

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to another issue of Young Precious Seed. I hope you find it as interesting as I did as I edited the articles. In this issue, we have come to the end of the series on the dispensations. I hope that you have found it interesting, thought provoking and helpful. My thanks to the author who wishes to remain anonymous.

I suggest that you read the latest article by Eric Baijal. It is challenging to be reminded that we cannot make real progress in the Christian life if we are not actively involved in the fellowship of a biblical New Testament church.

I have been asked to remind you of the Precious Seed mobile app. These days most of us access a significant amount of information through our phones. Whatever society's view of the 'smart phone' is, it has become a key tool in many spheres of life. So, here's my point, do you access *Precious Seed* through our app. It's free to download and easy to use. You can read the magazine, listen to articles in audio, go to our website, search for an article or order a book through our online shop. In addition, you could use the daily reading plan, read the Bible or keep your journal of what you are learning each day. It's worth a look.

Until the next issue, every blessing,
Stephen Baker



Edited by
STEPHEN BAKER

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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed*, designed for those young in the faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

Paul's I am Series

BY ANDREW DUTTON, NORWICH, ENGLAND



'I am glad', Rom. 16. 19

'For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil', Rom. 16. 19'.

'I am glad' is a familiar expression, usually linked with a pleasing circumstance. It might be used trivially in response to a bright sunny day or said of much more significant events such as exam success, a new job or other notable experiences that give cause for celebration.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines glad as 'happy about something or grateful for it'. Therefore, it seems to be an emotion dependent on situation. Is this the case for Paul as he states, 'I am glad'?

We're going to look at Paul's circumstances in Romans chapter 16 verse 19 and then look at some lessons from this. But first, let's consider the use of the word in the New Testament.

Gladness in the New Testament – *chairō*

The King James Version translates the Greek word *chairō*, Rom.16. 19, into 'I am glad'. According to my mobile e-sword app, after a search by the Strong's number for *chairō* (G5463), there are sixty-eight verses containing this word. Most of the occurrences are translated 'rejoice', 'hail', 'joy', or 'glad'. The ESV uses 'I rejoice' in the Romans passage that we are considering.

Whilst it's not possible to look at all these references here, a few may help us understand the depth of meaning behind the word.

- 'Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord', John 20. 20. After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, this meeting with Him must have been an amazing experience for the disciples.
- 'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name', Acts 5. 41. This was a circumstance that caused rejoicing; it was when the apostles were beaten and 'commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus', v. 40. Persecution and opposition led to gladness.
- 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing', 2 Cor. 6. 10 NKJV, and 'Rejoice in the Lord always', Phil. 4. 4 NKJV, indicate that there is a permanent state of rejoicing for the believer. It is a rejoicing that arises despite suffering and in all circumstances. Many believers experience times of sorrow and pressure yet can rejoice in the promises of God and blessings in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gladness in Romans chapter 16

Within the concluding section of Paul's letter to the Roman believers, he warns them of false teachers, Rom. 16. 17-20. The Epistle has unfolded the doctrine of the gospel methodically, which 'ye have learned', v. 17. They are an example to us; it would be a great thing to 'learn' and understand the doctrine and teaching of Romans! But it was this doctrine that was being undermined by some false teachers. Paul warns the believers to 'avoid them', v. 17.

Not only had the Roman believers 'learned', but they had obeyed, v. 19. It is important that the reading and studying of God's word doesn't simply end in learning, but that it leads to obedience and full subjection.

It was the obedience of the Romans that caused Paul to say, 'I am glad therefore on your behalf'; he was rejoicing over them.

But along with his rejoicing and confidence in them, he calls the believers to be 'wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil', v. 19. 'Simple concerning evil' means innocent of evil. HENDRIKSEN says, 'they should be wise for the purpose of doing and promoting what is right and should not get "mixed up" with anything that, in God's sight, is wrong'.¹

I don't think Paul's gladness was just an emotional response of happiness. It was rejoicing, with thanksgiving, for how the believers had grown in their knowledge of, and obedience to, the word of God. The rejoicing was mixed with warning and advice to enable them to be preserved and to glorify God.

Gladness in practice

We can draw some practical lessons from our study:

- Circumstances do give cause for specific rejoicing. It's right for us to be glad when things take place that bring glory to God; salvation of an individual and a believer growing in the things of God are great examples of things to rejoice in. An emotional response is therefore expected.

