

(i) Scripture.

The mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled ... and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom".

And he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him". It was told him, "Behold, he is in Dothan". So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army and they came by night and surrounded the city.

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them". Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see". So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2 Kings 6. 11-17 (English Standard Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you have been sealed for the day of redemption' (Eph. 4. 30).

'This verse teaches us with equal clearness these two truths, that we can and do grieve the Holy Spirit through sinning, but that we can never grieve Him away'.

(Ruth Paxton, *'The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian'*, page 38.)

'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (John 1. 17).

1. 'The claims made by the rabbis for Torah (the law of Moses) ***were true only of Christ*** ... Torah, said the rabbis, was "life in this age and in the age to come" (cf. John 5. 39); "as water ... Torah is "life for the world". Again, Torah was the bread which, like manna from heaven, is given by God to sustain the world; Torah was also wine. The words of the Torah were "light for the world" [The rabbinical references are given in full in C. H. Dodd, *'The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel'*, 1965, pages 82-84] ...

'John contrasts the truth of Christ with the claims made for the Torah when he declares that Christ is the Life (John 1. 4), the Living Water (John 4. 10), the True Bread (John 6. 32), the Vine (John 15. 1; cf. the miracle of Cana, John 2. 1-11), and the Light of the world (John 8. 12; 9. 5). As he puts it succinctly in the Prologue, Torah was given through Moses; the reality of grace came through Jesus Christ'.

(A. Richardson, *'An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament'*, page 163.)

2. 'Grace and truth were not absent from God's ways which He made known to Moses; on the contrary, He revealed Himself to Moses as 'abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness' (Exod. 34. 6), and the same language is repeatedly used throughout the Old Testament as a summary of his character ... Even in the law which was given through Moses, intimations of grace and truth were not lacking, but all that was manifested of these qualities in Old Testament times was disclosed in concentrated fulness in the incarnate Word ...

'This Gospel emphasizes in a series of presentations that the new order fulfils, surpasses and replaces the old:

(i) the wine of the new creation is better than the water which was used in Jewish religion (John 2. 10),

(ii) the new temple supersedes the old (John 2. 19),

(iii) the new birth is the gateway into a sphere of life which cannot be entered by natural birth, even natural birth into membership of the chosen people (John 3. 3, 5),

(iv) the living water of the Spirit which Jesus imparts is far superior both to the water in Jacob's well and to the water which was ritually poured out in the temple court at the feast of Tabernacles (John 4. 13-14; 7. 37-39),

(v) the bread of heaven is the reality of which the manna in the wilderness was but an adumbration (John 6. 32-33).

'Moses was the mediator of the law; Jesus Christ is not only the mediator but the embodiment of grace and truth'.

(F. F. Bruce, 'The Gospel of John', pages 43-44.)

'There was no place ('room', KJV)' (Luke 2. 7); 'the Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand' (Luke 20. 42).

'Man refused Him a place here ... God has given Him a place in heaven'.

(J. B. Stoney, 'The Man of Power', Ministry, Volume 2, page 4.)

'Wherefore ... consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus' (Heb. 3. 1).

1. 'On only one occasion in the New Testament is Jesus called by the title "apostle" ... the word comes from the verb which means "to send forth" ... it describes someone despatched as agent, envoy, representative, ambassador of some power greater than himself.

'There is no difficulty in applying the word to Jesus ... Again and again in the Gospels Jesus speaks of himself as being sent ... This way of speaking of Jesus as sent is especially characteristic of the Fourth Gospel (John 3. 17, 28, 34; 5. 36, 38; 6. 29, 57; 7. 29; 8. 42; 10. 36; 11. 42; 17. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20. 21). To describe Jesus as "the Apostle" is to describe Him as the One whom God uniquely sent into this world ...

'In all religious matters the Sanhedrin was the supreme governing body of all Jews not only in Palestine but also all over the world. When the Sanhedrin wished to despatch an instruction, a command, a warning to Jews in any part of the world, the bearer of it was known as an "Apostolos".

'Saul, for instance, was the "Apostolos" of the Sanhedrin when he went to Damascus to organise a campaign of persecution against the Christians (Acts 9. 1, 2) ... To the Jew, the "Apostolos" was not only a messenger; he was a delegate who for the time being and for the particular duty assigned to him exercised all the power and the authority of the Sanhedrin.

'Hence the rabbis said: "The one whom a man sends (that is, his *apostolos*) is the equivalent of the man himself", "The king's ambassador is as the king himself". An *apostolos* is more than a messenger; on him rests all the power and the authority of the one who sent him'.

