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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to YPS May 2021. I hope that this issue finds you well. One of my privileges when compiling and editing YPS is finding new writers and reading what they send me. Last issue we had a couple of new writers, and I really enjoyed their articles – there are more to come, so watch this space. This issue I have the privilege of introducing an elderly brother who has a message that he wants you to read. As you read his article 'An Upward Look', I hope that it will encourage you, as this was the reason that he asked me if he could write to you. He is a 'brother beloved', and I have the highest respect for him. It is well worth a read.

In this issue, we have the penultimate article on career choices. If, however, there is a career that you are interested in, and we have not covered it, send me a message and we will see if we can persuade someone to write about it.

As I close, I want to leave you with a word of encouragement. If you are still at home more than you prefer, I want to ask you how you are using your time? This could be a period when you can get to know God and His word better. Paul wrote to Timothy, 'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth,' 2 Tim. 2. 15 NASB 1995. May the Lord help us to make this our focus.

Stephen Baker

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STEPHEN BAKER

Editor's Introduction
Page 1

An Upward Look
Page 2

**Paul's
I am Series**
Page 4

**A to Z of Priests –
Prophetic Priests:
Joshua**
Page 6

Career Choices
Page 8

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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An Upward Look

BY JIM ELLIOTT, HUYTON, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND



In these difficult days of the Covid 19 pandemic, it is good for the child of God to be encouraged in the Lord.

There are countless occasions in the word of God when we are encouraged to 'lift up our eyes'. Some of the most prominent characters in the scriptures do just this, and we can learn profitable spiritual lessons from them.

When we 'look up' there are at least three important lessons to be learned:

1. We take our eyes off the things of earth.
2. We acknowledge our own insufficiency.
3. We recognize that God is all-sufficient to meet our every need.

We are now going to consider a few biblical characters who 'lifted up their eyes'.

Abraham

We know from Acts chapter 7 verse 2 that 'the God of glory appeared unto our father, Abraham'. In Genesis chapter 15 verse 6 it says that 'he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness'.

So, we learn the following lessons:

1. God is the object of his faith.
2. The word of God is the ground of his faith.
3. Righteousness is the result of his faith.

Three times Abraham is called 'the friend of God' and Romans chapter 4 verse 11 says that 'he is the father of all of them that believe'.

In Genesis chapter 11, at the tower of Babel, man, in his pride and defiance, acts independently of God. However, in the next chapter, God introduces us to a man who is dependent upon Him, Abraham.

Abraham 'lifted up his eyes' on more than one occasion. In Genesis chapter 13 verse 14, the Lord said to Abraham, 'Lift up now thine eyes'. The background to this was that Abraham's nephew, Lot, made a bad choice of the land offered to him. So

that there would be no strife between the respective herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, he was given a choice of land. Therefore, in Genesis chapter 13 verse 10, we see that Lot 'lifted up his eyes' and chose all the plain of Jordan, eventually pitching his tent towards Sodom. Genesis chapter 13 verse 5 is interesting. It says that 'Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents'. As a result, he had the possibility to be a worshipper, as he had flocks and herds, which could have been sacrificed on the altar of worship. He also had tents, showing he could have been a pilgrim moving in the will of God, but, sadly, his tent was pitched toward Sodom.

The Lord told Abraham 'to lift up' his eyes in chapter 13 verses 14 to 18 when He offered him all the land, northward, southward, eastward and westward. Lot only had a limited vision, whereas Abraham had an unlimited vista because of God's generosity. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3 reminds us 'that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ'.

In chapter 18 verse 2, Abraham again 'lift up his eyes' when three men appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre as he sat in the tent door. We know two of the men were angels who visited Lot in Sodom in chapter 19. The 'other', I believe, was the Lord Himself (Abraham said, 'my Lord', v. 3) gracing Abraham and Sarah with His presence. In verse 22, it says, 'but Abraham stood yet before the Lord'. On this visit, the Lord promised a son to Sarah and revealed that judgement was to fall on Sodom.

One of the great chapters of the Bible is Genesis chapter 22. In this chapter, Abraham was told by God to take Isaac, his son, to the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering. In verse 4, it says, 'on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off'.

