

STRAIGHT PATHS

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"...and make straight paths for your feet..." Hebrews 12:13

EDITORIAL

The world is chaotic; we see companies that flourished during the pandemic laying off thousands of employees, floods and droughts, wars, rapid political changes, new virus variants, the rise and fall of social media platforms, etc. If we close our eyes and try to reflect on our own lives, we find that our lives are often in a mess - perhaps our messy room betrays this. Jordan Peterson, in his Twelve Rules for Life says: "Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world." We can take this further to setting our hearts right. The remedy for the chaotic world is the order in God's word.

In apologetics, we critique the Big Bang theory, which is a chaotic contrast to the systematic creation account of Genesis 1. In the Holy Bible section, Thomson B Thomas explains different methods to study God's word. In Life Issues, Eby Varghese writes about how the Lord systematically disciplined the twelve. The process of disciplining continues today. In Missions we read of the gospel reaching Tibet. In our Devotional, we learn about prayer, which takes us away from the chaos of the world to God's peaceful presence. May God's peace be with you as you read this edition of Straight Paths.

Johnny Varghese

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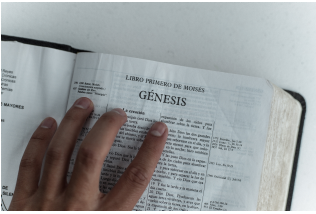
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Straight Paths Team

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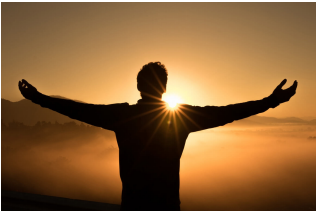
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Rupert Clarke

Straight Paths Team

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GOSPEL

The Victory Of Good Over Evil

Straight Paths Team

The Gospel Presents The Ultimate Victory Of God Over Evil

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STRAIGHT PATHS

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE – THE BIG BANG THEORY

JOHNNY VARGHESE

In this series of articles, we have been exploring the relationship between science and the Bible. We have been observing that not everything in science is observed or proven. Therefore, believers must not be dismayed or confused when the scientific narrative disagrees with the Bible. In the previous article, we analyzed scientists’ methods to estimate the age of the earth and listed the assumptions involved. The following are the scientific theories about origins:

1. The Big Bang Theory on the origin of the universe - the topic of this article
2. The Nebular Hypothesis regarding the formation of the sun and the earth
3. The theory of evolution about the origin of living things

Before the 20th century, secular scientists believed the universe was eternal and unchanging. However, several observations changed their views.

Between 1900 and 1920, Albert Einstein proposed a new theory of gravity to supersede Isaac Newton’s earlier theory, called general relativity. Einstein made several dramatic predictions, all remarkably confirmed in the last hundred years. A Russian scientist, Alexander Friedman, made some simplifying assumptions and concluded from Einstein’s theory that the universe must have begun as a point that expanded rapidly. He published his analysis in 1922. Taking this work forward, Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest, proposed the Big Bang theory in 1927.

The theory claims that the universe began as a point of infinite temperature. This point expanded. As the universe cooled, the energy condensed into matter. Some parts were a little denser than others. Due to gravity, the denser parts became denser, and the sparser parts became more sparse – thus, stars and galaxies (aggregates of stars) were formed. This theory is the prevailing atheist narrative about the origin of the universe.

“A Russian scientist, Alexander Friedman, made some simplifying assumptions and concluded from Einstein’s theory that the universe must have begun as a point that expanded rapidly.”

In 1929, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe was indeed expanding. This strongly suggested that the universe must have begun as a point sometime in the past.

In 1948, the Russian physicist George Gamow predicted that if the universe began as a very compact and hot energy capsule, there should be an “afterglow” left of faint radio waves.

In 1965, two Bell Lab scientists, Robert Wilson and Arno Penzias (who knew nothing about George Gamow), were testing a radio receiver. They noticed microwaves of the same wavelength coming from all directions in space - the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (CMBR). This was apparently the “afterglow” that George Gamow had predicted. Today, the CMBR is regarded as the “smoking gun” of the Big Bang, the best piece of evidence. Other explanations of the CMBR didn’t match its features well. As the CMBR continues to be examined with better and better probes, debates continue on whether the newly found features support or oppose the Big Bang Theory.

