



Edited by  
**STEPHEN BAKER**

#### **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*, PO Box 10544, Grantham, NG31 0HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

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## Fascinating Facts – Evidence from nature of a Creator's touch

PHIL ARMSTRONG, LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

From late October through to March, many of us in the UK and across Europe will see an amazing phenomenon. As twilight falls, thousands of starling birds flock together and fly in large groups called 'murmurations'. The flock constantly remoulds its overall shape and produces rippling patterns as birds change direction in unison. It is one of the most incredible displays of animal behaviour in the natural world. Check out videos of starling murmurations and watch how they transform the evening sky into living, abstract art. Researchers are still unsure exactly why starlings have this instinct; some think that it deters predators, such as sparrowhawks and falcons, and others suggest that it is an opportunity for the birds to communicate information about good places to find food.

This enchanting air show raises an obvious question: How do thousands of birds fly so close together at speeds of almost 50 miles per hour, constantly changing direction, without crashing into each other? Recent studies in Italy have helped us begin to understand, by photographing flocks from different angles and mapping the positions of individual birds in a computer program. It turns out that each bird in the flock keeps an eye on the seven birds closest to it and copies what they do. So, if one of its neighbours moves, then it moves! This means that one small change in the movement of one bird can cause every other bird around it to move in turn. The starlings respond to the changes in their neighbours in less than 100 milliseconds. Starlings in flight are compared to jet fighter pilots, who position their planes very close to each other and copy the precise movements of their nearest neighbour. However, starlings react around thirteen times faster than a human! This remarkable instinct has not developed through millions of years of unguided steps of evolution, but, rather, it shows the design flair of our Creator, who has programmed this behaviour into its DNA.

Scientists are drawing inspiration from what these starlings can do and are looking into potential applications of the idea. For example, engineers and tech developers could, potentially, use swarm robotics in micro-drones for use by the military, or for rescue missions. As we learn more about how God's creation glorifies Him, let us praise Him for His wisdom and power.

#### **Sources**

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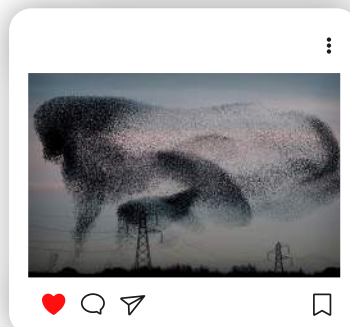
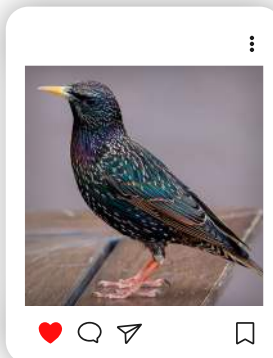
## Editor's Introduction

Thanks once again for reading YPS. This is the first issue for 2024, but for me, it is my final issue of *Young Precious Seed*. From the May 2024 issue Andrew Dutton will be taking over as Editor of YPS. Andrew has been involved in the work of *Precious Seed* for several years now, and will bring to the role fresh energy and ideas. He may also invite some new authors to write, so watch this space.

May I take the opportunity to thank you for your loyal support. *Precious Seed* only exists because people read what we produce. It is our ongoing prayer that both the main magazine and YPS will continue to be a blessing to many believers.

Yours through Grace,

Stephen Baker



# Soul-Searching Scriptures

BY PAUL COXALL, ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND

For most people, there is a routine to the days of our life that is somewhat comforting. We make arrangements for the days, weeks, and months that lie ahead and try to organize our lives so that we can accomplish our plans. However, there are times when an event happens, or we receive news, that means life is turned 'upside down'.

In May 2014, my life took an unexpected turn. I noticed a small growth in my upper body, and I thought it may be due to my recent exercise routine at the gym. Over the next few days, the size of the lump grew, and it was increasingly evident that it was not due to my bench-press ability. After a few trips to see medical personnel, I was given the diagnosis that I had non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a type of cancer that develops in the lymphatic system.

As you can imagine, I was shocked to hear that I, a relatively young and fit man who had not smoked or drunk alcohol for over 20 years, had cancer. It seemed somewhat surreal, but I knew it was reality. The consultant told me that I would receive a course of chemotherapy and then radiotherapy. My sense of curiosity caused me to ask, 'What will happen if I do not take the treatment?'. The reply was short and clear, 'You will die'. Refusing treatment was never in my mind, but his reply underlined the seriousness of the situation.

It is in times of difficulty and suffering that we often reflect on the person of Jesus Christ; His character, works, and promises. Things that seemed important to us fade into the background, and those that are of eternal value come to the forefront of our minds. Although many people have passed through far greater trials and difficulties than the one I was facing, it was the most serious personal one that I had encountered.

