

UK BIBLE STUDENTS NEWSLETTER

Mid-November 2009

UNDER THE HARROW: *An Exegesis*

2 Samuel 12: 29, 31 (King James Version)

And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. . . . And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon.

1 Chronicles 20: 3 (King James Version)

And [David] brought out the people that were in [Rabbah], and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon.

It is unremarkable these days to hear the Christian God faulted for His indifference to the suffering of the human condition. In addition, upon this accusation most of the criticisms levelled by atheists against Christianity itself are founded, the charge being that Jehovah is capricious at best, vindictive at worst. The conclusion they lead up to, however, is not merely that He does not exist, but that a Creator of such harsh disposition is untenable. In an odd way, this is an admission by the atheist that if there was a God, He would have to be better than He is portrayed in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. To some extent, the disrepute into which God has fallen is a result of misrepresentation by misunderstanding on the part of those who profess to be His friends.

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REMEMBERING THE CREATOR: *An Allegory*

Ecclesiastes 12: 1-7

These verses seem to present a vivid pen picture of old age — ‘the evil days’ of physical decline and infirmity, ‘when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them’. The world offers its pleasures to the young, who snatch at the delusions; but age has proved them all empty bubbles. The world has nothing substantial to offer, and therefore, unless the mind has found its satisfaction in God, there is indeed no pleasure in old age.

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In the Rear-View Mirror

A Valuable Manuscript Found

Very little authentic information is obtainable thus far concerning the discovery by some ladies of a palimpsest manuscript of the gospels in the library of the Convent of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, except that the find is looked upon by Biblical scholars all over the world as a most important one. Dr. Isaac H. Hall, curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is a well-known student of Syriac, and knew of the discovery long before the news was made public in the newspapers. He said yesterday that he expected to receive definite information from Syria in a few weeks.

As much as he knows now is that these ladies were visiting the convent last year, and while looking over some manuscripts saw one to be a palimpsest. This is the name given to a parchment roll from which the original writing has been erased in order that the parchment may be written on again and which has been writ-

ten on again. No matter how well the original ink is removed, in the course of time the chemicals in the fluid assert themselves, and a faint marking of the original tracings can be seen.

In the case of the present find the ladies did not know whether the parchment was of any value or not, but being equipped with cameras, they photographed several pages and carried them back to London. There the copies were studied by Messrs. Burkitt, R. L. Bensley, and J. Rendel Harris, who found that this was a very old Syriac version of the New Testament. These gentlemen were shortly afterward sent to Mount Sinai by the Pitt Press at Cambridge to make a complete copy and recovery of the valuable Syriac text.

They have thus far learned that the new manuscript contains the gospels complete, but whether it contains more of the New Testament than the gospels has not yet been told. This palimpsest omits the last twelve verses of the Gospel of St. Mark, which Biblical scholars have for a long time considered spurious, and which the two oldest Greek manuscripts omit.

The library of the Convent of Mount Sinai has been a very fruitful field of discovery. In 1844 Tischendorf found there the famous Sinaitic manuscript of the whole New Testament and parts of an old Greek Biblical manuscript of the fourth century.

Zion's Watch Tower, May 15, 1893 (from a report in The Sun (New York), now defunct)

Dragnet

Items of interest from the World Wide Web

Britain

Study to examine animals with human genes

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/11/11/2739867.htm>

The United States

The Dirt on Dust

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120252957>

International

Cluster bombs trade funded by some of world's biggest banks

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/small-arms-and-light-weapons/general-analysis-on-small-arms-and-light-weapons/48406.html>

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