There are at least two similarities between the Big Bang theory and what the Bible says about the creation of the universe:

1. The universe had a beginning. The CMBR could be the remnant of the light God created in Genesis 1:3.
2. The universe has expanded (Jeremiah 51:15).

Secular scientists noticed this, so they were initially uncomfortable with the Big Bang theory - it was too close to theism! A director of one of NASA’s space programs put it this way: “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries” [Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, W.W. Norton publishers, 1978.]

“As the CMBR continues to be examined with better and better probes, debates continue on whether the newly found features support or oppose the Big Bang Theory.”

Conversely, some Christians are very pleased: “This is good news for Christians because for more than 2,500 years the Bible and biblical commentaries were the only books proclaiming the fundamental features of big bang cosmology.” – Ross, H., *Cosmic Inflation: It Really Happened*, reasons.org, 3 August 2015.

Such people forget that the similarities between Genesis and the BBT are limited. In Genesis 1, space and the earth are created on Day 1 in verse 1 - there is water (which includes the heavy element oxygen). The sun and stars are made only on Day 4 (verse 14). Light is created after matter. On the other hand, the Big Bang Theory claims that there was light first, then clouds of gas that gradually became stars. Stellar evolution theories claim oxygen and other heavier elements formed when the first stars exploded and died. The earth and sun formed as these materials were recycled (billions of years after the first stars).

There are problems with the Big Bang Theory (BBT). Secular scientists acknowledge these problems but don’t see them as reasons to abandon the theory (as no other naturalistic theory is available).

“the Big Bang Theory claims that there was light first, then clouds of gas that gradually became stars.”

The Horizon Problem: Parts of the universe so far apart that even light has not had the time to travel between them (if the BBT is true) are at the same temperature. This is strange - temperatures are equalized by the flow of heat, which cannot occur faster than light.

The magnetic monopole objection: Every magnet has two poles - North and South. We never find a pole by itself (if you cut a magnet, the ends of both pieces will become North and South poles). But the BBT predicts that such “monopoles” would exist.

Recollapse: If the universe began as a point, and was very small in the early stages, then gravitation should have caused it to collapse.

To rescue the BBT from these problems, a new idea was introduced. It was postulated that the early universe underwent a super-rapid (faster than light) expansion phase. This is called inflation.

The flatness problem: The flatness of space is an abstract concept, but it is analogous to that of a surface – a surface can be flat, convex, or concave (or irregular). Making a flat surface requires deliberate effort. Space seems almost perfectly flat. This suggests deliberate design, not the simple expansion of matter and energy. The inflation rate would have to be precise to account for the flatness of space.

Fine-tuning: The universe’s parameters seem to have precise values supporting life. If the values of these parameters were slightly different, the universe would be vastly different. This suggests that some Agent deliberately chose the values of these parameters.

Baryon asymmetry: When energy becomes matter, it produces matter and antimatter in equal amounts. But as far as we can see, matter predominates in the universe. Antimatter is only seen in small quantities in nuclear experiments. In a 2011 Discovery Channel (Australia) program *How the Universe Works*, physicist Lawrence Krauss says that for every billion antimatter particles, there were billion and one matter particles, and we are made of the single particles that remained after the matter and antimatter mutually annihilated each other. But in the lab, it’s always billion and billion. So the Big Bang Theory needs to assume miracles.

Galaxy distribution: The Sloan Digital Sky Survey was an effort to observe as many galaxies as possible. The data show that the galaxies are denser closer in than further out; this contradicts the BBT. To understand why, first note that when we look far out, we see the early universe, as the light takes time to travel to us. According to the BBT, the matter was closer to each other than now.

The missing satellite problem (or dwarf galaxy problem): The number of dwarf galaxies orbiting normal galaxies is far less than that predicted by the BBT.

The Too Big to Fail problem: The BBT predicts a much bigger size for the dwarf galaxies than is actually observed.

The angular momentum catastrophe: The BBT predicts the shape of disc-like galaxies wrong – small and centrally concentrated – whereas they are found to be large and uniform.

“The data show that the galaxies are denser closer in than further out; this contradicts the BBT. To understand why, first note that when we look far out, we see the early universe, as the light takes time to travel to us.”

