

Today's Quick Word Psalm 74:12, 16-17

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 74:12, 16-17 *But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth. ... The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon. It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter.*

This is one of the many 'How long?' psalms. The psalmist, Asaph, is truly confused. He knows that his God is a God who saves - not just that he CAN, but that he DOES: "You bring salvation upon the earth". Asaph has more than enough evidence from the past for this belief - it is not 'blind faith' (see verses 2, 13-15). But as he did in the previous psalm, he looks at his current circumstances in the light of this belief and asks, "Why have you rejected us for ever, O God? Why does your anger smoulder against the sheep of your pasture?" (1).

There are many places throughout the world today where Christians could identify closely with the feelings expressed in these psalms, and are probably asking "How long?" Even in countries like our own, the true Gospel - based on Jesus as the only Saviour, the only hope for life beyond the grave, and the Bible as God's infallible revealed truth - is constantly being mocked

and openly challenged and rejected as politically unacceptable. It is good, therefore, for us to reflect deeply on what stimulates Asaph's faith in the midst of such discouragement. He knows that the God who 'brings salvation' is the God who brought the Universe into being out of nothing, who 'ESTABLISHED the sun and the moon'; he knows that the God who 'brings salvation' is the God who controls the day and the night, the summer and the winter, and all the boundaries of the earth - in fact, he is the God who is in full control of 'climate change'!

The Apostle Paul could well have been drawing on Psalm 74 when he 'preached' at the Areopagus in Athens: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:24-27). Yes, our God is a God who saves!

Today's Quick Word 2 Samuel 20:1

By Bruce Christian

2 SAMUEL 20:1 *Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bicri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted, "We have no share in David, no part in Jesse's son! Every man to his tent, O Israel!"*

It is good to read through 2 Samuel just to get a feel for the circumstances, the atmosphere, within which David wrote all his psalms! His whole life was one of constant stress, not just the pressure of the hostilities of the surrounding nations, but perhaps even more stressful, the gut-wrenching heartache that emanated from the godless intrigue and turmoil that was part and parcel of Israel's internal affairs. Killing Goliath at the launching of his political career was chicken-feed compared with what he had to endure throughout his leadership of his people as their God's anointed King.

The years of being 'king' without being king, during the years between Samuel's anointing of him and the death of Saul, were bad enough. But the attempted coup by his own son, Absalom, the subsequent untimely death of Absalom, the ongoing vying for power by the tribes that wanted to remain loyal to Saul's legacy, and the constant friction among his own would-be supporters, should have been enough to break the strongest man. However, David had something that enabled him to persevere where others would have given up. He could write: "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour - from violent men you save me." (2 Samuel 22:2-3; cf 32-33; Psalm 18).

O that God would raise up for US such national leaders today!

Today's Quick Word Galatians 1:11-12

By Bruce Christian

GALATIANS 1:11-12 *I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

This is an amazing and bold claim for Paul to make. Throughout history, others have made similar claims, and some of these can boast impressive followings even today to back up their claims. The Koran and the Book of Mormon would be two such claims.

But Paul's claim is intrinsically different. His gospel is firmly rooted in God's revelation of himself in history through the Old Testament Scriptures and in the clearly predicted life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

More than this, and unlike the claims of other religions, HIS

gospel is obviously not the result of human reasoning. Paul's Gospel defies human logic. Who would 'invent' a belief system based on God himself entering his world as a man and suffering death on a cruel, ignominious cross to bear the punishment for man's sin - a concept which is a 'stumbling-block' to Jewish pride and 'foolishness' to Greek intellect (1 Corinthians 1:23)? Who would 'dream up' a set of doctrines that promote servant leadership, and humility, and meekness, and giving up all aspirations for greatness or recognition or ambition or achievement for the sake knowing Christ (see Philippians 3:7-8)? No, Paul's claim IS justified: the Christian faith stands out among all the world's religions as being the one that IS NOT SOMETHING THAT MAN COULD HAVE/WOULD HAVE MADE UP.