Our beliefs are tested when we are faced with the unknown and circumstances seem outside of our control. Of course, the reality is 'you do not know what will happen tomorrow', Jas. 4. 14, NKJV. I understand that my theology, those realities I had learnt from scripture, would now be tested. Would the truth I held in my mind, find application in my life? Was it just 'head knowledge', or was there reality?

The scriptures proved to be a great comfort to me throughout my treatment for cancer. Even when I was too tired to read, or

the drugs had caused 'brain fog', I was able to meditate on God's word. There are many verses that God graciously caused me to consider, but I would like to share a particular one with you.

In the garden of Gethsemane, our Lord Jesus was about to be arrested, placed on trial, crucified, and then suffer in His body the wrath of God. He would completely propitiate God for the sins of all who would ever believe, so that they would never face that wrath. This was the work that He had been given to do. It was the path marked out uniquely for Him, yet, in the garden, He prayed:

'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will', Matt. 26. 39 NKJV.

Of course, there was never a desire in His mind to not accomplish the work He had been given to do. There could be no conflict in the Godhead; all three persons act in perfect harmony. We can see, though, that Christ, in His humanity, voluntarily surrendered His will to the will of the Father.

No-one can equate their suffering to the Saviour's, but the lesson I learnt from my Lord's prayer was that there is a path that our loving heavenly Father has decreed for us to walk. Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, the Lord taught His followers that, 'The disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master', Matt. 10. 24, and although, contextually, that statement is regarding persecution for being a believer the general truth is still true. The believer has not been promised an easy path through life. Many of the trials and sufferings that impact non-believers will also come to the Lord's people. What should be different is how we think, speak, and act when they come.

Would I have chosen a path that meant I would have cancer and suffer a loss of health, because of the treatment? No. But, by God's grace, I was able to consider my Lord and His words in Gethsemane. There was a trial that God had ordained me to pass through. He had not forgotten me, but would use it for my ultimate good.

Our will, unlike the Lord's, is not always perfectly aligned with our heavenly Father's. So, it took me a little time to appropriate the truth of this scripture and others for myself. As I looked to Jesus and His words, I knew that I could, by God's power and grace, walk the path that He had decreed for me, not through resigned acceptance but because I was looking to Him.



# We four kings... – Lessons from some of Judah's kings

BY RICHARD SMITH, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND



## Asa (1 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 14-16)

In this series, we're looking at the first four kings of Judah after the division of the nation. We've seen that Rehoboam lacked **conviction** and that his son, Abijah, though a man of conviction, lacked **courage**. The third king is Asa.

Asa was different from his father and grandfather. From the start of his forty-one-year reign, he was determined to do 'what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God', 2 Chr. 14. 2. You may remember the 'triangle of convictions' from previous articles:

1. **The word of God:** Asa commanded Judah to seek the Lord, to keep the law and the commandments – v. 4.
2. **The house of God:** He removed the foreign altars and the high places throughout Judah, making it difficult for idols to be worshipped, or for God to be worshipped inappropriately – Jerusalem, the temple was where people should worship.
3. **The people of God:** He fortified the cities in Judah, v. 6, ensuring the people were protected against attack.

The result of his efforts was peace, the Lord's peace, and Asa was quick to acknowledge that it was from God.

Everything seemed perfect. He had an army of 580,000. He was powerful and at peace. What could possibly go wrong? The Ethiopians came with an army of one million. Asa didn't hesitate in calling on the Lord, 'We rely on You', v. 11 ESV. The result was that, without warning, the Ethiopians fled and were pursued and thoroughly defeated by Judah, whose army returned to Jerusalem with very much spoil.

Asa was met by the Lord's servant, Azariah, who congratulated Asa on a job well done. He promised that the Lord would be with Asa as long as he sought Him, to take courage and the Lord would reward him. As soon as Asa heard these words, he took courage and continued the work, removing idol worship from the newly acquired cities and repairing the altar of the Lord. He gathered his expanding nation together (many Israelites had joined Judah when they saw the Lord was with them) and declared a time of sacrifice. They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul, 15. 12. In fact, anyone who didn't, would be executed. He removed Maacah, his grandmother, from the throne for her idolatry. Imagine how much courage that took.

But why did he do it? Was he showing off? Was he looking to make his name great? The answer is in 2 Chronicles chapter 15 verse 17, 'The heart of Asa was loyal all his days', NKJV. He brought sacred gifts of silver, gold, and vessels into the temple, and there was no war. Everything was perfect; Asa had re-established Judah as a prosperous, peaceful, God-fearing nation. His convictions were right; his courage was unquestionable.