One of the successes claimed by the Big Bang Theory is that it can predict the relative abundance of elements in the universe. There exists a parameter (called the baryon to photon ratio) – setting a certain value for this gives the correct (observed) relative abundances (75% hydrogen, 23% helium, etc.) of the elements, at least roughly. But there is a catch! Setting the required value of the above parameter also implies a certain aggregate of baryonic (ordinary) matter in the universe. But from how the galaxies tug at each other, they seem incredibly massive – the universe appears much more massive than the Big Bang Theory allows. Therefore, scientists have posited the existence of “dark matter” - vast amounts of exotic stuff, unlike anything that anyone has ever seen. This led to a new problem. According to the theory, if the universe has so much matter, gravity would cause it to collapse. So something else must push it apart – this thing was called Dark Energy.

In the final analysis, scientists say that the universe is 5% baryonic (ordinary) matter, 25% dark matter, and 70% dark energy. In other words, 95% of the universe is made up of entirely unknown stuff, unlike anything that anyone has seen, and the only reason scientists believe in this stuff is that it upholds the Big Bang theory. So much for explaining the universe!

To summarise, the Big Bang Theory has minimal similarity with the Bible: the universe had a beginning, and it has expanded. This was enough to make atheists of the early 1900s uncomfortable, but it is not enough to justify the claim that the BBT agrees with the Bible. While the BBT has some circumstantial evidence to support it, several observations are incompatible with it. The BBT pulls on with fudge factors and imaginary props such as inflation and dark matter. Atheists believe it because there is nothing else that they are willing to believe. For those who believe that the Bible is God’s word, the BBT is no valid reason to question our beliefs or force an interpretation of Genesis.

“The Big Bang Theory has minimal similarity with the Bible: the universe had a beginning, and it has expanded.”

STUDY METHODS

THOMSON B THOMAS

One of the noblest pursuits a child of God can embark upon is to get to know and understand God better. The best way to accomplish this is to look carefully at the book He has given, the Bible, which communicates who He is and His plan for humanity. If knowing God and glorifying Him is the noblest pursuit intended for humans, studying God's book, the Holy Bible, is inevitable. However, this calls for commitment and discipline if we should gain anything from the Book. According to the nature and interest of each person, an approach to the study of God's word may be developed.

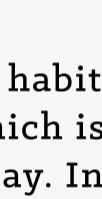
There are mainly three approaches to Bible reading or study.

Quiet time

Many have found this method to keep a closer walk with the Lord. Especially those who lead a busy life, who have little time to spare but still do not want to miss out on their walk with God, maintain a quiet time in their lives. The way to keep quiet time differs from person to person. Usually, the total time spent is about thirty minutes. It is divided into reading, meditation, and prayers. Some who are interested may take time to sing also. Short portions, such as paragraphs or chapters, are chosen for reading. Careful reading will be followed by meditation on the matters in the passage. This will direct their hearts to worship God. Developing a habit of keeping quiet time can help spiritual health and vitality. It enables the person to keep their heart riveted on God for the whole day. Though this can be held anywhere, it would be good to have it when we are least disturbed, at best early morning.



This action of God with His word, regenerating, is termed the 'washing of regeneration'



Devotional Reading

This is about developing a regular Bible-reading habit. Reading the Bible once a year will be helpful, which is possible if three or four chapters are read each day. In the long run, this could help to familiarize us with the Bible. There are many helpful Daily Bible reading plans, for example, Robert McCheyne's Bible reading plan. According to this plan, a person reads from four parts of the Bible. This plan helps us to keep in touch with the different parts of the Bible equally.

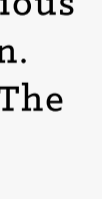
The following points or steps may express guidelines for devotional reading preparation.

