

THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Exercising The Mind || Igniting The Heart || Preparing The Hands

A free quarterly paper for rural pastors.

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Editor: Aaron Dunlop



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WELCOME TO THE PASTOR'S STUDY

In this issue we consider the nativity story: the worship of the shepherds and wise men, and Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:1-23). The Editorial (page 5) highlights the important theme of healing in Jesus' ministry, showing that he was not only King of the Jews but also the king over creation.

The Preacher's Workshop (pages 24-31) includes some guidance for "Preparing to Preach" this passage (page 8-10). There is a commentary on "The Story of Matthew 2" (pages 11-19), and an exposition of "Matthew's Good News of Christ the King," (page 20-23) by a first-time contributor, Dr. Charles Barrett. As always, we finish the issue with a devotional on the story (page 52-54), by Pastor John Dyck. In this issue, we have some regular contributors writing on pastoral and practical theology. Dr. Beeke has expounded John Calvin's explanation of "The Double

Grace” (page 32-36). Continuing from the previous issue, I have provided some more “Characteristics of a Healthy Church” (pages 37-41). Pastor Tonny Karwa has provided a meditation on “Sin and Pastoral Ministry” (pages 42-47). Dr. Haykin gives us a fascinating glimpse at the role of papyrus in the development of the Bible (pages 48-51).

These various subjects are important for pastors. We should weave them into our pulpit and pastoral ministry. Remember in all of this to “do the work of an evangelist” as you fulfill your ministerial responsibilities (2 Timothy 4:5).

Sincerely, Aaron Dunlop

EDITORIAL: KING JESUS THE HEALER

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

In this issue, as we approach the Christmas season, we will focus our attention on the story of Jesus' birth, particular chapter two of Matthew.

This is the story of Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus through the information gained from the wise men visiting from the east. One of the themes that comes out of this chapter is that Jesus is king.

Each of the four Gospels has a particular focus and emphasis. Mark emphasised the authority of Jesus as the Son of God. Luke focused on the facts of Jesus's life, to show that he is indeed the Son of Man. John focused on the divinity of Jesus.

Matthew focused on the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the King in the line of David. Matthew developed this theme of kingship throughout his Gospel by between Jesus and King David. For example, he often describes Jesus as a shepherd. We find this term five times, at 2:6, 9:36, 15:24, 25:31-46, and 26:31.

Matthew emphasised that Jesus' work on earth involved healing (Matthew 4:23, 9:35). As you continue to read through the book you will discover that Matthew connects these activities to Jesus's kingly title: the "Son of David." Matthew identifies Jesus this way nine times. Five of these occurrences are connected to healing (9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 21:15).

The healing ministry of Jesus was part of his kingship. Jesus is the King of Israel, but he is also the King of Creation. The powers of sin and sickness were subject to him. He healed

instantly, and he never left anyone disappointed or partially healed. David was the greatest king of Israel, but Jesus is “great David’s greater son.”

David defeated his enemies so easily that they may as well have been “lame and blind” (2 Samuel 5:6). Jesus turned his lame and blind enemies into friends, and made them able to see and leap for joy.

Aaron Dunlop was a pastor for several years in Canada before ministering in Kenya. Aaron is the director of The Krapf Project and now lives in the UK with his wife and five children. He blogs at thinkGOSPEL.com.

PREPARING TO PREACH ON MATTHEW 2

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

Start by reading the chapter several times. As you read, look for important people, places, and prophecies.

People

The most important person is Jesus, the new-born king. Notice how the other characters treated him.

The wise men searched for Jesus (verse 1). Then they worshipped joyfully (verse 11). They were true servants of Christ. Joseph was also a true servant of Christ. He defended Jesus, even at great danger to himself (verse 14, 22).

The Jewish leaders knew about Jesus' birth from the Old Testament (verse 5), but they did not join come to worship Jesus. They were false students of Scripture.

Herod did not want Jesus to take his throne (verse 3), so he lied about wanting to worship him (verse 8). He actually wanted to kill Jesus, and he tried to even though it meant killing lots of children. He was an evil enemy of Christ.

Places and Prophecies

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just as Micah 5:2 predicted. The Jewish leaders explained this to Herod and the wise men (verse 6).

Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt because God warned him in a dream (verse 13).

