these in the Letter to the Hebrews. It's interesting to note that the word "Hebrew" means those in transition! The letter encourages us to press on and keep focussed on **eternal things** as our goal. Practice living with Eternity in mind. The epistle also shows that **Christ is our great example** and proof that the goal can be reached. It's not out of reach at all, but of course only because of grace.

Jesus has gone this very same way. He kept focused, had a clear objective and has gone the whole way. We do not walk alone on this journey! Jesus said He would never leave nor forsake us! Not only that, **He has already arrived** at the final destination of glorious resurrection life. He has already done it all for us, and because **He was faithful and accomplished what the Father gave Him to do**, He gives us great confidence that the goal can be attained and the eternal prize finally received. The Jewish people have a saying:

"To grow in faith we need to know,
Where we **came** from,
Where we are **going**,
And who we **are**."

In other words if we have no sense of purpose and destiny we end being "soul like" which in the original Greek actually means to be "beast like". We are not like that; we have been seeded from above – John 3:3. Our Christian walk involves a "looking" that gradually transforms us (not "changes" us) so we can more fully understand the fullness of salvation. It's a kind of progressive unfolding awareness about the central theme of Scripture which involves three things: **God's Purpose. God's Process. God's Timing.**

Scripture is full of those who have glimpsed God's eternal purpose and kept their focus. They needed patience, and had to suffer trials. Paul also saw this and kept his focus on the ultimate purpose of the Father's will. Near the end of his life his one great burden was to instruct the saints about God's Great Ultimate Purpose - "**to bring many sons to glory**" (Hebrews 2:10). I normally don't like paraphrases of the Bible but in this case J.B. Phillips makes a very clear point. "**The whole of creation is on tip toe to see the wonderful sight of God's sons coming into their inheritance**" (Romans 8:19). What a thought!

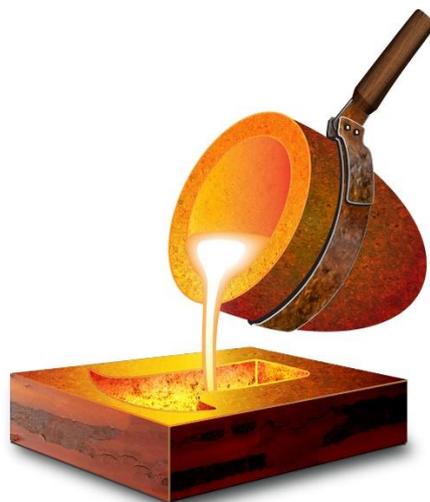
So may we conclude with a quote from one of my favourite Christian writers, Theodore Austin-Sparks.

- "**There is a goal and there is a prize. We have been called with one high purpose - a purpose so great that the Holy Spirit has considered it worthwhile to fill the whole Bible with the truth of it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize: it is just brimful of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose indeed.**"

So brothers and sisters let us remember this one thing:

**We're living for God. We have one objective, and that's to conform to Jesus Christ.
Compared to that, there's nothing else that really counts!**

The Place of Moulding



Peter McArthur

Moulding (or **molding** if you're American) is a method of manufacturing to shape a liquid or some pliable raw material using a frame (rigid or rubber) called a mould or matrix. Think of a cake mixture, or a child's plaster of Paris (gypsum plaster) to make a toy figure. Anything really, from a piece of pottery, to a ceiling decoration, or a child's fantasy figure. You know the thing I'm sure; see below.



Well there's an interesting text in 2 Chronicles 4:16-17 that has a spiritual application.

"The pails, the shovels, the forks and all its utensils, Hiram-abi made of polished bronze for King Solomon for the house of YHWH. On the plain of the Jordan the king cast them in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah."

Here we have a principle. Most pastors and Bible teachers teach out of a "mould", something they've read about in a book, heard at a conference, or which has been passed on from pastor to pastor. However there's a need now for what we might call "teachers of revelation" (see my article [here](#) on that). Such teachers will only teach the "pure" rather than second-hand revelation, or hand-me-down tradition.

Now here is where the above text comes into focus. Note where the moulding took place – on the **plain**. The word in Hebrew is *kikkar* (H3603) and means a round, a round district, a round loaf, a round weight. That word itself is derived from another word *karar* (H3769) meaning to dance, to whirl around as in a circle. It's used in 2 Samuel 6:14 **"And David was dancing before YHWH with all his might."** David was whirling about!

