



The G.E.M.

Volume 5 Edition 9

The Grace Electronic Magazine

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WALK IN PRAYER

It is that time of year again. When malls are filled with decorations, lights, and carols fill the air. A time when families come together to give gifts and share a fancy meal. For many in the world it is simply a time of goodwill, giving gifts and money to those we love or are less fortunate. But amidst all this giving, one needs to make sure we do not miss the real meaning and reason behind the season. The birth of Christ over two thousand years ago.

So, in this final edition of *The G.E.M.* for 2011, we look at what effective prayer is in a short study on a few verses from James (see the main article on page 3)

Having finished with our Bible study basics in the last edition, we begin a new series called *Hymn Stories* which looks at some of the stories behind some of the great hymns we have all grown to love. This month we begin with many people's favourite hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*.

In *Bible Basics* we continue with the minor prophets and look at the lesser known book of Zephaniah. While in *Lesser Known Heroes of the Bible* we look at the life of Abiathar. There is the usual *Bible Library Card* to cut out and collect, as well as the ever popular Crossword and colouring picture for the kids on the *Back Page*.

Finally, even though we are yet to finish 2011, be sure to start your planning for next year. Contact us today with any enquiries or requests you may have for small group and children's ministry resources for the new term.

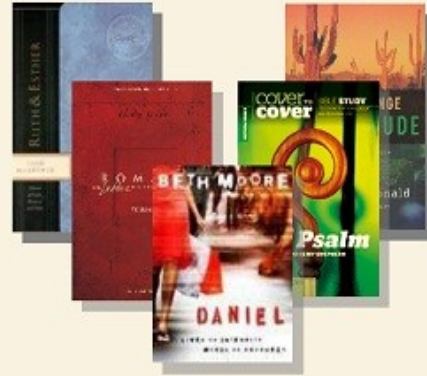
Until next time, we pray that you will have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful new year celebration. So sit back, relax in the summer sun, and enjoy this edition of *The G.E.M.*

Blessings,
Glyn and Linda. †

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

PREPARE FOR 2012

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BIBLE BASICS

Zephaniah

The Book of Universal Judgement

Where the prophet Habakkuk looked into the present situation of evil in the lives of believers, the prophet Zephaniah looked forward to a day when God will act dramatically and prove to mankind once and for all that He is the true and just judge of all.

Author & Date: Zephaniah was a descendant of the godly king Hezekiah and lived during the reign of king Josiah (639-609BC).

In the book, Zephaniah paints a bleak picture of the widespread idolatry of the nation of Judah. Therefore it is believed that this book was written sometime during the early years of Josiah's reign as it was in 621 BC that Josiah led a religious revival that removed all the idols from the nation.

The Message: The message of the book is simple – God is a God of judgement. Sometime in the future, God will step into life as man knows it, and judge all peoples and nations. This is referred to as the great “Day of the Lord.” However, Zephaniah also shows that even though a final date of judgement is coming, God will still judge people along the way.

Structure: The book follows the following basic structure:

Chapters

Judgement on Judah	1
Judgement on the Nations	2
Jerusalem's Future	3
Near Judgement	vv1-7
Eternal Kingdom	vv8-20

Did you Know? The name Zephaniah means “hidden of God”.

The phrase, “The Day of the Lord” is mentioned seven times throughout the prophecy of the coming judgement.

In John 4:21 when Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman, His declaration was that a time was coming when the location of worship was not important but rather the attitude of the heart (Jesus was referring back to Zephaniah's prophecy (see 2:11).)

Value for Today: As we read the book today, one is often horrified at all the negative announcements, threats, and wrath. To many modern believers God is a God of love and judgement is often overlooked.

However, it is through God's judgement on those who persecute His people, and His disciplining those He loves, that His love shows through the strongest. Like a father disciplines his children to make them better people, so God does the same for His children.

