

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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"I have been here before!"

Most people have had that rather odd experience of sensing something remarkably familiar about a place which is quite new to them; or it may happen when meeting a person they have never met before or when encountering a combination of circumstances which could never have happened in their lives hitherto... It is highly important for all good Bible students to have or to acquire a well-developed sense of Bible "pre-recognition". Without it a whole world of fruitful investigation and discovery may remain shut up.

The phenomenon referred to is, quite simply, this: The writers of Holy Scripture were mostly men who had already soaked themselves in the writings of those who went before... Hence the need for alertness to detect the existence of these hidden strands of truth. It is when a Bible reader pauses to say to himself: "That's vaguely familiar; where have I read something else like it?" that he is on the verge of what may prove to be a worthwhile discovery. Marginal references and the diligent use of concordances to pursue many an unusual expression will reveal a countless number of these allusions.

Harry Whittaker, Enjoying the Bible

Editorial

Question Marks in My Bible

Introduction

The overall message of the Bible, and our Faith, is capable of being understood by anyone, at any normal level of human intelligence. The simplicity of the gospel is clear: repentance and baptism come after a belief in the Lord Jesus, his sacrifice, and his future return to set up his Kingdom on earth. However, the fact that the central message is quite clear is the beginning, not the end. As the writer to the Hebrews says *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection”* (Heb 6:1). The process of seeking any sort of perfection, of understanding the totality of the Truth included in the pages of the Bible, is an essentially never ending task. So I will describe one method I use to help me in my attempts to gain a deeper understanding of my faith.

If you open the pages of the Bible I normally use, you will find it is littered with question marks. Particularly in the New Testament, and the Prophets in the Old Testament, they appear on most pages. Sometimes they are old, sometimes new, but I find that as soon as I find the answer to the problem posed, others have mysteriously arrived. Quite commonly, as I am doing the Daily Readings, listening to addresses, or participating in any sort of Bible Study, the text, the speaker, or my internal ruminations give rise to a question as to what the text means. So I put a question mark there, to remind me to think about the text in the future, and hopefully come up with an answer. (Sometimes other question marks are added to a note prompted by a statement of a speaker: *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”* (1Thess 5:21).

One example

Many times, the question is simply about what the text means. So opening my Bible at random, there was one by the margin of the text:

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;”
(1Tim 1:18).

My note concerned the prophecies — what were there? Where are these prophecies recorded? How do they lead to Timothy waging a good warfare?

My marginal references point to 1 Timothy 4:14, where we read, *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”* There was also a reference to Hebrews 7:18, *“For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before...”*. So I turned to the NIV, where we read:

“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,”

(Brethren George Booker and Troy Haltom, in their commentary on this passage, suggest a reading of “in keeping with the inspired words which pointed to you”.)

So it seems probable, from the rendering of the NIV, that one possible answer to the question mark was that the prophecies referred to were those that pointed to Timothy as being suitable for the ministry. And the laying on of hands, performed by the council of elders, was a form of their association and confirmation of the Spirit guided work. This mission was apparently foretold by prophecy, but I cannot think of any passage that tells us of this prophecy concerning Timothy. One might refer to Acts 13:1-3:

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

So we have here perhaps a similar passage, where through the Holy Spirit certain prophets and teachers were instructed to prophesy, and selected Paul and Barnabas for the work. It must, therefore, have been on a similar unrecorded occasion where similar prophecies were made of Timothy, with which the Elders associated themselves. I could, of course, also continue with a consideration of who were the Elders in this case, or the precise significance of this particular laying on of hands, but that is another question mark.

So, as is normal, I can answer some of the questions implied by my question mark, but not all. I am pretty sure the prophecies were concerning Timothy, and the gifts he was given through the Holy Spirit. These lead to his success in his spiritual warfare. But I am uncertain when they were given, by whom, and exactly how the Elders were involved.

Purpose of reading the Bible

I am not sure I will ever answer all the questions in my Bible, but certainly I consider it helps in my feeble attempts to understand the whole message of the Bible. I must, however, stress that adding these question marks is not primarily to help me in my comprehension of the meaning of these particular passages. The main purpose of my practice is to help me consider and reflect on the main purpose of the studying the Bible. It is not to understand the background, the history, or the subtleties present in the original texts. It is to help me in my walk to the Kingdom, and to help others in their walk. It is all too easy, especially in the well-known passages in the New Testament, to let the words and phrases wash over us as comforting, familiar sounds. To have the words hardly enter our consciousness, never mind our consciences. Think of the phrase in the Lord's Prayer “*lead us not into temptation.*” Perhaps on another occasion I will expand on my thoughts on this topic, but how can we truly reconcile these words with those of James 1:13, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted*

with evil, neither tempteth he any man". So why are we instructed to pray to God that He not lead us into temptation, when we are told elsewhere He never does so?

The objective in reading the Bible is not merely to read the text, not simply to understand the words, but to let the message contained therein let us be conformed to the example of our Lord Jesus, that in the end we might be transformed to be like him.

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21NIV).

We cannot do this by merely reading the words. We need to first read with understanding. Then we need to consider how these words can help us more closely pattern our lives on that of Jesus. They can do this in many ways: either by example, by warning, by encouragement, by direction, by understanding the message, by appreciating the purpose of the words. We often use these words:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Tim 3:16-17).

We tend to focus on the "inspiration" phrase, but the more important message of the passage is the purpose of the words of Scripture. They ought to fill our hearts, as well as our minds.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph 3:17-19).

Peter Hemingray

"No one can expect to go far in Bible study except he have or develop a well-sharpened faculty for asking questions. The ability to answer questions, to find the solution to problems and difficulties, will come with experience. But if there be no lively curiosity in the first instance which reads every verse and every phrase with a large question mark against it, progress will be little better than meager.

It matters little at the moment whether you can find the answers to the problems or not. Many of the answers will be supplied by others, because if your mind is full of questions they are bound to crop up frequently in your conversation. Many more solutions will arrive of their own accord with the passing of time and your growing overall knowledge of the Bible. Quite a number will remain with you all your days without any convincing answer — suitable reminders of your own fallibility and limited powers, but not (it is sincerely hoped) as seeds of unfaith".

Harry Whittaker, *Exploring the Bible*

Exhortation

Men of Faith (Matthew 9)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1’).

The characteristic words to define faith in Hebrews 11:1 are “assurance” and “conviction.” If our faith is real, it provides us with “assurance” and “conviction” of God’s will being fulfilled in its time, leading us to glory in Christ Jesus.

We live by faith, not just for our hope but also in everyday circumstances. We believe cars on the other side of the road won’t run into us. We don’t actually ‘know’ they won’t but we get into our car in the belief they won’t. We believe an airplane will fly into the air before it gets to the end of the runway. We don’t actually know that our plane will lift off, but we board it and place our lives in the hands of the crew and the mechanics of the aircraft, based on the evidence of all the other planes that become airborne on takeoff. We believe that stepping off a cliff will cause us injury, sufficient to prevent even the most daring person from doing so. While we can’t always prove the things we believe, we can often be assured of them and convinced of them...that is faith. On that basis, we live our lives in the hope of being welcomed by Christ into his eternal Kingdom.

Christ heals the paralytic at his home

Matthew 9 begins at Christ’s “own city”, which we learn from the parallel account in Mark 2 is Capernaum. He was at his home, and great crowds had gathered there. A paralytic was brought, carried on his sleeping mat by four men, but upon arrival they are faced with the problem of how to get to Christ through the multitude of people. So a plan is devised to lower him through the roof. Consider the faith of the paralytic who would risk such danger to be lowered through a roof. Can you imagine him being raised, probably by ropes, to the roof, and then the roof being dismantled with a hole large enough to lower a man horizontally through it? If at any time the paralytic falls off of his mat he will be severely injured or even die since his paralysis would prevent him from breaking a fall by use of his limbs. But... he had faith sufficient to take such a risk. He believed Christ would make him well. Christ does heal the paralytic by telling him that his sins are forgiven. This is consistent with the thinking of those times, that their fate in this life was directly related to whether God viewed them favorably or not. This is most likely because the blessings and curses that prophesied how Israel would prosper or perish according to their obedience to God’s laws.

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not known” (Deut 11:26-28).

“And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ” (John 9:2).

Many uninformed people today still believe that same principle, and find themselves wondering how could God allow bad things to happen. We recognize that in this life, often it is evil men who prosper, and the good suffer. So we must conclude the blessings and curses of the law were relevant to Israel collectively, not as individuals. Christ’s correlation of sin to our mortal infirmities was correct as illustrated by the conversation of the text we read here in Matthew 9.

Christ healed the paralytic through forgiveness of sin. This was to instruct him and those who witnessed it that the Christ had the power to forgive sins, and thereby remove the curse of sickness and corruption from our flesh. This also foreshadows the atonement. Christ has the power to forgive our sins and to bring healing upon us, in order to bring forth spiritual health. Sicknesses are obvious infirmities of the flesh. Sin is an inconspicuous infirmity of the flesh. Both are present in our fallen fleshly nature until we turn to Christ to heal us.

The crowd reacted with fear (Matt. 9:8). They were not prepared to accept the Son of God, their Messiah. The Scribes (and Pharisees per Luke 5:21) react with scorn. We read in Matthew *“And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This man is blaspheming.’ ”* This is the first recorded time the priests criticize Christ.

Jesus enrolls Matthew among his disciples

You might remember when the tax collectors came to John to be baptized and asked what must they do, he replied: Luke 3:12-13, *“Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than is appointed you’ ”.*

Matthew (Levi) was a tax collector, considered to be the lowest person in society of that time. The term “tax collector” is used almost synonymously with “sinners”. Consider the following passage, how it uses the terms “tax collectors” and “sinners” almost interchangeably.

“And as he sat at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were sitting with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’ ” (Mark 2:15-17).

Matthew would locate in Capernaum, on the highway that led from Damascus to the coastal cities, collecting duties on goods shipped by road or across the Sea of Galilee. While the Roman officials themselves collected the land and poll taxes, the tax on transported goods were contracted out to local collectors. Matthew was such a person, or else he was in the service of one. These middlemen paid an agreed-upon sum in advance to the Roman officials for the right to collect taxes in an area. Their profit came from the excess they could squeeze from the people. This may have made them the most hated of all publicans as they would be in a

position to make great profits from the leading men of commerce. Matthew was one of these lowly publicans.²

Each of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record Levi being called just after the paralytic is healed at Christ's home. Levi was a person who required healing of a different type. Jesus specifically calls out this person, who is lowest of the low in society, in order to make a point. He came to heal sinners. What could make this more obvious, than to convert a tax collector (or tax collectors as he was later found to be instructing many tax collectors at a feast for him at Matthew's house).

For Matthew to get up and follow Christ required great "conviction" of faith. To follow righteousness would require Matthew to give up collecting more than required. If he lost his job for poor performance, then it would be very difficult for a former publican to find another job. Yet, at some point he apparently did give it up. After teaching for 15 years in Palestine, he, according to tradition, went to teach in the foreign countries of Ethiopia, Macedonia, Syria, Persia, Parthia and Medea.

When criticized by the Pharisees, Christ responded: *"Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice"* (Matt 9:13, from Hos.6:6: *"For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings"*).

Faith is better expressed by love and mercy than by asking forgiveness. We too are like Matthew the tax collector and we are like the paralytic. We are sick in our sins and must turn to Christ, who has been granted the power to remove our sins and heal our flesh. He will do so if we show faith.

Why don't the disciples of Jesus fast?

The disciples of John questioned Jesus as to why His disciples do not fast (vs.14). They asked this because in those days of Pharisaical legalisms two additional weekly fasts had been added on Mondays and Thursdays. The Pharisees observed these fasts as did John's disciples but they wondered why Christ's disciples did not fast.

Christ's reply: *"Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved"* (Matt 9:15-17).

Just as unfermented wine would burst old wineskins that lacked the elasticity to manage the expansion of the fermenting wine, the priests patching up the Levitical Laws with their own legalisms would not be acceptable to God.

The allusion to the wineskins also makes the point *"And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.'"* (Luke 5:39). This seems to suggest the priests who have grown comfortable with the law will not be willing to accept a new law (wine) or gospel and thus the *"The old is good"*.

Christ's allusion to the Bridegroom was a reminder to John's disciples of John's own words about Christ.

“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full.” (John 3:39)

Christ brings out that the time for fasting will come when the bridegroom is taken away by violent death. True fasting results from a sorrowful heart, not ritual or tradition.

The woman with a hemorrhage for 12 years is healed

Jesus is approached by a woman who has had a hemorrhage for 12 years.

“for she said to herself, ‘If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well.’ Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, ‘Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And instantly the woman was made well” (Matt 9:21-22).

According to Levitical Law: touching one who has an issue of blood shall make you unclean.

“When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening” (Lev 15:19).

This is the second time Christ has done something that, according to the law, should make him unclean. However, rather than Christ becoming unclean the unclean person becomes clean. The first time was recorded in the previous chapter (Matthew 8:2-4) when Christ touched a leper and made him clean.

Third healing

There is a third instance of Christ making another clean by his contact. A ruler (of the synagogue “Jairus” Mk.5:21-22) comes humbly beseeching him to lay his hand upon his daughter who just died. Christ’s response is: *“the girl is not dead but sleeping”* (Matt 9:24). This is an obvious statement to indicate what he was about to do.

Scripturally, those who will rise again are said to be sleeping. (e.g. Lazarus, John 11). Those who do not know God are already considered dead (Mat.8:22 *“Leave the dead to bury their own dead”*.) So Christ *“went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose”* (Matt 9:25).

This was the third instance of Christ doing what the Levitical Law said should make him unclean by touching a dead body.

“And there were certain men who were unclean through touching the dead body of a man... Whoever touches a dead person, the body of any man who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him” (Num 9:6, 13).

Yet, rather than Christ becoming unclean or cut off, the dead are raised to life and Christ remains clean and undefiled.

By the faith of Jairus, his daughter was brought back to life, one of many examples that testify that freedom from death comes through faith. The other lesson we can derive from these miracles is the evidence and assurance it provides us that Christ is the means by which we are saved. Christ was not required to follow the cleansing rituals of the law for a person who touched a leper, dead person or person with a flow of blood. It therefore shows God's approval of him and provides us with "assurance" that he is the one God has chosen to save us.

Two blind men healed

Later we read of two blind men who cried out, "*Have mercy on us, Son of David*" (Matt 9:27).

"Son of David" is a Messianic designation, and was also somewhat of a political designation for those times. Christ did not acknowledge them until he entered the house where he could reward them in private for their faith.

"When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it done to you.'" (Matt 9:28-29).

This illustrates for us the correlation between Faith and healing. We must be faithful for the blood of Christ to have its full healing effect upon us.

Dumb demoniac healed

Next, a dumb demoniac was brought to him and healed. Here we see Scripture make another correlation between illness and sins. We have infirmities of our flesh because we are sinful. While some medical practices might improve the situation, the root cause cure is to remove the sinful nature from our flesh by baptism into Christ's blood. The true healing will be realized in our resurrection unto glory.

"And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean" (Num 19:19).

We are healed of our spiritual uncleanness on the third day (our baptism) and healed of our physical uncleanness on the seventh day (resurrection).

The crowds who followed him felt his compassion.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36).

His compassion was manifest, both in his relentless instruction of the Gospel message, and his healing them of their physical and spiritual infirmities. His compassion prompts him to make the point to his disciples and to us:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matt 9:37-38).

Jesus was urging his disciples to carry on the work of true discipleship.

As the Disciples of Christ today, we can express our faith through the preaching of the Gospel, obedience to God's word, fellowship with one another, and focus on Christ's kingdom first in our lives. So as we break bread and drink wine in remembrance of our Lord Jesus, it should help us remember the faith of those who were healed of their physical infirmities, that we might have faith that our spiritual infirmities can also be healed.

Jim Barton (Kingston ON)

Notes:

1. All references are from the RSV
2. Sources used were Nelson's Bible Dictionary, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, and Faucett's Bible Dictionary

A Poem, and a Hymn

*God's grace to all who love Him,
Is given full and free.
He honors those who serve Him
In true humility.
And those who would be like him,
Who hunger for His Word,
And thirst to be made righteous,
Shall see their living Lord.*

*He sent His Son, our Savior,
To manifest His love,
Providing for our hunger
The manna from above,
And when we stand before Him,
At last to see his face,
That day we shall be like him,
Made righteous by God's grace.*

*Oh magnify our Savior,
And praise his holy name.
Because, for our redemption,
As lamb of God he came.
As Judah's conquering lion,
He will return again,
With God's own might and power,
As King on earth to reign.*

Maggie Stonell (Hamilton Book Road, ON)

*This may be sung to tunes in the Christadelphian hymnbook,
i.e., Thornbury (209) and Aurelia (284).*

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (2)

The children of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month, seven weeks after Passover. Here God constituted them as His holy nation. The LORD revealed Himself to them and established His covenant with them. On their part, they proclaimed their intent to obey Him in all things. This exchange of vows confirmed that they were His people and He was their God.

The theophany was magnificent. God came down on the mount and made His presence known in power that the Spirit describes using the language of a severe thunderstorm, a massive earthquake, a raging fire, and a piercing trumpet blast:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud... the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai... And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled... And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder... And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount” (Exod 19:9-11, 16, 18-20).

This unnatural event was awesome. It made a lasting impression on the children of Israel, and was remembered in hymns and prayers like these:

“The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel” (Jdgs 5:5).

“The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel... The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (Psa 68:8, 17).

“The LORD reigneth... Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth” (Psa 97:1-5).

“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh 9:13).

The Tabernacle and Mount Sinai

Yet the time would come that Israel would leave this “mount of God” (Exod 24:13; Num 10:33; cf. Exod 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 1Kgs 19:8). This departure could easily make

them think that they were leaving God behind. As long as they were at Mount Sinai, the nearness of God remained firmly established in their minds. As they withdrew from the site of the theophany, how would God make them know that He was still with them? What tangible sign would God give that He was dwelling among them? The answer, of course, is the Tabernacle. This connection is made plain by the following analogies between the Tabernacle and the events at Sinai.

God and His people. At Sinai, God declared, “*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. . . . And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*” (Exod 19:5-6; 20:1-2). The Tabernacle has the same purpose: “*And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God*” (Exod 29:45-46).

Place to meet with God. At Mount Sinai, God met with His people: “*And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet <7125 qir’ah from 7122 qara> with God*” (19:17). Likewise, He would meet with them in the Tabernacle:

“And there I will meet <3259 ya’ad> with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. . . . This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet <3259> you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet <3259> with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory” (Exod 25:22; 29:42-43; cf. 30:6, 36).

The frequent phrase “*the tabernacle (of the tent) of the congregation <4150 mow’ed from 3259>*” or “*meeting*” (see RV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, NKJV, NIV, ESV, and others), emphasizes that the Tabernacle was the place where the children of Israel met with the LORD.