The plain referred to is the “**plain of the (river) Jordan**” (2 Chron 4:17). Biblical symbolism or typology shows us that the river “Jordan” signifies “death to self”. That word has the meaning of “descend” and that’s why in baptism you go down into the waters (of the Jordan) to die to self! The meaning we can draw from all this is that True Spirituality born of the Holy Spirit and not from man’s tradition will “dance” in rejoicing at the prospect of dying-to-self. I wonder how many of us truly rejoiced at our water baptism!

You may have read stories of seemingly irrational saints who acted rather strangely, who rejoiced over the oddest things, and who didn’t seem to act sensibly at all. They were (and perhaps still are) viewed as “other wordly”. Jesus had something to say about that kind of person.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Matt 5:39-44).

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. (Luke 6:22-13).

And look how the Saviour acted even while enduring the horrors of crucifixion: “**Father forgive them for they know not what they do**” (Luke 23:34).

This seems all irrational and doesn’t make any sense to the human, wordly mindset.

There’s a tradition about Saint Paul that when he was taken to his place of execution he ran to meet his executioners and embraced them. Strange indeed if you’re not a someone who is soon going to meet his Lord. Paul could’ve only acted like that (if the story is true) because all his life he had practised dying-to-self over and over in the little things, so that when the big occasion came, he was ready and able to do it. He had been moulded.

Now note in the story from 2 Chronicles that it was Hiram-abi the anointed craftsman who chose the place for the moulding. Jesus our great Moulder has also chosen the place for us as His spiritual vessels to be moulded. Why then do we kick against the work of God? We can talk a lot about dying-to-self as something we should do, but then on the other hand we fight against having to actually do it! Well at least that’s my own experience of it.

We’ve already mentioned that the moulding of the vessels took place “on the plain”. But note where on the plain; between two cities, one called Zeredah and the other Succoth. The actual Hebrew reads *Zaredathah* not Zeredah. Nevertheless the meaning behind the word is “change of dominion”.

The place where dominion changes (for believers) is the Cross, a dying-to-self where the dominion of Satan’s kingdom gives way to the kingdom of God. Interestingly enough another possible meaning behind Zeredah is “ambush” (see [here](#)). Satan’s plan was to get rid Jesus by killing Him on the Cross, but it was at the Cross where that plan was ambushed. Interesting!

So we find a wonderful truth hidden in this story. If we take Zeredah to figuratively mean “a change of dominion”, for Christians that is represented by Passover/the Cross/Death to self. And if we take Succoth to mean “Booths/Tents/Tabernacles” (Succoth is the Feast of Tabernacles), the great moulding of the holy vessels (believers) takes place somewhere between Passover and Succoth, between the Cross and the Tabernacle = between our salvation and our maturing.

Are you following this? The text says it all happens “between Succoth and Zeredah”. We are spiritually moulded between our own Passover experience (death to self = salvation) and our own

experience of residing and resting that's found in a personal Tabernacle encounter. Between these two (• death to self and, rest) we are moulded by the Divine Craftsman to conform to the image He alone purposes. It takes time, a lot of time, and many testings to arrive just where the Father wants us – conformity to His pattern for us – Jesus!

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Rms 8:29).

And it's not just an individual thing, but a corporate one too.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

Now between Zeredah and Succoth (both different sides of the Jordan) there was a city called Adam where Joshua parted the waters (Joshua 3:16). And interestingly enough the word "adam" refers to "red earth or clay" from which the first Adam was formed (Gen 2:7) so there's a word play between "adam" and "ground/earth".

The words "clay" and "ground" in 2 Chronicles 4 are based on other words meaning "*to grow firm, to cleave fast, to be compact*" (H4568 and H5666).

To take the imagery we're looking at in 2 Chronicles 4:16-17 we can see that our Adam-nature has to be re-shaped by a moulding that happens in between our initial Passover experience (salvation) and our Tabernacles encounter (maturity). For most of us this will be quite a long time, just as in the natural Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles there's a very long time gap. The Father has shown us such things in the natural Feasts He inaugurated with Israel, and the spiritual applications for us as Christians today. The Feasts of God always point to deeper spiritual realities.

