

STRAIGHT PATHS

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

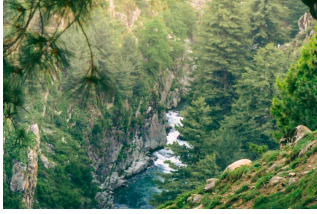
EDITORIAL

If we come to any arena, we do well to observe and understand the rules or conditions under which it operates. A sportsman has to play within the rules. In particular, God has created an order. In apologetics, we learn that the universe works according to mathematical laws. This shows God's existence and handiwork. In redemption, God has set a pattern of covenant and sacrifice. This is a model for us in missions today, as we learn in Life Issues. There is also an order in the presentation of the Lord Jesus in God's word. So much is written about his death, but so little about his youth. In the Jesus Series, we understand that God requires that we accept this order instead of looking to speculative theories. Similarly, in human history, God has an orderly plan concerning Israel and the nations. In the Hymn Story, we see the comforting conviction "Jesus loves me this I know" as part of the order that God has ordained: "for the Bible tells me so". In Missions, we see that human order and tradition can produce stagnation, which the Holy Spirit disrupts. Conversely, war is chaos that humans produce, while God brings peace and order.

As we read this edition of Straight Paths, may God help us to appreciate His created order, fit in to it and function well within it.

Johnny Varghese

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STRAIGHT PATHS

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

Evidence From Nature

JOHNNY VARGHESE

In the last few articles of this series, we have been surveying the evidence from nature that points to the existence of a creator. This article continues with further evidence from nature. We focus on mathematical and physical characteristics.

Laws

The purpose of science is to understand nature - this means to systematically describe what happens and also to make predictions about what will happen. Both these are possible because nature obeys laws. Nobel Laureate Richard Feynmann's famous chess analogy is helpful:

"Suppose that physics, or rather nature, is considered analogous to a great chess game with millions of pieces in it, and we are trying to discover the laws by which the pieces move. The great gods who play this chess play it very rapidly, and it is hard to watch and difficult to see. However, we are catching on to some of the rules, and there are some rules which we can work out which do not require that we watch every move. For instance, suppose there is one bishop only, a red bishop, on the board, then since the bishop moves diagonally and therefore never changes the colour of its square, if we look away for a moment while the gods play and then look back again, we can expect that there will be still a red bishop on the board, maybe in a different place, but on the same colour square. This is in the nature of a conservation law. We do not need to watch the insides to know at least something about the game." [1]

Observing the chessboard is, of course, meaningful because the pieces move according to laws. And they do so because there were intelligent beings who prescribed these rules, and there are players who adhere to these rules. Similarly, it is possible to observe nature and learn about it because it operates according to laws. The players (and inverters of the game) are analogous to God. If there is no Creator or Mind that is sovereign, there is no reason to expect that there would be laws governing nature. Laws imply a law-giver and a law-enforcer.

Laws that have a mathematical form

It is not just that nature functions according to laws, but that these laws are highly precise and often require abstract mathematics to express them. For example, Newton's Laws of Motion and Maxwell's Laws of Electromagnetism, when expressed mathematically, are differential equations. Pioneers like Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz developed the basic concepts, but it still required mathematicians like Carl Weierstrass and August Cauchy to tie up the mathematical loose ends a couple of centuries later. The fact that the laws are mathematical further drives home the point that there must be an Intelligent Mind behind nature - Someone with a consistent, unchanging character. Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists to have ever lived, said:

"The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility" [2]

He elaborated to a friend who expressed surprise at this statement:

"You find it surprising that I think of the comprehensibility of the world . . . as a miracle or an eternal mystery. But surely, a priori, one should expect the world to be chaotic, not to be grasped by thought in any way....the success of [Newton's gravitational theory] supposes in the objective world a high degree of order which we are in no way entitled to expect a priori. Therein lies the "miracle" which becomes more and more evident as our knowledge develops. . ." [3]

Heinrich Hertz, the scientist after which the unit of frequency is named, and the first person to produce electromagnetic waves with an electric circuit, commented on Maxwell's Equations of Electromagnetism:

"One cannot escape the feeling that these mathematical formulas have an independent existence and an intelligence of their own, that they are wiser than we are, wiser even than their discoverers, that we get more out of them than was originally put into them." [4]

Laws imply a law-giver and a law-enforcer.

Laws that are within human grasp
There are two aspects worth noting here.

If we imagine a linear spectrum of complexity (and the cognitive capacity to understand it), we find that the human mind's capability coincides with the complexity of the laws. Humans have just the right intelligence to figure out the laws and understand (and apply) them. It also turns out that precise complex laws have simpler, more accessible approximations. Quantum physics and Einstein's relativistic physics would be impossible to discover from scratch because the experiments needed to investigate them require sophisticated technology, which in turn requires a high level of scientific advancement. But Newtonian (classical) physics is an approximation to both. Historically, humans discovered the laws of classical physics, and as science and technology progressed, we stumbled upon the subtleties of quantum and relativistic physics. When we teach students, we start with a simpler level and then move to a deeper one. It seems not only that there is a God who made the laws, but that He wanted humans to discover them, and so He made them accessible, like suitably connected clues in a treasure-hunt game, or a graded curriculum.