People, priests, and place sanctified. Concerning Sinai:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify <6942 qadash> them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes. . . . And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified <6942> the people; and they washed their clothes. . . . And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify <6942> themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify <6942> it” (Exod 19:10, 14, 22-23).

Concerning the Tabernacle:

“And let them make me a sanctuary <4720 miqdash from 6942>; that I may dwell among them. . . . The tabernacle shall be sanctified <6942> by my glory. And I will sanctify <6942> the tabernacle of the congregation, and

the altar: I will **sanctify** <6942> also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office" (Exod 25:8; 29:43-44; and many others).

The cloud, the glory of the LORD. Sinai was enveloped by the cloud of God's glory: "And a **cloud** covered the mount. And **the glory of the LORD** abode upon mount Sinai, and the **cloud** covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the **cloud**. And the sight of **the glory of the LORD** was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel" (24:15-17). Similarly, the Tabernacle was filled with His cloud of glory: "Then a **cloud** covered the tent of the congregation, and **the glory of the LORD** filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the **cloud** abode thereon, and **the glory of the LORD** filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:34-35).

In these four essentials — God and His people; place to meet with God; people, priests, and place sanctified; and the cloud, the glory of the LORD — the Tabernacle was a portable continuation of the theophany at Mount Sinai. Just as God had tangibly manifested Himself in the mount, the Tabernacle was a tangible manifestation of God dwelling among the Israelites. He would be with them wherever they went. Beyond these four general analogies, there are detailed analogies as well.

Three Zones of Holiness

Mount Sinai. God established three zones of holiness and restricted access relative to the theophany on Mount Sinai (see Figure 1).

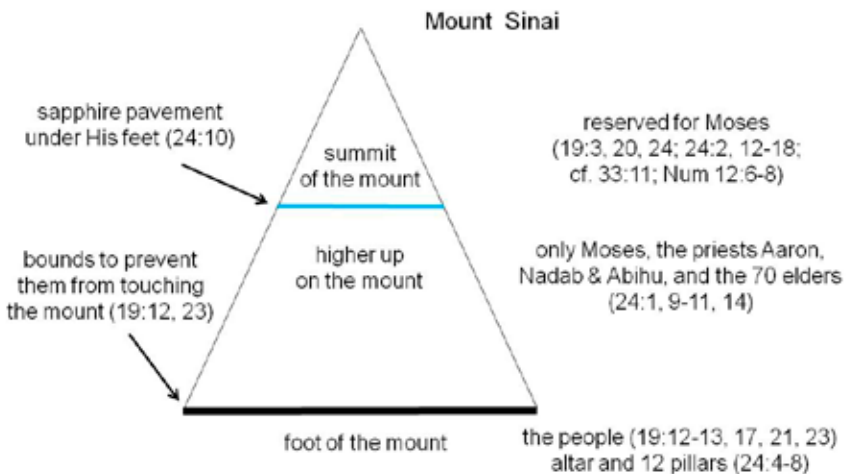


Figure 1. Three Zones of Holiness at Mount Sinai.

First, the people were allowed to come to the foot of the mount; they were not allowed to touch the mount, but could only come up to the border where bounds were set to prevent them from going up further; they stood at the nether part, and were unable to gaze upon the LORD:

*“And thou shalt set bounds unto **the people** round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death... And Moses brought forth **the people** out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount... And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge **the people**, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish... And Moses said unto the LORD, **The people** cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it” (Exod 19:12, 17, 21, 23).*

Moses built an altar (for sacrificing burnt offerings and peace offerings unto the LORD) and twelve pillars (representing the twelve tribes) at the foot of the mount, under the hill:

*“And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded **an altar** under the hill, and **twelve pillars**, according to **the twelve tribes of Israel**. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which **offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD**. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on **the altar**. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of **the people**: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on **the people**, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exod 24:4-8).*

Next, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders were allowed to come to a point further up the mount, where they saw God (from below, through the crystal-clear sky-blue sapphire pavement under His feet), and where they did eat and drink:

*“And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, **thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel**; and worship ye afar off... Then went up **Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel**: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Exod 24:1, 9-11).*

Finally, only Moses was allowed to enter the cloud of glory at the summit of the mount, where he and God communicated directly, face-to-face, mouth-to-mouth, as friends:

*“And **Moses** went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain... And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called **Moses** up to the top of the mount; and **Moses** went up... And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them... And **Moses** alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh;*

neither shall the people go up with him... And the LORD said unto **Moses**, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. And **Moses** rose up, and his minister Joshua: and **Moses** went up into the mount of God. And **Moses** went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto **Moses** out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And **Moses** went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and **Moses** was in the mount forty days and forty nights” (Exod 19:3, 20, 24; 24:2, 12-18; cf. 33:11; Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:10).

The Tabernacle. The structure of the Tabernacle follows the same pattern (see Figure 2); its three zones of holiness are the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies).

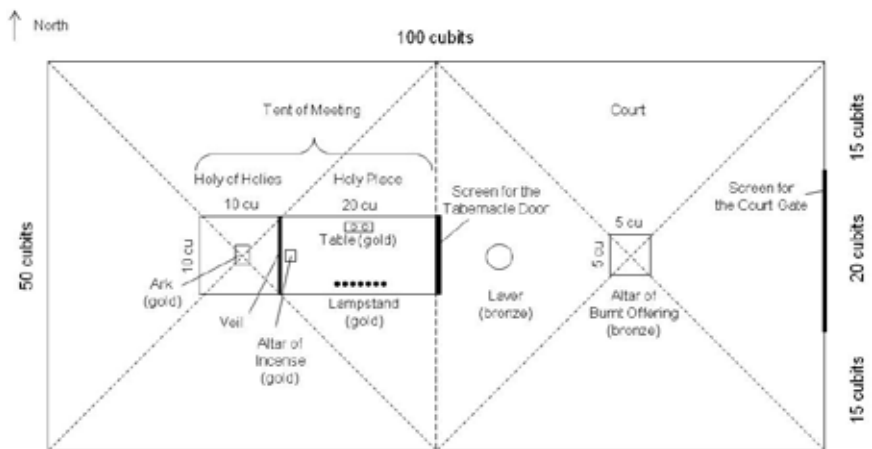


Figure 2. Floor Plan of the Tabernacle; based on Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 192. The Tabernacle had three zones of holiness: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies).

The Outer Court compares to the foot of the mount: the people were allowed to come into the Outer Court, where the altar of burnt offering was located (Exod 27:1-8; 38:1-7; 40:6, 19). The Holy Place corresponds to the location on the mount short of the summit: only the priests were allowed into the Holy Place to minister unto the LORD (Exod 28-29; 39:1-31; Num 18:1-7; Heb 9:6). The table of shewbread recalls the priests and elders eating and drinking on the mount. The Most Holy Place is analogous to the summit of the mount: only the High Priest, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement, was allowed to enter into the Most Holy Place (Lev 16; Heb 9:7; Exod 30:10). As the LORD conversed with Moses in the top of mount, so He does in the Most Holy Place.

The most significant reminder of the Sinai theophany was provided by the two tables of stone (Exod 24:12, 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1, 4) which were kept in the ark (Exod 25:16, 21; 40:3, 20; cf. Deut 31:26). This tangible symbol of the covenant was the heart and focus of the entire structure, and gave rise to the phrases “the ark of the testimony” and “the ark of the covenant”.

As we will see in future studies, the three zone structure of the Tabernacle is the basis for the literary structure of Leviticus. Moreover, it foreshadows the reality of Jesus Christ and the saints, the stages in the life of a believer, and the fulfillment of the purpose of creation in the Kingdom.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

The Glory in the Number of His Name (Part 2)

In our foundational commentary we established the precedent of the six Greek letters in the name of Jesus and how their cumulative numerical application provides a total of 888.

Creation’s molecular testimony

The significance of the **six** letters of our King’s name that add up to triple **eights** is confirmed in the molecular construction of the elements of the universe. Jesus is the first man to have been both mortal and immortal. He is the divinely appointed door leading from cursed mortality to blessed immortality, from six to eight. Six is the primary number that is consistently identified throughout Scripture and creation with the features of the curse of sin and death. Eight is the number identified with righteousness and immortality. There are two elements in creation that serve as symbols of these categories of life: mortal and immortal. The obvious element representing mortal life would be carbon. Any fifth grader would know that. There is no life form that exists that is not identified as a carbon based life form. Interestingly, this mortal life identifying element is scientifically identified by the number six on the universally accepted chart of the elements. Uniquely, there are six protons in the nucleus of the carbon atom. Carbon is the divinely appointed basis for all life under the curse of sin and death.

The only way to identify something as eternal would be to reference God’s word. That is the only eternal item we can visually witness and study in our current extremely limited range of observation. Fortunately the Bible does highlight the one element in creation that identifies immortal life: oxygen. Jesus educated the confused Nicodemus by explaining how one is born again of the spirit. “*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit*” (John 3:7-8). Being born of the spirit is to become like the wind. Appropriately, the very Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as spirit (as in the Holy Spirit) are the words for air and moving air (Heb: ruarch; Gk: pneuma). While oxygen is not the only elemental component in air it is the only element in air that actually sustains life. We get our oxygen regenerated from trees, which is a perfect shadow projection of the

tree of life in the Garden of Eden. The tree of life offered eternal life. The trees of life, under the terms of the curse, convert the poisonous carbon dioxide expelled by us into oxygen, extending our lives. Oxygen, upon the authority of the son of God, is the element that shadows immortal life. Appropriately, the scientific (creational) numeric identification for oxygen is eight. There are eight protons in the nucleus of the oxygen atom. The two elements in the features of creation that identify mortal life and immortal life are numeric mirrors of the numbers in the name of Jesus, where there are six Greek letters adding up to 888.

The pattern is repeated for those who love the light

If this observation appears to be somehow contrived all we have to do is look for confirming evidence (or its absence to deny the relationship) in the carefully constructed shadow images of Jesus in the divine record. We have twice referenced the heaven and earth covenant of Genesis 15. It would be appropriate to 'triple' the application of that shadow. By divine design there were six carcass halves to represent the earthly aspect of the covenant. By adding the heavenly promise of the two whole birds we see a total of eight sacrificial elements. Both the six and eight features of the numbers of our Messiah's name are highlighted in this covenant. The golden Ark of the Covenant would certainly be another Jesus shadow. In order to construct that box we see that six surfaces (left, right, front, back, top and bottom) are joined together at eight converging points (corners). Interestingly there are specifically three geometric planes that make up each of these eight points of convergence, further reflecting the triple eights in the name of our savior. That observation invites us up to the next level of our staircase reasoning in our pursuit of the glory of divine light.

Scripture is like a fathomless body of water. Looking down on the calm surface in the sunlight will only offer a somewhat distorted vision of our own reflection. Most of humanity is satisfied at this point. Literally every form of false doctrine degrades our Creator and improperly exalts ourselves in our own eyes. Every form of apostasy is about self-worship. It is the gospel truths that enable us to see a clear vision of our Creator beyond the seduction of our own personal glory on the surface of all His communications. Our Heavenly Father has expressed Himself in both the written and spoken word: the Bible and creation. Creation is a result of the spoken word of God. Each of the six days of creative activity began with a verbal command. Let there be...and it was so. The spoken word of our Creator (creation) expresses the same principles, exhortations, prophecies and promises in His written word. In fact this issue eliminates all possible defensive claims of innocent ignorance. *"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse"* (Rom 1:19-20).

It is our understanding of the humbling basic truths about our Heavenly Father that serves as our breathing capacity as we submerge below the reflective surface of divine communications to witness the far greater glory, hidden for the exclusive witness of the enlightened. From the beginning we have noted how the six

Greek letters of the name of Jesus equal a total of 888. We pursued just a few of the many available Scriptural extensions of this observation. We witnessed the relationship between the six letters of his name and his mortality as well as the triple eights relating to the immortality he experienced and now extends to the enlightened faithful. Our next stage in this consideration will be to understand why the number of his name had to have exactly **three** eights.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

“As it was in the days of Noah” (Part 1)

The Bible sets forth Noah as a positive example for the “last days.” The Apostle Peter wrote about “the last days” in his Second Epistle (2Pet 3: 3). He was referring to the time in which he and his readers were living.¹ Dramatic changes were about to take place in the world that they knew. Roman armies were going to invade Israel, a brutal war was going to take place, the Temple in Jerusalem was going to be destroyed, and those who had rejected the Lord Jesus were going to be punished.

The world was a wicked place then. Sexual immorality was rampant. People’s minds were focused on acquiring goods, achieving status, and living in pleasure (2Pet 2: 14). And the ecclesia was being invaded by worldly thinking (2Pet 2: 2).

Peter did not want his readers to be caught unprepared by the changes that were coming. So, as part of his message, he reminded them about the lives of several Old Testament characters. They were men who had lived in the last days of their societies and had been righteous during challenging times. Peter wanted his readers to consider their example and to follow it.

Peter’s words are incredibly relevant to us. The days in which we are living are quite similar to those in which he wrote. The Bible calls our time “the latter days” in places like Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 2.² That is because dramatic changes are about to take place in the world that we know. An army from a new type of Rome is going to invade Israel, a brutal war is going to take place, and those who reject the Lord Jesus are going to be punished: “*And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes*” (Ezek 38:16).

Given the similarities between our time and his, it is especially important for us to think about the examples of those men who Peter identified as being worthy of emulation. Their stories offer us guidance and hope as we strive to serve God in this age that is quickly coming to an end because of its ever-increasing wickedness.

One of the people that Peter set forth as a positive example was Lot (2Pet 2: 7-8). The other person was Noah: “*And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly*” (2Pet 2:5). In this series of articles, we are going to consider lessons we can learn from the life of Noah, “a preacher of righteousness.”

“The days of Noah”

Peter must have been thinking about the words of the Lord Jesus as he wrote about Lot and Noah under inspiration. The Lord had spoken about the two of them during his ministry. He had said that the world would be like the times in which they had lived prior to the Roman invasion of Israel and again at his Second Coming: *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed”* (Luke 17: 26-30).

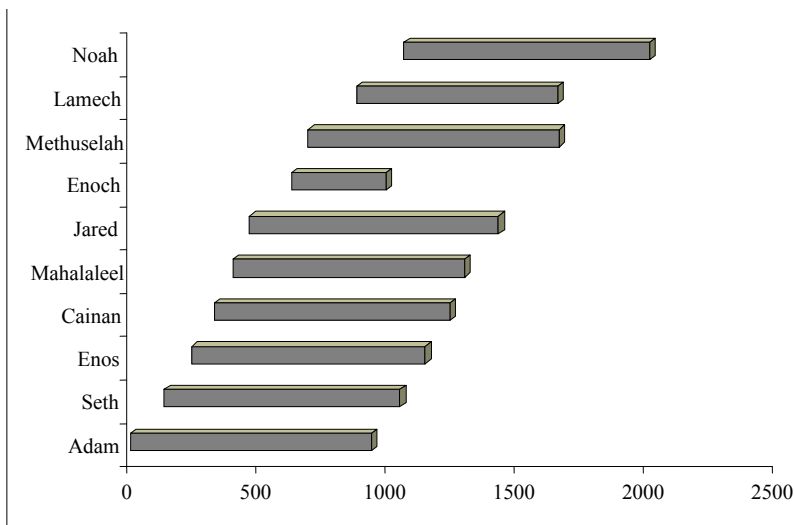


Figure 1: Bible Chronology to the Flood

So, what were the days of Noah like? He was born 1,056 years after the creation of Adam. Adam died during the life of Noah’s father, Lamech, 126 years before the birth of Noah. And Adam died knowing that there was a judgment coming.

When Adam was 687, his descendant, Enoch, had a son. Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14), and he named his son “Methuselah,” which means “when he dies, it shall be sent.” That “it” is a reference to the Flood. Methuselah died at the age of 969, which was 1,656 years after Creation. That was the year that the Flood took place. So, the name that Enoch gave his son is the first recorded prophecy about the coming of the Flood.

Methuselah’s name also provides a wonderful demonstration of the long-suffering of God. The prophecy contained in his name revealed that judgment would come at the end of his life. So, it is remarkable to note that Methuselah had the longest life of any person ever to have lived. His astonishing longevity is certainly an

indicator of God's great willingness to give people the opportunity to turn from their ways and escape judgment. It shows how much God wants people to avail themselves of the forgiveness that He offers. According to Rotherham's rendering of 1Pet 3:20, "*the longsuffering of God was holding forth a welcome*" during that time.

Two Families of People

Yet although God was longsuffering, he was not slack concerning His promise that judgment would come. Adam was probably not surprised by Enoch's warning. He surely must have been aware that he had given rise to two families of people and that they had very different characters. On the one hand, there was Adam's son, Seth, and his descendants. Even though their lives were long, they realized the inherent weakness of their flesh, so they looked to God for strength. The Bible records that Seth's descendants began "to call upon the name of Yahweh" in the days of his son, Enos: "*And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD*" (Gen 4:26). "Enos" means "mortal man," a name that Seth gave him as a reminder of man's need for God and the necessity of serving Him.

Then there was the line of Adam's son, Cain, and his descendants. They disregarded the commandments of God and focused instead on getting wealth, pleasure, and status in this world. Cain was the first murderer. Not only did his descendants follow in his footsteps, but they also added to his wickedness. The character of Cain's descendants is epitomized by Lamech, the sixth generation from Cain. (Note that this Lamech is different from Noah's father, who was a descendant of Shem.) Lamech was a polygamist. He is the first person recorded in the Bible as having two wives: "*And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah*" (Gen 4:19). He was also a murderer. But unlike Cain, he expressed no sense of acknowledgement that what he had done was wrong. Instead, he bragged about it: "*Lamech said to his wives: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me*" (Gen 4:23,ESV). Lamech said that what he had done was justified by revenge: a young person had hurt him, so he killed him.

In his boast, Enoch made reference to the promise that anyone who slew Cain for killing Abel would suffer a 7-fold vengeance at the hand of God (Gene 4:15). But Lamech proclaimed that anyone who tried to punish him would receive a 77-fold vengeance at his own hand: "*If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold*" (Gen 4:24).

There is an interesting echo of Lamech's words in the New Testament. In Matthew 18, Peter asked the Lord how many times he should forgive someone for sinning against him: "*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?'*" Jesus answered, "*I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times* (Matt 18:21-22, NIV). In his response, the Lord was teaching that we should be generous in our forgiveness of others. But "seventy-seven" is not just a large number. It might a way of stating that our attitude towards others should be the exact opposite of Lamech's. If someone wrongs us, we should not seek to avenge ourselves as he did. Instead, our response

should be to forgive. Lamech threatened 77-fold vengeance; the Lord calls on us to give 77-fold forgiveness.