This might seem a little drawn-out for you but I hope not "flaky". I am trying to express a truth and divine principle here and words do get in the way!

To sum up: We are being moulded and re-shaped. The end of our re-shaping should see us come to a place where we are firm and compact, steadfast and cleaving to the Father's purpose – to be more like His Son Jesus.

Now should we think this is simply a lesson for the development of our own personal Character/Inner Man, let us remember it's also about the wider Body of Christ. There is too much "self" in today's church (just look at some of the wording of modern Christian songs). Also too many sermons on what's beneficial for the individual. Being a follower of Jesus is greater than US getting blessed more, and MY needs met, or a PERSONAL calling. It's about the Body of Christ and the maturing of our joint ministries that will equip the brethren for service. "**Until we all attain to the unity of the faith**" (Eph 4:13).

Let us therefore allow the Holy Spirit to re-mould us just the way the Father has purposed, to be more like His wonderful Son!

Peter McArthur

Four Prayer Challenges

4 Four Prayer Challenges

Peter McArthur

Prayer - that vast subject that is so much written about, preached about, and talked about, but so little of it actually done! So I wanted to share some thoughts on four points to prayer that I have found very helpful, maybe not ones that are generally preached on or written about.

The first thing I would like to say that as Christians we often get confused about just what is "prayer", and part of this is due to our taking on board so many ideas and opinions then welding them all together and eventually finding we get tired with prayer. It seems hard, inconvenient, and even boring at times.

So let's try to get some refreshment into our understanding of prayer. What you might find helpful is that there's a distinction between prayer, and what we call intercession. Prayer is general. Intercession is specific. If we can appreciate the difference it will help enormously, especially in a group prayer time when we gather to "intercede" and end up having to say "Amen" to a VERY wide range of prayer topics.

If you want to "pray" for all sorts of issues (someone's health, a marriage, something going on in your church, etc) that's fine - but just realize that it's a bit like a shotgun approach. A lot of ammunition scattered very broadly that may not hit the target.

Intercession however is quite specific and targetted. It is focussed, and keeps the focus going. Intercessory corporate prayer may possibly just have ONE subject for the prayer team (revival perhaps or someone's salvation). Those praying stay on the subject and press through. It takes discipline both personally and corporately to achieve this, but there are very often distinct answers to this kind of prayer - often more so than a general "prayer time" when the answers are frankly quite thin on the ground.

It's not that the Father answers one kind of prayer over the other, but there is a point to staying on target and not wandering from this subject to that subject and back again. Really, both our prayer times and intercessions should be birthed from heaven's throne not from what the team leader/pastor etc thinks is a good subject to pray about this week.

So here are four challenges to prayer that you might find helpful. If they don't scratch where you're itching, that's fine. I'm simply putting this forward as suggestions to help us get a little more encouraged in our prayer life.

1. Measured Prayer. This kind of prayer is when you take time and pay attention to what you're praying. So often Spirit-filled believers just jump in to prayer without first asking "what has heaven got to say?".

Ever heard someone pray a rapid excitable prayer and get things mixed up? Like when someone says "Father we just thank you for that you died on the cross for us that you shed your blood etc". The Father didn't do that, the Son did! But the person (sadly sometimes a Pastor) just flows on in the prayer without realizing he's mixed-up about Who did what. If you asked him if he believes the Father died for our sins, he would straight away declare "of course not, Jesus did". But his confusing prayer is trotted out as he fires away running all sorts of Biblical themes together without really paying attention to what he's saying. Sorry if this sounds harsh, but it's quite common. You'd be surprised. If we think prayer is important, we should be diligent and serious about its content.

Measured prayer can be summarised like this:

- It definitely doesn't mean "ritual" praying or cold words.
- But it does mean a kind of "deliberate" use of Spirit-led words and phrases.
- Think about the words you pray; search the Spirit for just what to say.
- Be willing to move out of the box of the usual topics or phrases we all use.
- There's a wonderful saying, "The prayer that doesn't move your heart probably doesn't move God's either".
- This saying is true of extemporary prayer, but also fits "measured" praying.
- Try it!
- Methodists were called that because they had METHOD without the dead ritual of it. They didn't ignore the moving of the Spirit, but were still ordered.