"The ability of human beings to discover the laws of nature is beyond human understanding" [5]

If we imagine a space of different dimensions or directions, it could be that the laws of the universe are in one direction, while the human mind thinks in another, but no, these two coincide. We are not speaking of humans setting out to discover the laws of nature. We are speaking of humans who set out to do math without bothering about practical applications, and developed abstract, complicated mathematics, only for scientific applications to be found later. It seems the human mind is set up to think about the very principles by which the universe works - evidently, the God who made the human mind also made the physical universe.

James Jeans, co-founder of British cosmology writes in his best-selling book:

"The essential fact is simply that all the pictures which science now draws of nature, and which alone seem capable of according with observational fact, are mathematical pictures . . . Nature seems very conversant with the rules of pure mathematics. . . . In any event it can hardly be disputed that nature and our conscious mathematical minds work according to the same laws." [6]

Morris Kline, mathematics professor at New York University and historian of mathematics, also recognized this strange matching:

"Finally , a study of mathematics and its contributions to the sciences exposes a deep question. Mathematics is man-made. Yet with this product of his fallible mind man has surveyed spaces too vast for his imagination to encompass; he has predicted and shown how to control radio waves which none of our senses can perceive; and he has discovered particles too small to be seen with the most powerful microscope. Cold symbols and formulas completely at the disposition of man have enabled him to secure a portentous grip on the universe. Some explanation of this marvelous power is called for." [7]

Welshman Oliver Sutton was both a mathematician and a meteorologist, dealing with abstract theory and natural forces, and this relationship did not escape his notice:

"How can the manipulation of symbols which we have invented, according to rules which we alone make, reveal that which lies beyond our senses?... , [this question] is one which is unlikely to receive a satisfactory answer. . . ." [8]

Princeton physicist Remo Ruffini reacted to the news of men landing on the moon.

"How a mathematical structure can correspond to nature is a mystery. One way out is just to say that the language in which nature speaks is the language of mathematics. This begs the question. Often we are both shocked and surprised by the correspondence between nature and mathematics, especially when the experiment confirms that our mathematical model describes nature perfectly." [9]

American mathematician and computer science pioneer Richard Hamming weighs in:

"From all of this I am forced to conclude both that mathematics is unreasonably effective and that all of the explanations I have given when added together simply are not enough to explain what I set out to account for." [10]

Both the above aspects together show that there is a God who has made a coherent universe - He wants humans to engage with the universe and with Him!

Conclusion

Finally, we quote Eugene Wigner, the 1963 Nobel prize winner in physics for his work in quantum mechanics:

"The enormous usefulness of mathematics in the natural sciences is something bordering on the mysterious and...there is no rational explanation for it....it is not at all natural that 'laws of nature' exist, much less that man is able to discern them.... [Newton's Law of Gravitation] has proved accurate beyond all reasonable expectations." [11]

The scientists quoted above express surprise and disbelief because what they're finding does not fit with their worldview (atheism). However, the connection between math and nature is only to be expected from a Biblical theistic viewpoint, and thus constitutes strong evidence for the existence of a personal God who created human beings with the intention that they should investigate the universe.

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1. Richard Feynmann, The Character of Physical Law, Lectures in Physics.
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7. Morris Kline, Mathematics and the Physical World, p. ix.
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It seems the human mind is set up to think about the very principles by which the universe works - evidently, the God who made the human mind also made the physical universe.



THE SILENT YEARS

THOMSON B THOMAS

After the age of twelve, little is known about Jesus for the next eighteen years. Many call these ‘Silent years’ or ‘hidden years.’ But it should be noted that the scripture is not fully silent about Him in these years. Sufficient light is thrown into this period of His comparatively silent period.

Luke tells about His development in various areas during this time. “Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men” (2:51,52). This is about Jesus’ years following His visit to Jerusalem at age twelve. There, He made His self-consciousness evident. He knew He was God come in the human flesh. He knew He should be in His Father’s house. Yet He lived a submissive, obedient life in Nazareth. He had a balanced, normal growth as an adolescent. On another occasion, Luke records that He grew up in Nazareth, and it was Jesus’ custom to attend the local synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Jesus might have furthered His studies in the Word of God. Every Jewish child who had reached 15 years of age was supposed to study at the Academy of Theology of Gemaras. This was the running commentary of the Mishna. It starts with the study of the Book of Leviticus, followed by the Pentateuch, the prophetic books, and the Hagiographa. And Jesus might have undertaken such studies during these years as a young man.

Every Jewish youngster was supposed to master a craft. And with Joseph being a carpenter, choosing carpentry as a profession might not have been difficult. Later, during His public ministry, people remarked, “Is this not the Carpenter?” (Mk. 6:3). If He were a carpenter, we can be sure He was the best carpenter the world has ever seen. His yokes and ploughs were probably much in demand! Dr. Fulton J. Sheen quotes a church father: “Justin Martyr, basing himself on tradition, says that during this time our Lord made plows and yokes, and taught men righteousness through the product of His peaceful toil.”¹ The word used for ‘carpenter’ may also be rendered as ‘builder’. Thus, it may refer to a person working with wood, stone, or metal. It may be applied to a person engaged in any construction work. Sepphoris was a town built by Herod the Great. It was located in Central Galilee, just 6 kilometers north-northwest of Nazareth. Known for His perfect work, Jesus might have had opportunities to work in these sites. Though it was a big, modern city, we do not have any mention of this city in the Gospels, or any record of His visit to this place during His public ministry. Probably, he avoided them because of their high-mindedness.