• In Paul's example of Romans chapter 16, gladness isn't passive; the rejoicing was not his only response. It was mixed with actively providing warning and encouragement to help preserve the believers. When we are glad about the spiritual progress in others, we should be stimulated to provide support that leads to preservation and further growth.

• Gladness does not mean that difficulty, concern or suffering is absent. Most of the references that we have considered contain some element of difficulty or opposition.

• What should our attitude be to other believers who are going through times of difficulty and sorrow? Paul teaches that we should 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep', Rom. 12. 15.

Let us, like Paul, be glad, looking for circumstances to rejoice in with other Christians. May we see times of suffering on account of the gospel as a privilege. But with the Lord's help, regardless of situations, let us be 'always rejoicing', 2 Cor. 6. 10 NKJV.

¹ WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, New Testament Commentary - Romans, Volume 2: Chapters 9-16, The Banner of Truth, 1981, pg. 512.

Principles for Progress

BY ERIC M. BAIJAL, WICK, SCOTLAND

Attending and participating

The New Testament is clear that believers were baptized and then sought fellowship with other believers in assemblies of Christians, Acts 2. 42. However, the scriptures also teach that once added to the local church, fellowship was not a passive experience. Rather, each believer was to be active in the work of the local church.

As we will see in later articles, the local assembly has two main objectives:

1. to worship God, and
2. to witness to the saving power of His Son, 1 Pet. 2. 5-9.

Each member of the assembly has a responsibility to be active in these two areas of assembly life.

God has given each Christian a different spiritual gift or gifts, and so not every activity is open to all. For example, unless a man is a gifted teacher, he ought not to be teaching the saints. Having said this, the New Testament writers continually emphasized individual responsibility.

In Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25 we read:

‘And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching’.

The writer of this Epistle is encouraging believers to keep serving God in difficult days. The verse makes clear that believers are expected to attend the assembly gatherings. Not just the Breaking of Bread, not just the gospel meeting, but the prayer meeting before the gospel is preached, and the mid-week meeting and so on. Again, note Acts chapter 2 verse 42, where emphasis is given to the fact that the saints ‘continued steadfastly’ in the prayers. Do you only miss the assembly gatherings in extreme circumstances? Can you be relied upon to encourage others by your faithful attendance? Or are you often missing with the weakest of excuses? If we love God, we ought to be obedient to his commands.

There is, of course, the possibility that we are good meeting attenders, but not really in active fellowship with the rest of the assembly. To be in active fellowship must involve sharing responsibility. That could be practical – we will discuss financial giving in our next article – but we ought to share, as the Lord enables, in the financial commitments of the assembly, whether that is to cover heating costs, the cost of literature or gifts to the Lord’s servants. However, it is also essential to be involved in the spiritual activities of the local church. Are we making spiritual contributions? Are we adding to the worship, audibly for males, inaudibly for females, at the Breaking of Bread and other gatherings? Are you fully behind the work of evangelism in the assembly? That could be children’s work, other regular meetings or special gospel

meetings? Are you praying for the activities and inviting unsaved friends to come?

When we read 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we find that the assembly is a local expression of the church which is Christ’s body. The apostle pictures each member of the local church as if they were a body part. There are two points we should notice. First, he observes that some body parts, such as the face, are visible, and their usefulness is obvious. There are other body parts, for example internal organs, which, of course, are not seen and get no exposure. However, as you know, you might look good, but you will not get far without a heart or a brain! Paul uses that picture to teach us that even if we do not have a very public role or, perhaps, we feel invisible, our role in the assembly is vital and must be fulfilled. Second, Paul teaches that we should not be jealous of the part someone else has to play; each body part is vital and so is every member of the assembly. Elders and godly older saints can give us guidance about the role God has for us in the assembly. However, as we have previously seen, God will speak to us primarily through the reading of His word.

Practical issues to consider

1. Do I organize my life to prioritize attending the assembly gatherings?
2. Am I really in the gatherings when physically present or is my mind drifting somewhere else?
3. Am I missing meetings without any legitimate reason?
4. Do I prepare for the assembly gatherings?
5. Do I pray for them?
6. Do I give all my energy into the service of the assembly?
7. Do I play the part God has for me?
8. Am I clear about what my role is?

These are important questions to think about and answer in the presence of God.

The Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times

BY TM SE ASIA

8. SPECIAL DISPENSATION ‘And so we went toward Rome’, Acts 28. 14.

In our studies of the dispensations we have considered ways in which God, at different stages in history, has placed certain requirements upon mankind. We have seen that God’s demands have never been unreasonable, and in every dispensation there have been people who pleased Him. Nevertheless, in general, whatever test God has set, mankind has failed it.

The various dispensations roughly align with periods of history. So, for example, we can say that the dispensation of conscience ran from the fall until the flood. However, a dispensation is more accurately described not as a time period, but as an administrative system, and, as we saw with promise and law, there can be a degree of overlap between two or more administrations.

There are two historical periods in particular which do not fit neatly into too simplistic a dispensational system. These are the Acts period, and the future tribulation. Therefore, in a study of the dispensations, these two periods warrant special consideration.

The closing chapters of Acts describe in some detail Paul’s journey from Jerusalem to Rome. In a sense, that is a good analogy to summarize the whole story of Acts, which describes a theological journey from Old Testament Judaism to New Testament Christianity, from law to grace, from the gospel of the kingdom, Matt. 4. 23, to the gospel of the grace of God, Acts 20. 24. Both geographically and spiritually, the action in Acts is moving inexorably from Jerusalem to Rome.

At the beginning of Acts, Peter and the apostles continue to preach a very similar message to that which John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus had preached in the Gospels, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’, Matt. 4. 17.

Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’, Acts 2. 38.

‘Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord’, Acts 3. 19.

Here, Peter is reiterating the national offer of the kingdom to Israel. Thus, he preaches that baptism is required for **national** salvation.

To authenticate this offer, just as in the Gospels, we see the signs of the kingdom – miracles – being manifested, as well as tongues and prophecy. These signs should have proved to the Jews beyond any doubt that the testimony of the apostles was of God, Isa. 28. 11; Joel 2. 28.

Israel had rejected the offer of the kingdom once; in Acts the nation is given a second chance. Some Jews repent, and recognize Jesus as Messiah. Most do not.

In Acts, the Jews were still under the law, and many Christian Jews still observed the law, even performing sacrifices, Acts 21. 26. We see elements of the fading dispensation of law, and glimpses of the future dispensation of the kingdom, side by side.

But as Israel persistently refuses to repent, we also see elements of the dispensation of grace being introduced in Acts. God raises up Paul, giving him a special commission to both Jews and Gentiles with the message of grace.

‘And the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God’, Acts 20. 24 NKJV.

Paul always goes to the Jew first, but three times he warns that he will turn to the Gentiles if the Jews remain intransigent, Acts 13. 46; 18. 6; 28. 28.

At the end of Acts, Paul is in Gentile Rome, and it is no accident that the next book of the Bible is Romans, the fullest exposition of the gospel of grace.

Therefore, when studying Acts, we need to be especially careful to distinguish between dispensations. There are elements of law and kingdom which are not directly applicable to us today. But there are also features of grace which certainly are.

Not all of Acts is normative¹ for the church today. Many events were exceptional – unique stepping stones on the journey from the old to the new, from Jerusalem to Rome.

¹normative, definition, ‘attempting to establish or prescribe a norm’, *Wiktionary*.

A to Z of Priests – Jehoiada - 2 Chr. 22-24

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

Jehoiada the priest was a thoroughly versatile individual: childcare provider, military strategist, educator, matchmaker, clerk of works, treasurer. You name it, Jehoiada did it. He embodied Solomon's advice – 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might', Eccles. 9. 10, ESV.

Before we study Jehoiada, let's consider the historical context. After the glory days of David and Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into two independent nations. The Davidic dynasty ruled over Judah. Various kings ruled over Israel, but there was no lasting line of succession. In the mid-ninth century BC, Ahab was Israel's monarch. His wicked consort, Jezebel, introduced Baal worship to Israelite society. Look at their family tree, in the diagram.

Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, married into the royal family of Judah, clearly an 'unequal yoke', 2 Cor. 6. 14. When General Jehu exterminated Ahab's family, king Ahaziah of Judah was also assassinated, 2 Chr. 22. 9. Then, Athaliah rolled into action, v. 10 – the queen mother of Judah ruthlessly determined to eliminate all male members of the royal family so she could become undisputed ruler.