But in the years before the Flood, the way of Lamech was picked up by others. And the way of God was forsaken. The world became a violent place. In characterizing the time before the Flood, Genesis 6:11 records: *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence”*. This idea is repeated two verses later for emphasis: (Verse 13) *“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth”*. Man is made in the image of God; therefore, He abhors the violent acts that people commit against each other. We live in an age of incredibly realistic media, and we should bear in mind God’s displeasure with bloodshed in the movies that we watch and the video games that we play.

Methuselah’s father, Enoch, was contemporary with Lamech. Jude describes Enoch as the seventh from Adam (through Seth). Lamech was the seventh from Adam (through Cain). It is likely that Enoch’s prophecy that Jude quotes was first directed against Lamech and those like him: *“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him’ ”* (Jude 14-15, NKJV).

It is easy to imagine that Lamech would not have liked Enoch’s message, and he might have tried to kill him. Perhaps that is why God translated him. *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God”* (Heb 11:5).³

Walking with God

Genesis 5: 22 states, *“Enoch walked with God.”* Genesis 5: 24 repeats the phrase for emphasis. It is an amazing assessment, which is also applied to Noah in Genesis 6: 9. Amos 3: 3 elaborates on what it means: *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”* So, if Enoch and God “walked together,” they must have been in agreement. But what was it that they agreed on? Consider the options. Did they both agree that Enoch’s way was right or that God’s way was right? It must be the latter. Enoch agreed with God’s purpose, His principles, and His commandments.

Agreeing that God’s way is right is fundamental to the character of a righteous person. It means acknowledging that the events of our lives are under God’s control and that the difficult things that happen to us are for our spiritual wellbeing and ultimate good. It also means recognizing that God’s commands are wise and that we should strive to keep them, even when doing so is challenging.

Unfortunately, however, many of the people of Enoch’s day stopped walking with God and took a different path. In our next article, we will consider the fall of the sons of God and one of the fundamental reasons behind it.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. See Acts 2: 17, Hebrews 1: 2, and James 5: 3.
2. The specific references are Ezekiel 38: 16 and Daniel 2: 28. See also Hosea 3: 5.
3. It is unlikely that Enoch never died. Hebrews 11: 13 goes on to state that all of the people listed in the chapter died in faith: Hebrews 11: 5 might mean that God protected him so that he would not see death at the hands of Lamech.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Challenges that We Face: Sunday Schooling your own Child

What suggestions can you offer to the parent who has his or her own child in a Sunday school class, either with other children or as a single student?

Children differ greatly. Some respond very well under the Sunday school instruction of their moms and dads. Others may not respond well at all for any number of reasons. Knowing this, here are a few things to consider.

1. Many advantages and blessings can come from teaching your own child in Sunday school.

- a) It can strengthen the spiritual bond that you have with your child.
- b) Your child can observe, first hand, the genuine commitment that you have to God in Christ. You are a living role model. This is true when your child sees you in action in Sunday school, and it is also true when he or she sees you spending hours preparing Sunday school lessons at home.
- c) When you willingly do your Sunday school homework, there is an increased likelihood that your child will do his or hers as well without a lot of urging.
- d) Your positive attitude toward Sunday school can become his or her positive attitude toward Sunday school and toward spiritual things in general.
- e) You know exactly what your child had in Sunday school last week! You can help him or her build on the lesson and apply it at home. This goes beyond just doing Sunday school homework.
- f) Your child can be a source of feedback on how things are going with the Sunday school class. His or her perspective can help you make valuable adjustments in the way you teach and manage the class.

2. There may be times when your child does not respond well.

- a) Attitude and behavior problems can show up in Sunday school when a parent is directly involved with his or her own child. The problems may show openly with younger children and be more internalized by older ones. Try to recognize them in any case. Address them if they threaten to take away from the well-being of the class.
- b) Try to keep things in perspective. Children have a lot to learn, even when they

think it's the other way around. Mark Twain said that he was amazed how much his father learned between the time he was 17 and 21! I wonder what his father thought in the meantime. Charles Wadsworth said something similar: "By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he's wrong."

- c) Don't give up. Pray. Place it in God's hands, be patient, and persevere. Sunday school teaching is service with God as well as a service to the children and the ecclesia. What you have joined God in doing, let no man or problem child put asunder.
3. Having said this, there may still be times when it is not advisable to teach your own child in Sunday school. You need to be realistic about this. Another teacher may be more effective at this time in your child's life.
 4. It may also be desirable to:
 - a) Share the authority role with a teaching assistant.
 - b) Draw on guest teachers from time to time to vary the input and interactions that take place in class (e.g., ask another brother or sister in Christ to come into your class and handle a special topic on a given Sunday).
 - c) Plan occasional peer teaching activities. It may be possible to do this with the students in your own class, or it may be good to have students from another class become involved this way from time to time.
 5. A couple keys to success in Sunday school:
 - d) Don't show partiality to your own child, one way or another. Treat him or her the same way you treat the other children.
 - e) Value all of the Sunday school children equally and let it show. This may not always be easy!
 6. A couple keys to success that carry over from home:
 - a) The relationship that you have with your child at home will often carry over to the relationship you have with him or her in Sunday school.
 - b) Be consistent in your own life. Live the Sunday school lessons that you teach. How your child perceives you in this regard will bear on the success you have as his or her Sunday school teacher.
 7. If you have not taught one of your own children before, talk with parents who successfully home school their children. Find out what works for them. Talk with other Sunday school teachers, too, and find out what they suggest.
 8. We have mentioned prayer. It deserves to be mentioned again. Keep your vital work in God's hands, and thank Him for the problems and the blessings that He provides along the way.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

**Your comments and additions to this list are invited.
Please send them to me at 2harps4u@gmail.com.**

Reflections

I am Abigail (Part 3)

Conflict

Reports, meanwhile, continued to reach us of the conflict in our nation. Samuel, the great prophet, priest, and judge, had died in a good old age, and all Israel had mourned for him... just as he had mourned for Israel and her king. David, it seems, was constantly on the move, pursued by a king who seemed quite out of his mind. David's band of followers was now quite sizeable, making it harder to move quickly or to hide effectively. One of our servants told me that, in more recent times, David and his company were nearby, with our own shepherds.

David's closeness to our property and to our very lives was brought vividly to mind one day when a trusted servant came running to me. He was obviously very upset, and his words came tumbling out:

"David sent messengers from the desert to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them: 'Who is this David?' my master said. 'Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?'

"Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. Night and day they were a wall around us all the time we were herding our sheep near them. Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

I was in shock. Had Nabal really been so ungrateful? Yes, I knew he could be selfish, cruel, and much more. Now the old uneasy feeling seemed to come flooding over me again. Nabal with his mean, uncaring ways could be the cause of many deaths. It was altogether possible that David was on his way to our home to settle with Nabal. Now, out of desperation, I felt charged with strength and resolve. I was the one who must act. I had to do something... I would get the provisions David had begged for... and I would deliver them to David and his men myself.

My servants responded quickly to my orders. Soon two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five bushels of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs were loaded on donkeys. I hastily mounted one of the little creatures and told my servants to go ahead with the gift and that I would follow.

I had told Nabal nothing... nothing at all. I knew I would have to deal with him and his anger later, but for the moment I could only see disaster looming ahead if food was not made available for David and his people. We had an abundance of food... there was no need to deny a meal to any who asked for it. I must hurry.

Meanwhile, apparently, David was trying to cope with his anger. As he strode with four hundred men towards our home, he was heard to mutter:

“It’s been useless... all my watching over this fellow’s property in the desert so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!”

And, as I’ve learned since, David meant it. His men were anxious to seek vengeance on Nabal. Indeed, these men, wearied by months and years of being chased by Saul, were now about to seek a prey in Nabal and his household.

What would I say when I met this giant killer, this warrior, this fugitive, David? I did not even know what he looked like... although according to reports he was very handsome. Perhaps my servants would recognize him. I prayed that God would hear my voice and grant me safety and mercy in this situation. And I prayed for words... the right words, words of truth and wisdom, to turn David’s heart from evil.

David

Then as I turned a curve in the rough path, I saw that my servants had come to a sudden stop. There, blocking the narrow way was a band of men... and one angry man was at their head, arguing with my servant. I left my donkey and hastened to this man, for this, I instinctively knew, must be David. I bowed with my face to the ground and offered a quick prayer that my words might be wise and firm:

“My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name... his name is Fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent.

“Now since the Lord has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, may your enemies and all who intend to harm my master be like Nabal. And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my master, be given to the men who follow you. Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the Lord’s battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live.

“Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the Lord has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him, and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord has brought my master success, then I beg you... remember your servant.”

There... I had said it all... and then I stood there in stunned silence. God had answered my prayers. He alone had put the words into my mind and mouth. I was aware of the awkward, tense silence, broken only by the sound of a shuffled foot,

or by a nervous cough and by my loudly beating heart. Then David spoke to me... to me, Abigail, wife of Nabal:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.”

And then he accepted my gift and dismissed me with these words:

“Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”

The trip home was over the same pathway, but now there was no urgency. Mistress and servants alike were lost in thought and prayer. But the elation of the successful meeting, even David's handsome face, quickly faded as I remembered Nabal. Likely by now, someone had told him what I had done. There were a few of his servants who were always seeking some little way in which they could please their master -- poor creatures! So, now my thoughts and prayers were for myself and Nabal. How would I deal with him? I quickly lost myself in prayer... for therein was my only help, I knew.

There are those who have told me that I should have let David kill Nabal... this was what he deserved. There are those also who hold me responsible for Nabal's death. Had I not acted so rashly, so totally without my husband's permission, he might have overwhelmed David and his men. Possibly, I've been told, just possibly, Nabal might have changed his mind and given the required food. In any case, I've been told, the knowledge of my actions undoubtedly brought upon my husband the... but I must pause, for my thoughts will rush ahead of the story.

It was nightfall when I entered our main gates and courtyard. The din from the house was unmistakable. He was doing it again. I dismissed my weary servants and started for my rooms. My household servants greeted me, anxiously, as I entered the house. The sounds of much feasting and drinking also greeted me. Nabal was holding another of his wine-filled feasts, like a grotesque version of a king's banquet.

What a contrast, I thought... what a contrast to the glimpse I had had this day of the life of David, the one, some said, who was Israel's next king. I wondered where David, his men, and their families were dwelling this night, and if the food I had taken was enough for them all. One thing I knew for certain, David was not feasting as Nabal was. Nabal was in high spirits, as were his friends... and all were very drunk.

I slipped quietly through the hallways and up the stairs of our house. My servants followed in attendance, glancing nervously over their shoulders lest their master should somehow see them. I would tell Nabal nothing tonight... maybe I would tell him nothing at all.

Wearily I ate my meal and prepared for sleep. The sounds of Nabal's coarse and loud friends drifted across the otherwise quiet night air and assaulted even the far

walls of my rooms. I sank to my knees in a prayer of thanksgiving for the deliverance the Lord had brought today... and I prayed for help in the days to come in this house. As the coolness of the night and the weariness of the day settled over me, I slept. I slept a deep and easy sleep, for I knew, as I had known as a child, that the angel of the Lord encamped around me.

I awakened to another golden dawn, the quiet stillness of which was broken occasionally by a dove's soft cooing in a nearby tree. As my practice was from a child, I started my day with prayer, then dressed and descended the stairs to assume the daily supervision of the household.

Our servants were already busily cleaning the banquet rooms. The pattern of the previous night's events and their duties were well known in this household. They greeted me respectfully and somewhat nervously, I thought. Then, once again, I saw him. My husband was pacing back and forth in a nearby garden area. He was sober and very, very angry. I wondered who or what had caused such a reaction in him, so early in the day. He bellowed my name as he approached, and the abuses, verbal and physical, followed. I knew that one of his trusted servants had told him of my actions the previous day.

Death of Nabal

I would not lie. I told him everything. And, then, in his rage, he lunged for me again, but stopped abruptly. Gasping for air, hands clutching his chest, he stumbled across the room and collapsed in a heap at the doorway. Never once did he call for help. Never again did he even speak my name. The nearby servants hurried to their master and carried him to his rooms. I stood trembling and frightened at what had just happened.

One of my maidservants helped me to Nabal's rooms, where his servants had just finished laying him on his bed. I went to his side and spoke to him, expecting to see some of the old temperament, but there was no answer. Nothing. He was breathing, but there were no responses to any of us or to anything. We took turns talking to him, bathing him, sitting through the nights, trying to feed him, trying to reach him in some way. But there was no answer.

One day slipped into the second, and that into the third... then four days... and by the time the ninth day arrived we were beginning to feel that it was hopeless. He seemed to be slipping further away. It was no surprise to me when early on the tenth day, Nabal's servant awoke me with the news that his master had died, without ever saying a word.

As I looked upon his lifeless body, my heart was filled with such pity and sadness for both of us... but, especially for him. What a wasted life! He had had everything, and yet he had nothing. All of his riches meant nothing now... nor did his plans and schemes for additional work and wealth. Thus our pathetic excuse for a marriage came to an end.

As I've told you, some blamed me for bringing this end upon Nabal. Word spread rapidly through the region about the events at our home. I had to deal with the

pity, the criticism, and the gossip about a secret relationship with the fugitive David, in addition to making all the usual arrangements.

Meanwhile, what would I do? Where would I go? Should I leave? I could not, in all honesty, play the part of the sad, grieving widow. I would be suitably attired in widow's clothing for a reasonable time, but not for years. There would be no paid mourners, as was the custom, at this funeral. Had I not sought release and relief from God? There was no real marriage to mourn... no loving moments to cherish and share over and over with friends... no deep love to grieve for... just an unhappy, selfish, foolish man to return to the earth. The simplest procedures were best... and that's what I did for Nabal, rich man of Maon and Carmel.

Nabal had never wanted his family near him, and over time his family decided they didn't really need him. So the emotional distance had become a physical distance, a self-imposed isolation from family. Nabal wanted no one... and in the end no one wanted Nabal... no brothers, no sisters, no children, no one.

And then I left. I left all that was his... the late but scarcely lamented Nabal. And, yes, I went with David's servants, to David, to be his wife.

A New Life

And so it was that David and I filled Nabal's houses and property with those most needy. There were some of David's men, fugitives, who with wives and children needed a home, a settled place, a refuge. They would reap the full benefit from Nabal's wealth: lands and flocks and vineyards would provide richly for many in want. The walls of Nabal's elaborate rooms would echo with the sound of little feet and the laughter of many happy children.

* * * * *

I have lived with little of life's material blessings, and yet had much.

I have lived with many of life's material blessings, and still had little.

I have lived in a simple, happy home in a small village.

I have lived in great luxury but in misery and loneliness.

I have lived in caves, among the hunted and fearful.

And now I live in Jebus, with David, son of Jesse...

recently crowned king of all Israel.

I am Abigail, widow of Nabal, and wife of David.

My life is bound up with his, and his with mine, and ours with the Living God, the Almighty One who holds us as His special treasure.

I know that we shall be His when He counts His jewels.

I am Abigail.

What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God.

J.I. Packer

Managing Isolation¹

My family and I live in “Isolation.” In fact, our meeting in Esslingen, Germany is a seven hour drive away. Yet, we manage to live in “isolation” without feeling isolated from our ecclesia. With a determination not to feel “isolated” and intelligent support of the ecclesia, we have effectively managed our circumstances, and so can others in similar situations. And this is true whether we live close by or far away from the meeting.

Stewards of one another

Christadelphians are stewards not only of the Truth but also of one another. We try to take this duty seriously. We encourage each other to regularly attend meeting to give and receive spiritual strengthening, to remember our Lord in the appointed way, and to find a sense of belonging.

And it make sense to do so. After all, if we share the Hope of Israel, isn't it natural to want to be around others who share this hope? However, sometimes distance or illness do not allow us this joy. Alternately, sometimes even if we dutifully attend meeting, this sense of belonging can somehow break down. In both situations, members are living in “isolation” and surprisingly both can be managed in the same way.

Isolation means “To be set apart”

What does it mean to be in isolation? The term “Isolation” was first used in 1833. According to Webster's, it was originally used as a chemical process of isolating something, or “setting something apart”. Of course, we know “setting apart” to be an entirely positive principle in Scripture.

“But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him” (Psa 4:3)

God is asking us to be “isolated” from the world; to come out and to be separate.

The faithful in Scripture lived “set apart.” Noah and his family lived in isolation (set apart) while building the ark. Abraham lived in isolation (set apart) in the Promised Land at the request of the Lord. Joseph lived in isolation (set apart) in Egypt both literally and spiritually. He was sent there by God to save his brethren. Who gave him encouragement? Who strengthened him week by week? He did not belong in Egypt, but in the Land of Promise and he based his faith upon this fact. He asked that his bones be buried not in Egypt but in the Land of Promise.

To live in “isolation” (set apart) was a common experience for many faithful in Scripture. Yet they were never isolated in the sense of being alone from their God.

Isolation in the sense of being alone

Another sense of “Isolation” is loneliness, and this was common experience for many faithful giants of Scripture. And some experienced it even while surrounded by other fellow believers.

Joseph lived amongst his family, yet he felt the pangs of “isolation” when he ex-

perienced the hatred and jealousy of his brethren. How much worse this must have become as he was carted off to live in “isolation” in Egypt believing he would never see his family again.

David, perhaps the most social of all the faithful giants, experienced deep “isolation” throughout much of his life, even when, for example, he was he surrounded by almost 400 loyal men and their families. He was amongst believers but he and they could not connect on some level. Many deeply emotional psalms were written during these times of excruciating loneliness.

“I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies” (Psa 6:6-7).

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed” (Psa 31:9-10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ was himself in “isolation” (set apart) by God to save his brethren. Yet often he was both in isolation (set apart), and in that deep “isolation” (loneliness) that wears at the very soul and marrow. This, even when his friends slept only a few yards from him. In the Garden, he was strengthened in his deepest pangs of loneliness by an angel of God.

What really is isolation?

This suggests a problem.² Is it more excruciatingly painful to be in “isolation” (alone) in the meeting than to be alone (set apart) and yet feel so wonderfully connected to God and to his “separated ones”?

This is the real challenge of isolation — to feel connected to our brethren and sisters whether we are local or distant members. It can be managed, but requires the effort of both the ecclesia and the member. The inclusive ecclesia assures that all members feel the fellowship that is experienced through the Hope of Israel. Members, for their part, do those things that help create that bond of fellowship.

The burden naturally falls on the ecclesia to develop an environment where individuals feel connected. With Esslingen being the largest on the continent, my ecclesia assists both local and distant members to feel connected and does so every week.

A connected ecclesia

First, it is a matter of the mind. An ecclesia needs to provide a warm, welcoming atmosphere. If we, living so far away, had felt unconnected while attending the meeting, living any closer was not going to change that. Isolation is not a function of distance. It is a function of feeling connected. So, by stating the obvious, an ecclesia needs first to have a sense of hospitality and friendship.