From the absence of any mention of Joseph after the Jerusalem visit, we assume that Joseph passed away early. If so, the entire responsibility of looking after His mother and the siblings would rest on Him- the ‘carpenter-son’. His brothers were James, Judas, Joses, and Simon. He had sisters also (Matthew 13:56), but how many is unknown. It was a big family. The craft he learned and the training He had with Joseph might have come in use in those needy years.

There are those who think that from the age of twelve to thirty, He traveled to Eastern countries and gained knowledge and Oriental wisdom, which became the foundation for His future ministry. This assumption was first published in the book ‘The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ,’ published in 1894 by a Russian journalist, Nicholas Notovich. The author claims he traveled to Tibet in 1887 and visited the Buddhist monastery at Hemis. In his talk with the main Lama, he asked whether he had ever heard of Isa (Jesus). The Lama replied that he had read about Him in the ‘Dark Treasury’, a library with about 84000 scrolls. Originally written in Pali, these scrolls were translated into Tibetan. The Lama read out, he claims, certain portions of it to Notovich. The book he wrote was based on notes he took from the Lama’s readings, with the help of a translator.

Later, Swamy Abhedananda published a Bengali book claiming that he, too, had seen the scrolls in Hemis and that he had published 224 verses in fourteen chapters in 1922. Following these, Prof. Nicholas Rorich also published a similar book.

According to these writings, Jesus left his home when he was compelled by his people to get married and settled, and traveled to Punjab via North Sind with traders at about the age of fourteen. There, he lived among the Jain sanyasis. From there, he moved to Jagannath in Orissa and studied the Vedas. Then he came to Kashi and lived in the royal palace for about six years. From there He went to Kapilavasthu. There He lived for six years with Buddhist monks and studied the writings of the Pali language. Then, through Nepal and the Himalayas, he traveled to Persia. By the age of twenty-nine, He returned to Israel and began preaching to His people from the age of thirty.

According to the Gospel narratives, Jesus never left Israel. If at all, there was a foreign trip, it was to Tyre and Sidon, during His public ministry. On this visit, it seems Jesus did not enter these cities but remained at the border. The following facts prove sufficiently that Jesus never traveled to Eastern countries or elsewhere in His quest for wisdom. The writings referenced above are unreliable.

1. Much about Nicholas Notovich is not known. He is a mystery. But the people who try to spread his writings want others to believe he is a Christian.
2. The claim that the safely kept secrets of a library of a Buddhist monastery were opened to a Russian journalist is also suspicious.
3. These are nothing but assumptions to relate Jesus to India and Tibet.
4. These writings got publicity as the contents were sensitive.
5. The claim that Jesus lived in Jagannath and studied the Vedas is unbelievable, as there are no relations between His teachings and Vedic teachings.
6. Similarly, the teachings of Jesus have nothing in common with those of Buddhism. Buddhism is essentially an atheistic religion. But Jesus’ teachings were about Jehovah of the Old Testament.
7. Unlike Buddhists, He was not a vegetarian and didn’t practice yoga.
8. Those who spread the theory that Jesus visited Tibet or India are followers of Ahmed Khadiani. Most probably, Notovich might have written for the Mohammedis, or they might have made the story in Notovich’s name. This charge was brought against the writing of Notovich in the initial days of its publication itself.
9. Nehru, in his ‘Glimpses of World History’, mentions this theory and says that there is no clear evidence to prove it, and takes a neutral stand. And he states that anybody who has studied the history of Jesus will deny the assumption.
10. If at all He studied all the eastern philosophies and religion and started teaching doctrines that were variant from these then it is crass rejection of the eastern teachings.

Even if He had come and studied the eastern teachings, that wouldn’t in any way sully His personality or wisdom. But a look at the facts below clearly shows that the Lord had never traveled outside Palestine. Notice the following facts:

- He was known as the Nazarene.
- People understood Him as the carpenter.
- It was His custom to attend the synagogue at Nazareth, Lk. 4:16. - All His parables are with the Palestinian style and taste.
- All His sayings are of Palestinian Jewish origin, Matthew 5:13; 5:14; 7:16; 13:57; 15:14; 24:28; Mark 4:21; Luke 4:23; 6:40; 10:7.
- His speech was always in Aramaic. He never had any influence of foreign languages.
- He never spoke to His own about any foreign trips He made.
- He never spoke about any body of the diaspora He met in His journeys.
- He waited until he was thirty years of age, as that was the age set in the Old Testament for beginning the public ministry.

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1. Fulton J. Sheen, Life of Christ, Pg. 49.