Then a new test came from Israel, the old enemy, Baasha, the King of Israel, laid siege to Judah and, as a result, Asa was worried. He gathered silver and gold from the temple and made a covenant with the King of Syria to protect him – no prayer, no confessions of reliance on God, a completely different reaction to his previous much more powerful assailant. Hanani the seer visited Asa with a very different message from the one previously delivered by the prophet Azariah, 6. 1-7. The opportunity to defeat the King of Syria had slipped through Asa's fingers. He had not relied on the Lord as he had against the Ethiopians, although the Lord would have protected him, and wanted to protect him. The accusation came, 'you have done foolishly'. The time of Judah's peace was over.

We all make mistakes. The question is how do we respond when our mistakes are pointed out? If Rehoboam was marked by a lack of **conviction**, and Abijah by a lack of **courage**, Asa will be remembered for how he reacted to **criticism**.

Asa was furious, he went straight into a rage. The 'triangle of convictions' collapsed:

1. **The word of God:** Hanani was put in stocks in prison.
2. **The house of God:** He had already given the treasures from the house of God to the King of Syria.
3. **The people of God:** He afflicted some of the people.

The last three years of Asa's reign were spent in pain with diseased feet. The man who had travelled the country doing the will of God, spurred on by the praise of Azariah to even greater exploits, finished a bitter, angry, immobilized man who refused to seek the Lord in his need. He'd done so well but couldn't handle criticism. His heart was right – he wanted the right thing; he just couldn't handle being wrong.

Compliments and positive words are always good to hear. On the other hand, may God give us the grace to accept when we're wrong, to make the necessary corrections, and to carry on with a true heart to serve the Lord.





# Saints' CVs: Selina Hastings

BY JEREMY SINGER, BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

## SELINA HASTINGS 1707-1791 COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON

'I am encircled in the  
arms of love and mercy'<sup>1</sup>

Selina Hastings often thanked God for the letter 'm' since, she said, she would never have been saved without it. She referred to the fact that 'not many noble are called', 1 Cor. 1. 26. Certainly Selina was a member of the upper class, born the daughter of 2nd Earl Ferrers. At the age of twenty, she married the 9th Earl of Huntingdon. She was a high-ranking aristocrat in Georgian England, on speaking terms with royalty.

Soon after her marriage, Selina heard the message of salvation and put her trust in the Lord Jesus. She loved to listen to evangelical preachers of the day including the Wesleys, Augustus Toplady and George Whitefield. Whitefield preached regularly in the drawing room of her London home. In 1748 he wrote: 'Lady Huntingdon is come to town, and I am to preach at her ladyship's house twice a week to the great and noble. O that some of them may . . . taste of the riches of redeeming love'.<sup>2</sup>

One of Selina's friends, the Duchess of Buckingham, wrote her a scathing letter of complaint: 'It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting; and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding'.<sup>3</sup> As time went by, some of Selina's acquaintances avoided her because they would not accept the gospel message.

Selina was marked by genuine kindness to others, whether rich or poor. She took great interest in her servants and often visited impoverished residents on her estates, praying with them and providing for their needs. She had a particular care for orphaned children, Jas. 1. 27.

The countess felt a burden to use her wealth to build chapels

in different areas of the country, where gospel preaching could be embedded in communities. Today, more than 200 years later, there are still twenty-two local churches in the UK operating as part of her legacy. In 1768 she established Trevecca House in Wales entirely at her own expense, intended as a college for training evangelical preachers.

King George III was aware of Selina's charity and religious activities. In conversation with her, the king said: 'I have been told so many odd stories of your ladyship, that I am free to confess that I felt a great degree of curiosity to see if you were at all like other women; and I am happy in having an opportunity of assuring your ladyship of the very good opinion I have of you, and how very highly I estimate your character, your zeal and abilities, which cannot be consecrated to a more noble purpose'.<sup>4</sup>

Tragedy did not diminish her enthusiasm for serving God. Like Job, Selina was stripped of her family. She had seven children, but only one of them outlived their mother. Selina's husband died when she was in her late thirties. Despite her overwhelming loss, she continued to maintain her faith in God. Towards the close of her life Selina remarked, 'I am well. All is well, well forever. I see, wherever I turn my eyes, whether I live or die, nothing but victory'.<sup>5</sup>

### Further reading

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<sup>2</sup> GILBERT W. KIRBY, *The Elect Lady*, 1972. pg. 16. Available at: <https://www.cofhconnexion.org.uk/images/pdfs/The-Elect-Lady-book.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