According to Hosea 11:1, God's rescue of Israel from Egypt showed his fatherly love. Matthew thought the same about this trip to Egypt (verse 15).

The mothers of Judah wept when Herod killed their children, just as they wept when the Babylonians invaded and killed their sons (Jeremiah 31:15). Only Mary is not weeping, because her Son lives, and has come to give life.

The family moved to Nazareth, a humble town in Israel. This matched the prophets' prediction that Jesus would be a humble savior. He would be despised (Isaiah 49:7), partly for coming from Nazareth (as in John 1:46).

One more thing: Isaiah 11:1 portrayed Jesus' humility by the image of a "branch" —a little shoot growing from a tree stump. The Hebrew word for "branch" is *netzer*, which sounds like "Nazareth." Before anyone worshipped him as their King, he was a humble man living in a humble town.

A KING IS BORN: THE STORY OF MATTHEW 2

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

The first chapter of Matthew shows that Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David (according to 2 Samuel 7:12-13). Chapter two, however, shows that he will indeed take the throne despite opposition from the highest authority. Matthew shows us that he will call the powers of heaven (angels and stars) to subvert the powers of evil.

The wise men (verses 1-2)

The coming of wise men to acknowledge the birth of a king follows a long tradition. Solomon prophesied that the glory of the Messiah will be manifest by visits of foreign dignitaries (Psalm 72:10-11). We see similarities in the story to the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon with “gold and ... spices” (1 Kings 10:1-10). Matthew reminds us, however, that someone “greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42).

This story includes four nations (Rome, Israel, Egypt, Persia) on three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe). Gentiles were among the first to worship the king of the Jews, while his own people rejected him. By including these countries and the wise men, Matthew is establishing a truth that he will later develop: the Gospel of the kingdom is to be preached in all the world (Matthew 24:14). These Gentiles represent the “many” who would come and take their place in the Kingdom (Matthew 8:11) and the Lord would later commission the Church to go and make disciples of them (Matthew 28:19).

Herod fears the infant king (verses 3-8)

Herod received the news of Jesus’ birth as a threat to his throne. Herod had been given his kingdom by Rome. He had no ancestral right to the throne, and the news of one who was “born king” shook him up. The Jews were troubled also, most likely because they feared the social and political unrest of a rival king. The Jewish leaders had the Scriptures before

them but were blind to the message of the Messiah. They showed no interest.

Herod's reaction quickly descended from emotional agitation (verse 3) to frantic action, assembling and inquiring (verse 4), summoning (verse 7), sending (verse 8), and then killing the children (verse 16). But first, he will try a soft deceitful approach. As political authorities still do, he used religious leaders and religious sentiment for his own political ends. He presented an image of interest and desire towards the infant king, but the Lord turned all this hypocrisy for his own glory.

The faithfulness of the wise men (verses 9-12)

The wise men were not discouraged by the indifference of the Jewish leaders or dazzled by the interest of the king. They were focused on finding Jesus.

The star had left them, but now it appeared again. To their great joy, it shone on the house where Jesus was. The Lord of creation used the

stars of heaven for his own glory and the good of those who were seeking him. He showed the wise men that this infant is the God of creation and that they should worship him. Those who truly see Jesus by faith will worship him through the poverty and lowliness of his situation or the poverty and lowliness of their situation.

Herod's evil plan was derailed. Blinded by hatred and anger, he failed in the details to make sure his plan succeeded. The wise men returned to their own country, ignoring Herod and leaving him frustrated. Sin creates many blind spots.

The escape to Egypt (13-15)

The angel's command was precise and urgent: "rise," "take," "flee" and "remain." Joseph's obedience is highlighted here by the use of the corresponding verbs—he "rose," "took," "departed" and "remained" (verses 14-15). Joseph's immediate obedience enabled the family to escape before the border shut down.

This fulfilled Hosea 11:1, that God's son would be called out of Egypt. When God first called Israel out of Egypt, the people were disobedient. They were out of Egypt, but Egypt was not out of them. They continued worshipping idols (Hosea 11:2).

Joseph was a better Israelite because he was obedient to God's command. Jesus was the best Israelite of all, because he obeyed all of God's commands perfectly. This is how, just when the Messianic hope seemed to be gone, God brought Israel out of Egypt. God did not forget his son Jesus, and he did not forget his people either.