Our meeting begins with greetings sent from any member who wishes to be remembered to the ecclesia. They may be in hospital, are traveling, or like us, live far

away. We send greetings from time to time to let them know that we are thinking of them. Simple but so effective at making members and the ecclesia feel connected.

Esslingen uses almost every available means to keep members feeling connected. A newsletter and study magazines are sent out each month. Consider the effort required to produce these each month, and to send them out!

Using technology to everyone's advantage

Ecclesial news are sent via email every few weeks to distant members. Facebook is used to announce events such as Bible Schools. Distant and local members have a constant stream of communication from the ecclesia, all of which is accomplished by a relatively small membership. It is a shared effort by everyone.

And most significantly for us, they make available via Skype and WinAmp³ the audio feed of the Sunday Morning Service and the mid-week Bible Class. We hear the exhortation as it is delivered. We participate in the memorial service at it happens. We sing hymns and pray with the ecclesia. Through intelligent use of technology, we are present and feel very much connected with our ecclesia.

And then, of course, there is the telephone, but that needs no comment.

Managing spiritual development is an individual task

Of course, the burden of managing our spiritual development falls entirely on us, whether we were local or distant members. At Esslingen, we are fully connected with the ecclesia in almost every sense. We participate in the memorial service with the ecclesia. We are constantly updated with ecclesial activities through newsletters, emails, and phone calls. We send greetings to them. We run a small home Sunday school. And we have all the responsibilities of any Christadelphian of Bible study and prayers.

It isn't any harder or easier for us. We just feel the responsibility slightly more keenly. We are determined not to feel isolated.

Pay as much attention to local member in isolation as to distance members

We often hear of the dangers of living in "isolation". Though real, we manage living in "isolation" because we are determined to feel connected to the ecclesia and the ecclesia makes it easy for us to do so. We are not really living in "isolation", but we are living as "set apart".

A greater worry is the member who feels "isolated" (alone) amongst the many. Remember Joseph and David. Ecclesias should pay as much attention to the "isolated" within ecclesias as they do to members living in "isolation". David's psalms show how painful it can be and the efforts that make distant members feel connected work just as well with local members who feel isolated within their own ecclesia.

This is the real story. The unconnected are more likely to leave the ecclesia if this connection is not established. The suggestions made in this article, based on my experience managing "isolation" with my ecclesia, can be just as effective with any member feeling "isolated" (alone and unconnected) within their ecclesia.

It is all about personally experiencing the joy in the fellowship of sharing our common Hope of Israel.

Glenn Lea (Berlin, Germany)

Notes:

1. This article was suggested by the author and encouraged by the Editor of the Tidings after reading the excellent recent editorial “Isolation”.
2. We ought not, then, to use the term “Isolation” to define members who live a considerable distance from a meeting. In fact, they are simply distant members.
3. Technical details can be provided upon request. After the initial setup and testing, streaming the audio of the memorial service and Bible class is very simple.

Puddles

For the last few years my home has been in a townhouse complex. Since the complex was built in 1981 there are a number of maintenance issues to pay attention to, but this past year the Strata Council has been focusing on the dips in the driveway where water collects. Since we live in a rainy part of the world, puddles are to be expected, but even if one of the owners washes their car or the sprinkler system goes on, puddles develop. One particularly rainy day this spring, as I was walking down my driveway I found myself before an enormous puddle.

There were a few things that I noticed right away about this puddle and after thinking about it for a while some other things occurred to me. First, although at a distance this puddle blended in quite well with the areas of the driveway around it, the reason I noticed it was because as I came closer the light reflected from the sky caught my attention. Even on that cloudy day, it looked shiny. Next, when the wind blew across the surface of the puddle the light sparkled and glistened on the waves. The puddle also reacted when the rain drops landed in it and when I walked through it, causing waves and splashes. The puddle was something that grew or shrank depending on whether there was a water source. In the summer, when it gets warmer, sometimes all that is left of that puddle is a little pile of dust in the dip in the driveway.

That is when I had an epiphany!

We are all puddles!!!

You may not want to take this analogy all the way down to the mud, but consider the following comparisons. First we can seemingly blend in and become invisible until we shine with reflected light. We are supposed to be reflecting the light of God’s goodness, grace, love, and will to the world around us. We stand out from the landscape of the general population because we look different when we shine.

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14 NLT).

We can feel the spirit of God in our lives as it moves across the surface of our puddle, causing it to change shape, ripple, and His light reflects and sparkles off of us. Times like these have been described by some as our “God conscience moments”. These are the moments when we have given our will to God, asking Him

to help us, and we experience an answer to that prayer or request. We can feel the power of God at work in our lives, just as was promised.

“Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and (that) your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16 ASV).

“...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt 28:20 ASV).

“What happens is not as important as how you react to what happens” (Thaddeus Golas).

We also react when things fall into our puddles or drive through our puddles. The way we react to situations or events can be a practical opportunity that can be useful to God when those around us observe how we allow that thing to change or affect us. Alternatively, it can simply be a negative event that we spend a lot of time and energy on, but in the end is pretty useless to us or to God. Learning to control the ripples, waves, and splashes that are caused by what it is that has disrupted the calm on the surface, is part of our witness as believers.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was constantly bombarded by situations, where things were thrown into or driven through his puddle. There were always people making demands on him and challenging him, physically, emotionally, spiritually, morally, and/or legally. He literally became the king of being able to stop himself from reactions that not only would be regrettable, but also would have been sinful. He constantly turned these opportunities into useful moments in his life.

Christ's preparation for his ministry was important to how well he was able to react to the challenges presented to him. He filled thirty years with personal study of the word of God, and in building a personal relationship with God. He spent the next three and half years of his life, constantly maintaining that relationship. It was important that he maintain that level of connection with his Father and so for Christ, prayer was more important than food or sleep. We see the consequences of his preparation time and the constant maintenance of that relationship with His father in Jesus' reactions. Over and over again, Jesus doesn't answer a fool according to his folly. He simply presents the truth and the folly becomes evident.

Take for example the woman caught in the act of adultery. They come to him with the woman in tow and demand a ruling on the case. Our own reaction might have motivated us to ask questions regarding the nature of the discovery of this individual, or we might inquire where her partner had gone to, since she was caught 'in the very act'. We may have demanded to know which one of them had been the bait, or which of them had set the trap. Jesus doesn't enter into the argument however, he simply presents the truth. Perhaps by bending down and writing in the sand he controlled his reaction to this situation until he could present the truth that they had blinded themselves to for the moment. In the end the only man who could have thrown the first stone, demonstrated to that woman that he had no intention of doing so (John 8:4-11).

It is an interesting study to look at things that Jesus does not do. Count the times that Jesus does not argue with people, or the times he does not dispute with those who held false beliefs or wrong doctrine. Even when the false doctrine seems so obvious and easy to dispute, there is seemingly silence from Jesus. When he cast the demons out of Legion and into the pigs, the only message he seemed to be sending was that even if there were demons, he was more powerful than they were (Mark 5:1-19). It doesn't seem important to him to clear up their misunderstanding about demons.

Then we can also count the times that Jesus doesn't point out the moral errors of people surrounding him. The woman of Samaria, although attempting to worship the God of Israel, was divorced five times and was living with a sixth man. Jesus does not focus on the moral standing of her as a believer, but spends some days there preaching to the whole town. We are not told the end of the story, but perhaps that is because the end is not as important as the opportunity to preach to those he knew were waiting to hear the gospel - those in need of God's grace! (John 4:5, 39-43).

There is a stark contrast between those things that Jesus does not do, compared to the amount of times we dive in to "straighten out someone". The error, in our minds, is so obvious, as is the solution. There is seemingly no need for pause, or for the benefit of the doubt. Yet, perhaps taking a page out of Christ's handbook would help us to avoid reacting in a way that would be more negative than useful. A simple prayer for guidance, a thoughtful investigation of the subject in Scripture through personal study, or perhaps being sure that all the information is understood, would be a good place to start. After that we could ask the question: Should we react? And if 'yes' — then how? What is the appropriate thing to say, or not say? However above all, if we are to reflect the grace God to those around us, we need to be sure to present truth. How can we as sinners, cast the first stone? Perhaps it would be better to simply remind ourselves of the grace that has been extended to us, and in understanding our need before God, speak of that need to those who are lost.

Puddle Analogy

The last bit of the puddle analogy of interest is the way it grows and shrinks. Obviously there has to be a water source. When we have access to that source our puddles grow, and when we are cut off from that source our puddles will shrink. If we are not careful in the feeding and the maintenance of our puddle, we may end up as a little pile of dust in a groove in the ground, quite literally. One of the best ways to take care of our puddle is by personal study. It is always wonderful to attend classes that someone else has spent time and energy preparing, but nothing can compare with the amount of spiritual food gained through individual personal study. The benefits of personally studying the word of God are extensive and they are summed up nicely in the verse:

"... study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing" (1Thess. 4:11-12 ASV).

This verse indicates that the water of the word that feeds our puddles keeps us out of other people's business, helps us deal with our own struggles, builds our personal faith, helps us walk honestly before God so that we are better able to understand those who are lost, and fills up the empty places in our lives. Amazing!

Nevertheless, what if life does not allow the luxury of time for personal study? What if getting to the Sunday worship service, or midweek Bible class, is all that can be managed during the week? That would be the definition of Puddle Survival Mode. Our puddles may not shrink to nothing, but we may be only just maintaining. There are times in life when we have no choice about the way our time is spent. Sometimes we hit the floor running in the morning and fall into bed at night without one moment to spare. During those times, it is so wonderful to have other puddles around that are willing to pour a little of their water into ours. Sharing things that we are studying with each other, speaking often one to another, and assisting in the maintenance of all the puddles within our reach, for most of us can often mean the difference between living and dying spiritually.

However, when we do have time to schedule some personal study, the benefits are immeasurable and almost immediate. We can be energized by it and the reaction to it entering our life causes our faith to grow, and our increased surface area reflects more of God's grace to those around us. Sometimes it is difficult to know where to begin with personal study, and therefore it can be discouraging. Suggestions gleaned from other students include perhaps making note of words, phrases or themes that interest us, to use as a place to start. Character studies and place studies are also very instructive, and interesting. There are many commentaries on all sorts of topics that we can use to structure our study time. These are the personal studies of students of the Bible, and they were usually motivated from a desire to share with others the interesting things that they discovered during their personal study time. A profound compliment can be paid to the author of any commentary, when their study motivates the personal study of others!

However, a few sad facts remain: First, that if we do not feed our puddles with the water of the word and build a relationship with God, we could end up as just a pile of dust in a dip in the ground! Then there are the challenges that we are throwing into each other's puddles. What are we asking of each other as fellow believers? What challenges are we forcing on each other? What objects sit in our fellow believer's puddles which are a direct result of our carelessness or neglect? How willing are we to help to remove those challenges and pour water into other's puddles rather than rubbish?

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Add to that the fact that we all have items in our lives which perhaps have little or nothing to do with our brothers and sisters, and we are coping with them every day. Do we focus so much on those items that we allow them to destroy our lives, so that they become the defining characteristic of our puddle around which is

very little water, or are they surrounded and washed by the water, so that they are still there but not so noticeable?

Final Thought

One final thought comes to mind: If our puddles are healthy, growing, reflecting, and reacting in positive ways to the things that are thrown into them or that drive through them, we can look forward to the fact that our puddles will at some point join up with other puddles, and ultimately they will cover the globe. Then our collective puddles will be reflecting the glory of God, “as the waters cover the sea” (Isa.11:9).

- Pursue
- Understanding
- Don't
- Destroy
- Love
- Each Other
- Shine

Eileen Henthorn, (Victoria, BC)

“Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom 5:3,4).

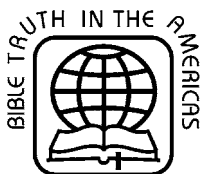
Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles to try our faith. If our faith is worth anything, it will stand the test. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable; but that is true faith which holds by the LORD's faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden.

A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” [Job 13:15], is heaven-born faith. The LORD afflicts His servants to glorify Himself, for He is greatly glorified in the graces of His people, which are His own handiwork.

When “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope”, the LORD is honored by these growing virtues. We should never know the music of the harp if the strings were left untouched; nor enjoy the juice of the grape if it were not trodden in the winepress; nor feel the warmth of fire if the coals were not utterly consumed.

The wisdom and power of the great Workman are discovered by the trials through which His vessels of mercy are permitted to pass. Present afflictions tend also to heighten future joy. There must be shades in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights.

Charles H. Spurgeon



Bible Mission News

From Australia to Chile

In the month from October 15 to November 15 there have been five baptisms in Central and South America: Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile. The last of these took place on Sunday, November 14, near to the city of Temuco in the south of Chile where Hipólito (Polo) Alejandro López Rodríguez and his wife, Ester Carrasco Salas, were baptised in the saving name of Jesus. At nearly 700 kilometres south of the capital, Santiago, Polo and Ester become the southernmost brethren on the American continent. However, despite their isolation their baptism was a real occasion with three brethren making the trip south from Santiago, one from Argentina, and two from Australia and New Zealand which meant that the breaking of bread which followed was the largest in the short history of the Truth in Chile.



Ester, Pia, Polo, Evelyn and Xavier

Polo and Ester are the parents of Sis. Evelyn Mugford who belongs to the Brighton Ecclesia in South Australia. Evelyn has lived in Australia for several years where she is married with two children. It was through a newspaper advertisement for a Bible seminar that she made contact with the brethren at Brighton and initiated a series of classes which resulted in her baptism. In 2009, Polo and Ester travelled to Australia to visit the family for three months, and it was during this stay that they

too began to take notice of the Truth. Ester began some classes with the brethren in Brighton through translation provided by her daughter. Once returned to Chile, they met the brethren who live in Santiago, and began to take baptism classes via telephone. Evelyn and family were able to make the trip back to Chile to be present at the baptism on November 14.

The baptisms themselves took place on a small farm about 100km south of Temuco near the picturesque lakeside town of Villarica. The scenery here is dominated by the lake set amongst mountains and the prominent, snow capped Villarica Volcano



Group at baptism and volcano in background

which quietly smokes away. The farm belongs to friends of Polo and Ester, so a group of close friends as well as brethren and family, witnessed their confession of faith. The baptisms were followed by a breaking of bread service, and then a late lunch which involved a lamb that until the day previous had in turn been enjoying those southern pastures.

We are reminded of the importance of family links in the Truth, and how that those we know closely are those with whom we can most easily share our hope. After all, a part of God's confidence in calling Abraham was that *"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment"* May God bless our new brother and sister and their family.



New office for the Santiago Ecclesia

Back in Santiago the brethren are very pleased to have found a new office in which to meet. Previously, the office known as the 'Centro Bíblico Cristadelphiano' was located on the 10th floor of a rather gloomy building. The new location is at street level in a leafy but very central neighborhood. It is hoped that this location will make the office a place more likely to be visited.

*Robert Alderson
(Auckland, NZ)
CBMA Representative*

Busy Days in Bolivia

We've learned that even a five day trip is important in the mission field and a lot can be accomplished. Following is a summary of activities that took place during Bre. Dan Robinson and Don Luff's trip to La Paz, late in October 2010. All the young brothers and sisters — Spanish Truth Corps or visiting — were of excellent assistance. Sis. Gisela Larsen from the Seattle Ecclesia, Naomi Osborn's mother, is visiting for three months assisting with the new baby, amongst other things. The Osborn's home (our in-field missionaries) is a very busy place!

On the first day, the Spanish Truth Corps crew (Sisters Yaana Melles from NZ and Sophie Melles from AUS), Joshua Dean (a young British brother living and attending university in Argentina for a year) and Bro. Freddy helped in organizing the hall, Sunday School room, painting the walls, getting the carpets cleaned in preparation for the special effort.

The second day, we handed out around 4,000-4,500 leaflets in two hours and then went back to the hall for lunch and looked through the old ecclesial photos. On Sunday morning we filled the Hall — it is nice to know that we will need more chairs in the near future!



On Monday night, the visitors started arriving 40 minutes before the lecture started. The public talk was “El fin del mundo: un nuevo principio” (“The End of this World and a New Beginning”) given by Bro. Dan. In attendance were twelve regular students from the Thursday night First Principle class, thirty new friends as well as fourteen brothers and sisters. After the class, many stayed and asked questions.



On Tuesday there was another public lecture “¿Por qué un Dios cariñoso permite el sufrimiento?” (“Why does a Loving God Permit Suffering?”), again given by Bro. Dan. The attendance was much the same as the previous evening.

The week ended with a baptism of Sis. Jackeline Romero Soliz – a truly wonderful way to end a very busy week.

Sometimes even the quantity of time spent in an area is not as important as the quality of that time. Short visits do provide exciting activities



and excellent results. Please contact Bro. Don Luffs (luffs@sympatico.ca) if you are interested in a short visit sometime to help with this important work.

*Submitted by
Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/C Publicity)*

Truth Corps 2010 — to Mexico

Though Sis. Sylvia and I had both served in Guadalajara before, it was quite a surprise when we received a phone call from Bro. Brad asking if we could possibly take on the job of Truth Corps leaders this summer. We had never pictured ourselves in this situation but we're glad we agreed to take on the task. After Bro. Brad gave us our orientation briefing, we spent the next several weeks rehearsing our duties.

Bro. and Sis. Tunnell invited the Truth Corps to stay in their home in Escondido, CA, not far from the San Diego hall. When our team members, Brian Adams, Rachel Cheetham and Andrea Weir Laverde arrived, we continued preparing and rehearsing various kinds of preaching encounters with them. They are great young brothers and sisters, and it was lots of fun and inspiring. We and several members of the ecclesia spent four-five days canvassing the neighborhood with invitations to a street "fiesta" the ecclesia planned. There was a good turn-out for the fiesta and it certainly brought the presence of the ecclesia to the neighborhood's attention.

Upon our arrival in Mexico, we stayed at Sis. Cynthia Paiva's home in Ixtlahuacan, about 20 miles south of Guadalajara. The fourth member of our team, a young sister from San Salvador, Andrea Tovar, joined us there. Bro. David Lloyd (the CBMA linkman) arrived to help out soon after. Sis. Cynthia made us all feel very much at home.

The ecclesial hall, which is close to central Guadalajara, is a very active place, with regular visitors studying the Bible and people stopping to ask questions and pick up literature. During our tour there, Bro. Bill Rawson, who speaks fluent Spanish, was engaged daily in teaching classes and meeting with individual students.