The book does not end with the doom and gloom, but with singing and rejoicing. Let us therefore shift our focus on seeing God as judge in a negative way, but rather rejoice that through it He is showing His love for us. †

HYMN STORIES

Great is Thy Faithfulness Lamentations 3:22

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm was born in a humble log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, on July 29, 1866. Without the benefit of high school or advanced training, he began his career as a school teacher at the age of sixteen in the same country school house where he had received his elementary training. When he was twenty-one, he became the associate editor of his home town weekly newspaper, *The Franklin Favorite*. Six years later he accepted Christ as personal Saviour during a revival meeting conducted in Franklin by Dr HC Morrison. At Dr Morrison's invitation Chisholm moved to Louisville to become office editor and business manager of Morrison's publication, the *Pentecostal Herald*. Later Chisholm was ordained to the Methodist ministry but was forced to resign after a brief pastorate because of poor health. After 1909 he became a life insurance agent in Winona Lake and later in Vineland, New Jersey. Thomas Chisholm retired in 1953 and spent his remaining years at the Methodist Home for the Aged, Ocean Grove, New Jersey.

Mr Chisholm wrote more than 1200 poems, many of which have appeared frequently in such religious periodicals as the Sunday School Times, Alliance Weekly and others. A number of those poems have become prominent hymn texts.

In a letter dated 1941, Mr Chisholm writes, “My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unflinching faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.”

In 1923 Mr Chisholm sent several of his poems to the Rev. WM Runyan, a musician associated with the Moody Bible Institute and an editor with the Hope Publishing Company until his death July 29, 1957.

This hymn was the favourite of the late Dr Will Houghton, former beloved president of the Moody Bible Institute. It has since been an all time favourite with students at the school and as a result its usefulness has spread to evangelical churches everywhere. Bev Shea states that this hymn was first introduced to audiences in Great Britain in 1954 by the Billy Graham Crusades and has since been a favourite there as well.

While many hymns are born out of a particular dramatic experience, this hymn was simply the result of the author's “morning by morning realization of God's personal faithfulness.”

Thomas Chisholm is also the author of the hymn “Living for Jesus”.

Quoted from Osbeck, Kenneth W. (1982). *101 Hymn Stories*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications. †

LESSER KNOWN HEROES OF THE BIBLE

ABIATHAR

Personal name meaning “father of abundance.” Son of Ahimelech and the eleventh high priest in succession from Aaron from the line of Eli.

He survived the slaughter of the priests at Nob and fled to David, hiding in the cave of Adullam from King Saul (1 Samuel 22). Having escaped with the Ephod, Abiathar became the high priest and chief counsellor for David (a Samuel 23:6).

Repeatedly he inquired of the Lord for David (1 Samuel 23:9; 30:7; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19). Abiathar shared with Zadok the responsibility of taking the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:11-12; 2 Samuel 15:24).

While Abiathar remained faithful to David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15), he later supported Adonijah as successor instead of Solomon (1 Kings 1:7). Solomon deposed him from the priesthood and banished him to Anathoth, his home town, fulfilling the prophecy to Eli (1 Samuel 2:31-35). Only because of his faithful service to Solomon's father, King David, was he spared the death penalty (1 Kings 2:26-27).

Next Month: Johanan.

Quoted from Butler, Trent C (Editor) (1991), *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers. †



CUT OUT & COLLECT

DANIEL

27

Key Idea: Time of Gentiles

Summary: History of the non-Jewish nations predicted.

Key People: Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Gabriel.

Key Places: Babylon.

Strange but True: A diet contest between vegetarians and meat eaters (1:11-16).

Four students with knowledge of the times superior to everyone else's (1:19-20).

A ghostly hand that wrote a strange message on the wall (5:5-6).

Hungry lions not eating their dinner (6:16-28).

A beast with iron teeth and bronze claws (7:7,19).

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EFFECTIVE PRAYER

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." (James 5:16b-18)

Have you ever heard anyone say that their prayers are never answered? Maybe you are even one of those people. Don't you wish that you could be like Elijah in the text above, where God hears your prayers and answers them in amazing ways? Well, your prayers can be answered in the same light Elijah's were. If you learn how to pray the way he did, then you will begin to see changes unfold in your life.

So let us look at how Elijah prayed and see what we can learn about prayer.

A Sinful Man, Yet Righteous

The first thing to notice in the verses above is that James refers to Elijah as "a man with a nature like ours." There was nothing different about Elijah's nature to ours that made him extra special to God. None of us are perfect in any way. All too often we think that we have to be a certain way in order to be able to pray and have our prayers answered.

The verses say that the prayers of a righteous man accomplishes much, and then goes on to talk about Elijah's prayers being answered, so by implication, Elijah was righteous. If that is the case, what I have just said can seem contradictory. If Elijah was a sinner like us, how could he have been righteous? How then can we be righteous?