GOD'S HEART FOR MISSION

EBY VARGHESE

Many people assume that mission is primarily a human initiative; our effort to reach fallen humanity with the love of God. However, Scripture presents a very different picture. Mission does not begin with man reaching out to God; it begins with God reaching out to man. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible consistently reveals the missionary heart of God. Mission is rooted in His very nature. In this article, we will trace God's self-revelation: His nature, His plan, and His actions, as they unfold across Scripture, demonstrating that mission is fundamentally God's mission.

God's Initiative in Creation and the Fall

The Bible opens with God as Creator. Humanity is not an accident but a deliberate creation made in His image: "God created man in his own image" (Gen 1:27). From the beginning, God desired fellowship with humanity. Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden to enjoy a life of communion with Him. Yet, humanity rebelled against God. Sin entered the world, and as a result, humanity "falls short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). The consequence of sin was separation. Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden (Gen 3:23–24). Yet even in judgment, we see God's mercy and His missionary heart. Instead of abandoning humanity, God pursued them. He called out, "Where are you?" (Gene 3:9); not because He lacked knowledge, but because He initiated restoration.

Furthermore, God made garments of skin to clothe them (Gen 3:21). This act implies sacrifice and reveals a profound truth: God Himself provides what humanity cannot. Even in their helplessness, God reached out in grace. This is perhaps the first clear expression of God's missionary movement - seeking, covering, and restoring fallen humanity.

The Abrahamic Covenant: Mission Takes Shape

As the biblical narrative progresses, God's mission becomes more explicit. In Gen 12:1–3, God calls Abraham, "Go from your country... and I will make of you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This passage is foundational for understanding mission. First, we see a divine initiative; God chooses Abraham out of idolatry (Joshua 24:2–3). Second, we see sending; Abraham is called to go. Third, and most importantly, we see a global intent: "all the families of the earth" will be blessed through him. God's plan was never limited to one individual or one nation. Abraham was blessed to become a channel of blessing to the nations. This reveals that mission is not an afterthought; it is embedded in God's covenantal purpose from the beginning.

Mission does not begin with man reaching out to God; it begins with God reaching out to man.

Israel: A Light to the Nations

God's promise to Abraham unfolds through the nation of Israel. They were chosen not for privilege alone but for purpose. In Exodus 19:5–6, God declares: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." A priest represents God to people and people to God. Israel was meant to display God's character to the nations. Similarly, Isaiah declares: "I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). However, Israel repeatedly failed in this calling. Instead of being a light, they often became inward-looking and disobedient. Yet, God did not abandon His mission. He continued to reach out through prophets, warnings, discipline, and restoration. Even in judgment, such as the exile, God's purpose remained redemptive. He promised a coming Savior (Isaiah 9:6, 53:5). Thus, the Old Testament anticipates a Messiah who would accomplish what Israel could not, bringing salvation to the nations.

Christ: The Fulfillment of God's Mission

The New Testament begins with the arrival of Jesus Christ, the climax of God's missionary plan. Jesus is the One sent by the Father: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). Jesus' mission is clear in His own words: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). In Christ, we see the full expression of God's missionary heart. He crosses social, cultural, and moral boundaries. He engages the marginalized, heals the broken, and proclaims the kingdom of God. Most importantly, He accomplishes salvation through His death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4). On the cross, God's justice and mercy meet. Jesus bears the penalty of sin, defeats death, and opens the way for humanity to be reconciled to God. The mission of God is not merely proclaimed; it is accomplished in Christ. Mission is not the work of one person of the Godhead alone; it is the unified work of the Triune God. The Father sends the Son (John 3:16). The Son accomplishes redemption (John 19:30). The Holy Spirit applies this truth to human hearts, convicting and regenerating (John 16:8). Thus, mission is deeply Trinitarian. It flows from the very being of God.

The Church: Sent into the World

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus entrusted His mission to His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:18–20). He also said: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21). The church, therefore, is not merely a gathering of believers; it is a sent community. In Acts 1:8, Jesus declares: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the end of the earth." The book of Acts shows this mission unfolding. The church becomes a light to the world, carrying the message of the gospel across geographical, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. Those redeemed by Christ are now entrusted with the message of the cross. Mission continues through the church, empowered by the Spirit. The Bible concludes with a powerful vision of the fulfillment of God's mission: "A great multitude... from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages... standing before the throne" (Rev 7:9). This is the ultimate goal of mission, not merely conversion, but worship. God is gathering a people for Himself from every corner of the earth. Additionally, Scripture promises the complete restoration of what was lost in Eden: "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5). The curse of sin will be removed, and God will dwell with His people forever (Rev 21:3). The story that began in a garden ends in a renewed creation.

Conclusion

From beginning to end, the Bible reveals God as the ultimate missionary—seeking, saving, and restoring humanity. Mission is not our invention; it is God's work. We are invited to participate. Paul describes believers as "God's fellow workers" (1 Cor 3:9). What a profound privilege to labor alongside God in His redemptive mission! This also brings responsibility. If mission belongs to God, then we must align ourselves with His heart. We are called to reflect His compassion, proclaim His gospel, and live as His witnesses in the world. Mission, therefore, is not a specialized calling for a few; it is the calling of every believer. Mission does not belong to man. It is God's mission. And by His grace, we are participants in it.

Mission is not a specialized calling for a few; it is the calling of every believer.