Guadalajara is a large, busy city with a modern subway system. During the two weeks we were there, we went out to various "barrios" and distributed leaflets



found fellowship with the Truth Corps team members and others we were blessed to meet during this time.

advertising talks to be given by Bro. Ralston. We were carefully guided by the local ecclesial members and CYC as we ventured into these neighborhoods. It was most encouraging to see visitors attend the lectures as a result of these efforts. We have also received the news that some members of the Guadalajara CYC are now studying for baptism.

We thank the Lord for a good experience and for the new-

*Your brother in Christ,
Norm Duke*

ThisisyourBible.com — Promoting Bible Readings

From January 1st (God willing), there will be a new feature on the joint ACBM/CBM/CBMA website www.thisisyourBible.com capitalising on the 400th anniversary of the King James (AV) version of the Bible. The aim is to promote personal Bible reading.

The feature on the www.thisisyourBible.com website will allow the visitor to the site to:

- Read a chapter of the Bible. The chapter offered will be according to the one chapter a day plan found in the ALS booklet *The Bible Reading Notebook*.
- Listen to that chapter being read by a Christadelphian.
- Read a short comment on the chapter (taken from the ALS booklet that is associated with the one chapter a day reading plan).
- Follow a link to a more details set of comments on the chapter.

Each month there will be an article on the significance of the King James version. These articles will be supplied by Glad Tidings as part of their activities associated with the 400th anniversary of the King James version.

The Bible readings have been kindly made available by Bro. Dave Hart (Halifax Balmoral, UK) and can be ordered as CDs from him. The more extensive readings have been kindly made available by Bro. Peter Cresswell (Derby Bass Street, UK) from his website www.dailyreadings.org.uk from where it is possible to listen to the whole of the daily readings from a number of different versions and see comments on every chapter in the Bible by a number of brethren.

Peter Forbes

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2. 519-837-9094, Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com
Website: www.agapeinaction.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BROOKLYN, NY

WE rejoice to report the baptism of another young person who grew up in the ecclesia — ALISHA DALE, the daughter of Brenda. Earlier this year, at our NY Family Camp at Copake Falls, DAVIAN CORBIN, eldest of three daughters born to Bro. David and Sis. Sarah, took on the saving name. The current baptism trend began last year with DANIELLE GRIFFITH, niece of Sis. Jenny Edwards.

Sadly we have lost Sis. Brijmani Budhai (Babbs) who fell asleep in Christ on July 26th this year, after a brief illness. Also, a year ago our most senior member, Sis. Eunice Chan also fell asleep at age 94 (she was baptized 53 years ago). Sis. Yvonne Huran has relocated to Atlanta, GA, and Sis. Eunice Murray plans to visit Broughton, Jamaica, for an extended stay. Bro. Martin and Sis. Viola Eastman are in the UK, also for an extended stay.

We continue to use free cable-access TV as our main preaching forum. The tapes are made at the South Ozone Hall on a monthly basis.

Clive Drepaul

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are pleased to welcome amongst us our Sis. Kamice Bailey who has been commended, and has recently transferred to us, from the Georgetown, Guyana Ecclesia. We thank our Heavenly Father for adding to our numbers. We were pleased to have amongst us Bro. Kurian Varghese from India who was visiting his family. Bro. Kurian has now returned to India.

We have once again been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brethren and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen, (Union NJ); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester NY); Deborah Kellet, Atlanta North, Tom and Sally Davies (Pamona CA), Tobi and Mishael Widemann (Christchurch, New Zealand); and Mark Collett (Halifax St., Adelaide, Australia).

Stewart Marsden

GLENDALE, AZ

It has been some time since the Glendale, Arizona Ecclesia has updated our fellow ecclesias of our status.

We wish to inform you that as of January 1, 2011, the recording brother will be Bro. Matthew Smith, and any ecclesial correspondence can be sent to his home address as follows: Matthew D. Smith, 12846 N. 112th Ave., Youngtown, AZ 85363.

After several years of our webpage being faithfully hosted by Sis. Rachel Howe on her own personal site, she has handed the title of webmaster to Bro. Luke Smith who has re-created the webpage for us with our own domain name **www.azchristadelphians**.

com. We wish to thank our sister for her dedication and pray that she will enjoy her life back in England among the brothers and sisters there. She will be missed.

Matthew D. Smith

MERIDEN, CT

Since our last report we have enjoyed the fellowship of many brothers and sisters from across the United States, Canada, South Africa, Jamaica, and the United Kingdom. We would like to thank Bro. David White (Durban, South Africa) for telling us about the preaching work that is going on in South Africa and for his exhortation. Also thanks to Brethren Steve Davis (Boston, MA), Ray Calise (Cranston, RI), Jim Barton (Kingston, ON), Bruce Waite, (Southern New Hampshire), Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), Gideon Drepaal (Brooklyn, NY), Mark Mallard (Tulsa/Joplin), and Aaron MacAdams (Worcester, MA) for their helpful words of exhortation.

Bro. Bruce Waite led our 2010 Study Weekend on the subject, "Prophetic Possibilities Concerning Israel and the Return of Christ". Brethren Steve Davis, Bruce Waite, Michael Owen (Seaton, UK), and Aaron MacAdams have also given dinner-lecture presentations for us in recent months. We extend thanks to all of them for their help.

Bro. Chris and Sis. Donna Rawson transferred membership to Meriden from the Springfield, MA Ecclesia late last year, and Bro. Benjamin Link transferred his membership from the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia early this year. We are pleased to have them with us, and they are now actively involved in the life of the ecclesia. Our Sis. Icema Gayle transferred from Meriden to the Treasure Coast, FL, Ecclesia in 2009. We commend her to the love and fellowship of the brothers and sisters in Florida.

With great joy we announce that two more of our young people have been baptized into Christ. Sis. RACHEL ASHLEY HARPER, middle daughter of the undersigned and Sis. Brietta Harper, was baptized on December 6, 2009. Most recently, Sis. MARISSA (MARCY) HART, youngest daughter of Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Laleeta Hart, was baptized on November 14, 2010. May God bless our new sisters in their journey to His kingdom.

Sis. Alyssa Tuck has just returned home after spending three months in South Africa. She celebrated her 18th birthday there. Sis. Alyssa and Sis. Katie Schlageter of the Westerly, RI, Ecclesia traveled together for the purpose of serving the brotherhood and working with children in some of the ecclesial centers of South Africa. The dedication of our young sisters is an example to all of us.

Bro. Brad and Sis. Sarah Demarest are the happy parents of a second baby boy. Joel Elijah was born on June 20, 2010. The older children amongst us cannot seem to lavish enough attention on the growing number of little ones in the ecclesial family.

We have also lost two of our eldest members. In August, 2009, Bro. Walter Kowles fell asleep in Christ. Bro. Walt was 95 years old, the husband of our late Sis. Dotty Kowles and the uncle of our Sis. Lynn Clark. In June, 2010, Sis. F. Edna Skinner, fell asleep in Christ. Sis. Edna was an accomplished ecclesial organist for many years. She was 98 and had been a member of the Meriden ecclesia for 78 years! Both "Uncle Walt" and "Aunt Edna" had been in declining health for some time. They now sleep in Christ against the day of resurrection.

In the summer of 2009, our young Sis. Haleigh Harper was diagnosed with melanoma. After immediate surgery and a year of treatments, we are very thankful to report that she is cancer free. Bro. John Turner, who suffered a debilitating stroke many years ago

as a teenager, recently underwent surgery to help him regain some use of his right hand. We are thankful to say that God has blessed his outcome as well. Our prayers continue to be with Sis. Cindy Schneider in Florida. Sis. Cindy is a member of our ecclesia in isolation and the mother of Sis. Cindy Nevers. She has long been stricken with arthritis and recently fell and broke her hip.

In 2009, the Meriden Ecclesia hosted the 78th Annual New England Christadelphian Fraternal Gathering. The NECFG was first held in Springfield, MA, in 1930, and has been hosted by the New England ecclesias on a rotational basis every year since, except for the war years of 1942 and 1943. We thank Bro. Ryan King of Petersburg, VA, for speaking at the 2009 gathering. Close to 300 brothers, sisters and young people were in attendance.

In 2010, our ecclesia purchased property for a new meeting place in South Meriden, Connecticut. We hope to break ground and start building early in 2011. The project has been a matter of ecclesial prayer for many months and God has seen fit to bless us with bright prospects for the future. Our prayer continues to be that we will be an effective lightstand of His truth in central Connecticut.

Stephen Harper

PETERBOROUGH, ON

The brothers and sisters of the Peterborough ecclesia would like to share some of our recent news. Our small group depends on visiting brothers to bring us words of exhortation. We are pleased and privileged to have the company of these brothers and their families and welcomed them around the table of the lord. We wish to thank these brothers from various Southern Ontario ecclesias for their uplifting words of exhortation. We also thank the sisters who provided musical accompaniment for our hymns. We are located in cottage country and thank all vacationing brothers and sisters who visited our ecclesia while in the area. We welcome and enjoyed their fellowship in the Lord.

We sadly report that our Sis. Eva Gwilliam fell asleep in Christ on November 4, 2010. Sis. Eva was in the Truth for over fifty years and will be sadly missed by all in our ecclesia. On November 21, 2010 we are moving our start time to 11:00 am. We welcome any brothers and sisters visiting in the area to join us around the table of the Lord

Percy Gwilliam

SANTA BARBARA , CA

It has been over a year since we have reported the activities of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia.

We continue to maintain a strong and active light stand in our community. We presented the Learn To Read Your Bible Seminars this year and continue to have one interested friend attending our midweek Bible Class from the Seminars.

It is with sadness that we report the death of our Sis. Marian Reavill. Sis. Marian was the daughter of our late Bro. Dave and Sis. Effie Stocks of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia. Sis. Marian had been ill for the past seven years and was confined to her home during this time. She was laid to rest on August 25, 2010, at the age of 86 in Santa Barbara, awaiting the resurrection. She is survived by her two sons, who attended the Santa Barbara Sunday School, Dave and Rick Reavill. May her sleep be short when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

We welcome by way of transfer our Bro. Matthew Walker. Bro. Matthew had been living in the Seattle area and has relocated to the Santa Barbara area. We look forward to Bro. Matthew's youth and enthusiasm for the Truth in helping our aging ecclesia. Out of 26 members, we have five Brethren and Sisters over the age of 90 with the eldest, Sis. Wilma Hirst celebrating her 95th birthday this month, and six brethren and sisters over the age of 85. We thank God for bringing our Bro. Matthew back to our ecclesia.

In September, we celebrated our annual Labor Day Picnic in the back yard of our Bro. John Seagoe's home. We had a wonderful day of fellowship and food with brethren and sisters of like precious faith from near and far. We would like to thank our Bro. Ron Stewart of the Lompoc Ecclesia for his words of encouragement on this occasion.

This past year we welcomed around the table of the Lord the following brethren and sisters: Jason and Ruth Hensley, Gordon and Rosa Hensley, David and Erin Clubb, Josh Barrett, Chris and Kathleen Stickney, Erik and Sharon Sternad, Julio Scaramastro (Simi Hills); Tony Banks, Russ and Betty Patterson, Bryan and Harmonie Blanchard, Al and Teri Carlson, Bob Carlson, Edith McDougal, Kelly and Kristy Robinson, Leta Tate (Verdugo Hills); Ron and Shirley Stewart (Lompoc); Sid Wattles (North County); Michael and Myra Stickney, Jane and Emily Tunnell, Jim and Dee Brinkerhoff, Norm and Sylvia Duke (San Diego); Ken Smith (UK); Nigel Fletcher, Michelle Fletcher, Samantha Fletcher, Jake Eggington (Australia); Tim and Liz Woods, Amy Woods (New Zealand); Jim and Marilyn Seagoe, Jerry and Wendy Hirst (San Francisco); Alistair and Jane Henderson (South Africa); Marion Sell (San Luis Obispo); Gary and Shirley Smith (Canada); David Cooper, Lolita Van Merlo, and Ann Loftis (Pomona).

We would like to thank the following brethren for ministering to our ecclesia with Bible classes and the word of exhortation: Jason Hensley, David Club, Josh Barrett, Gordon Hensley, Russ Patterson, Ron Stewart, Michael Stickney, David Cooper, Ken Smith, Nigel Fletcher, Erik Sternad, and Alistair Henderson.

It is our prayer that our Lord and Savior will return soon to establish his Father's Kingdom on this earth.....even so come Lord Jesus.

Craig Stickney

ST. LUCIA

During the past twelve months we have been privileged to have the company of Bro. Arne and Sis. Emma Roberts of the Cardiff Museum Place Ecclesia. They were with us being supported by CBM Canada and their contribution to our ecclesia is greatly appreciated. They returned home at the beginning of October.

During their stay, many lectures were held and preaching work undertaken. We were disappointed at the poor response to a "Learn to read the Bible Effectively" seminar. Our Wednesday evening lectures are getting a fairly good attendance from interested friends and we have a core group of about fifteen visitors who come quite regularly. We continue to work with them to develop their understanding of the gospel.

At the end of July 2010 we leased an "upper room" where the memorial service and lectures are held. Being at this room we are able to hold a Sunday School for the children.

During the course of 2010 we have welcomed a number of visitors from England and Canada. We do appreciate the work done to support our activities. Should any brother or sister come to St. Lucia for a holiday, they will receive a warm welcome from the members of the ecclesia.

We are pleased to report that none of the members were harmed by the recent hurricane (Tomas) that came to St. Lucia at the end of October.

Martin J Webster

VICTORIA, BC

We celebrated the marriage of Bro. Matthew Neville and Sis. Sabrina Higgs in July 2010. We wish them God's blessing and presence in their union. Our thanks to Bro. Noel Greenwood for his ministry at our annual Fraternal Gathering in September. Our semi-annual Joint AB Meeting was held in November — with four Island ecclesias represented. It is always a blessing to gather with like-minded brethren to discuss issues of mutual concern.

We received by transfer from the Church Street Ecclesia Sis. Diana Hills and from Maple Ridge, Bro. John and Sis. Dina Pillion. They are welcome additions to our local fellowship. We continue to be blessed with many visitors. At a recent summer Memorial service, we welcomed visitors from 14 different ecclesias.

Our Spring Study Weekend will be held, God willing, on March 5, 2011. We are looking forward to the company of Bro. John Hellawell to lead our weekend on the theme "David: Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign." For information, accommodation and transportation, please contact the undersigned at spring@csll.ca. Our annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference will be held, God willing, the weekend of April 21 – 24. For further information contact CYC@csll.ca.

Clyde Snobelen

Approaching the Cross

No man of faith can stand before the cross. It is perpetually holy ground — this mysterious place of meeting between God and man. The perceptive disciple approaches this 'mercy seat' on his knees; he finds there no place to display his own strength or wisdom or cleverness. All the qualities that may encourage pride in natural man are driven from him further and further with each blow of the hammer upon the Roman spikes.

As his awareness deepens, he must finally acknowledge that the cross of Christ has become, not a set of logical premises to be tossed back and forth in legalistic debate, but rather a moral mandate. As the rising of the sun drives away the darkness and creates each day a new world, God's love for man as demonstrated in Christ's death forever changes the spiritual landscape for the believer. Every issue of his life must now be viewed in the peculiar divine glow emanating from Golgotha.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Minute Meditation

Overcoming Problems

Theodor Rubin said, “The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.”

We all face problems in our lives, and the only people who have no problems at all are dead. What is important is how we deal with our problems. Circumstances and situations happen, but, it is not what happens, but how we react to what happens, that determines whether the outcome is positive or negative.

Our attitude toward the problems that come our way indicates what kind of person we really are. If we are humble and God-fearing, we should recognize that our character is being molded by our heavenly Father, and just as Jesus needed to learn obedience by the things that he suffered, we must learn some lessons as well. Confucius said, “The gem cannot be polished without friction nor man without trials.”

Try to polish a clod of dirt and you destroy it, but polish a diamond and it becomes beautiful. God has called us out from a world of darkness and is preparing us as jewels for His Kingdom. We read in Malachi, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

God in His wisdom sends us opportunities, cleverly disguised as problems, to improve our character, polish off our rough spots and train us in righteousness. For this reason we should learn to see troubles as divine surgeries to make us better, not bitter, to encourage us to rely on God and seek His ways. The good news is that God has promised never to send us a problem that is more than we can bear, for as Paul tells us, “No temptation (or problem) has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

In the Psalms David lamented, “I suffer all day long, and am punished every morning.” We may feel discouraged when we keep having troubles over and over again. But remember, the Lord has told us, “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” In Hebrews we learn that everyone the Lord loves, he chastens. God is teaching us lessons, polishing our character so that we will shine like jewels, and we may need more than one opportunity to learn certain lessons. We have much to learn and overcome to become sons of God.

Clearly we cannot overcome unless there is something to overcome. In a high hurdle race the runners must jump over hurdles to win. If the hurdles are missing,

the runner may finish first but will have lost the race because he did not jump the hurdles required for that race. The hurdles are there for a reason, and so are the problems that the Lord gives us to overcome. Our attitude should be to thank God for our problems and not be surprised because we have them.

The apostle Peter gives this good advice, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”

Let us accept the problems that God allows to come into our life, knowing that all things are working together for our ultimate good. We pray that when the Lord returns he will see that we have successfully endured the trials we have faced and have come through as polished jewels and gold that has been purified by the fire.

When Paul had a very big problem, which he described as a thorn in the flesh, he asked God three times to take it away from him. What was the answer to his prayer? “The Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Let our answer to the problems that we face be like Paul’s when he concludes, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

JANUARY 2011

29 San Diego, CA Study Day. Ecclesial Hall. Our speaker will be Bro. Arne Roberts (Cardiff, Wales). The study day begins at 9:30am and lunch will be provided. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis, ellisk@san.rr.com or (858) 674-5645

FEBRUARY 2011

4-6 Camp Ladore Youth Camp. Waymart, Pennsylvania. Theme: “Watch and Pray Always”. Speaker: Bro. Ryan King. Contact Bro. Ryan Mutter themutterteam@cyccamp.org or register online at www.cyccamp.org

27- March 4 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year’s school will be Bro. Karam Ram (Birmingham, UK): “In the Image of God”, and Bro. John Launchbury (Portland, OR): “Appreciating Job”. The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God’s Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brothers and sisters. To register contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2011

5 Victoria, BC Spring Study Weekend. Bro. John Hellawell, “David: Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign”. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen csnobelen@csl.ca 250-652-3318

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12-13 Paris Avenue, OH Spring Study Weekend with our speaker being Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD). The subject of the weekend will be announced later. Anyone having questions is asked to contact Coordinator Bro. Everett Muniz, everettmuniz@gmail.com or phone 330-497-2811

APRIL 2011

9-10 Sussex, NB Study day. Our speaker will be Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON). His theme will be, "Lessons from First Thessalonians".

