

## The righteous judge

This title is found in 2 Timothy 4:8: “henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”. The context is interesting. At the end of his life the Apostle Paul left the question of his eternal destiny in the hands of the righteous judge. Were we the judge, he would have been condemned to oblivion for his earlier wickedness against the ecclesia. We would not have sought for his conversion, nor would his repentance have appeased our wrath. The tremendous good that was subsequently done for the cause of Christ would have been easily set aside as our revenge was at last obtained.

Perhaps this scenario is too harsh, but certainly Paul was thankful that the judgement of the righteous judge awaits him, and not that of man. The point that he goes on to make should not be lost on us either; the same righteous judge will be ours also. There will be no wriggling out of his justice. No fancy and corrupt counsel will prevail. Wealth will not prevent the right decision, nor poverty either. When we appear, as we all must, before the judgement seat of Christ, we may confidently expect him to act as God and judge rightly. This is a source of great encouragement

to those who love his appearing, and a warning to those who do not.

## “Sun of righteousness”

This title comes from the prophecy of Malachi: “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (4:2). It is not difficult to associate this title with our Lord Jesus. He is elsewhere described as “the dayspring from on high” (Lk. 1:78), “the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16) and “the light of the world” (Jno. 8:12). The reign of the coming King is described in this way in 2 Samuel 23:3,4: “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain”. In this passage the association between the sun and being just is also made.

The natural sun is capable of scorching and destruction, or of providing growth, warmth and life. If we are wicked then the Sun of righteousness will burn us up like stubble (Mal. 4:1). If we fear the Name of God, the extremities (wings) of the Sun will gently warm and heal us, and grant us immortality and youthful vigour.

(To be continued)

## Bible Workshop

# Joseph and his family\*

## 6. Joseph

**J**OSEPH WAS the eleventh of Jacob’s twelve sons, born to Rachel (Gen. 30:22-24). His two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) received the blessing from Jacob (ch. 48) because all the other brothers proved themselves unworthy. We are going to look at the central theme of Joseph’s life, “I seek my brethren” (37:16). In this we see how Joseph *acknowledged* what God had given him, how he *chose* to dedicate his life to the things of God, and then how he *tried* to ‘seek his brethren’ in a self-sacrificing and humble way. He took responsibility for himself, then went after his brothers. “I seek my brethren”—above all, in ecclesial

life, this is what God calls us to do. Joseph’s life revolved solely on this fact. So must ours.

### 1 Although the phrase “I seek my brethren” occurs only once in the story, the idea comes up throughout the story.

- a) Find as many examples in Joseph’s life as you can where he sought the welfare of

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others ahead of his own (remember Christ's response in Luke 10 to being asked, "And who is my neighbour?" [v. 29]).

b) Joseph looked out for all aspects of his brethren's welfare, and we are exhorted to do the same. Find at least five ways we are to care for each other in the ecclesia. Think physically, emotionally and spiritually.

**2 Find passages that speak of one 'seeking' someone out. Look at parables, visions and real-life events. Come up with a minimum of seven examples. How do these examples add to Joseph's 'seeking' of his brethren?**

**3 In Genesis 42, Joseph, as governor of Egypt, sent his brothers away the first time they came to buy corn.**

- a) Why did he do this?
- b) What was he looking for in them?
- c) What was he looking for when he imprisoned all ten of them and asked one of them to go back to their father to get Benjamin?
- d) When he kept Simeon in prison, what was he looking to learn about them here?

**4 Turn to Genesis 50:14-21.**

- a) What was the concern of Joseph's brethren?
- b) How did Joseph react to their words, and why?
- c) Turn to the following passages and discuss what they state about forgiveness.

- Matthew 18:21,22
- Matthew 5:23,24 (be careful when reading this one; who was wronged here?)
- Practically, how can we become more forgiving like Joseph (remember 'acknowledge')?

**5 Joseph changed and matured spiritually as he grew from a boy into a man. His circumstances refined him into the great man of faith we have witnessed. We often get the impression that the faith Joseph had at seventeen is the same he had at thirty. This is not necessarily the case. One area in which he noticeably changed was in his attentiveness to listen and understand what his brothers really needed (Joseph was *not* wrong in how he dealt with his brothers at 17, but he definitely changed his approach when he was older).**

- a) What differences in Joseph's dealings with his brethren can you see when he was thirty from when he was seventeen?
- b) If you can find differences, what does that teach us as young people?
- c) Compare this now to David's life:
  - How did David start out? How did he finish up?
  - Was he stronger or weaker spiritually at the end of his life?
  - If stronger, how?