1. Read daily. Many find this difficult to do. If we are not committed enough to read the Bible regularly, the chances are that we may not continue reading at all. Psychologists say we will develop anything as a habit if we do it regularly for twenty-one days.
2. Set a regular reading time.
3. Set a regular place for reading. From the Gospels, we understand that even for Jesus, there were certain places where He was accustomed to going for a prayer.
4. Read with a pen at hand. This may be to underline or mark the words or verses that touch us. Some brief jottings also can help us in future. We often think we will remember whatever we read in our study or meditation. But the fact is that we hardly remember anything. Only a tiny percentage of what we study lingers in our minds with clarity. Thus, writing it down is essential.
5. Read devotionally. This means to read, looking for messages directed to you,
6. Keep a daily spiritual journal. Write the day and date at the top of the page. Write the scripture passage. As you study and ponder over some important things, make notes of them. Somebody has suggested the following points to record in the journal.

- God's message for my life today
- A promise from God
- A command to keep
- A timeless principle
- An application for my life



This action of God with His word, regenerating, is termed the 'washing of regeneration'



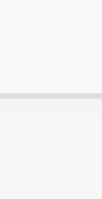
Bible Study

Here we mention the Bible Study methods of serious Bible students. This must be our primary concern. There are various types of Bible study methods. The following are the major ones.

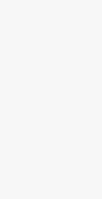
1. The Synthetic method. 'Synthesis' means to put together. This is by finding the book's central theme by reading and rereading. An example is the epistle to Colossians. The topic is Christ and the church. This we come to know only by careful reading and analysis. Similarly, the subject in Ephesians is believers and the church. The epistle to Galatians has liberty in Christ as its theme. Here, look for distinct themes running through the book or passage. See how those themes develop. Find one verse or passage that states the theme more clearly than any other. And see how all the parts relate to the book's central theme.
2. The Biographical method. The Bible contains many illustrations of the lives of individuals and families. The study of those characters is challenging. Their faithfulness or failures are guidelines and warnings for us.
3. The Analytical method. This is by pulling apart sections of scripture, words, or phrases, then analyzing them in detail.
4. The topical method. This method studies various topics in the Bible. The Bible is not written topically. Truths are scattered in various portions. One must go through all the verses which elaborate on the topic and bring out all matters concerning it.
5. The practical method. This is looking for practical application.

Those who are ardent students of the Word may choose any one or more of the above methods, or any others, that fit their interest.

Observation, interpretation, and application are involved in any of these methods. The study of the Word of God is called 'labor' (1 Tim. 5:17). But anybody who devotes themselves to this discipline shall never be in spiritual poverty. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).



We must accept it as the supreme authority over our lives. It is necessary to have that commitment to the Word to obey it in any circumstance



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DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLING THE TWELVE

EBY VARGHESE

In the previous issue, we started a new series on Christian discipleship. We observed the biblical meaning and the implications of discipleship. In this article, we will examine how the Master Himself trained twelve men in discipleship. How Jesus dealt with His disciples in various situations gives us deeper insights into what it means to live as a disciple. Throughout the gospels, we can find several instances where Jesus took the opportunity to train the twelve. Observe His words in Matthew 4:19, where He tells His disciples – “I will make you fishers of men”. He didn’t say – you will become fishers of men; instead, I will make you! Jesus put these twelve ordinary men into intense training throughout His ministry’s three and half years. Consequently, they turned the world upside down after the ascension of Jesus to heaven. Who better than Jesus can teach us about discipleship? To keep this series short, we will skip examining all four gospels and focus only on Luke chapter 9.

Luke chapter 9 focuses on Jesus’ mission, ministry, and the disciples’ experiences as they follow Him. We see Jesus demonstrating His power through miracles and teaching His followers about the importance of commitment and faith. Additionally, we see Jesus preparing His disciples for His death and resurrection and warning them about the challenges they will face as they continue to spread the gospel. Throughout His teaching on discipleship, Jesus emphasizes the importance of a personal relationship with Him. He calls His disciples to follow Him, to learn from Him, and to imitate Him. He promises to be with them always and to empower them through the Holy Spirit to fulfill their mission of spreading the gospel to all nations.

Power and authority from the Lord (Luke 9:1-2)

Jesus called His disciples and gave them the power and authority to preach God’s kingdom and perform miracles. In Matt. 28:18, Jesus claimed, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”. The power and authority given to the disciples demonstrate Jesus’ divine authority and power. It also allows them to perform miracles, which serves as a sign of the truth of their message and Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. As modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ, we can draw courage and strength from the fact that our Master has given us the power and authority to be effective witnesses for Him. Here are some practical applications of having power and authority in discipleship:

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Throughout His teaching on discipleship, Jesus emphasizes the importance of a personal relationship with Him. He calls His disciples to follow Him, to learn from Him, and to imitate Him.