Herod's violence against the children (verses 16-18)

Matthew's account of Herod the Great does not emphasise the fact that he was an Edomite, or that he was appointed king by Rome. Both of these points were intensely important issues for the Israelites that he ruled.

What mattered to Matthew was that Herod hated Jesus. This was his greatest sin. Prior to this, he had been indifferent to Israel's religion, but now, confronted with the reality of the sovereign God, come in the flesh, Herod's heart is revealed.

He shows his hatred for Jesus in his desperate slaughter of the innocent children. Like Rachel, the women of Israel refused to be comforted (verse 18) because their children were lost. But Jesus has come to defeat death and Mary is comforted.

Jesus returns to Nazareth (19-23)

Herod's death was a pitiful end of a wicked life. He died without being mourned. When Joseph heard, he returned to Bethlehem. However, under the new king Archelaus the situation near Jerusalem was still unsettled and Joseph had good reason to fear.

The Lord confirmed in a dream that they should move on. Jesus would grow up in the

quiet environment of Nazareth. But what appeared on a human level to be merely wise and reasonable choices, were indeed the providences of God, for Jesus, according to the Old Testament prophets, must be “called a Nazarene.”

Aaron Dunlop was a pastor for many years in Canada before ministering in Kenya. He holds a degree in theology from Geneva Reformed Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, USA. Aaron is the director of The Krapf Project and now lives in UK with his wife and five children. He blogs at thinkGOSPEL.com.

POINTS FOR PREACHERS

Wise Men Seek Jesus

1. Though it is hard work.
2. Though it is lonely.
3. Though it is humble.
4. Though it is dangerous.

Strangers and pilgrims

Jesus lived in three places in his earliest years. Like us, he was a stranger and pilgrim in this world (Hebrews 11:13).

Responding to Jesus

1. Are you angry like Herod?
2. Are you ignoring him, like the scribes?
3. Are you happy with him, like the wise men?

Herod the Great, Jesus the Greater

1. The Fear of Sin: Herod was afraid for no reason (verse 3).
2. The Deception of Sin: Herod lied to keep on sinning (verse 8).
3. The Frustration of Sin: Herod could not get

what he wanted (verse 16). He should have stopped here, but he wanted more.

4. The Violence of Sin: Herod will hurt anyone in order to indulge his anger (verse 16).

5. The End of Sin: Herod died, still hating Jesus (verse 19). How different from Jesus, who died, still loving his enemies!

MATTHEW'S GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST THE KING

Dr. Charles Barrett

Matthew wastes no time establishing the theme of Jesus as the Messianic King. He demonstrates this by using the word “fulfilled” many times in the first two chapters (1:18-21, 2:13-15, 2:17, and 2:21-23).

Matthew uses Old Testament passages and themes to draw attention to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the long-awaited Messiah. He is David's greater son.

The genealogy in chapter one came as good news for the people of Israel. At that time, they had no king on David's throne. They also did not have any prophetic word since Malachi's promise (four hundred years earlier) that Jehovah would send his messenger of the covenant.

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1 introduces Christ's right to the throne through a carefully crafted genealogy. "The genealogy of Jesus Christ" (1:1) reminds us of the first biblical genealogies in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1, which tell us about the first Adam. In this new genealogy, Matthew is showing us that the last Adam has arrived to reverse the curse of sin.

There are three sections in this genealogy. There is the time before David (1:2-6a), then the period of the kings from David to the exile (1:6b-11), and finally the period from the exile to Christ's birth (1:12-16).

The inclusion of Abraham in Matthew 1:1 links Jesus' identity not only to David but also to the one who promised to be a father to a great nation (Genesis 12 and 15). Jesus Christ is both the rightful heir to David's throne and the ultimate seed of Abraham.

By carefully summarizing Israel's history in these genealogies, Matthew assures God's people in all ages that God is faithful to his promise. He will not lose sight of any of his children.

The Uniqueness of King Jesus

The birth story of the Messiah (1:18-2:25) highlights the uniqueness of King Jesus. Mary supernaturally conceives through the work of the Holy Spirit (1:18). An angel appears to Joseph to explain the miraculous event and to prevent him from divorcing Mary privately (1:19-20).

All of this, including the baby's name, fulfills the Old Testament prophecy and shines a light on the purpose of Jesus Christ's coming to the world. He is a king, come to destroy sin and rescue his people from the kingdom of darkness.