In verse 13, Abraham 'lifted up his eyes' and behold a ram was caught in a thicket by his horns behind him. Here we see a lovely picture of Calvary, Christ, the

obedient Lamb of God, accomplishing the Father's will. Isaac was to be received back from the dead, in a picture of the Lord Jesus as the mighty conqueror over death.

We can learn many spiritual lessons from the life of Abraham, such as his faith and obedience, and that his every resource was to be found in the God of heaven.

Isaac

Abraham is associated with the altar and worship, but Isaac is linked with the unblocking of wells. Earth had filled the wells up, so there was no refreshing water available.

This is a picture of sin in our lives which could be stopping or hindering our blessing and progress. In Genesis chapter 24, when Abraham's servant goes to find a bride for Isaac, God directs him to Rebekah. We read, Rebekah 'lifted up her eyes', v. 64, and beheld Isaac, but it also tells us that Isaac 'lifted up his eyes' and saw Rebekah approach. Here is another lovely picture of the bride and bridegroom. The Lord is the heavenly Bridegroom who will come to the clouds to claim His bride, the church, 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.

His promise is sure - He will return. The question is - are we looking for His coming?

Jacob

While Jacob had to learn many lessons in the 'school of God', we must never forget that he was a man who valued that which was spiritual. He valued the birthright and the blessing which his brother Esau rejected, Heb. 12. 16, 17.

The outstanding chapters in Jacob's life are described in Genesis chapter 28, Bethel; chapter 32, Peniel; and chapter 49, Jacob's last words to his sons, plus his demise.

Three times it is recorded that he lifts up his eyes, 31. 10, 12; 33. 1. We shall deal with chapter 33. Here we see that Jacob dreaded a meeting with his brother Esau. However, the Lord brought about reconciliation, which means to make friends after estrangement, see Rom. 5. 10, 11.

Some lessons can be learned from Genesis 28, Bethel, and Genesis 32, Peniel. In chapter 28, Jacob placed his head at night on a stone pillow and closed

his eyes to the things of the earth. While he was asleep, God showed him heavenly things: a ladder, the house of God, etc. The ladder linked heaven and earth; the cross is now that link - through the death of Christ. Bethel means 'The house of God'; we do not see here, in chapter 28, the existence of a building, but we do see the presence of God. So the house of God is where God dwells, i.e., the place of the divine presence. We can link this with 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 15 where 'the house of God' is in view and the local assembly is seen as the pillar and ground of the truth.

In the life of Jacob, we see one who raised up a number of pillars that speak of testimony. How lovely to see at the end of his life that 'Jacob worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff', Heb. 11. 21.

Joshua

The book of Joshua opens with the words of the Lord to Joshua, 'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel', Josh. 1. 2.

Joshua was to take on the mantle to lead Israel over Jordan and to conquer the Promised Land. He was to face many obstacles, not least conquering the mighty city of Jericho. And so, in chapter 5, 'he lifted up his eyes' and met up with 'the captain of the host of the Lord', w. 13-15. Joshua had to learn of the holiness, supremacy, and encouragement of the Lord. Sometimes we call these appearances of the Lord prior to His incarnation a theophany or Christophany.

Joshua may well have thought he was the leader of Israel's hosts, but God was to reassure him that he was not alone in earth's battles. God would lead the way and direct his paths.

The Lord Jesus Christ

So far, we have looked at various characters from the Old Testament who have 'lifted up their eyes'. There are many more, such as David, Daniel, Zechariah, etc. However, we now want to consider the Saviour, who does not compare with other men but contrasts with all others. For when we consider the Saviour, we look at One who came down from heaven, took flesh, became man but never ceased to be who He ever

was, the eternal Son of the eternal God. Colossians chapter 2 verse 9 says, 'for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'.

On quite a number of occasions, the Gospels record that the Lord Jesus Christ 'lifted up His eyes'. In John chapter 6, the Lord 'lifted up his eyes' at the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Here we see His wonderful **provision** turning hunger into fullness.