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1. Using power and authority to serve others: The power and authority given to disciples should be used to serve others and demonstrate God’s love and compassion. This can include praying for the sick, providing for the needs of the poor, advocating for justice and righteousness, etc.

2. Demonstrating humility and servant leadership: Disciples should use their power and authority to serve others with humility and a willingness to put others’ needs above their own. This means using their influence to lift others rather than seeking to elevate themselves.

3. Submitting to God’s will and purpose: Power and authority should always be used as per God’s will and purpose. Disciples should seek to discern God’s leading and direction in all they do and use their power and authority to further God’s kingdom rather than their own agenda.

4. Cultivating a personal relationship with Jesus: True power and authority in discipleship come from a personal relationship with Jesus based on faith, obedience, and surrender to His lordship. Disciples should prioritize cultivating this relationship through prayer, studying God’s Word, and fellowship with other believers.

In summary, having power and authority in discipleship is a responsibility that should be taken seriously and used for the benefit of others and to serve God’s purposes. By using our power and authority in these ways, we can demonstrate the love and compassion of God and further His kingdom on earth.

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Disciples should seek to discern God’s leading and direction in all they do and use their power and authority to further God’s kingdom rather than their own agenda.

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Trust and confidence in the Lord (Luke 9:3-6)

This was the first time the disciples were asked to go out on their own to proclaim the message of the Kingdom. However, Jesus puts a strange condition before them. He tells them not to carry anything on their way. No food, extra clothes, money, or even a staff. He even told them to stay at one house. Observe the list given by Jesus carefully. He was asking them to have no expectations or worries about the following:

- Essentials of life
- A better lifestyle
- Rejection by people

Depending on the Lord entirely is a crucial aspect of the Christian faith and discipleship. It involves putting our trust and confidence in God and relying on Him for all our physical and spiritual needs. Here are some practical applications of depending on the Lord entirely:

Seeking God’s guidance and direction: Depending on the Lord involves seeking His guidance and direction in all aspects of our lives. This can include seeking His will for our careers, relationships, and other important decisions. By seeking His guidance, we acknowledge that God knows what is best for us and trust His wisdom and provision.

Trusting in God’s provision: Depending on the Lord also involves trusting in His provision for our physical and material needs. This means relying on Him for our daily bread and trusting that He will provide for us as we seek first His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Surrendering control to God: Depending on the Lord requires offering control to Him and acknowledging that He is the one who is ultimately in control. This can involve letting go of our plans and desires and submitting to His will, even when it may not align with our own.

Finding strength and comfort in God: Depending on the Lord involves finding our strength and comfort in Him rather than our own abilities or the things of this world. We can find peace amid trials and strength to overcome our struggles by relying on Him.

In summary, depending on the Lord completely involves putting our trust and confidence in God and relying on Him for all our needs. By doing so, we can experience His provision, guidance, and comfort in our lives and grow in our relationship with Him as His disciples.

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By seeking His guidance, we acknowledge that God knows what is best for us and trust His wisdom and provision

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THE PRAYER OF THE RIGHTEOUS

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

The vitality and effectiveness of our life largely depend on the quality of our prayer life. For many, prayers are just mumbling – a means of satisfying themselves that they have prayed. James, in his very practical letter, dwells on prayer life also. He says,

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit” – James 5: 16-18.

James wants his readers to develop an effective prayer life, so he gives them a command and an illustration for prayer in these verses. This is God’s will concerning all His people. He wants all to trust in Him and live lives enjoying the blessings of prayer.

The Bible is full of instructions for prayer life. We must pray without ceasing; we must be holy while praying; we must pray in the will of God; we must have unity with others while praying. The conditions laid down in the scripture for prayer are many. These show how vital our prayer life is. One of James’ statements is: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” From this one statement, we may draw out two instructions at least about prayer.