Christ's Kingly Office

Matthew chapter two shows us more about

Christ's kingly office. When the wise men come and offer worship to the King (2:2). These are righteous kings, come to honor the King of Kings.

Herod, by contrast, is an evil king, who refuses to worship Jesus. He is an enemy of King Jesus, which is the reason that Joseph took his family to Egypt. He was also an enemy of Jesus's people, which is the reason that so many mothers wept over their lost children.

God's promise to his covenant people is kept in the person of Jesus Christ. God has provided a king who can conquer all his and our enemies and who can rule in righteousness and equity.

God's Rule Over History

At a time in history when it seemed that God was silent, the birth of Jesus the King reveals that God was not inactive. This was a time of little hope among the covenant community as they scanned the landscape of cultural events.

Rome was in power, God's people were scattered, no king sat on David's throne, and the priestly clan was corrupt. Yet, God arranged the events so that in the fullness of time when all was ready, He sent forth his Son born of a woman to establish His kingdom (Galatians 4:4).

Even today when we may not always understand why things are the way they are, we can trust the God who sent His Son who rules and reigns with everything being placed under his feet.

Charles Barrett serves as Associate Pastor at Wayside Presbyterian Church in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, USA.

PREACHER'S WORKSHOP: EXEGETICAL NOTES

(Notes on the text, words, and grammar)

Verse 1: “wise men” — magi, Greek transliteration from an Iranian word meaning “great.”

Verse 2: The Bible does not say what kind of star this was or how it led the wise men to Jesus.

Verse 2: “King of the Jews” appears here and at the end of the book (Matthew 27:11, 29). These “bookends” identify the theme. Also “the king of the Jews” is a Gentile way of saying “king of Israel,” or the “Messiah.”

Verse 3: “troubled” means shaken or frightened (see Matthew 14:26; Luke 1:12; John 14:1), or thrown into confusion.

Notice Joseph's obedience. In verses 13-14, God told him to rise, take, flee, and remain. Joseph did these four things. In verses 20-21,

God told him to rise, take, and go. Joseph did these exact things.

Verses 11, 13 and 20: “the child” is always mentioned before the mother.

Verse 20: “those who sought to kill” indicates there were more than Herod involved in this hatred.

PREACHER'S WORKSHOP: PREACHING NOTES

(Points for explanation and application)

Herod received the title “King” from Rome.
Jesus was king from eternity.

Verse 3: The presence of Jesus brings peace to the Christians but trouble and confusion to the unbeliever. It threatens their authority.

Notice the verbs. Herod assembled and inquired (verse 4), summoned (verse 7), sent (verse 8), became furious (verse 16), and died (verse 19).

Verse 18: Jesus' coming comforts those who have lost children. Rachel refused to be comforted because her children were lost, but Jesus has come to overcome the evil one. Mary was comforted.

The arrival of a Shepherd for the Wandering people (verse 6), and the arrival of a Comforter for Sorrowing people (verse 18).

Four places, each with its theme: danger in Bethlehem, exile in Egypt, mourning in Ramah, and reproach in Nazareth.

QUESTIONS

Here are some questions you should ask as you prepare your sermon. They will help you focus on the most important matters. You might choose to mention these questions in your sermon, or you might not. Some suggested answers are provided.

1. What does the story teach about God?

God is King of kings like Herod. He uses even his enemies' wrath to accomplish his purposes.

2. What does the story teach us about ourselves?

We sinfully rebel against God openly, like Herod, or quietly like the Jewish leaders. To serve Christ, we need the joy of the wise men and the courage of Joseph.

3. What does the story teach about Christ?

He has come to destroy the works of the devil, including evil kings murdering innocent

children. He is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

4. What does this story tell us to do?

We should believe that Jesus is the Christ. We should serve him wholeheartedly. As we do so, we should expect suffering and endure it bravely.

What would you add to these questions and answers?

APPLICATIONS

Application is an important part of every sermon. Show your hearers how the Bible's teaching affects them personally. Show them what God wants them to do and how God wants them to change. It is best to apply your sermon specifically to different kinds of people. Here is an example:

The Lost

Like Herod, your rebellion against Jesus Christ may last for a little while, but it will fail in the end. Christ's kingdom stretches around the world today, and Herod's has vanished.