In John chapter 11, Lazarus dies, and the **power** of the Lord is demonstrated when He raises him from the dead.

In John chapter 17, we read the priestly **prayer** of the Saviour. He, and He alone, could say 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do', v. 4.

Also, in John chapter 4 verse 35, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the

fields; for they are white already to harvest'. When the risen Lord instructed His disciples to 'go' to all nations He assured them of His **presence**, 'and, lo, I am with you alway', Matt. 28. 19, 20.

In closing, we are exhorted to 'run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus', Heb. 12. 2.

In Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, we are taught 'if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth'.

The chorus says quite beautifully:
'Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace'.

Life: 'to me to live is Christ'

Paul identifies his continual, personal goal of life – to live Christ. He does not say that he wants to live for Christ, good though that might be, but simply to live Christ. It carries the idea of the Lord Jesus being Paul's whole object, dominating his character, or as NORMAN MELLISH puts it, 'only Christ, always Christ, ever Christ'.¹ HENDRIKSEN² refers to other references in Philippians which help explain what Paul meant by 'to live Christ': strength from Christ, 4. 13, the mind and humility of Christ, 2. 5-11, the 'knowledge of Christ', 3. 8, 'in Christ' and 'the righteousness which is of God', 3. 9 and 'to rejoice in the Lord', 3. 1.

The practical outworking of Paul 'living Christ' is seen in the verses that follow:

- 'If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour', v. 22. He was confident that remaining in life would result in fruit from his work for the Lord.
- 'To abide in the flesh is more needful for you', v. 24. Paul was looking to how he could benefit the Philippians.
- 'I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith', v. 25. Paul loved the Philippian believers and he longed for them to grow spiritually, cp. v. 9. He desired to encourage them in their 'joy of faith'.

Death: 'to die is gain'

Verse 23 explains the 'gain' of death that Paul has identified in verse 21, as 'to be with Christ; which is far better'. 'Depart' comes from an interesting Greek word, *analuō*, meaning to unloose or undo, as in a

¹ NORMAN MELLISH, *Philippians, The Mind of Christ*, Gospel Folio Press, pg. 54.

² WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN, *Philippians*, The Banner of Truth Trust, pg. 76.

³ This is a quote from Eric Hughes. I really appreciated his verse-by-verse teaching during his Friday evening Bible

tent being taken down, or a ship setting sail. I once heard it put something like this, 'it is like a ship ready to depart, straining on the anchor, ready to travel to a better place, a sunnier clime'.³ Paul says that it is 'far better' and that is because the departing would take him to 'be with Christ', v. 23. This is the 'gain' of death for the Christian and Paul longed for it.

Our perspective on life and death

It is not always possible to think and act like Paul! He was an apostle, set apart for a special work for God, and without some of the ties that legitimately concern us. This, however, is not so much about prioritizing things in life, such as family, education, or work, but about our desire and motive being aligned with the things of God. Paul's desire to remain 'in the flesh' was so that he could be of benefit to the people of God, v. 24. It was motivated by being subject to the will of God in his service for the Lord and in sacrificial love for the Philippian Christians. We can apply the same principle to our perspective on life. Whatever the circumstances God has placed us in, our desire should be to follow the example of Paul.

Therein lies a great challenge. It is a challenge that strips away motives that would benefit me. Paul desired either to be 'with Christ', or to be benefiting others according to God's will. We, in the western world, live relatively comfortably and with limited suffering. The challenge for us is to simplify our desires and ambitions. Might we, with the Lord's help and like Paul, desire to be with Christ, or to 'live Christ' in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Classes. But I remember this quote when he was speaking at the graveside of Margaret Harrison, an older sister whom I also learned from as a young believer. We can thank the Lord for older Christians that helped us when we were young; and younger Christians can look for those that will provide a godly example and teaching from the word of God that will provide an influence on their Christian lives.

Paul's I am Series

BY ANDREW DUTTON, NORWICH, ENGLAND

I am in a strait – Phil. 1. 23

'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain ... what I shall choose ... I am in a strait ... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ... nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful', Phil. 1. 21-24.