In the backdrop of the present blindness and rejection of Israel (Romans 9, 10), Paul now presents the plan of God for them (Rom 11:1-36). Israel has been rebellious and a gain-saying people, though God sought after them with stretched out arms (Romans 10:21). Now, what would God do about these people? Would He give them up forever and turn away from them permanently? This is the query Paul takes up in chapter 11 of the epistle to the Romans. Paul says, “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (11:29). This means that God will not go back on what He has begun with the people of Israel. He shall fulfill the purpose for which He has called them. Just as God is unchanging, His purposes never change either. To present the purposes of God toward Israel, Paul adopts a dialogical style, asking questions and answering them.

God has His Remnant Always, vv. 1 - 10. Paul asks, “Has God cast away His people?” (V. 1). The question means whether God has cast away His people wholly. He says, ‘Far be the thought.’ This means such thoughts should not be entertained at all. God has His remnant always. The case is argued from the time of Elijah. When Elijah said he alone was alive among God’s prophets, God said that there were seven thousand who were faithful to Him (vv. 2-4). Paul states, “God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew” (v. 2). He calls them ‘the election of grace’ v. 5. He includes himself also among them (v. 1). What Israel as a nation desired but could not attain, the election has received. But the people outside the remnant stumbled (vv. 9, 10).

God shall restore Israel wholly, vv. 11 - 27 Paul takes up another question, now. “I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?” (v. 11). Another version says, “Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?” (NIV). He now explains that the casting away is not final, but is with restoration in view. For the question he poses, he answers negatively and explains.

Firstly, their fall made it possible for the salvation of the Gentiles (v. 11). “But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.” This refers to the great work the Lord is doing in the present time, the church age. Quoting Simon Peter James says, “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). The casting away of the Israelites has paved the way for this work of God. The building up of the church with those who receive the Lord from the Jews and the Gentiles is progressing now. Paul goes on to argue that if the fall of Israel became the cause for the blessing of the Gentiles, how much more enriching would ‘their Fullness’ be! This ‘Fulness’ is ‘their full inclusion.’ (NIV). This points to the restoration of Israel at the Glorious Appearance of the Lord. Verse 16 makes it clearer. “For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” The ‘riches’ of verse 12 are explained here. It is the “life from the dead.” This may indicate the completion of the various resurrections of the first resurrection of those who are dead in Christ. Paul also expresses his desire to provoke his people after the flesh with the blessings of the Gentiles (vv. 11, 14).

Secondly, he gives a warning to the Gentiles to continue in faith and humility (vv. 16-21). This, probably, is to balance the truths he said about the blessings and riches the Gentiles gained, which would make the Jews envious of the Gentiles. He warns the New Testament believers, “Do not be haughty, but fear” (v. 21). The ‘first fruit’ and the ‘root’ (v. 16) may point to Abraham, in whom all Israel and New Testament believers are accepted. The New Testament believers are blessed in Abraham and his Seed, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:29). The warning here (v. 22) does not mean that the salvation one has received could be forfeited. Once saved, one is saved forever. If anyone falls from faith, that only proves that he was never saved.

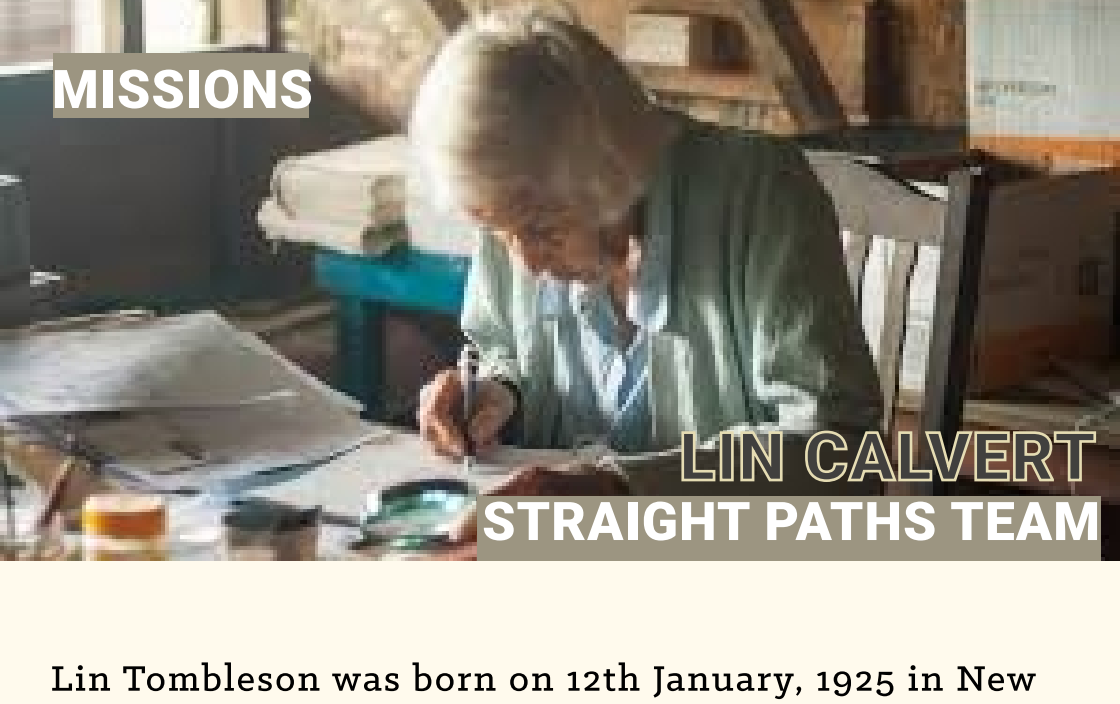
Thirdly, God is able to restore Israel (vv. 22-27). Paul says, “God is able to graft them in again” (v. 23). The imagery of grafting plants is used to explain these truths. In horticulture, good plants are normally grafted onto inferior ones. But God has done the opposite. Here, grafting was “contrary to nature”: the wild olive is joined to the good olive tree. This was because these Gentiles came to Jesus Christ in faith. When Jesus shall come in His glory, Israel as a nation shall turn to Him and acknowledge Him as the Messiah. Paul says, “And so all Israel will be saved” (v. 26). Now Israel is in blindness. But this shall not be forever. “Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (v. 25). The “fulness of the Gentiles” is the completion of the building up of the church. Paul calls it a “Mystery” (v. 25), a truth hidden in the Old Testament time but now revealed.