15-17 Men in the Truth Campout. Lake Cachuma, CA. "A Godly Workout — Beefing Up Your Spirituality". Contact David Lloyd davidrlloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486

21-24 Annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference. Shawnigan Lake, BC. For further information please contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen cyc@csll.ca 250-652-3318

22-24 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering. T4C Camp, Freestone, Texas. Speaker Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, AU). Topic will be "The King's Manifesto For Life — Matthew 5-7". Contact Bro. John A Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

23-24 New Westminster, BC Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby) is will lead our study on Easter weekend. Topic: "Events at the Time of the End".

JUNE 2011

19-25 California Christadelphian Kids Camp for children ages 9-16. Held at our same location as in year's past in Ojai, CA. Speakers this year will be brethren Ken Styles and David Wisniewski and they will be leading us in a study of Elijah. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com

JULY 2011

16-24 Eastern Bible School. Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org.

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference Adelaide, Australia. Theme "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, CA). Please note the year **2012**.

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TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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February, 2011

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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"If the LORD delight in us, then..." (Numbers 14:8).

These are the outstanding words of the minority report. They reveal the difference in viewpoint between the minority and the majority. These men saw all the others saw, and more. They had clear apprehension of the goodness of the land; they were by no means blind to the formidable nature of the difficulties that stood between them and possession. But they saw God. They started with that vision, and saw everything else in its light. Therefore the enemies were "as bread" for them; their defenses were removed, if indeed the LORD were with them. Yet these men also saw that there was a condition and they named it in the words: "If the LORD delight in us..." In these words there was surely the recognition of a fact, and the statement of a responsibility. The fact was patent. The LORD did delight in them. He had ransomed them from slavery, brought them to Himself, provided for all their need, promised them this very land. What further proofs could they have of His delight in them? Nevertheless, they were in danger of placing themselves outside the benefits of that delight, by their rebellion and their unworthy fear. These things were surely written for our learning. Every call of God to His people is a call to those in whom He delights. Therefore they should know that no difficulties need daunt them. They are not called to meet them in their own strength. He will be with them in the path of obedience.

G. Campbell Morgan

Editorial

Isolated — But Not by Distance

Introduction

A few months ago, I wrote an editorial about the problems and challenges faced by those moving into physical isolation. Since then, there has been a follow-up article by a brother who, with his family, lives not only in a foreign land, but several hundred miles away from the only ecclesia in his country. There have also been several who have pointed out that it is quite possible to be in isolation, despite being members located geographically close to their Christadelphian ecclesia.

Most of Christendom attends churches, which are led by (usually) full time professional ministers. For many of the attenders of this type of congregations, their involvement is confined to a largely passive attendance of services on Sundays. Christadelphians, by their continuing use of a “lay ministry”, are commonly much more involved in their ecclesia. But this is not universal. There are at least two situations where isolation is common, despite being members of a local ecclesia:

- Sometimes the ecclesia is too large to involve any but a fairly small number of the members. This can result in a number of the ecclesia being only marginal members, by design or accident.
- Some ecclesias, although not particularly large, are so dominated by a few extended families that “outsiders” can feel isolated from the doings of these larger groups.

Large Ecclesias

These are not common in North America. Only about seven ecclesias have one hundred members or more, and none exceed about 150. This contrasts with the situation in both England and Australia, where there are a number of ecclesias numbering in the hundreds. For a time, I lived in Birmingham, England, and occasionally attended Birmingham Central, which at the time had about 1,500 members, with about 1,300 present most Sunday Memorials. This ecclesia has since closed, with most migrating to ecclesias in the suburbs, but it was then most impressive to look down from the balcony on the ranks of suited and hatted members — but knowing very few indeed. Nor was the welcome warm, so I soon joined a much smaller ecclesia. I did have several conversations with the recording brother, whose tasks and problems were quite unlike those of any other in that capacity that I have known. He acknowledged that regretfully many in the meeting were passive Sunday Morning attendees, whose absence could easily pass un-noticed, and whose attachment was minimal. Various attempts were made to overcome this problem, mainly by focusing on small geographic satellite Bible classes, etc. You can indirectly see the results of these efforts by the proliferation of other ecclesias in the surrounding areas. Although the Central Ecclesia closed in 2007, the total number of ecclesias in the metro area has changed little.

But this problem does exist on this continent, although not to the extent seen in the case of Birmingham Central in its heyday. Large ecclesias tend to develop factions, it being quite difficult to get to know everybody. We naturally tend to associate with those we know well, and the result is that newcomers, whether newly baptized or newly transferred, often find it difficult to “break in.” Thus their association with the ecclesia can be somewhat tangential, and thus full commitment is made more difficult, although not impossible.

I can recount myself somewhat disturbing episodes along these lines, both on this continent and in England. I have moved locations quite a few times, and on occasion have attended meetings with my family in areas remote from my home. I enter the meeting with my family, being clearly associated with the Christadelphians. (Who else have their wives with hats, carry Christadelphian hymn books, and carry large Bibles in leather cases?) And not only were we not asked which was our home ecclesia, but no-one, either before or after the meeting, talked to anyone in my family. It was also almost impossible for me to initiate conversation, because everyone was busily chatting with their friends. Thus are the ways of at least a few of the larger ecclesias. Not that this is common — I have been warmly welcomed in many other large ecclesias. But it has happened to me, so it probably has happened to others.

Family Dominated Ecclesias

Some ecclesias, by their very “DNA”, are hospitable. If a visitor comes, they are welcomed warmly, and commonly invited to lunch by any of a number of members. This tradition continues if they move into the area and join the ecclesia. Not just one or two members, but almost everyone is hospitable. And if an “outsider” is baptized, the same warm hospitable welcome is extended, and the new member soon feels part of the true extended family, that of the family of Christ.

Other ecclesias are much more inwardly focused. The extended families of the members have so much to discuss that, unintentionally, they tend to exclude anyone not in their family. And in some such ecclesias, the tendency is to scatter shortly after the end of meeting, with many going for lunch at their customary locations, leaving the strangers and non-family members to fend for themselves. In others, although many might linger, there are relatively few offers of hospitality. All these characteristics are quite innocent, and the members would be astonished if they were told their actions lacked the sort of hospitality expected by the New Testament injunctions to *“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares”* (Heb 13:2). It is more a matter of innocent involvement with other matters, and the whole focus of the meeting being inward looking.

The Result

In both these two types of ecclesias, it is quite easy to be in effective isolation, even though you might be able to attend a “local” ecclesia. So what can be done to solve this problem? Perhaps, on this continent, there are few that create major problems by their very size. But on this matter of size, this problem does not ap-

pear to have been common in the first century. And the reason for this is probably simple: most early ecclesias met in homes, which by their very nature restricted their size. When Paul wrote “*To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*” (Rom 1:7), it is clear from the salutations in Romans 16 that there were many “house churches (or ecclesias)” in that city. The situation might have been different in Corinth, for Paul, again in Romans, speaks of “*Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you*” (Rom 16:23). Gaius appears to have been the host of the whole church at Corinth: who knows, perhaps this means the very size of this ecclesia was one of the factors for the many problems in the Ecclesia at Corinth.

However, whatever the cause, there is no doubt isolation does occur. It is perhaps even more common for those who join ecclesias, not having been associated with the Christadelphians much before baptism. There is a whole set of cultural norms and expectations which are accepted in our ecclesias, but can be quite strange to those without a long term association. Few newcomers are aware of the way a typical ecclesia is organized, and they can be quite ignorant of the function of our serving (or arranging) brethren. The easy assumption that every male member is quite comfortable reading the Scriptures, offering public prayers, presiding, or speaking is, in at least some cases, quite incorrect.

As I have stressed, any such isolation is almost always quite unintentional. Any ecclesia would claim they are extremely warm and welcoming both to strangers, new members, and those who have transferred. Any perceived isolation or estrangement is not the way any ecclesia likes, expects, or intends to operate, but such situations do exist, perhaps more widely than many realize.

Solutions¹

In both types of ecclesias, the large or the family-dominated, it is possible to be in perceived isolation. So what can be done to ensure that these situations are minimized, or removed? These are a few suggestions: many more can be made.

- New members (whether newly baptized or newly transferred) should have a meeting member (or family) mentor them, unless such members are aware, by previous proximity or family connections, of the inner workings of the ecclesia. It is particularly important to ensure they are integrated into the social aspects of the ecclesia, as this is the way strong bonds are established.
- Newly baptized members, particularly those not brought up in a Christadelphian family, need special consideration. A serving (or arranging) brother should meet with them in an informal way to let them know how the meeting is organized, the function of the board, and any expectations of the meeting in the way of expected involvement, etc.
- For any brother who might be expected to preside or exhort, the expectations, requirements, and protocol to be followed should be explained. In many cases, brethren are put on the schedule almost casually, which can be quite frightening to the initiated. And public prayer is quite hard for many newly baptized. In former times, mutual improvement classes were the norm, which gives the opportunity for practicing such activities in a non-public and helpful format. These have almost totally disappeared, but the void needs to be

filled. And we should point out there is no problem about writing out public prayers ahead of time!

- Despite its acknowledged problems, the use of the Internet to enable contacts with others can form part of the methods of alleviating isolation. The knowledge that the community is much larger, and perhaps more diverse, than the local ecclesia is often helpful. It is unhelpful to exist in an isolated cocoon. As I have pointed out before, there is also a vast trove of useful Bible talks and exhortations available for free on many Christadelphian websites. New members should be encouraged to help in other ways: being a tutor at such sites as www.thisisyourbible.com is suggested.
- All members, especially newly baptized, should be encouraged to attend Bible Schools and like activities. These are essentially the glue that holds the fabric of our North American community together, especially among the young people. And if any are financially unable to afford them, every effort should be, and often is, made to ensure this is not a hindrance.

Conclusion

The sort of isolation I have described is one of the hidden problems of our community, especially on this vast continent. It is often not recognized as even possible by long time members of ecclesias where this occurs, content and comfortable as they are in their normal interactions. It requires a deliberate attempt to eliminate any possibility of this problem, and to ensure new members are rapidly and seamlessly integrated into the very fabric of an ecclesia, the body of Christ. True religion is not only to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, but also to prevent any feeling of isolation in any member.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. I am indebted to Bro. Stephen DeMarco for some of these suggestions.

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our respective communities, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
36th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2011.*

Main Speakers:

Bro. Ted Sleeper — "Meditations on Creation"

*Bro. Tim Galbraith — "The Tabernacle:
A Magic Mirror for Disciples"*

Bro. Ed Carpenter — "The Light of the Gospel"

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com

Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>

Exhortation

The Story of Naaman and Us

Most are familiar with the story of Naaman. He was the proud commander of the armies of Syria. He was a man that we might truly fear. As the Bible tells us, Naaman was a great and honorable man, a man who needed nothing from God. His very name means “Pleasant”, which is an unusual name for a general of one of the enemies of Israel. And why are we told that, “*The Lord had given deliverance to Syria?*” (2Kgs 5:1). Perhaps he was not a leper until we meet him here in 2 Kings, and was being punished for his attitude during his victories over Israel. His story is well known: his leprosy caused consternation in his household, and one of the Israelitish maids of his wife wondered if “*The prophet in Samaria*” would be able to heal him. So Naaman caused great disquiet when he arrived at the court of Jehoram, King of Israel. Elisha the prophet heard of this, and sent to Jehoram to tell Naaman to come see him, Elisha.

Now Naaman was not poor, or weak, or anything we would consider as a man in need of God... yet he was. He was a leper. An outcast. A man whom the Jews, and all his contemporaries, would shun. Yet, out of the misery of his life there came hope. Perhaps his previous military victories acted as a salve on his sores. A temporary balm over the hurt he felt inside. But this inner hurt led him to a man, to Elisha, to the prophet of the Living God. Elisha was so certain of the power of God, that he did not come out of his house. Rather, he instructed his servant to tell this great and mighty general that God would not accept him unless he bathed in the River Jordan.

It is quite instructive to listen to Naaman. He says, “*Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?*” (2Kgs 5:12). He didn’t think the waters of the Jordan were worthy of bathing in so that he could be healed. He equated the purity and majesty of the rivers of Syria, his homeland, to healing, and despised the rivers of Israel.

He questioned the judgment, nay, the commandment, of God, and was angry about it. He wanted to go to the best and cleanest waters to be cleansed, waters that would reflect his high standing.

God told him “no” through his servant, but why?

Naaman is a lesson for us because he is us. Look at Noah, Hezekiah, David. Look at Jesus. Was obedience easy for any of these men of faith? Why would Naaman expect things to be different for him? Except he did. He was prideful, he was arrogant, he did not want to go God’s way.

Naaman wanted to come to God on his own terms. God showed him otherwise. It was His rules, His way, not Naaman’s. Naaman wanted physical purity. Naaman perhaps wanted his washing to be viewed by his countrymen, not a few passers-by

in a backwoods corner of the world. But God wanted inner purity. He wanted humility. The dirty Jordan into which Naaman bathed is a metaphor for us.

God, in the beginning, created the world; the world became evil, but God baptized Noah in the muddy waters which enveloped the world. Later on He enveloped Naaman, the Syrian, the man of pride, in waters he did not expect. And Naaman was saved.

We also seek to come to God

We too may approach God as Naaman, looking into that muddy water, thinking it should be cleaner. Maybe cringing like Naaman, that the water is so dirty and maybe idly wondering how we ended up in a muddy river. But faith, real trust in the Living God, will guide us through. That is the lesson of Naaman.

How often have we stared at the water? Not seeing the bottom, only thinking of our distaste for the task ahead. Jesus was right to warn that the way to the Kingdom was narrow, yet the path to destruction was broad. For indeed it is. We can like be like Naaman staring, thinking, that wow, this does not look like fun, why couldn't God have chosen a nicer looking place or an easier thing to do.

It is also instructive to look at the response of Elisha. We can see Naaman, we can walk in his shoes, we can think of times in our lives where God is asking us to have faith and we have walked where we may not have wanted to. (Conversely, at least for myself, I can also think of many times where I needed more faith, I needed to be a Naaman!)

But also, look at Elisha, for he provides an instructive example. A type of Jesus if you will, and a good example for us.

After Naaman is healed, Naaman does two things. He recognizes the supremacy of God, and he offers God's servant gifts. Mule loads of gifts. If you have ever seen a mule, they sure can pack a ton of stuff! Elisha's response is telling,

"But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused" (2Kgs 5:16).

I think it is telling, because it is contrasted immediately afterwards with the behavior of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who runs after Naaman to get those same gifts. The lesson is important because it illuminates James' discussion in the New Testament of good works. Good works are done not for gifts (whether they be Naaman's or God's or someone else's). Good works are done because of internal character and a desire to do what it is right by God. I think Elisha and his actions, in contrast to Gehazi's, preview the discourse James delivers. The lesson for us is stark in its clarity, simple in its outcome, but also difficult in its application.

In business school, I took a course in organizational behavior; one of the things it touched on was motivation. There are extrinsic and intrinsic motivating factors. Money, rewards, promotions can provide extrinsic motivation. It is the intrinsic motivation, though, which is more powerful, but it is also harder to manage because it comes from character. God, through Elisha, through Jesus, and through His good book is trying to instill that character in us.

The Lord's Comment

The character of Naaman, Elisha, and of His son: It is that son whom we come to remember, the son of man, who submitted to punishment, put away pride, and was hung up on the cross and died. He died full of faith that God would resurrect him, and through his faith, he has saved us all. He has bridged what was broken; he brought salvation and a conclusion to the baptism of the earth in the flood. Hear what he has to say about Naaman.

“Then he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’ ... Then he said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian’ ” (Luke 4:20-27 NAS).

Many are called, but few heed the call. Many are in need of healing, but few find the healer. Indeed, many have no interest in the healer. That is Jesus' point.

As we direct our thoughts towards the table of our Lord, we think of Naaman's baptism in the muddy waters of the Jordan, and the powerful example he provides of faith and redemption. A great story of the character God is building in us. It is our choice, we see the broad path, we see the clean waters, but God has called us to the narrow path and the muddy waters — it is up to us to answer the call.

Nathan Sleeper (Glendale, AZ)

“It may seem strange and incredible that God would connect such a momentous change [covenant relationship, and forgiveness of sins] with a trivial and (as some regard it) ridiculous observance [baptism]. An earnest mind, however, will not stop to reason on the matter when once satisfied that it is the will of God, especially when he remembers that it is one of the characteristics of God's dealings with men that He selects ‘weak things, things despised, yea, and things that are not’ (1Cor 1:27,28), by which to accomplish important results — that it may be seen that the power is of God, and not in the means, and that true obedience may be secured in His servants.

It was not the eating of the fruit in itself — apart from the divine prohibition — that constituted Adam's offence. It was not the mere looking at the brazen serpent in the wilderness that cured the serpent bitten Israelites. It was not Naaman's mere immersion in Jordan in itself that cured him of his leprosy. It was the principle involved in each case that developed the results — the principle of obedience to the divine law, which is one prominent feature in all God's dealings with man” (Robert Roberts, Christendom Astray).

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (3)

We've seen that the Tabernacle was a portable continuation of the theophany on Mount Sinai. God would continue to be with His people, meeting with them in the Tabernacle just as He had met with them in the mount. In both cases, the people, priests, and place were sanctified: as God was Holy, so they must be Holy. In both, God manifested Himself, filling the mount and the Tabernacle with the cloud of His glory. In both, there were three zones of holiness and restricted access, the Outer Court corresponding to the foot of the mount, the Holy Place to the location on the mount short of the summit, and the Most Holy Place to the summit itself. God conversed with Moses in the Most Holy Place just as He had in the summit.

In these ways, the Lord's presence on the mount continued in the Tabernacle, His dwelling-place among the children of Israel. The tables of stone given to Moses on the mount were kept in the ark in the Most Holy Place, a physical reminder that the book of the covenant was the basis of their relationship with the Lord and the focus of their ongoing attention. In short, the Tabernacle was a living microcosm of the theophany on Mount Sinai.