The Lazy

You may not be like Herod, violent or angry against Jesus. But it is also rebellious to read the Bible like the Jewish leaders, without bothering to obey it.

The Weak

You may have many enemies and troubles in

this life, but God is able to rescue you from them all. You may have many sorrows in this life, but God is able to comfort you in them all.

The Wandering

There are many small and shortlived joys in this world. A palace is comfortable, and a religious position is honorable. The greatest joy, though, is to worship the Lord Jesus.

JOHN CALVIN ON THE “DOUBLE GRACE”

Dr. Joel Beeke

According to John Calvin, believers receive from Christ by faith the “double grace” of justification and sanctification. Justification offers imputed purity (in the righteousness of Christ), and sanctification provides actual purity in the life of the Christian.

Calvin defines justification as “the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteous men.” He goes on to say that “since God justifies us by the intercession of Christ, he absolves us not by the confirmation of our own innocence but by the imputation of righteousness, so that we who are not righteous in ourselves may be reckoned as such in Christ.”

Calvin and the Reformers regarded justification as a central doctrine of the Christian faith. Justification not only serves God’s honour by

satisfying the conditions for salvation, it also offers the believer's conscience "peaceful rest and serene tranquillity." As Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the heart and soul of piety. Believers need not worry about their status with God because they are justified by faith. They can willingly renounce personal glory and daily accept their own life from the hand of their Creator and Redeemer.

Sanctification refers to the process in which the believer increasingly becomes conformed to Christ in heart, conduct, and devotion to God. It is the continual remaking of the believer by the Holy Spirit, the increasing consecration of body and soul to God. In sanctification, the believer offers himself to God as a sacrifice. This does not come without great struggle and slow progress. It requires repentance, mortification, and daily consecration.

To separate one from the other is to tear Christ in pieces, or like trying to separate the sun's light from the heat that the light generates. Believers are justified for the purpose of living piously to worship God in the holiness of life.

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THE HUMILITY OF KING JESUS

J.C. Ryle

Trouble awaited Jesus as soon as he entered the world. His life was in danger from Herod's hatred and he was forced to "flee into Egypt." The circumstances of his humiliation were manifested even from his infancy.

He is the Savior that the suffering and sorrowful need. He knows what we mean when we tell Him in our troubles. He can sympathize with us when we cry to Him under cruel persecution. Let us keep nothing back from Him.

Let us make Him our bosom friend. Let us pour out our hearts before Him. He has had great experience of affliction.

Matthew Henry

It was a mark of humiliation put upon the Lord Jesus that, though he was the "desire of all nations," yet his coming into the world was

little observed and taken notice of, his birth was obscure and unregarded.

Having undertaken to make satisfaction to his Father for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man, he did it by denying himself in, and despoiling himself of, the honours undoubtedly due to an incarnate Deity.

MORE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

What makes a healthy church? I began answering this question in the previous issue (July-Sept 2022), by considering four characteristics: 1) strong leadership, 2) earnest and expository preaching, 3) church discipline and 4) discipleship. Let us now consider three more.

Vibrant and deliberate singing

Christians are a singing people. The Psalmist says that God places a song of praise in the heart of those whom he delivers (Psalm 40:3). It is a “new song,” culminating in the ultimate triumph of glory (Revelation 5:9 and 14:3).

The singing of the church is praise to our sovereign creator, sustainer and saviour. While singing is primarily “to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19), it also informs us and

renews our minds. Hymns, therefore, should be culturally and emotionally accessible. They should be written in the “living language” of the church.

The hymns we sing ought to inform us and move us to greater love, holiness and service. They must contain accurate and significant theology, and they must ¹⁴ be emotionally and intellectually engaging. This is consistent with the principle that ministry should be conducted in a way that everyone can understand (1 Corinthians 14:15).

We should sing with full hearts, not just giving praise to God, but receiving grace from him. The hymns we sing, like the sermons we hear, will demand a response.

Active Evangelism

The goal of evangelism is to form the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of people (1 Corinthians 9:27, Luke 17:21) and to extend the kingdom

throughout the earth (Matthew 16:18, 28:18-20).

The evangelism of the church is twofold. First, the Gospel is for those who are part of the visible body but are not yet saved. Second, the Gospel is for those whom the apostles referred to as “those who are without” (1 Timothy 3:7, 1 Corinthians 5:13).