Just as God is unchanging, His purposes never change either.

God shall be Merciful to All, (vv. 28-32). Paul asserts that God has not cast them off without purpose. Israel is an elect nation and beloved for their fathers’ sake. “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (v.29). Now, the Gentiles who trusted in Him have obtained mercy. But Israel as a nation is in unbelief. But Paul tells the Gentiles, “that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy” (v. 31). This may be an encouragement to the Gentile believers to reach out to the Jews and bring them to faith in the Lord. Paul declares in conclusion, “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all” (v. 32). Sensing the immensity of the wisdom and knowledge of God in salvation, Paul breaks forth into a doxology (vv. 33 - 36).

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MISSIONS



LIN CALVERT

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

Lin Tombleson was born on 12th January, 1925 in New Zealand. Her mother was a nurse, and her father was a soldier, but after World War I, they took up farming in a remote place in New Zealand. Lin learned to look after farm animals, milk cows, ride horses, and grow gardens to survive. She also grew up reading the Bible, missionary biographies, and Christian classics such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. She did most of her schooling through long-distance studies. God was preparing her for the call on her life. She went on to study medicine.

Meanwhile, another young New Zealander, Peter Calvert, was studying law. When World War II broke out, he trained as a navigator with the Air Force. His view of life changed after the war, and he decided to study medicine. In doing so, he met Dr. Lin, who was just completing her training. Lin took a liking to him but wanted God's guidance. She writes in her autobiography, *Let The Fire Burn*: "So one evening I prayed, 'Lord, I refuse to marry anyone unless you give me really clear directions to do it.'" How He did it, I do not know, but when I woke the next morning, I was perfectly sure I was to marry Peter. The doubt and confusion of one day became inner certainty and peace the next."

After his graduation, they got married. The young couple wanted to serve God as missionaries with their medical skills. They received a letter from the London Missionary Society asking them if they would serve in a mission hospital in a place called Kapuna, hidden deep in the jungle swamps near the banks of the crocodile-infested Wame River in Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea (a country made up of a group of islands north of Australia).

The Society was clear in their letter... There has been no doctor there for a year. Kapuna is a place of mud, mosquitoes, and malaria. But as Peter and Lin read the letter, they looked at each other and said, "Just the right place for us".

In 1954, they sailed to Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, and then caught a coastal trading vessel to a nearby point and were paddled across the river to the bush hospital in a canoe. They finally reached the doctor's residence at Kapuna hospital. As they entered the house, their two-year-old daughter Valerie, who was just beginning to speak, said "Home!" That house would be their home for 69 years.

As they approached, Lin became aware that all was not well. Although they believed God wanted them to go to Kapuna, no church commended them. The churches in New Zealand and Australia that they were part of were lukewarm. The church at Kapuna was much more vibrant in terms of activity and prayer, but still unfruitful. They found many church members not taking the Bible seriously and not believing in the reality of evil spirits.

Meanwhile, despite difficult conditions, Lin and Peter fell in love with Kapuna and its people. One night, Dr. Peter performed an emergency cesarean on a pregnant woman by torchlight, assisted by six (new) nurses. Five nurses fainted on the floor, but thankfully, the torch-bearing nurse (and the torch) lasted the duration.

One of their first long-term tasks was training young women to be nurses, and also young men as first-aid helpers. They would travel by paddle canoe to the nearby villages and motorboat to the more distant villages. Even today, Kapuna is the only hospital within paddling distance for 35,000 PNG locals comprising nine tribes. Locals can spend hours – even days – navigating their dug-out canoes through endless waterways, winding around bush-clad, mud sediment islands to reach the hospital. The Missionary Aviation Fellowship's amphibious aircraft greatly increased their reach, helping them to access other islands. Dr. Peter also pioneered a short-wave radio 'medical sked' for missionaries at isolated stations across PNG. This service proved to be hugely popular, and the whole family learned the radio alphabet. Traveling by canoe or float plane, Dr. Peter set up 15 village aid posts, established health patrols, and achieved world-class immunization coverage. Meanwhile, Dr. Lin taught their four children – Valerie, Edward, Andrew, and Colin – and helped out at the hospital.