The answer is quite simple. We too often interpret the word righteous to mean perfect, to be without sin. But that is not what the word is referring too. Instead it means to be in a right relationship with God and others. Because of what Christ did on the cross, as believers we are in a right relationship with God?

But just because we are in a right relationship with God, it does not mean we are perfect on the inside. As Paul remind us in Romans 7, there are two natures battling within us. The Spirit of God and the flesh. The point is, we are to recognise our condition that we are sinners, yet because of what Christ has done for us, God sees Christ's righteousness. Therefore we are in a right relationship with God.

In terms of our relationship with man, in Matthew 5:23 Jesus tells us that when we come before the altar and remember that there is a brother who has something against us, we are to go to our brother and make right with him, and then come back to the altar and present our offering. We are to also ensure that we live at peace and in unity with one another. When we do these things, we are making sure that we are in right relationships with our neighbours.

Effective prayer must have the right motives!

When you study the life of Elijah, you see that at all times he was in a right relationship with God and others. He always put God first and saw to the needs of others.

Therefore, though we are sinners like Elijah, we can still be righteous and be in a right relationship with God and others, and our prayers can be just as effective as Elijah's

Prayer that Accomplishes Much

In order for our prayers to be effective like Elijah's, our prayers have to fulfil seven criteria.

1) *Effective prayer has a definite object* - In 1 Kings 17-18 we see that Elijah's prayers had a definite goal in mind - God's glory. Elijah did not just pray a general prayer and tag on "Oh yes, and Lord, please do not let it rain on Israel." All too often we pray so generally for things that they become more like a habit prayer as opposed to one that deals with a particular subject.

Though there is nothing wrong in praying general prayers and remembering people in our everyday prayers, those are not the prayers that James is referring to. Like Elijah we should rather set time aside, even if only five minutes, and pray specific requests.

2) *Effective prayer must focus on the will of God* - Praying in God's will does not mean adding some tag-line on to the end of our prayers. Instead it means having the underlying attitude that God's will is to be in control. Even if we do not know the specifics of it for our lives.

The same Spirit that was at work in Elijah is at work today, illuminating things to us from God's Word that show us His will for all mankind. Things such as giving Him glory, looking out for the interest of others, praising Him, thanking Him, are all parts of His will for our lives. Our prayers are not to be self focussed, but God focussed.

3) *Effective prayer is filled with deep desire* - Elijah was jealous for God's glory. He wanted all of Israel to see and experience God's glory. When all of Israel had turned its back on God, Elijah remained faithful.

How often do we pray with desire about a subject? We seem to take a light-hearted approach to praying for our families and friends who are dealing with issues. The prayer that James is talking about comes from deep in the heart.

4) *Effective prayer must have the right motives* - This ties in very closely with the two previous components of effective prayer. Elijah always had the right motive in his prayers - God being glorified by the nation. The motive behind Elijah's desire was pure, and it was in line with the will of God.

When we pray for issues in our lives, it is so easy to become self-centered. When it seems as though your prayers not being answered? Maybe the place to start is to check your motives. Are you praying for the right reason, or are you only interested in your own happiness and comfort?

5) *Effective prayer is persevering prayer* -

Effective prayer takes time. It is so easy to become disheartened when it seems like it is taking God forever to answer your prayers. But we need to be like Elijah. He did not pray only once for rain, but seven times (1 Kings 18:43). Be patient when you pray. Do not expect God to answer you according to your timeline, because God is never in a hurry, but He is always on time.

6) *Effective prayer is active* - We need to work at our prayers. We must not treat prayer lightly. We need to think about what we are praying. If there is something that we need to do, then we must do it. We must not just say the words and then sit back and wait for God to do His part. It has been said that prayer has legs. It is something that is active.

Are you praying for something and it seems as though God is taking His time? Maybe there is something that you need to do? Maybe God is wanting you to get into action yourself so that your prayer can be answered.

7) *Effective prayer must be in faith* - Too often we take a need to God, only to then try and do it ourselves. It is a fine line to being active and responsible to do those things we should be doing, and leaving God to do all the work for us. We should not expect God to do all the work for us, but we can trust Him to guide us, to give us the words, wisdom and courage to go through the process.