This begins and ends with the local church. Evangelism is interwoven through the church’s ministry. The evangelist (or the missionary) must have a high view of the church (Psalm 69:9, John 2:17). The life of the church will play a major role in the development and growth of new converts.

Evangelism will keep the people in prayer for the Spirit’s help. It will maintain a sense of purpose in the church. Others will be brought into the church and the church in turn will be renewed and extended by others being sent out (2 Timothy 2:2).

A healthy church is excited about the Gospel. Its members have the confidence to live in the Gospel, and they believe in the power of the Gospel to save. They are excited for others to hear the message of the Gospel.

Sacrificial Giving

The church at Corinth was not a healthy church. They were divided (1 Corinthians 11:18). They were uninformed about important matters (12:1, 14:38). They were childish in their behavior (3:1, 14:20). They were selfish in their attitudes (14:26-31). They were disorderly (14:40) in their worship and fellowship, because they were proud about their gifts.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul addressed the financial support of the global work of God (2 Corinthians 8:1-15). Paul told them that their giving proved the sincerity of their love (verse 8).

There was nothing new in Paul's encouragement to generous giving. The principle was well established when Moses was building God's tent in the wilderness (Exodus 25:1-9). In the earliest days of the church, many sold all their possessions and distributed the proceeds to those that were in need (Acts 2:45).

Sacrificial giving is contagious. Paul was able to tell the Corinthians about the example of the Macedonians who gave generously and sacrificially out of "deep poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:2). The Macedonians did not have much, but their giving brought glory to the Lord, and encouraged others to give more than they could have given themselves.

Aaron Dunlop was a pastor for several years in Canada before ministering in Kenya. Aaron is the director of The Krapf Project and now lives in the UK with his wife and five children. He blogs at thinkGOSPEL.com.

UNDERSTANDING SIN AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

Pastor Tonny Karwa

The fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden severed man's relationship with God. Sin affected everything about human nature—body, mind, heart, and will, and we are unable to do anything righteous and good in the sight of God (Romans 3:9-18).

Because of sin, we all must be reconciled to God through the mediator, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:20-23, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). We must be “born again” and become “new creations” (John 3:3, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is the transforming work of the Spirit, and is what is commonly referred to as “regeneration” (Titus 3:5). This transformation, or regeneration, leads to a lifelong process of being conformed to the image of Christ which is commonly referred to as “sanctification” (Romans 8:29). Throughout our lives, we must

engage in the battle of putting to death what is earthly and sinful, and grow in newness of life, being renewed after the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:5-11).

In other words, being conformed to the image of Christ is not immediate, but progressive. It happens over time. The more we behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, the more we become like Him. Reminding ourselves of these basic truths helps us in our ministry. It shapes how we view ourselves and how we pastor the flock of God, over whom the Holy Spirit has made us overseers (Acts 20:28).

The Shepherd Still Struggles With Sin

We don't become pastors because we have been completely and perfectly sanctified. We are the same in nature as the sheep—we have the same smell, and the dirt and dust of the earth clings to us as it does to them. We are called in our weakness and have nothing to boast about in our calling.

The only difference is that the chief shepherd, Christ Jesus, out of love for the sheep, has provided leadership for them and he has entrusted us with the task (1 Peter 5:3). The Holy Spirit has made us overseers over God's church (Acts 20:28).

The pastorate is therefore a matter of heightened responsibility to which we will give an account. Since we too still battle against sin, we will disappoint our sheep. But we must have a humble posture, we must be patient, and gracious, and we must have a readiness to listen and learn.

This in turn will serve as an example to them to be ready and willing to repent and be reconciled to one another. Indeed, one of the ways by which we shepherd them is by showing them the example to follow (1 Peter 5:3).

The Sheep Still Struggle With Sin

Christ hasn't called us to shepherd morally and

spiritually perfect sheep. Otherwise, there would be no need for the leadership and discipline of the shepherd. They are learning to put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit (Romans 8:13). They will sin against the shepherd, against one another, and against God.

The pastor therefore will find himself repeating the same instructions and exhortations. Repeating ourselves can be tiresome and frustrating, but Paul sets us a good example. He said:

“For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

The sheep will sometimes speak slanderously against you, attribute failures in the church to you, or even have unnecessary expectations for you or your family. All these have the potential to discourage.