(William Barclay, 'Jesus as They Saw Him', page 244.)

2. To some extent, chapter 3 verse 1 functions as a summary of the teaching given in the previous two chapters:

(i) The first section (Heb. 1. 1- 2. 4) focuses on the Lord Jesus as the One through whom and in whom God has spoken—sent to reveal God and the gospel.

(ii) The second section (Heb. 2. 5-18) is concerned with the Lord Jesus as the One who was 'made like His brethren in all respects that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest'.

The Lord Jesus first came down to be God's representative among men and has now gone up to be man's representative before God.

3. 'Is this dual title of our Lord ("Apostle and High Priest") not reminiscent of Moses and Aaron? Is not the writer really saying, "Consider the Moses and Aaron of our confession"?

'The Apostle is the sent One (*apostolos*). As such, He was sent forth to us. As high priest, He has now gone back.

'The Apostle comes out. The high priest goes in. He has represented God to us and now He represents us to God. The ministries of Moses and Aaron are now invested in one Person'.

(J. M. Flanigan, 'Hebrews: What the Bible Teaches', page 65.)

'He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night, He came to them' (Matt. 14. 23-24).

'It was His purpose in all the events of this night to train His disciples to higher things than hitherto they had learned. The earlier storm (Matt. 8. 24) was by day, this by night. Then, He was present in the ship with them; if it came to the worst, they knew that they could rouse Him; while the mere fact of His presence must have given them a sense of comparative security.

'But they must learn to walk by faith and not by sight ... and this time He puts them forth into the danger alone, even as some loving mother-bird thrusts her fledglings from the nest, that they may find their own wings and learn to use them ... When He has tried them to the uttermost, "in the fourth watch of the night", He ... appears beside them; thus teaching them for all their after life, in all coming storms of temptation, that He is near them—unseen it may be by their bodily eyes, yet indeed a very present help in the needful time of trouble ...

Nor should we miss the symbolic character which this whole transaction wears. As it fared with that bark upon those stormy billows, so fares it oftentimes with the Church, tossed to and fro on the waves

of a troublesome world. It seems as though its Lord had forgotten it ... so baffled is it and tormented by hostile forces upon every side. But His eye is on it still; He is "on the mountain" apart praying—ever living, an ascended Saviour, to make intercession for His people.

(R. C. Trench, 'Notes on the Miracles', page 298.)

'Obedient to death ... highly exalted' (Phil. 2. 8-9).

"He humbled Himself and became obedient to death"; He goes so low down that He could go no lower; "even to the death of the cross". But, then, "God hath highly exalted Him" (He can go no higher). He was the first grand example of "he that humbles himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18. 14).

(J. N. Darby, 'The Effect of Christ Down Here', Collected Writings, Volume 27, page 229.)

'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life' (Psa. 23. 6a).

1. 'Goodness and mercy "pursue" David; they do not merely "follow" him. The word is so intensive, it is often used in combat scenes, where people are "pursued" to death ... Whereas "follow" might suggest a sort of tagging along ... [God's] goodness and mercy are dogged and determined in their pursuit'.

(D. Gibson, 'The Lord of Psalm 23: Jesus Our Shepherd, Companion, and Host', comment on Psa. 23. 6.)

2. 'Traditional translations render the Hebrew *rāḏap* with "follow", but this domesticated language fails to communicate the tenacity of God's purpose that the term denotes.

'Normally in the psalms, it is the enemies who pursue the psalmist in order to inflict bodily harm (Psa. 7. 5; 31. 15; 35. 3; 71. 11; 109. 16, etc.). Here, the divine attributes of goodness (*tôb*) and loving-kindness (*hesed*) are pictured as incarnate forces, which will not rest until they have tracked down and provided a safe harbour for the endangered psalmist'.

(R. A. Jacobson, 'The Book of Psalms: The New International commentary on the Old Testament', comment on Psa. 23. 5-6.)

3. 'He had been pursued often in his life; but no man chased him as persistently and effectively as the Lord'.

(A. Ross, 'Commentary on the Psalms', Volume 1, page 570.)

'I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever' (Psa. 23. 6b).

'In the closing words of Psalm 23 we have the climax of the Bible's whole storyline expressed in a final, beautiful confession of faith ... This is the personal invitation of our Shepherd-Host; He comes to be with us (verse 4) that we can go and be with Him (verse 6). He invites us to dwell with Him where he dwells and to be there with Him forever ...