Firstly, we must be righteous. In the New Testament, righteousness is seen in two ways, imputed and practical. Both these may be applied here. Imputed righteousness is the righteousness of Jesus Christ being reckoned to our account. This is available to all who put their trust in Jesus Christ. As such, the moment he believes, the good of Jesus’ life and death is applied to him. Then, in the sight of God, positionally, he is as righteous as Jesus is. He becomes a child of God at that very moment. He can call God his Father. He has the Holy Spirit residing in him to help him pray. We may call this the basic essential to drawing near to God in prayer.

The term righteousness also points to the necessity of a righteous life. Those who are made righteous by imputation must also live righteously. If there is no practical righteousness, there is no point in saying we are righteous. What we claim to be must be seen actually in practice. Otherwise, the righteousness that is claimed must be doubted. When we draw near to God, He expects us to be holy. Psalmist says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. 66:18). This shows that a holy, righteous life is a prerequisite to an effective prayer life.

The conditions laid down in the scripture for prayer are many. These show how vital our prayer life is.

Secondly, our prayers must be fervent. James says about the effective, fervent prayers of the righteous man. The word ‘fervent’ indicates involving in a work with full ability or power. It gives an idea of wrestling in prayer, just as Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord in the Ford Jabbok (Gen. 32). Epaphras was “always laboring fervently for you in prayers” (Col. 4:12). Similarly, Jesus agonized in prayers and petitions to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane. Such should be our prayers also to be effective. Most of the time, we do not get our prayers answered positively because we have become casual and easy in our prayers.

The illustration James gives is that of Elijah. He says, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain.” First, James ensures that no one would say the illustration is above the normal level. He says Elijah was a man with a nature like any other person. To show this, it is sufficient to see his response to Jezebel’s threat. We see him under a juniper tree, complaining in self-pity. He desired that God would put an end to his life. He thought that he was the ‘one-man army for God’s cause’. It is not very difficult to see our reflection in his behavior. He was a man very much like any of us. But he wrestled in prayer.

The illustration of his fervent prayer is seen when he shut the skies from giving rain, and after three and half years, he ordered the skies to give rain again. According to his instructions, the skies obeyed. The reason for this we see in his fervency in prayer. He wrestled in secret prayer with God before standing before King Ahab and stopping the rains. On Mount Carmel, we see him wrestling in prayer after he tells king Ahab that there is a sound of abundant rain (1 Kings 17, 18). His prayers are also seen at the raising of the Shunamite’s son and when he fought against the prophets of Baal. His fervency in prayer is evident on Mount Carmel. “And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, cast himself down upon the earth, put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, looked, and said, there is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand” (1 Kg. 18:41-44). This gives a glimpse into Elijah’s wrestling in prayer.

It is necessary to make our prayer life real and that we avail much through fervent prayers. Without it, we are missing a better life available to us.

He desired that God would put an end to his life. He thought that he was the ‘one-man army for God’s cause’.



RUPERT CLARKE

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

Rupert Clarke was an English doctor. When his mother was pregnant, she was tempted to abort him, but thankfully didn't. In his childhood, he often stayed at his grandmother's place, where daily prayer and going to church on Sundays were adhered to without fail. He learned the Bible there and tried to live a good life. However, when he went to college, two friends at the Christian fellowship he joined, Robert A. Pearce and James Cecil Pedley, sensed that his Christianity was a mere facade. They prayed for him and lent him a book. Upon reading it, Rupert finally realized that the assurance of salvation rests on God's promises, not human efforts. He trusted in the Lord Jesus and invited Him to take control of his life as he knelt by his bed.

While studying medicine, Rupert contracted mumps. Confined to bed in his grandmother's home, he read the book "A Thousand Miles of Miracle in China", which details the dangerous trek of the Glover family, missionaries who were taken from Shanxi to Shanghai during the Boxer Rebellion. Clarke was deeply moved and became burdened by the needs of the Chinese. His attention soon shifted to Tibet, an even more difficult place.

Upon reading it, Rupert finally realized that the assurance of salvation rests on God's promises, not human efforts

The people who lived across the Tibetan Plateau were devout believers in Tibetan Buddhism. One out of every four adult males was a lama (monk). At that time, infectious diseases such as syphilis, leprosy, smallpox, plague, and diphtheria were rampant. Due to the lack of medical care, the only prevention method was to isolate the sick, even to the point of casting them out of the community for life.