2. Next we take a look at "Inclining". This is when we take note and pay close attention to what is actually being prayed, not simply listening to someone. Inclining is when you "lean into" the prayers as it were. We see this attitude in Joshua 24:23. "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to YHWH the God of Israel."

- Read too Psa 78:1 / Psa 119:36 ("Incline" in Hebrew means *to bend to it, extend into, stretch out*). Just like a person intently leaning forward in a lecture to take hold of the teaching. A person only does this when they're captivated by what's being said.
- Body language shows you're interested in the subject (has a Biblical truth to it).
- Link "onto" the words; find a balance between the truth of the words and your imagination, but DO NOT let your imagination run free. Rely on the Holy Spirit, not you!
- Listen to God before you pray (this is foremost a recognition of dependence on God). Don't rush into prayer, WAIT to hear what Heaven has got to say first.

3. Don't ask the Father for anything, instead speak of His attributes!

- Today's society focuses on self too much ("selfies / you're worth it").
- This has crept into many of our so-called "worship" songs (worship is telling the Father how great His Son is) but a lot of songs have the focus still on "us" - "Lord I want more of you" / "Refresh **ME**" / "Move amongst **US** oh God". Check it out next Sunday it might surprise you.
- Learn the difference between WHEN to focus on our needs, and WHEN to focus on Him.
- Put aside (for a season) the use of words like "my", "me" and "I" (unless urgent).
- Try this for a week or two - see what difference it makes, it may startle you!

I once asked the congregation to NOT ask for anything at all in their prayers for a week, and to come back the following Sunday and share what had happened. The outcome was quite remarkable. At first people found it hard to adjust to not ask, but after a couple of days it clicked - they spent time telling God how wonderful and gracious He was.

For most of the people there were substantial changes in their lives, and some were very dramatic. Long held issues of regret, spite towards others, even some addictions, were dealt with - whereas I spent many hours of counselling without getting far at all in helping them. Though perhaps that reflects more on my lack of counselling ability!

4. His purposes should be acknowledged foremost.

There's a marked difference between the Plan of God and the Purpose of God. The former is often preached in Bible-believing churches. It is about Jesus' death and the sin penalty paid by His blood, about forgiveness, salvation and acceptance by the Father. All the Gospel things we know so well.

However, while the Plan is well known and mentioned, the Purpose isn't so commonly taught. Salvation is the PLAN of God, but it obviously isn't the "everything" of God. The PURPOSE is about the maturing of the saints, about the grander perspective the Father has for us beyond salvation. It's summed up in the awesome words "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10).

Read Ephesians slowly and intently - and hold on for a wonderful revelation ride! The letter is all about the Purpose, the grandeur of the event, the predestined glory yet to come, the astonishing intention of God for us - "according to His purpose" (Eph 1:11).

Just imagine how our spiritual life would change if we relished the PURPOSES of God in prayer, if we rejoiced in what is to come, and praised Him for the greater unseen things He's prepared for us! Not just "heaven" and our wanting to enjoy it, but the issues of full adoption (Eph 1:5), the administration of the mystery (3:9), the ability to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth (3:18), and even the amazing being "filled up to all the fullness of God" (3:19).

These are grand and magnificent things that await us. Let's incorporate them into our daily prayers and "keep our eyes on things above" (Col 3:1-2). This will make our prayers rich beyond understanding!

- The bigger, grander things are the more important.
- One of the great themes of the NT is "Perfection" (Jhn 17:23 / 2 Cor 13:9 / Col 4:12).
- This can be translated as "Completion" or "Maturity".
- That Christ might formed within us (2 Cor 4:16 / Gal 4:19).

- Father's purpose for us is to be mature, to no longer be children but Sons (Rms 8:28-29).
- Pray specifically for personal and corporate Maturity, Fullness, Wisdom, the Mind of Christ.

So let's press on, willing to be challenged, and to honour prayer as more than just asking and wanting. There is of course a place for that, but you will find as you grow older and wiser in the things of God your attention swings away from the earth realm and you'll focus more on the wonder and glory purposed for us by the Father.

I hope these words by John Bunyan may help keep the focus.

**“When you pray let your heart be without words,
rather than your words without heart”**

Peter McArthur

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“Wisdom is a tree of life to
those who take hold of her”

Proverbs 3: 18