Are you trusting God with your prayers? Do you believe that He can and will answer you? After all, though we do not like it, "No" is still an answer, but if our prayers have contained the previous six components, then we can accept the "No" easier

Energise Your Prayer Life

If you feel that something is lacking in your prayer life, or that God is not hearing you, then now is the time to look at your prayer life and energise it by applying the seven components.

May your prayer life become as effective as the great men of the Bible. Amen! †

To read the complete article, e-mail us today and request your free copy.

Coming to Cinemas

COURAGEOUS in Cinemas 27 January 2012

The latest movie from the creators of Fireproof! Police officers Adam Mitchell, Nathan Hayes, and their partners are brave men well-equipped to deal with hardened criminals. But when they remove their badges, they face a more daunting challenge - fatherhood.

As their children drift away from them, can these stalwarts find a way to defend and protect those nearest and dearest to them, and draw closer to God?



THE BACK PAGE

BIBLE TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Complete the verses below from the book of Zephaniah. All verses are from the NIV.

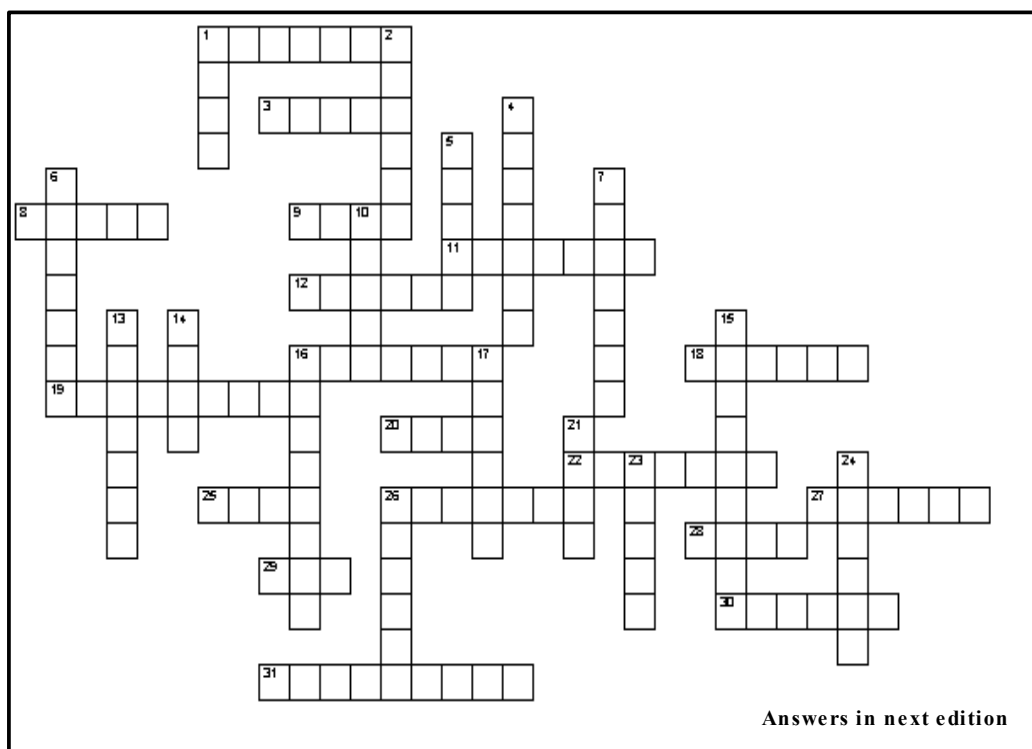
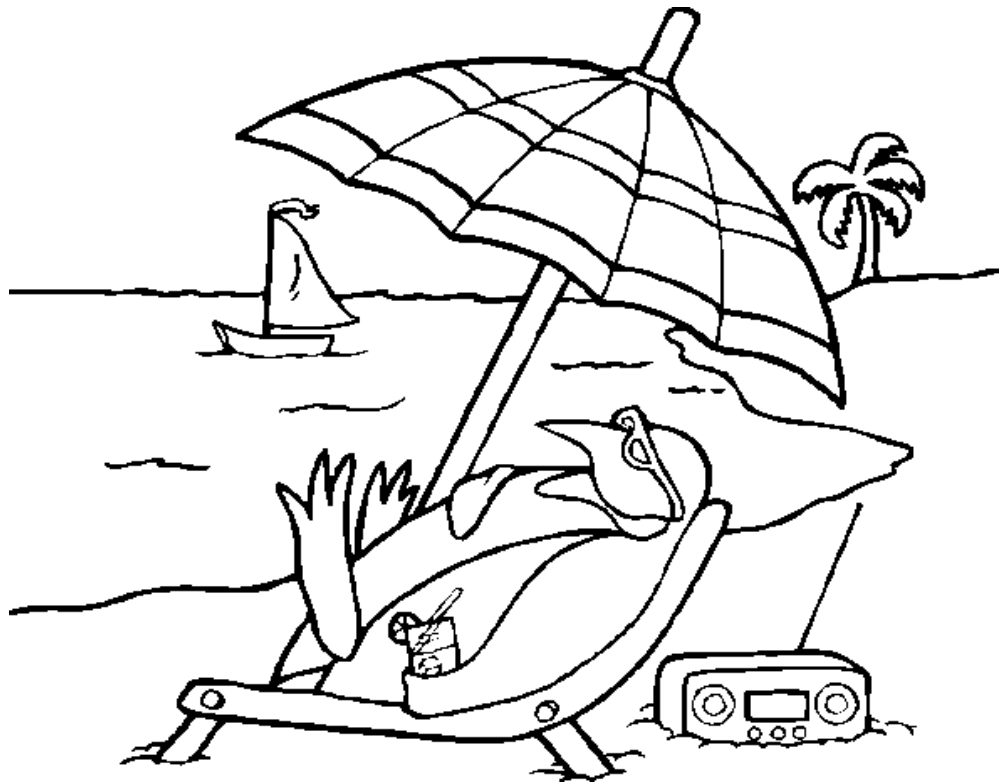
ACROSS