It has been said that in Bible study the context determines the meaning. This is true of the words of Paul, 'I am in a strait', Phil. 1. 23. The Greek word for 'strait' is *sunecho*, meaning 'to hold together with constraint, and would have been used to describe a narrow channel for a ship to navigate. The end of verse 23 helps to clarify the meaning, 'what I shall

choose I wot not', or, as the ESV puts it, 'Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two', w. 22, 23 ESV. Paul is torn; he just cannot decide.

Paul is weighing up a choice. We will consider the arguments from each side, before concluding with an application for a right perspective on life.

I am in a strait ... which I shall choose I cannot decide

The choice that Paul is considering in Philippians chapter 1 is that of life and death, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain', Phil. 1. 21. It reminds us, as Christians, that we ought to have a proper perspective on life and death.

A to Z of Priests – Prophetic Priests: Joshua

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

The original Joshua featured in Israel's first exodus; after they escaped from Egypt, he led them into the Promised Land. The other Joshua, who is the subject of this article, participated in Israel's second exodus, when they returned from Babylonian captivity. The magnitude of the second exodus was roughly a tenth of the first; only 50,000 people came back to Jerusalem in a 'day of small things', Zech. 4. 10. We can be encouraged that, like Joshua, even in diminished circumstances we still have opportunities to serve God and to be a 'sweet savour of Christ' to others around us.

Joshua the son of Jozadak appears in the historical narrative of Ezra, as well as in the prophetic records of Haggai and Zechariah. We will focus on two key mentions of Joshua, Zech. 3. 1-5; 6. 9-15. In the first of these passages, Joshua is a picture of ourselves as sinners cleansed by God's grace. In the second prophecy, Joshua is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the Sovereign crowned for God's glory.

1) A Cleansed Priest

During a series of nocturnal visions, the prophet Zechariah caught a glimpse of Joshua in God's presence, presumably in heaven. Priests serve God, so they ought to be prepared for interaction with God. However, the high priest decidedly was not in a suitable condition, since he was 'clothed with filthy garments', Zech. 3. 3. This is incompatible with divine service. 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord', Isa. 52. 11. In Jewish society, the high priest should have been the best-dressed man, with his unique 'holy garments . . . for glory and for beauty', Exod. 28. 2. Instead, Joshua resembled the prodigal son in his pig-herding rags, Luke 15. 15.

Satan, as the ever-ready 'accuser of our brethren',

Rev. 12. 10, found fault with Joshua, Zech. 3. 1. What right did this defiled sinner have to stand in God's presence? However, the Lord claimed the helpless Joshua for Himself, as a 'brand plucked out of the fire', v. 2.

The Lord provided for the priest's inadequacies, 'I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee', v. 4, so God removed his guilt. Further, 'I will clothe thee with change of raiment', v. 4, so God replaced his garments. The whole episode is a powerful exhibition of divine grace, which is able both to save sinners and to restore saints. God equips us to stand in His presence and serve Him, overcoming our flaws and empowering us.

Like Joshua, we should be thankful that our sins were removed by 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world', John 1. 29. Our filthy rags have been replaced by 'the robe of righteousness', Isa. 61. 10. Along with the aged Apostle John, we praise the One who 'loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us . . . priests', Rev. 1. 5, 6. In summary, **God purifies us so that we can please Him.**

2) A Crowned Priest

The two appearances of Joshua are in sharp contrast. This second event is an enacted prophecy rather than a night vision. Here the high priest is depicting the Saviour as king-priest, rather than denoting the sinner.

We recognize the cost of this symbolic act, Zech. 6. 11, for which silver and gold were necessary raw materials. We also see the craftsmanship – presumably Josiah was the jeweller of Jerusalem who produced the crowns for Joshua's coronation,

v. 10. At this point in time, there had been no king in Judah since Nebuchadnezzar's conquest a century earlier. However, Zechariah and his divinely appointed colleagues were prepared to crown Joshua the high priest, who was engaged in the temple reconstruction project. Prophetically, Joshua foreshadowed another crowned priest who will build a temple and sit on a throne. Throughout the nation's long history, Israel had never experienced one person combining the roles of high priest and monarch. Both Melchizedek at the start of the Old Testament and Joshua at its end prefigure the coming Messiah, the One who 'shall bear the glory', Zech. 6. 13. The Lord Jesus is the royal priest who fulfils all God's purposes.