The Tabernacle and Creation

In addition to these connections between the Tabernacle and Mount Sinai, the record of the Tabernacle is filled with allusions to the Creation in Genesis:

- 1) As the phrase "*And God said <559 amar>...*" declared God's plan in the seven days of creation (Gen 1:1-2:3; cf. Psa 33:6, 9), so the phrase "*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying <559>...*" occurs seven times (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12) in the "thou shalt make" section (Exod 25-31), dictating God's pattern for the Tabernacle.
- 2) This parallel is confirmed by the seventh of these, in which keeping the Sabbath is explicitly based on God having rested on the seventh day: "*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep... for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed*" (Exod 31:12-17; cf. Gen 2:1-3). The idea of Sabbath rest occurs seven times in this passage, which is no doubt significant (one of these seven, "the sabbath of rest", has the Hebrew root twice).
- 3) "*And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold... onyx stone...*" (Exod 25:3, 7; cf. 35:22, 27) recalls **the gold** and **onyx stone** of the land of Havilah (Gen 2:11-12).
- 4) The **cherubim** of the mercy seat (Exod 25:18-22; 37:7-9), in the linen curtains (26:1; 36:8), and in the veil (26:31;36:35) reminds us of the **cherubim** that were placed east of the garden of Eden, "*to keep the way of the tree of life*" (Gen 3:24).
- 5) The **candlestick** — with its shaft, seven branches, and almond-like bowls,

- knops, and flowers (Exod 25:31-40; 37:17-24) — is reminiscent of **the Tree of Life** (Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24), because almond trees typify life from the dead: Aaron's rod "was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Num 17:8); as a prototypical example of life from the dead, Aaron's rod was stored in the Ark of the Covenant (Heb 9:4).
- 6) Bezaleel and Aholiab being filled with **the Spirit of God** so they could build the Tabernacle (Exod 31:1-6; 35:30-35) recalls "*And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters*" (Gen 1:2b).
 - 7) "*Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished* <3615 kalah>" (Exod 39:32) parallels "*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished* <3615>, and all the host of them" (Gen 2:1).
 - 8) "According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, **so** <3651 ken> the children of Israel made all the work... they had done it as the LORD had commanded, **even so** <3651> had they done it... Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, **so** <3651> did he" (Exod 39:42, 43; 40:16) follows the "And God said... And it was **so** <3651>" pattern in Genesis 1. In addition, the description of Moses setting up the Tabernacle is punctuated seven times by the reverberating refrain "as the LORD commanded Moses" (40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32).
 - 9) Moses inspecting and approving the Tabernacle, "*And Moses did look upon* <7200 ra'ah> **all** <3605 kowl> the work, and, **behold** <2009 hinneh>, **they had done** <6213 'asah> it as the LORD commanded" (Exod 39:43a), echoes God inspecting and approving creation, "And God **saw** <7200> **every thing** <3605> that **he had made** <6213>, and, **behold** <2009>, it was very good" (Gen 1:31); the Hebrew for these two passages is nearly identical.
 - 10) "*And Moses blessed* <1288 barak> them" (Exod 39:43b) recalls "*And God blessed* <1288> them [the water creatures]... And God **blessed** <1288> them [the man and woman]... And God **blessed** <1288> the seventh day" (Gen 1:22, 28; 2:2).
 - 11) "*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation... And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up*" (Exod 40:1-2,17) refers back to the Passover command "This shall be unto you **the beginning of months**: it shall be **the first month of the year** to you" (Exod 12:2). Together these bring to mind "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... And the evening and the morning were the first day**" (Gen 1:1, 5; cf. 8:13). The setting up of the Tabernacle occurred on New Year's Day, and represented a new beginning, a new creation.
 - 12) "*So Moses finished* <3615 kalah> **the work** <4399 mela'kah>" (Exod 40:33) parallels "*And on the seventh day God ended* <3615> **his work** <4399> which he had made" (Gen 2:2).
 - 13) "*Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*" (Exod 40:34, 35) reminds us of God's purpose with the earth: "As

surely as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (Num 14:21; cf. Psa 72:18, 19; Isa 11:9; 60:19; Hab 2:14; Rev 21:22, 23).

These allusions show that the Tabernacle was intended to be a microcosm of Creation! Just as God dwelt among the children of Israel (Exod 25:8), even so He will dwell among men (Rev 21:3; cf. John 1:14).

Overcoming Sin

Beyond these detailed parallels between the Tabernacle and Creation, there is a general “big picture” analogy between Genesis 1-9 and Exodus 19-40. The two records follow the same pattern of blessing/sin and cursing/restored blessing.

Genesis 1-9 follows this three-phase pattern (see Appendix 1):

- Phase 1. Creation is very good (Gen 1-2).
- Phase 2. Sin threatens creation; in particular, Adam and Eve sin and are driven out of the garden of Eden, Cain murders Abel, and God destroys all flesh by flood because mankind is evil, corrupt, and violent (Gen 3-7).
- Phase 3. God remembers Noah and his family, creation is restored, and God establishes his covenant with all living things (Gen 8-9).

Exodus 19-40 follows the same three-phase pattern (see Appendix 2):

- Phase 1. God establishes His covenant with Israel (Exod 19-24), and gives them the plan for the Tabernacle (Exod 25-31).
- Phase 2. The sin of the golden calf breaks the covenant, threatens the destruction of the nation, and forestalls the need for the Tabernacle (Exod 32:1-33:11).
- Phase 3. Moses intercedes for the nation, God repents and renews the covenant (Exod 32-34), and the Tabernacle is built and is filled with the glory of the Lord (Exod 35-40).

Both cases start with blessings from God (creation; covenant and tabernacle). In both cases, man’s sin endangers the blessing, because of God’s wrath. In both cases, God preserves His purpose through one man (Noah; Moses). In both cases, God confirms the original blessing and (re-)establishes His covenant (with all living things; with Israel). Neither mankind nor Israel changes – the imagination of their heart is still evil continually; and they are still stiff-necked – but God Himself guarantees His everlasting covenant nevertheless.

This final “big picture” structural parallel clinches the analogy between the Tabernacle and Creation: the Tabernacle is indeed a microcosm of Creation.

Appendix 1: The Three Phases in Genesis 1-9

Phase 1. Creation is very good

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen 1:1-2): in other words, the earth was an uninhabitable wasteland (Deut 32:10; Isa 24:10; 45:18; Jer 4:23-27) and it was covered by darkness and by water. In Genesis 1, God prepares a dwelling place appropriate for his creatures. He does this by creating light, the

firmament above, the seas below, and the dry land; then He populates them. After inspection, He declares everything to be “very good”. Once finished, God rests from His work. The seven days follow a 3/3/1 pattern:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Day 1. Light | Day 4. Lights (sun, moon, stars) |
| Day 2. Water (above, below) | Day 5. Water (birds, fish) |
| Day 3. Earth (seas, dry land) | Day 6. Earth (land animals; man and woman) |
| Herbs and trees | Herbs and trees for food |
| Day 7. Rest | |

Genesis 2 provides more details about the formation of man and his wife, and their placement in the Garden of Eden. They could eat of any tree except the tree of knowledge.

Phase 2. Sin endangers creation

- **The serpent contradicts God.** In promising “*Ye shall not surely die*”, the serpent contradicts God.
- **Eyes opened, but now ashamed.** After the eating of the fruit, Adam and Eve transitioned from being naked and unashamed to having their eyes opened and being shamed.
- **Return to the dust.** Created out of dust, after the fall Adam was told he would return to the dust.
- **Out of the garden of Eden.** God put him in the garden, but after the fall drives him out.
- **Sin escalates:** Cain murders Abel, and Lamech threatens violent revenge (Gen 4).
- **The wickedness of man causes God to repent.** The wickedness that caused God to send the flood (Gen 6:5-7) contrasts with the sense of accomplishment in Genesis 1-2.
- **God saw and behold.** God’s assessment of the earth, “*God saw and, behold, it was corrupt*” (Gen 6:12), directly contrasts his original assessment of creation, “*God saw... and, behold, it was very good*” (Gen 1:31).
- **Windows of heaven opened.** “*And the windows of heaven were opened*” (Gen 7:11) reverses the division of waters above and below on day two (Gen 1:6-8).
- **Fountains of the deep broken up.** The breaking up of the fountains in Genesis 7 reverses the gathering of waters and formation of dry land on the third day (Gen 1:9-10).
- **All flesh died.** The death of all flesh (Gen 7:21-22) reverses the creative acts of days five and six (Gen 1:20-31; cf. 2:7).

Phase 3. Creation restored and the covenant established

- **Windows of heaven stopped.** “*And the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained*” (Gen 8:2), reverses their opening to cause the flood (Gen 7:11) and reestablishes the division of waters from day two (Gen 1:6-8).
- **Fountains of the deep stopped.** “*The fountains also of the deep... were*

stopped...” (Gen 8:2-13) restores the dry land from the third day (ct. Gen 7:11, 18-20, 24; 8:9; cf. 1:9-10).

- **Animals to be fruitful and multiply.** “Bring...every living thing... that they may breed abundantly in the earth” (Gen 8:17) replays days five and six (esp. Gen 1:22).
- **No more curse.** “And the LORD said... I will not again curse the ground” (Gen 8:21b) reverses “Cursed is the ground for thy sake” (Gen 3:17).
- **No more smiting of all living things.** “And the LORD said... neither will I again smite any more every living thing” (Gen 8:21d) reverses “And the LORD said, I will destroy... both man and beast” (Gen 6:6-7).
- **Imagination of man’s heart remains evil.** The reason God gives for these reversals, “for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21), is exactly the same reason He gave for causing the flood, “And God saw that... every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Man has not changed: it is by God’s mercy that creation continues.
- **Seasons shall not cease.** “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest... and summer and winter... shall not cease” (Gen 8:22) reestablishes the purpose of the sun, moon, and stars from day four, (Gen 1:14). This promise is applied to Israel (Jer 31:35-36; 33:19-21, 25-26), probably because the annual calendar of feasts was so essential to the nation’s identity.
- **God renews His blessing to be fruitful and multiply.** “And God... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen 9:1; cf. 9:7) renews the original blessing of Adam and Eve, “And God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen 1:28). God is starting over with Noah and his family.
- **Mankind has dominion over the rest of creation.** “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth” (Gen 9:2) recalls “Let them have dominion over the... earth... and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:26, 28), but with the idea of “dread” indicating a need for further reform (see, for example, Psa 8:3-8 and Heb 2:5-9).
- **Mankind’s diet extended.** “I have given you all things” (Gen 9:3) echoes “I have given you every herb... and every tree... to you it shall be for meat” (Gen 1:29; cf. Mark 7:15-19; Rom 14:6; 1Cor 10:25-31; 1Tim 4:3-5).
- **Murder is a capital offense because God made man in His image.** “At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man” (Gen 9:5-6) recalls Cain’s murdering of Abel (Gen 4:8, 10-11). The reason God gives, “for in the image of God made he man” (Gen 9:6), repeats “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26).
- **God’s covenant with Noah and all of creation.** When God announced His intention to destroy all flesh (Gen 6:5-7), He promised Noah, “with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt **come into the ark**,” (Gen 6:18; 7:1; cf. 6:8). God’s directive to “come into the ark” indicates that God was in the ark already, implying that God was with Noah and his family in the ark. The details of this covenant are formalized after the flood,

“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I,

behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you... neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:8-11).

- **God remembers His covenant.** In the midst of the flood, “God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark” (Gen 8:1). This remembering of Noah points forward to the token of the perpetual covenant:

“And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth...and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant” (Gen 9:12-17).

Appendix 2: The Three Phases in Exodus 19-40

Phase 1. The Covenant and the Tabernacle

As we have seen in earlier articles in this series, Exodus 19-40 opens with the Covenant (Exod 19-24) and the plan for the Tabernacle (Exod 25-31).

The first of these sections begins with a reference to God’s covenant with Israel. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine” (Exod 19:5). This is followed by the theophany on Mount Sinai (Exod 19), the ten commandments (Exod 20), and the rest of the book of the covenant (Exod 21-23; cf. 24:7). Lastly, this first section concludes with the establishment of the covenant (Exod 24).

Once the covenant has been ratified by the shedding of blood (Exod 24:5-8), “Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights” (Exod 24:18) to receive the blueprints for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-31). That the Tabernacle is part of the Covenant is confirmed by the seventh “the LORD spake unto Moses” saying, where we are told, “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath... for a perpetual covenant” (Exod 31:16).

Phase 2. Sin endangers the Covenant and the Tabernacle

Tired of waiting for Moses to return from the mount, the people get Aaron to make a golden calf, which they worship, offering sacrifices to it, as if the calf was the god which delivered them out of Egypt (Exod 32:1-6, 21-24).

Furious, the LORD sends Moses down to deal with Moses’ people, which Moses had brought out of Egypt, who had corrupted themselves (Exod 32:7-8). “And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Exod 32:9-10). God is threatening to destroy the people of Israel, so He can start over with Moses, just like He had done with Noah.

Moses intercedes, giving two reasons for the LORD to reconsider: first, God's reputation would be tarnished; and second, God should remember His faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and the promises He had made to them. In response, the LORD repents of the evil He had intended to do to the people (Exod 32:11-14).

When Moses arrives at the camp, he sees the calf and the dancing, and he smashes the two tables of stone, reflecting that Israel had broken the covenant (Exod 32:15-16, 19; cf. Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). Moses burns the calf, mixes it with water, and makes the people drink it (Exod 32:20). Responding to Moses' request, the Levites go through the camp killing those who were guilty, totally about 3,000 men (Exod 32:25-29).

Moses intercedes on behalf of the people, offering to be blotted out on their behalf:

“And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin --; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. (Exod 32:31-32).

The Lord responds to Moses' plea, including a command for Moses to lead the people into the Promised Land, supported by an angel of the Lord:

“And the Lord said unto Moses... Therefore now go, lead the people... behold, mine Angel shall go before thee” (Exod 32:33-34).

God continues, explaining in more detail, especially that He would not be going up in the midst of the children of Israel, because He would consume them if He did:

*“And the LORD said unto Moses... I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: **for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way...** For the LORD had said unto Moses, **Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee:**” (Exod 33:1-6).*

Israel was a stiff-necked people; if God were to stay in their midst, He would consume them. The threat was so imminent that Moses takes his tent outside the camp, away from the people, and sets it up as a temporary “tabernacle of meeting” (Exod 33:7-11). Further, if the LORD was not going to dwell among the people, then there would no longer be any need for the Tabernacle.

Phase 3. The Covenant renewed and the Tabernacle built

Moses understands the seriousness of the situation, and continues pleading with the Lord:

“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people... And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name” (Exod 33:12-17).

The issue is whether the LORD will continue to go up with the Israelites or not. Moses tries to understand how to approach God on this question. God indicates that His presence will be with Moses (Exod 33:14), to which Moses argues, “*If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?*” (Exod 33:15-16 TNIV). At last, God concedes, He will do as Moses has asked, that is, He will go with His people (Exod 33:17).

As a result, the Tabernacle is constructed and God fills it with the cloud of His glory (Exod 35-40). Exodus 35 picks up where Exodus 31 left off (the children of Israel must keep the Sabbath), as if the episode with the golden calf had never happened.

Exodus 34 contains the renewal of the covenant. It starts with God telling Moses to hew out two tables of stone to replace the two he had smashed (Exod 34:1-4). The LORD appears to Moses, proclaiming His name, “*The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*” (Exod 34:6-7; cf. 33:19).

Moses immediately bows his head and worships, saying, “*If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance*” (Exod 34:9). Moses is here referring to God’s agreement to go among them (cf. Exod 33:16-17). Moses acknowledges God’s repeated statement that the people are stiffnecked (Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5): the people have not changed, but God is merciful, so Moses pleads for forgiveness.

God responds by renewing the Covenant, “*Behold, I make a covenant... And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel*” (Exod 34:10, 27-28).

The details of this Covenant show that it is a renewal of the Covenant described in Exodus 19-24:

- **Nations driven out before the Israelites.** “*Behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite... For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders*” (Exod 34:11, 24a) recalls “*For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off*” (Exod 23:23).
- **No covenant with the inhabitants of the land.** “*Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest*” (Exod 34:12, 15) echoes “*I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods*” (Exod 23:31b-32).
- **A snare unto thee.** “*Lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee*” (Exod 34:12) recalls “*For if thou serve their gods, it shall surely be a snare unto thee*” (Exod 23:33).
- **Break down their images.** “*Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves*” (Exod 34:13) echoes “*but thou shalt utterly overthrow*

them, and quite break down their images” (Exod 23:24).

- **Worship no other god.** “Thou shalt worship no other god” (Exod 34:14) reminds us of “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works” (Exod 23:13; cf. 20:3, 5). “Thou shalt make thee no molten gods” (Exod 34:17) is more specific and targets the Israelites’ particular sin (Exod 32:4, 8; cf. 20:4).
- **Sabbath rest.** “Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest” (Exod 34:21) repeats “Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest” (Exod 23:12; cf. 20:8-11).
- **Three covenant feasts.** “The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep... And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel” (Exod 34:18, 22-23) echoes “Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread... And the feast of harvest... and the feast of ingathering... Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD” (Exod 23:14-17; cf. 34:24b).
- **Firstfruits.** “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk” (Exod 34:26; cf. 34:19-20) repeats “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seeth a kid in his mother’s milk” (Exod 23:19).

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

The Young Boy at the Tabernacle

“Hannah... said to her husband, ‘After the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the LORD, and he will live there always’... The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli” (1Sam 1:22; 3:1).

Samuel ministered unto the LORD at the tabernacle. How lovely a picture! The little child growing up in such a holy place, his first impressions of his surroundings a blend of reverence and delight. Before him was gradually opened, day by day, that “illustrated book” which was the Tabernacle. As idea after idea unfolded, God would appear in everything around him: the garments, the sacrifices, the lamps, the shewbread, the incense rising noiselessly toward the heavenly throne. With solemnity he would contemplate the veil which hid the holiest place, tracing on it the figures of the cherubim — the “living creatures” that mutely declared the unfailing purpose of the Almighty to fill the earth with His glory! All this Samuel saw, and more.

George Booker

Bible Study

The Glory in the Number of His Name (3)

The six Greek letters in the name of Jesus add up to 888. We have already witnessed an uninterrupted ray of the light extending from this observation as it continues laser-like through the shadows of Scripture and creation, the written and the spoken word of God. We will have to ascend our final platform of observation into the glory of the number of the name of our Messiah in two stages.

Progressions of Three

A very powerful pattern throughout Scripture is the countless threefold progressions. Bordering this understanding is that there are exactly two separate directions in these three stage progressions. One triple pattern direction leads to truth, righteousness and life. The other triple pattern leads to ignorance, wickedness and death. We begin with the negative triple patterns, submitting to the divine precedent of darkness before light (Gen 1:5).

- There are three categories of sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1John 2:16).
- There are three progressive steps to sin's full maturity:
 1. Temptation, which is the enticement of lust;
 2. Lust conceives sin; and
 3. Sin brings forth death (James 1:14-15).
- Although Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, we see those unending temptations capsulized into the three wilderness temptations, matching the three categories of sin and the three stage failure in Eden.
- David was appropriately offered three possible judgments for his census related sin: 3 years of famine, 3 months of military defeats or 3 days of plague.
- There are exactly three categories of ritual uncleanness that physically distanced a believer from God during the first Kingdom Age: leprosy, bodily issues, and physical contact with the dead.
- Death appropriately had dominion over our Messiah for exactly three days and three nights, prophesying that creation would suffer the dominion of death for just three more divine days of 1,000 years each (Psa 90:4), when the third and final immortalization event is completed. At the end of the Restored Kingdom Age, 3,000 years from the death of Jesus, we see death and the grave being cast into the lake of fire which is defined as total elimination (the second death; Rev. 20:14). The three days and three nights of our Messiah's death is part of a very, very large Scriptural theme. Once again, the apostasy's delusion of a Friday afternoon death and a Sunday morning resurrection blacks out the glory being veiled by supposedly simple Scriptural expressions.