'We have been hemmed in safely all along the paths and in the valleys, but now the psalmist asserts with bold confidence that we are going to make it all the way to the Shepherd's house. And, as we enter, we will hear: "You're with me now. You're home. Welcome. This is it. Hang your hat. This is where you shall live forever".

(D. Gibson, 'Crossway Daily Devotional', meditation for 19 May 2025.)

'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' (Luke 1. 35); 'when the Holy Spirit has come upon you' (Acts 1. 8).

Among those assembled in the upper room (Acts 1. 14), waiting to be baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1. 4-5), 'Mary the mother of Jesus' had previously experienced what it meant for the Holy Spirit to 'come upon' her.

'Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see"' (2 Kings 6. 17)

1. 'There was no need for Elisha to have his eyes opened. He had already seen the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof waiting upon Elijah as he ascended from earth to heaven (2 Kings 2. 12). The faith of the prophet realizes that the same chariots and horses of God accompany him as he takes his journey through the earth.

'The young man has seen the horses and chariots, with the great host, that encompassed the city (2 Kings 6. 15); now he sees the mountain "full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6. 17). The Syrian host may be round about the city, but what can they do if God's high host is round about Elisha? ...

'The host against Elisha may be mighty, but the host of God is mightier: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psa. 68. 17)'.
(H. Smith, 'Elisha: The Man of God', page 71.)

2. 'Our challenge is to read God's word ... asking that our hearts, minds, and spirits be opened to the full transcendent reality of the Lord of the Burning Bush, the Lord of the Smoking Mountain, the Lord of the decisive call to pick up our crosses and follow Him. ...

'Like Elisha's myopic servant, we need to have ... our secular modern short-sightedness surgically corrected, so that we can see the "horses and chariots of fire all around" (2 Kings 6. 17). Only then can we put on the whole armour of God and join the struggle "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6. 12)'.

(O. Guinness, 'Re-open the Windows', accessed at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/re-open-the-windows>.)

'My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly', Psalms 119. 167.

'Faithful Christians refuse to be satisfied with a cursory understanding of the Bible. They are not content to know as little as possible in order to engage in evangelism and missions. No, the Bible is their food and their delight—they are hungry for God's word ...

'A love of God's word has always been a distinguishing mark of God's people ... Those who love God's word seek communion with the Lord by regularly and personally meditating on Scripture ... Their prayers are saturated with the Bible as they strive to pray God's word back to Him'.

(H. Singh, 'Prioritizing Missions in the Church', Crossway Daily Devotional for 13 May 2025.)

The Lord Jesus—the 'firstborn' in four realms.

(i) Creation, Col. 1. 15.

(ii) Resurrection, Col. 1. 18; Rev. 1. 5.

(iii) Salvation, Rom. 8. 29.

(iv) Dominion, Psalms 89. 27; Heb. 1. 6.

Extracts from two hymns that should make our hearts leap:

1. 'Joined to the Lord' (1 Cor. 6. 17).

O tell me no more of this world's vain store,
The time for such trifles with me now is o'er;
A country I've found where true joys abound,
To dwell I'm determined on that happy ground.

**And when I'm to die, 'Receive me', I'll cry,
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why:
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not live in glory and leave me behind.**

(John Gambold, the hymn, 'O tell me no more of this world's vain store',
in 'A Collection of Hymns by Several Authors, with Several
Translations from the German Hymn Book of the
Ancient Moravian Brethren', 1741.)

2. 'A better country' (Heb. 11. 16).

We speak of the realms of the blest,
Of that country so bright and so fair,
And oft are its glories confess'd;
But what must it be to be there?

**We speak of its freedom from sin,
From sorrow, temptation, and care,
From trials without and within;
But what must it be to be there?**

(The hymn, 'We speak of the realms of the blest',
generally attributed to Mrs E. Mills.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

Victor and Betty are getting ready for bed. Betty is standing in front of a full-length mirror taking a hard look at herself.

'You know, Vic', she says, 'When I look in the mirror, all I see is an old woman. My face is all wrinkled. I've lost a lot of my hair and got bags under my eyes. My stomach is big, my legs are fat and my arms are all flabby'.

Turning around, she faces her husband and asks dolefully, 'Vic, tell me something positive to make me feel better about myself'.

Victor thinks hard for a few moments and then responds in his most sympathetic voice, 'Well, Betty, I can tell you truthfully that *there's nothing wrong with your eyesight*'.

Victor didn't remember much of the conversation when he woke up two hours later in the A&E department of the local hospital.