Jehosheba, a princess, was wife of Jehoiada the priest. Together, they rescued her baby nephew, an infant prince named Joash. Jehosheba stole him, 2 Kgs. 11. 2; 2 Chr. 22. 11, perhaps the only legitimate 'theft' in the Bible, to keep him safe. In this article we examine three activities of Jehoiada:

1. Hiding the heir
2. Crowning the king
3. Serving the sovereign

We observe Jehoiada's attitude towards God's

word, God's house and God's people.

This priest's priorities are always divine interests.

1) Hiding the heir

Husband and wife were 'heirs together of the grace of life', 1 Pet. 3. 7, as they cared for the royal baby. Jehoiada knew the Davidic covenant, 2 Sam. 7. 16, so he appreciated the need to protect Joash. Athaliah was operating under Satanic influence, seeking to destroy the Messianic line. DALE RALPH DAVIS memorably refers to Jehosheba as 'the lady who saved Christmas'.¹ Let's apply this preservation principle to ourselves; it is our responsibility to attend to the spiritual wellbeing of the next generation.

The house of God became a refuge for the boy whose life was endangered, 2 Chr. 22. 12, cp. Ps. 84. 3. Is the local assembly a safe place for nurturing young people today? Jehoiada assembled an alliance of loyal subjects who planned to restore the rightful king. He spoke to them, advised them and united them, as he reminded them of God's word, 2 Chr. 23. 3. In a future day, another faithful Jewish remnant will acknowledge their king as He is revealed in 'power and great glory'.

2) Crowning the king

The house of God became a joyful coronation location. The new king had the crown on his head, and the scripture in his hand, v. 11, cp. Deut. 17. 18-20, after being anointed by the priest. Although Athaliah exclaimed 'treason', she was marched out to be executed as a traitor. No violence took place in the house of God.

The people of God were party to a renewed covenant, 2 Chr. 23. 16 – they were 'the Lord's people'. Once again, they remembered the dignity and responsibility of owning His name. Similarly, we are 'not [our] own . . . bought with a price', 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.

3) Serving the sovereign

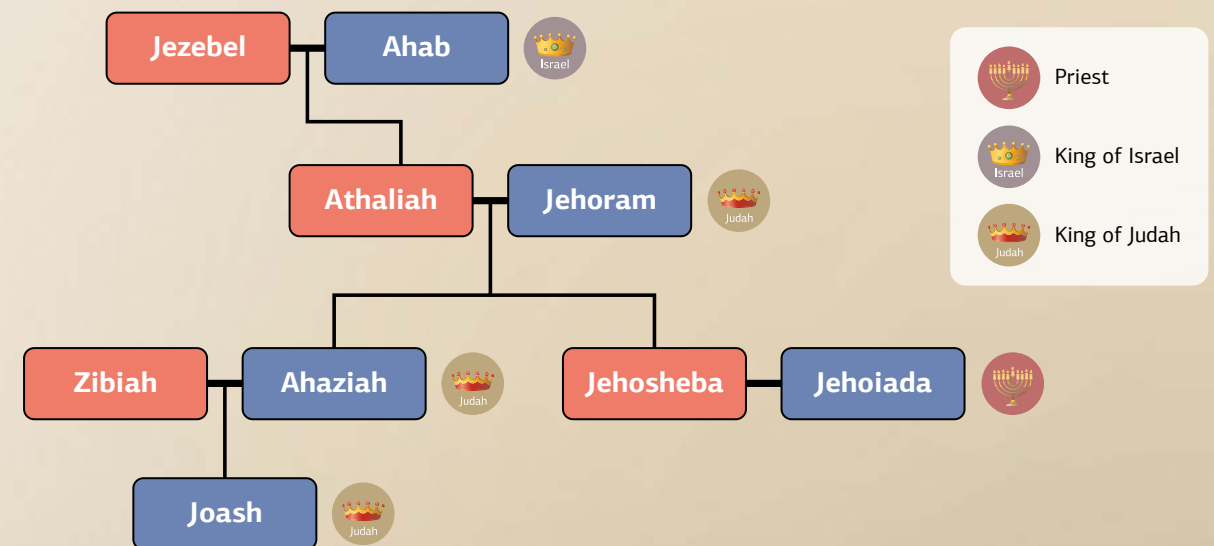
Young Joash was greatly influenced by the godly priest who had reared him. We should be challenged regarding our personal spheres of influence. Note the massive disparity in age; Jehoiada was more than eighty years older than Joash, 2 Chr. 24. 1, 15. This pair is joined by other inter-generational partnerships in scripture, like Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy, and Naomi and Ruth.