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Her gentle spirit and unwavering commitment to others made her a true angel amongst us.

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After about 25 years in the field and several years of asking God to work powerfully in their midst, Lin and Peter began noticing a difference. First of all, they got baptized (being Presbyterians, they had only been sprinkled as infants). The pastor was transferred elsewhere, and the church's leadership fell into their hands. One of the first things they changed was baptizing people shortly after they came to Christ, rather than waiting for a special occasion with a dignitary. Shortly afterward, they held a 10-day 'Seminar on the Holy Spirit'. Many people came on the first day, but only a few remained for the next. Lin writes:

"In the mornings we studied the work of the Spirit in the Old and New Testaments. In the evenings we looked at the meaning of full commitment. We spent much time on repentance, writing down all the sins that came to our mind from childhood up. These papers we burnt after accepting God's forgiveness for them all. Another night we shared the sad things that had left a bitter taste, either when we were children, at school or since coming to Kapuna. We told God we had forgiven all those who had hurt us and that we would not hold any anger against them anymore. Another time we wrote down all our possessions and dedicated everything to God, acknowledging His right to take it all away from us if He wished to. We looked at the problem of completely committing our lives to God as far as marriage was concerned. I was thankful I could honestly say I myself had done just this and how wonderfully happy I had been as a result. We talked about being willing to give 24 hours of our day to the Lord, not speaking of 'my holiday' and 'my off duty' anymore. We discussed the right use of our possessions, especially cassette players and radios. Lastly, we talked of three of Jesus' commands: "Love one another", "Give up all you have" and "Go and tell". All fourteen girls went all the way with everything I said and none turned back because they felt the standard Jesus laid down for His disciples was too high."

They began to see supernatural experiences: people delivered from sickness, evil spirits, a supernatural ability to distinguish between genuine and fake seekers, and a steady stream of people coming to faith in Christ.

Lin translated parts of the New Testament into the Baimuru language and loved to teach the Bible, especially to the CHW staff and students. She translated many well-known hymns to make the Oni Buka, a hymnbook for the people of Baimuru. She was also a dedicated doctor who hated to see people suffering and was always on call, whether it was her dinner time, her sleep time, or during the day. She also had a keen interest in gardening, planting flowers, coconuts, and pineapples, and removing weeds.

Lin and Peter sent their children to New Zealand to study. In 1982, Peter died of bowel cancer, leaving Lin at the helm of affairs. Lin's granddaughter, Destinee, and her husband, Jono Macleod, also helped at the hospital for three years before leaving to run a hospital in South Sudan.

A hospital staff member reported a dream about Dr. Lin when Dr. Lin was aged. She saw Dr. Lin's passing. However, to her surprise, at that very moment, she saw Dr. Lin walking towards her, holding many crosses. Dr. Lin gave these to the staff and told her, "Give these crosses to the people." The staff testified that the cross indeed represents how Lin lived her life. The locals called her Bubu Mei (grandmother). In 2018, Kapuna Hospital was renamed Calvert Memorial Hospital in honor of the Calvert family.

Even at 98, she still asked to see the patients in the hospital. Dr. Lin died on the 8th of August 2023. Her body was rolled in a mat and laid in a canoe, to be buried beside her husband on the land of the Kapuna. The Calverts' daughter, Valerie, who also became a doctor, carried forward their legacy by continuing to work at the hospital.

Shortly after she died, Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister, James Marape, paid tribute to her. "Dr. Lin's life exemplified selfless service, embodying the very essence of Christian values. Leaving behind her birthplace and family, she embraced Papua New Guinea as her own. Her gentle spirit and unwavering commitment to others made her a true angel amongst us," he said. "Her legacy as a resident surgeon, gynecologist, anesthetist, and pediatrician, spanning over six decades of service, enriches the fabric of Gulf Province's health sector."

Kapuna Hospital continues to serve the region. Two doctors, one matron, five nurses, and 19 community health workers see 1000 inpatients and 14,000 outpatients, and deliver up to 300 babies a year. Today, visitors to Kapuna can travel by small plane to a gravel airstrip, then take a four-hour journey downriver in a speedboat or motorized dinghy. The legacy continues.

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As Peter and Lin read the letter, they looked at each other and said, 'Just the right place for us.'

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Anna Bartlett Warner was born in 1827 to wealthy New York parents who could trace their lineage back to the Puritan Pilgrims. Her father was a successful lawyer, but he lost his wealth during the 1837 economic crisis, forcing the family to give up their upper-class lifestyle. Soon after, Anna and her sister Susan were saved, and when they grew up, they started writing novels and children's stories to earn money and support the family.

Anna wrote the words to "Jesus Loves Me" in her sister's bestselling 1860 novel "Say and Seal". In the novel, a Sunday School teacher visits his dying student, who begs him to sing something. He sings 'Jesus loves me, this I know...'. In 1862, songwriter Dr. William Batchelder Bradbury added the tune and chorus.