The pastor, however, must remember to be patient, bearing with their sins, weaknesses, and imperfections. They are on the battlefield against sin and Satan, so treat them gently and graciously.

Tonny Karwa is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Kisumu, and a missionary with Heart Cry Missionary Society. Before his call to full-time ministry, Tonny studied Mechanical Engineering at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, and theology at Trinity Baptist College in Nairobi.

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ON PAPYRUS

Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin

One of the most prominent mediums by which the Scriptures were recorded for us was on papyrus.

Papyrus grows mostly in the Nile Delta in Egypt and began to be used for writing books as far back as 3000 BC. Papyrus is a reed that grows between 7 and 16 feet in height and has a long three-sided stalk without joints, which is roughly the thickness of the human wrist.

To manufacture it into a writing material, the hard, outer shell was cut away, which revealed the softer pithy centre. The Greeks called this biblos, the word from which we get our term “Bible.”

This centre was then cut into thin strips. These were placed side by side on a hard, smooth surface, while other strips were placed at right

angles in a layer over them. These two layers were then fused by means of a press that broke down the cellular structure of the papyrus fibres and released the juice of the pithy centre that acted as glue.

This formed a sheet that was then dried, trimmed, and the surface smoothed out with pumice stone.

The size of a single sheet ranged from 4 inches to 11 inches in width and from 8 inches to a foot in length. For a biblical reference to a single sheet, see 2 John 12.

The next step in the process was to paste individual sheets together with a flour paste to form a long strip. This long strip was then rolled up as a scroll with wooden dowels at either end. It is reckoned that the two longest books of the New Testament—Luke and Acts—would have filled scrolls of about 30 to 32 feet in length.

The side with the fibres running horizontally was called the recto, and the side with the fibres running vertically was called the verso. A standard roll had about twenty sheets and ran to about eleven and a half feet. The scroll was rolled up with the recto, the side for writing on, facing inwards for protection. Writing on both sides of the papyrus was quite unusual. It is thus interesting that the scroll mentioned in Revelation 5:1 was “written on the inside [the recto] and on the back [the verso].”

Once a papyrus scroll was produced, it was often wrapped in cloth or leather and stored in some kind of container, usually a jar. All of the original copies of the books of the New Testament, which scholars call ‘autographs’, were written on papyrus.

Today, we have 97 papyri of various portions of the New Testament. The oldest papyrus fragment is called “p52.” It contains five verses from John’s Gospel of John, namely, John 18:31-33, 37-38. This fragment dates from A.D.

125, perhaps only about 30 years after the death of the Apostle John. Virtually no other book from the ancient world is so well attested as our New Testament.

Since most papyrus grew in the Nile Delta, Egypt eventually came to supply papyrus for most of the Mediterranean world and it became a major book production centre. In fact, the library of Alexandria was deemed one of the wonders of the ancient world and made Alexandria a centre for scholarship.

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DEVOTIONAL: WISE MEN SEEK THE LORD JESUS

Pastor John Dyck

In Matthew 2 we read the amazing story of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ which fills our hearts with wonder.

What can we learn from this story of the birth of our Lord Jesus?

We learn firstly, the Lord has His people in all parts of the world. We don't know much about these wise men, but we know that they were foreigners who came from the east. They were willing to leave the comfort of their home and make a diligent search, making inquiries along the way: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.

We learn secondly that not everyone who seeks the Lord has good motives or desires.

King Herod, threatened by the presence of this baby, shows interest and asks the wise men to report back to him. His heart however was filled with murder.

We learn thirdly, that those who seek the Lord Jesus will find and worship Him. These wise men yielded their wealth and authority to the King who lay in a manger. By faith, they bowed down and worshipped. They did so with great joy and offered Him their treasured gifts.

We learn fourthly, that all of these events had been decreed by a sovereign God. Matthew records no less than four prophecies of the Old Testament that are fulfilled by these events. Although some of the details may seem insignificant in our eyes, God shows them to be an important part of His plan of redemption.

Behold the wonderful works of God! Have you searched diligently for the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you worship Him, giving up your most valued treasures? He is worthy.

Pastor John Dyck graduated from Western Reformed Seminary in Tacoma, WA (USA) in 1989. He has pastored Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church in Canada since 1990. John has visited East Africa many times.