Due to Jehoiada's teaching, Joash was aware of Moses' 'atonement money' collection, Exod. 30. 16; 2 Chr. 24. 6. This reinstated tax became

an income source for the king's infrastructure programme, to repair the temple which had been ransacked by Athaliah and her followers, v. 7. When we consider construction work in the house of God, we must appraise our efforts in the local assembly, 'Let every man take heed how he buildeth', 1 Cor. 3. 10. The people of God were fully involved with temple repair, in terms of giving, 2 Chr. 24. 10, working, v. 12, and worshipping, v. 14.

Jehoiada eventually died at the age of 130. After the priest's death, Joash tragically crashed into moral and spiritual failure. However, Jehoiada's inspired epitaph was, 'He had done good in Israel', v. 16. Aside from the Lord Jesus, Acts 10. 38, only a handful of people in scripture are noted as 'doing good'. Like Jehoiada, we aspire to hear the Lord's commendation at the end of our lives, 'Well done, good and faithful servant', Matt. 25. 23.

¹ DALE RALPH DAVIS, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, Christian Focus Publications, 2011.



Let Her Alone (Part 2)

BY JONATHAN DALTON, COVENTRY, ENGLAND



Reading: John 12. 1-9a

The pouring of the ointment

By reading the complementary accounts, we discover this ointment was in an alabaster box. Implied in the words 'she brake the box', Mark 14. 3, is that of complete devotion. Once the neck of that vessel was snapped and the contents outpoured, there was no gathering of it up again for reuse. This was then applied by means of her own hair. Not only was this a respectable custom, but it highlights to us the personal and intimate nature of her worship.

It is this beautiful blend of premeditation and yet spontaneity which brings pleasure to God. We learn that true worship is not merely empty sentimentality, nor is it cold formality. Rather, to worship 'in spirit **and** in truth', is the scriptural ideal. 'The Father seeketh such to worship him', John 4. 23. How true this ought to be of our collective worship. We bring what we have gathered in private but look for liberty and leading as we offer it. Oh, that our worship may always be fresh and never become stilted or stale.

The purpose of the ointment

Spices such as these would often be used to embalm a dead body; how appropriate this was! Mary was credited with keeping this, v. 7, 'against the day of . . . [his] burying'. As we consider the wealth of her sacrifice and the testimony of our Lord concerning her, we realize that by faith Mary grasped something not only of who He was, but of what He must accomplish in Jerusalem. Christ Himself says in verse 8 that His hour was nigh at hand and He reminds them that, 'me ye have not always' and so Mary seizes the opportunity.

The sweetness of worship - her approval

'What a waste' was the murmur of the crowd; 'leave her be', the response of Christ. The derision was sharp, but the defence was sweet. Having discerned

his motives, the Lord rebukes Judas, since he cared not for the poor but for his own pocket. However, Mary's portion was the applause of heaven, for she came with sincerity and not with pretence.

Her anointing of the Lord with spikenard, 'sendeth forth the smell thereof', S. of S. 1. 12. This costly perfume, known for its volatility, had far-reaching effects. In verse 3, 'the house was filled with the odour of the ointment'. Its fragrance touched the very nostrils of God, and the people of Bethany knew that Jesus was in the house. Sweet is the thought, that the very garments they would later strip from Him, likely still bore the scent of this woman's worship.

What an encouragement to us that, although our pre-occupation with Christ has a low value in the eyes of our fellow earth dwellers, it is recognized in heaven.

God is a jealous God and desires worshippers. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve', Luke 4. 8, were the words of Christ to Satan. Notice, there is an order there: worship and then service. When the people returned from captivity in Babylon, they re-erected the altar first before rebuilding. Elijah prayed first before his short but effective life of service, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself knew thirty quiet years in full communion with His Father, before His three years in public view. Worship should therefore be the priority of every genuine child of God.

He not only desires worship but deserves it. Surely there is no cost too great when we consider that He is 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me', Gal. 2. 20. In an age that has so misconstrued the essence of worship, let us each follow the scriptural pattern, as exemplified by this dear woman.

'Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her', Matt. 26. 13.