The two sisters also taught the Bible to cadets at West Point Military Academy. The cadets would sing "Jesus Loves Me" while on duty. Their uncle, Rev. Thomas Warner, was the Academy Chaplain. It is believed that Dwight D. Eisenhower was one of the last cadets to attend their classes. He graduated the year of Anna's death.

The song's popularity was so great that both sisters were buried with military honors for their contributions to the spiritual well-being of the soldiers. They are the only civilians buried in the West Point Cemetery. Their home was willed to the academy and became a national shrine.

There are stories of missionaries sharing the song with children in all sorts of languages, and the children pick it up and love it. It seems to speak something of the simplicity of faith to children all around the world.

A seminary student once asked the Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth, "How would you summarize your theology in a single sentence?" His reply was: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!"

In recent times, the song has been remade in different music styles.

Jesus loves me—this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong—
They are weak, but he is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me (3)
The Bible tells me so

Jesus loves me,—he who died.
Heaven's gates to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let his little child come in.

Jesus loves me—loves me still,
Though I'm very weak and ill;
From his shining throne on high
Comes to watch me where I lie.

Jesus loves me—he will stay.
Close beside me all the way.
Then his little child will take
Up to heaven for his dear sake.

Additional stanzas include:

Jesus loves me when I'm good,
When I do the things I should,
Jesus loves me when I'm bad,
Though it makes Him very sad.

Jesus, take this heart of mine,
Make it pure and wholly Thine;
On the cross You died for me,
I will try to live for Thee.

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WHEN NATIONS RAGE

STRAIGHT PATHS TEAM

The ongoing conflicts we witness today, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere, are sobering reminders of how fragile human peace truly is. Nations rise against nations, cities are reduced to rubble, and countless lives are disrupted or destroyed. Families are displaced, children grow up amidst fear, and uncertainty grips even those far removed from the battlefield. War exposes more than political tensions; it reveals the deep brokenness of our world. Despite advancements in diplomacy, technology, and global cooperation, humanity continues to repeat the same cycles of violence. The longing for peace is universal, yet it remains elusive.

The Bible does not ignore this reality. Jesus Himself acknowledged the persistence of such turmoil: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:6–7). War is not an anomaly in human history; it is a symptom of something far deeper. Even our best efforts at peace are temporary. Ceasefires collapse, agreements fail, and mistrust lingers. What we see on the global stage is a magnified reflection of what exists within the human heart. Conflict among nations mirrors conflict within individuals.

The Human Heart in Conflict

Scripture provides a clear and unflinching diagnosis. The root cause of war is not merely political disagreement or economic inequality: it is sin! The Bible locates the origin of conflict within the human heart. Pride, greed, fear, desire for power, and self-interest drive individuals and nations alike. War is simply the large-scale expression of these inner realities. The Bible says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). This means that the problem is universal. No nation, no leader, no individual is exempt. Sin distorts our desires, corrupts our motives, and fractures our relationship with God and with one another. At its core, sin is rebellion against God. Instead of living under His authority, humanity seeks autonomy. This vertical brokenness inevitably leads to horizontal conflict. When we are not at peace with God, we cannot truly be at peace with others.

This is why human solutions, though necessary, are ultimately insufficient. Political negotiations can restrain conflict, but they cannot transform the human heart. Laws can regulate behavior, but they cannot remove sin. Education can inform the mind, but it cannot redeem the soul. Until the root problem is addressed, the cycle will continue. Wars may change in form, but they will persist in reality.

Peace Through Jesus Christ

The gospel offers a solution that goes deeper than surface-level fixes. It addresses not just the symptoms of war, but its root cause. At the center of the gospel is this truth: God has not abandoned a broken and warring world. Instead, He has entered into it. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). Jesus Christ came into a world marked by violence, injustice, and division. Yet He did not come to conquer through force or establish political dominance. He came to bring reconciliation; first between humanity and God, and then among people. On the cross, God deals decisively with the root problem of sin. Jesus takes upon Himself the judgment that we deserve, making forgiveness and reconciliation possible. Through His death and resurrection, a new reality is established. Colossians 1:20 explains that through Christ, God was “making peace by the blood of his cross.” This is the foundation of true peace. Before there can be peace among nations, there must be peace with God. The Bible affirms, “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1)

When a person is reconciled to God, transformation begins. The heart that was once driven by pride and self-interest is reshaped by grace. The gospel creates peacemakers – people who reflect the character of Christ in a divided world. This does not mean that all wars will immediately cease. Conflict will continue in a fallen world. Yet the gospel introduces a new kind of hope. His victory assures us that evil and violence will not have the final word. The Bible points forward to a future where God will bring a final restoration: “He will wipe away every tear... and death shall be no more” (Rev 21:4).

Dear friend, in a world filled with unrest, God offers you peace—real, lasting peace—not by changing your circumstances first, but by changing your heart. Scripture calls us to respond: “Repent and believe in Christ” (Mark 1:15). To repent is to turn from sin, and to believe is to trust in Jesus Christ—His death for your sins and His resurrection for your life. Jesus Himself invites: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). In a world at war, the most important question is this: Are you at peace with God? That peace is available to you today—through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

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.

STRAIGHT PATHS

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