The China Inland Mission had been trying to reach Tibet for many years. Clarke joined them and worked in Lanzhou, Gansu Province. He suffered severe jaundice on a mission trip to the neighboring Ningxia province. The China Inland Mission (CIM) immediately sent nurse Jeannette Barbour to care for Clarke. Jeannette was born in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and trained as a nurse in Edinburgh, Scotland. After his recovery, they both decided to get married.

After years of prayer, in 1949, Clarke got to set up a hospital in Hualong, in Qinghai province. Medical supplies left by the American military during World War 2 served as his initial stock. Hualong sits 10,000 feet above sea level and has thin air. The ground is unfrozen only four months of the year, and only in August is there no snow. Rupert and Jeannette, pregnant with their first baby, moved in of one mind — unafraid of hardships, all to serve the Lord of their lives and the Tibetans they loved. On one occasion, their car's fuel pump broke down. Clarke pulled his stethoscope out of his medical bag, held the gas can on top of the car, and guided the gas through the tube of the stethoscope and into the engine. He managed to fix the car, and he could continue.

They turned the clinic into a facility with 20 beds, which they named Holy Light Hospital. That same year, they saw as many as 3,590 patients and performed 160 surgeries. Jeannette held their newborn son, Humphrey, in one hand and carried out her nursing duties with the other. Soon the word about the hospital and Clarke's exceptional attitude as a doctor spread far and wide. People said, "This foreign doctor is very good to Tibetans, treating them the way he treats Han (mainstream) Chinese." Sometimes traveling for weeks, Tibetans and lamas came on horses, yaks, or on foot in large groups to seek medical treatment. When they arrived at the hospital, they would hear the gospel for the first time, undergo surgery, recover, and joyfully return home with a New Testament or gospel pamphlet. There were often no free beds. Sometimes patients had to leave before they fully recovered to make space for more seriously ill people flooding in. Clarke thought serving Tibetans was "a great deal" because they had a strong will to live and were grateful. However, he was disappointed at the Han Chinese Christians' sluggishness in learning Tibetan and taking the gospel to Tibetans.

In 1950, in the wake of the communist takeover of China and Tibet, China Inland Mission withdrew from China. Rupert was one of the few missionaries who remained stranded in China. When the communists caught him, they let his wife and children leave but detained him. They accused him of being a Western spy and of killing some of his patients. The thousand Tibetans at his trial stood by him, but the communist mayor yelled, "Kill him," so he was put in a crowded cell. This changed to house arrest. During this time, Rupert lived on a diet of bread and soup made with rotting cabbage leaves. He was all alone, but occasionally Christians, at great risk, brought him a little food. The communists shut down the Hualong hospital in 1950, and in 1953, Clarke and another missionary (Arthur Mathews of Mongolia) were the last to leave, ending Western missions in Tibet. However, in answer to Clarke's prayer, the Han Chinese Christians began their work. Although Rupert could not enter China again, he continued serving other people in East Asia.

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This article is adapted from a February-20, 2023, Christianity Today article by Xuan Ji-ren. His biography, *No Way Back*, by Phyllis Thompson, is out of print. Another source of information is "They left all" by Merle Lamprecht, Jeanette's niece.

HYMN STORY

ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

Edward Perronet was born in England in 1726. He was descended from the Huguenots, French Protestants who had to flee France due to Roman Catholic persecution. He was ordained as a minister in the Anglican Church but soon became convinced that much of what was believed and practiced in it was not Biblical. He joined the Wesley brothers, who were founding Methodist congregations. He suffered for Christ. On one occasion, he was beaten and pushed into muddy water. He would hesitate to preach when the Wesley brothers were around, preferring that they speak. In one church meeting, John Wesley announced, "Brother Perronet will preach now". Edward got up to the pulpit and said, "I will now deliver the best sermon ever preached on earth". When all the heads turned, he read out the Sermon on the Mount. While humble, he was also stubborn and struggled to get along with others. He had firm beliefs and tended to sour relationships with those he disagreed with. He eventually split from the Wesleys and pastored an independent congregation.