Joshua enjoyed the privilege of wearing the decorative crowns for only a few minutes. They were a temporary, symbolic adornment, swiftly committed to the temple treasure trove for safekeeping. However, as we read of this incident, we recall One who wears 'many diadems', Rev. 19. 12 ESV, the King of kings who is a priest for ever.

We keenly anticipate the arrival of a sacred sovereign, the priest and king whom Joshua faintly foreshadows. In summary, **God provides us with pictures of Christ so we can appreciate Him.**



The young believer and career choices – a cabinetmaker

BY STEVE HACKETT, NORTHAMPTON, ENGLAND



As I start to tell you about my work-life experience, there is a principle that you would be wise to consider. As Christians, we should talk to the Lord about everything, so as you think about what career you should pursue, make it a matter of prayer.

I always wanted to be a chef, however, God had other plans for me. I did not come from a Christian family and, to my knowledge, I was the only one in my family who trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am not academic, so when I left school my grades were not brilliant. I discovered that I was more comfortable with practical activities. One day, an opportunity came up to work on a building site. I was told that I could have an apprenticeship in bricklaying, but later they decided to give this to another lad who was a friend of mine! I was so disappointed, but I can see now that the Lord wanted me to be in cabinet making and joinery, not in bricklaying.

I was willing to work hard and do whatever I was told, and I learned very quickly that the world of work is very different from school life. It was difficult getting used to hearing bad language, jokes, and stories that I did not want to hear. I told my workmates that I was a Christian, but they kept pushing me to drink with them. I got the strength to say no, which helped me learn the reality of Philippians chapter 4 verse 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'.

After some time, I applied for a job with a cabinet making company and was promised a job once I had completed a two-year cabinet making course. After enrolling for a course with Falmouth College, I had to find accommodation. The Lord had His hand in this, as some believers had contacted other believers in the area, and they had agreed to look after me and provide accommodation. I was, and am, very thankful for these believers who made me a part of their family and showed me what a Christian home should be like.

During my first year of college, I found out that the company that had promised me a job had gone into liquidation, which was very disappointing; however, I continued with the course.

Whilst at College, I realized that I had to make a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ and what I believe in, and not sit on the

fence or be led astray by others who were strong characters. Just a side note: one lad asked me to take him to the gospel meeting. I did this for a long time. All of this was very encouraging to me. You can witness for the Lord by your life, as well as by preaching!

Once qualified, the Lord provided me with employment, working in antique restoration, then on building sites and with joinery firms. Twice the firms I worked for went into liquidation, but the Lord was good to me, and I always managed to get another job quickly. I soon realized that not everyone is helpful or honest. Some people have their own agenda, and lie, steal, and blame others to get what they want. They are not worried about the consequences. As a believer, I was different to others and was often picked on and ridiculed for my faith, but the Lord has always been with me, and I have been able to rely on Him for everything I need. He has never failed me.

The Lord has provided me with opportunities in recent years to work in an office rather than 'on the bench'. My role now includes drawing using CAD technology and managing projects. I enjoy my work, however, there is a lot of pressure, and the challenge of being different (as a believer) is just as real. My boss knows that I will not lie, but often still suggests that I should say something different to the truth just to keep clients happy. My boss doesn't always appreciate it when I refuse, but he knows he can trust me, as the clients do.

In most lines of work, some people will work weekends and late evenings as they do not have anything else, apart from work, in their lives, and are often only focused on earning more money. As believers, we have something more important in our lives than work, and, although we should work hard and do our best, at the end of the day, it is just a job!

Early in my working life, I did work some weekends and evenings, but my spiritual life suffered, and there was no lasting benefit to me. You will find that the more you do in this trade, the more is expected from you; but if you look to the Lord and aim to please Him, the rewards are eternal.

'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus', Phil. 4. 19.