- 1 "He will ____ out His hand against the north..." (2:13)
- 3 "surely Moab will become like ____." (2:9)
- 8 "At that time I will search Jerusalem with ____." (1:12)
- 9 "I will sweep away everything from the ____ of the earth." (1:2)
- 11 "The Lord will be ____ to them." (2:11)
- 12 "...during the reign of ____ son of Amon king of Judah." (1:1)
- 16 "I will sweep away both men and ____." (1:3)
- 18 "The Lord your God is with you, He is ____ to save." (3:17)
- 19 "The ____ of my nation will inherit their land." (2:9)
- 20 "____, you who live in the market district..." (1:11)
- 22 "I have heard the ____ of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites." (2:8)
- 25 "The Lord their God will ____ for them." (2:7)
- 26 "I will punish the ____ and the king's sons..." (1:8)
- 27 "O ____, land of the Philistines." (2:5)
- 28 "At that time I will bring you ____." (3:20)
- 29 "____ to you who live by the sea..." (2:5)
- 30 "Neither their ____ nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath." (1:18)
- 31 "...they will plant ____ but not drink the wine." (1:13)

DOWN

- 1 "____, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel!" (3:14)
- 2 "Seek the Lord, all you ____ of the land." (2:3)
- 4 "I have left their ____ deserted., with no one passin through." (3:6)
- 5 "I will stretch out my hand against ____" (1:4)
- 6 "I have cut off ____; their strongholds are demolished." (3:6)
- 7 "The ____ of Israel will do no wrong" (3:13)
- 10 "he word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah son of ____" (1:1)
- 13 "Morning by ____ He dispenses His justice" (3:5)
- 14 "Therefore ____ for me, declares the Lord" (3:8)
- 15 "The Lord within her is ____; He does no wrong." (3:5)
- 16 "Gaza will be abandoned and ____ left in ruins." (2:4)
- 17 "be ____ before the Sovereign Lord." (1:7)
- 21 "'On that day,' declares the Lord, 'a cry will go up from the ____ Gate.'" (1:10)
- 23 "You too, O Cushites, will be slain by my ____." (2:12)
- 24 "____ together..." (2:1)
- 26 "Then will I ____ the lips of the peoples" (3:9)

COLOUR ME IN



Answers in next edition

Wind 11, Gain 13, Strength 14, Faith 19, Tablets 22, Laugh 24, Prophet 26, Feared 28, Temple 29, Earth 31, Rock 23, Builds 25, Honor 27, Stolen 30, Horses 32, Prayer 33, Eternal Down: 2, Idol 3, Strife 4, Kings 5, Stones 7, Look 10.
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 Last Month's Answers

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