In his old age, he wrote several small books that included his composed hymns. One of these books, Occasional Verses, Moral and Sacred, contains as its third entry the hymn titled "On the Resurrection," now known as "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." The song is a magnificent treatise on God's great triumph in redeeming humanity. God, through the "stem of Jesse's rod...saves you by His grace". We, "sinners whose love can never forget the wormwood and the gall...ransomed from the fall", will "spread your trophies at His feet". Not only the "chosen seed of Israel's race" but "every kindred and every tribe on this terrestrial ball" and even "angels prostrate fall". We will "join the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all!". No theme could be more outstanding.

William Shrubsole, a friend of his, composed a tune for the song called Miles Lane (tunes have names, too!). However, this tune has given way to two other uplifting melodies.

A few years after the song's release, Oliver Holden of Massachusetts composed "Coronation," a two-beat tune, which, as the name suggests, sounds suitable to accompany the coronation of a king. It is popular in North America.

James Ellor composed a third tune, Diadem, in 1838, when he was just 19, for the anniversary of a Wesleyan Sunday school in Manchester. This three-beat tune also conveys royal grandeur. For those of us who like choral or congregational singing with parts, this is "the tune".

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Not only the "chosen seed of Israel's race" but "every kindred and every tribe on this terrestrial ball" and even "angels prostrate fall". We will "join the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all!". No theme could be more outstanding.

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The last verse originally read:

*Let every tribe and every tongue that bound creation's call,
Now shout in universal song, the crowned Lord of All!*

In 1787, John Rippon modified it to:

*Oh that, with yonder sacred throng, we at his feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all.*

This version has stuck.

A missionary to India called E. P. Scott felt burdened to visit an aggressive tribe. Despite being dissuaded by others, he set out and reached the place where they stayed after several days. He was soon surrounded by several men, their spears pointing toward his heart. He closed his eyes, whispered a prayer, took out his violin, and began playing and singing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name". When he reached the words, 'Let every kindred, every tribe,' he opened his eyes. There stood the warriors, some in tears, every spear lowered. Scott would go on to spend a great deal of time spreading the Gospel among the tribe.

May this hymn lift our hearts even more as we continue to use it to sing praise to the Lord who died for us but is now exalted and crowned Lord of all.

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GOSPEL

THE VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

The month of March marks the grand celebration of the festival of Holi. The mythological story associated with the celebration of Holi is the triumph of good over evil. The festival is linked to several Hindu legends, the most popular being the story of Holika and Prahlad. According to the legend, the demon king Hiranyakashipu wanted to kill his son Prahlad, a devotee of Lord Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu's sister, Holika, who had the boon of being immune to fire, tried to burn Prahlad alive. However, Lord Vishnu saved Prahlad, and Holika was burnt to ashes. Hence, the festival signifies the victory of good over evil. Although the story of Holika and Prahlad has no historical evidence, it is essential to recognize that the story is a part of the religious and cultural beliefs of the people who widely celebrate this festival. Generally, we all enjoy a story where good overpowers evil. The entire entertainment industry thrives on this storyline. People like to believe that in the end, good will defeat evil! Is it the stories like these that give hope to humanity that good will triumph? Or, is there a real reason we can know that?

The Holy Bible says, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54-55). This passage refers to the victory over death achieved through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Once the ultimate and inevitable end for all people, death has been defeated through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection. This victory over death is available to all who believe in Jesus and accept His gift of salvation. As a result, anyone who puts their faith in Jesus can hope for eternal life beyond the grave and the assurance that death is not the end but merely a transition into a new and glorious existence.

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This victory over death is available to all who believe in Jesus and accept His gift of salvation.

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The victory of good over evil is a popular storyline in our culture. However, its ultimate manifestation was seen on the cross of Calvary, where the son of God defeated sin by rising from the dead on the third day. Unlike popular mythologies, Jesus Christ did not kill anyone to defeat evil. Instead, He sacrificed Himself and conquered evil. Dear friend, a loving God sent His only begotten son to die for your sins. It's not a myth but a historical event with undeniable evidence. He has defeated evil once and for all. You can put your faith in this victorious Christ and be saved from your sins.

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Straight Paths is a bimonthly e-zine which exists to edify young believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in their Christian life, to help them apply Biblical principles in their daily lives, and to equip them to share their faith with others. It also exists to serve anyone else who may have an interest in the Bible.

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