Positive Progressions of Three

Opposing the negative threefold progression pattern is the positive counterpart.

Jesus defines himself as the truth, the life and the way (John 14:6). This declaration is an extension of the three door-to-ones-home rituals of the First Kingdom Age.

- 1) Truth: Writing the first and greatest commandment on one's doorpost (Deut 6:4-9);
- 2) Life: Painting the Passover blood on the doorpost of one's home;
- 3) Way: Boring a hole in the ear of a voluntary lifelong Hebrew slave at the doorpost of their beloved master (Exod 21:6).

Paul declares the three great behavioral motivations: faith, hope and love (1Cor 13:13).

The ordination of the priesthood included a unique offering requiring blood to be dabbed on the right ear, the right thumb and the right large toe of each priest. This displays the positive progression of hearing the word of life with the right ear, choosing the truth about life with the grasping feature of the right thumb and walking in the way of life with the navigational feature of the large right toe.

This same pattern is similarly portrayed in the path of repentance and forgiveness projected in the sin offering. When a sin offering was for the High Priest or the nation, the blood of the bullock was applied twelve times at exactly three stations. The sacrificial blood was first spattered seven times on the veil (the flesh of Christ, Heb 10:19-20) and then smeared on the four horns of the incense altar (prayer or repentance) and then the remaining bulk of the sacrificial lifeblood was poured out at the base of the bronze altar (changing the behavior pattern in our lives). These three successive blood application stations indicate the three stage progression of true repentance:

- 1) Recognition,
- 2) Sorrowful repentance expressed through prayer
- 3) Repentant behavior of a changed lifestyle, pouring our lives out at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Waiting for the Kingdom is repeatedly defined in the terms of three stage progressions: the blade, ear and mature grain stages of fruit bearing plants (Mark 4:26-29); the leaven hidden in the three measures of dough (Matt 13:33).

Similarly we see three distinct priesthood ages leading up to the Kingdom: Patriarchal Priesthood, Levitical Priesthood and Ecclesial Priesthood. There has to be a law change when there is a priesthood change (Heb 7:12), just as there was a law and priesthood change at Sinai, and then at Jerusalem, and there will be a third law change when the Millennial Kingdom priesthood is established. A great deal of Kingdom Law will be restored when both mortal and immortal priests direct mankind in the principles and ways of the Creator.

The three divisions of the peace offering (thanksgiving, votive and freewill) parallel the three great love commandments.

- 1) Love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength;
- 2) Love our neighbors, but only as much as we love ourselves and

- 3) Love our brothers and sisters in Christ greater than we love ourselves (John 13:34; 15:12-13; Gal. 6:2, 10; Matt 25:40).

This relationship between the three peace offerings and the three love commandments is significant since the peace offering (Heb. Zebach) is fulfilled in merciful love. *“For I desired mercy (Heb: chesed=merciful love), and not sacrifice (Heb: zebach=exclusively the peace offering); and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”* (Hos. 6:6).

Three Progressive Stages to God

Just as the serpent philosophy was pursued in those three progressive negative stages in Eden, so the reversal back to Godly righteousness is repeatedly presented in three positive stages. This is highly significant in our pursuit of the reason why the number of Jesus' name is expressed as **triple** eights. Let's progress to the next platform in our pursuit of the glory of divine light. The approach to our Heavenly Father is presented as a three stage progression in the divinely constructed sanctuary at the introduction of the first Kingdom of God at Sinai. There are specifically three entranceways, three portals, offering entrance into a progressively holier environment.

- 1) The first entrance was into the sanctuary courtyard, through the door with three curtains to the right as well as the left (Exod 27:14-16). This parallels the entrances in the temple design for the Restored Kingdom with three chambers to the left as well as the right of each gate (Ezek 40) as well as the golden lamp stand with the three branches for light to the right and three to the left of the primary lamp stand center shaft. All ritually clean Israelites could enter the courtyard. Appropriately there were three articles within the courtyard:
 1. The bronze altar of burnt offering;
 2. The bronze laver
 3. The Tabernacle.
- 2) The next portal was into the Holy Place of the Sanctuary. The priests were allowed to enter this holier environment but had to wash their hands and feet before entering... or die (Exod 30:19-21). Appropriately, there were three articles in the Holy Place:
 1. The golden table of showbread,
 2. The golden lampstand
 3. The golden incense altar.
- 3) The third and final portal offered a barred entrance into the Most Holy Place. Only the High Priest could enter here and only three times each year, on the Day of Atonement. There was only one item in the Most Holy. However the golden ark of the covenant received three progressive deposits: 1st an omer of incorruptible manna; 2nd the covenant stones with the ten commandments and 3rd the rod of resurrection with its buds and blossoms and ripe almonds.
- 4) Each of the three progressively holier stages highlight an inner three that serves to emphasize the significance of the pattern. Hopefully, the sheer volume and consistency of the pattern has allowed us to progress beyond any potential criticism of a 'contrived' pattern.

Entrances of the High Priest

The next understanding platform brings us to the three exclusive entrances of the High Priest into that third and holiest environment, where the divine glory rested above the mercy seat between the cherubim. These three entrances declare the three great immortalization events in the divine plan. This is what atonement is all about: immortalization. The principle of atonement is often dramatically minimized as nothing more than forgiveness. The darkness of that limiting presumption would blind us to the glory of the rock solid relationship between atonement and inheriting the divine nature that is so powerfully displayed in the shadows of the Day of Atonement ritual.

- 1) The first entrance of the High Priest into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement was to generate the incense cloud that would blend with the divine glory embracing the golden ark. This was reviewed in the previous commentary. This action saved the life of the High Priest... *“And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not” (Lev 16:13)*. This conversion of the aromatic dust of the incense into the cloud that saves the life of the High Priest is a flawless representation of the first immortalization event. Our Messiah was raised from the cursed nature of *dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return* to the immortal spirit nature of his Father, represented throughout Scripture by clouds. After the High Priest saved his own life through this ritual he was free to spatter the blood of the bullock eastward as well as before the mercy seat for the atonement of the entire family of the High Priest.
- 2) The second immortalization event will be when our ultimate High Priest takes his bride, who is also expressed as his children and his brothers and sisters throughout Scripture. This second immortalization event is for the family of the High Priest. The third Day of Atonement activity in the Most Holy was when the High Priest spattered the blood of the goat eastward and before the mercy seat, for the atonement of the rest of the nation.
- 3) The third immortalization event in the divine plan, at the end of the Millennium Kingdom, is for the rest of the world. Everyone will either perish or inherit the divine nature. The three Most Holy Place activities on the Day of Atonement flawlessly project the three immortalizations in the divine plan. This observation is impossible to anyone who believes the serpent lie of not surely dying because of sin. The God-despising delusion of immortal human souls and immortal wicked beings represent the next evolutionary philosophy stage beyond the limitation of atonement to an understanding of simply forgiveness. Separating atonement from the covering of the divine nature immediately blocks our view of the veiled glories in the shadows of divine expressions.

Creation Confirmation

The spoken word of God (creation) always confirms the written word of God (The Bible). Just as there are three progressive stages to the eternal continuation of life in the ultimate divine plan, so there are exactly three progressively significant stages in the continuation of life under the current temporary order. Temporary

life requires each of the three categories of matter to continue life: gas, liquid and solids (oxygen, water, bread). If we are deprived of oxygen we will die in minutes. If we are deprived of only water we will die within two weeks. If we are deprived of only solids we may live for a couple months. Each of these three life extending necessities in the terms of creation (air, water and food) are presented as symbols of God's word or His Spirit in Scripture. This was the lesson in the manna. "*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live*" (Deut 8:3). It is the word of our Creator that is the source of life, whether it is eternal life from the written word and the word made flesh or it is the spoken word that constructed the features of creation by which we are currently and temporarily sustained. Another creation shadow of these three stages — to the realization of total creational immortality — is the three specific trimesters in the conception to birth progression of a new human life. Creation constantly testifies divine truths to those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

The number of the name of Jesus had to have triple eights. He is our source of life. He is our oxygen, our water and our bread. He is the key component of each of the three immortalization events in the divine plan. He is the key to understanding the three divinely appointed feasts that were each identified with harvests (judgment) throughout the year, indicating the same three immortalization events. The glory in the number of his name is hidden in the shadows of Scripture and veiled in the features of creation for the exclusive witness of those who have circumcised their hearts, rejected the serpent philosophy and truly love our Creator and His principles.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Will you be ready?

Will you be ready for the king when he comes? Wise men will. The Master comes to reign on earth. He will give eternal life to all who have believed these good things and have been baptized, and are waiting faithfully for him:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:31-34).

Surely, this is worth believing. And it is true!

Harry Tennant

“As it was in the Days of Noah” (Part 2)

Whom do You Trust?

In the previous article, we discussed the “days of Noah” with a particular focus on Noah’s lineage. His father was from the line of Seth, which had produced men like Enoch, who had shown more affinity for the things of God than the descendants of Cain had. Unfortunately, however, many of the people of Enoch’s day stopped walking with God and took a different path. Genesis 6: 2 records that righteous men, many of whom were probably from the House of Seth, began to marry women of the world, many of whom were probably from the House of Cain: *“That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose”*. The title “sons of God” is used repeatedly in the Bible in reference to faithful people.¹ For example, John states that God’s love for us is shown by the fact that we are called *“the sons of God”* (1John 3:1).

However, in the time before the Flood, the sons of God went astray. Genesis 6:2 describes what happened. They looked on the daughters of men; they saw that they were beautiful, and they took them as wives.

It is remarkable the number of times that the Bible hints at the character of a person’s spouse. It does this because when a person has a choice of who they will marry, the decision that they make reveals a lot about who they are. And it is a consistent characteristic of the ungodly to select a marriage partner based on appearances and physical appeal alone. Consider Lamech, for example. The Scriptures make repeated references to his wives, Adah and Zillah. “Adah” means “ornament,” which certainly indicates beauty and a focus on appearance. The name “Zillah,” his other wife, means “shadow,” which brings to mind the woman of Proverbs 7, who waited in the shadows and seduced her lover with flattering words and sensual speech. Faithful Ruth, of course, was the exact opposite. She was commended for choosing a spouse based on his character and not focusing merely on physical attraction (Ruth 3:10). And God blessed her marriage to Boaz.

The marriages of the sons of God to the daughters of men did bring some material advantages for a time. The descendants of Lamech were very skilled in the ways of the world: *“And Adah bore Jubal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah”* (Genesis 4:20-22 NKJV). Perhaps that is why the children of the unions between the sons of God and the daughters of men produced giants: *“There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown”* (Gen 6:4). Maybe the technology they had access to, and the high standard of living they enjoyed, allowed them to grow larger in stature, just as people from prosperous Western nations are often physically bigger than people from poorer countries.

Of course, the real reason that those unions produced giants was probably because

of the lesson it conveyed. Those marriages were just based on flesh. So, what did they produce? More flesh. Giant amounts of it.

And the end result was not happiness. The corruption of God's way led to lawlessness: *"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time"* (Gen 6:5, NIV). It is not hard to imagine that the giants that came from the marriages of the sons of God to the daughters of men probably took advantage of their imposing size and contributed to the violence that prevailed in society.

There is a powerful lesson for us in the developments described in Genesis 6. We should never deceive ourselves into thinking that supposed "little" deviations from God's way, such as cultivating relationships based purely on physical attraction, are acceptable as long as we are "sons of God" in every other way. That is a temptation that our minds are prone to indulging in. It is so easy to think that we can have the best of both worlds by permitting ourselves to have "little" departures from divine standards. We can think that a few moral compromises will allow us to enjoy both the benefits of a relationship with God, as well as some pleasures of the flesh. But, as Genesis 6 shows, that never works. Indulging our own disobedience only leads to more departures from God's way. Notice how quickly the world progressed from being a place that had "sons of God" who strayed, to being a place completely given over to wickedness. Moreover, the departures from God's way that we permit in our lives have a way of creating new problems for us. That principle is illustrated vividly by the appearance of the giants. If the sons of God had not allowed themselves to be drawn away by the beauty of the daughters of men, the place would not have been overrun with giants. A lot of hardship and sorrow could have been averted if the sons of God had stuck to divine principles **in all aspects of their lives**. The same is true for us, particularly when it comes to whom we spend our time with, and especially whom we marry.

Trust in God when it comes to finding a marriage partner

Proverbs states: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Prov 3:5-6). The question of trust was a defining characteristic that distinguished the House of Seth from the House of Cain in the years before the Flood. Those who followed the principles of the House of Seth put their trust in God. But those who followed the principles of the House of Cain trusted in themselves.

So, do you trust God? It is an important question. The answer has a lot of implications for our actions. For example, much of what happens in our dating relationships and our choice of a marriage partner are reflections of how much trust we place in God to do what He has said.

So, what has God said that He will do? Well, He has promised that He will give us what we need to serve Him. The Apostle Paul writes: *"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:19 ESV). And if we need a Godly, loving spouse, God will meet that need: *"House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD"* (Prov 19:14 ESV).

But, if you are a single person, you may go through periods where you feel you have a need along those lines that is going unmet. You may want a relationship but have a hard time finding the right person or having things work out. You may even want to date someone for all of the right reasons and still find yourself alone.

If you find yourself in this situation, continue to trust that if marriage will be a happy and spiritually healthy state for you, God will provide you with a suitable partner. But make sure that you have your priorities straight. Look for someone who loves God more than anything else, including you: *“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:25-26). If someone loves God above all else, they will try to love you as God loves. They will be nurturing. They will be gracious. They will forgive. And they will do it even when you do not necessarily deserve it.

Look for someone who is incredibly supportive of you and your activities, even if he or she cannot fully participate in them. God ordained marriage so that two people could help each other: *“Then the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him”* (Gen 2:18 ESV). The person you marry should be your biggest fan and the best supporter of your activities, especially of your spiritual pursuits. So, observe the inclinations of the person you are dating. Do not stay with someone who is not particularly supportive of you and what you do. Do not stay with someone who you do not especially enjoy helping. That is not what relationships are supposed to be like.

And remember that your timeframe for dating and marriage, and God’s timeframe for you, may be different. One implication of that is that you and your friends may not get into serious relationships (and get married) at the same time. If you find yourself on a different timeline than your friends, do not panic and either get into a relationship, stay in a relationship, or marry a person who is not right for you just so that you can “keep up.” In other words, do not jeopardize your future happiness at 30, 35, 45, 55, 65, and beyond for the sake of being in the same place as your friends when you are 19, 22, or 25. Place your confidence in God. Trust that He will take care of you and will meet your needs when the time is right.

“Rest”

God provides. If you trust Him, He will provide in your life, just as He provided for the faithful remnant of the House of Shem. A boy was born to Lamech, the son of Methuselah. His father named him “Noah,” which means “rest” or “comfort”: *“And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed”* (Gen 5:29). His father gave him that name because he hoped that the boy would bring rest and comfort to the world. In that way, and in many others, Noah prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ, who offers us hope of rest from the curse.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. See Hosea 1: 10 and Romans 8: 14.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

What's the Goal? (1)

God's truth is more than a set of doctrinal statements. It is a distinctive and compelling way of life. It sets us apart. In the days of the Reformation, practicing believers were singled out and persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike because their excellent spirit and godly behavior gave them away!¹ There is no reason why an excellent spirit and godly behavior should not still give us away today. Belief *and* behavior identify the true follower of Christ.

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4²).

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3:1-4).

If we agree with this Biblical description of discipleship, then it tells us something about the kinds of educational goals we need for our Sunday school programs.

Information and transformation goals

Our beliefs are based on revealed information. They are the direct result of knowing what God has told us about His plan and purpose in the pages of Scripture. Coming to a knowledge of what God has revealed starts a transformation process in us; it begins to change our minds. Or at least it should.

Information goals. Years ago, as a Sunday school teacher, I made a list of what I thought were the most important things Sunday school children need to know about. I have revisited and refined my list over the years, and today it looks like this: Bible contents, God, Christ, man, the ecclesia, doctrines, commandments.³

These are my **information goals** as a teacher. These are the subjects that I want to teach. But initially they are just subjects in the abstract. The information related to these subjects has to come alive in the learner. It has to transform the person in order to be of any value.

Acquiring a basic knowledge of these subjects is the first *transformation* that takes place in a would-be disciple. But it is only the first. It is what God would have us do with the knowledge — and what we allow Him to do in us — that takes transformation to its higher and more mature levels.

Transformation goals. I also tried to think through the kinds of things that need to change, the kinds of transformations that need to take place if a person is to grow as a disciple of Christ. Starting with the acquisition of revealed knowledge, the list I came up with looks like this:

Knowledge, attitudes, effective thinking, relationship with God and Christ, relationship with others, personal life practices.³

These are my transformation goals. All of these will get better as a disciple grows. The goals are challenging to say the least.

It is not as easy to define transformation goals as it is information goals. And it is even less easy to address them in our teaching. Almost certainly as a result of this, the transformation aspects of discipleship do not get as much planned emphasis in our Sunday schooling as they should. But who can dispute the importance of the goals?

There are other realities as well. A Sunday school teacher can only do so much to shape the attitudinal and behavioral side of a student’s life. We are venturing into the realm of what must ultimately take place between the person and God. Still we cannot dismiss the high importance of these goals in our teaching. They need to be addressed.

Educational TRANSFORMATION

| Goals | | Knowledge | Attitudes | Effective thinking | Relationship to God, Christ | Relationship to others | Personal life practices |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| I N F O R M A T I O N | Bible contents | | | | | | |
| | God | | | | | | |
| | Christ | | | | | | |
| | Man | | | | | | |
| | The Ecclesia | | | | | | |
| | Doctrines | | | | | | |
| | Commandments | | | | | | |

The goals are interrelated

Information and transformation goals are interrelated. They impact on each other. What we know and the priorities we place on the things we know affect how we think and act. It is clearly intended to work this way when it comes to knowing what God has revealed to man.

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2Tim 3:16-17).

Scripture was given by God to change us. God expects the things He tells us to make us new and different people. Divine information is intended to drive godly transformation.

Visualizing this. At the same time that I made lists of information and transformation goals, some years ago, I felt compelled to try and represent the fact that the goals are interrelated. This led to the creation of what I called an educational goal grid. It is a visualization tool that places the two sets of goals against each other and invites us to contemplate how the goals relate to each other:

Every open space on the grid is a meeting place between an information goal and a transformation goal. Every meeting place invites a question: *How should this affect that?* For example, how should my knowledge of God; that is, how should my knowledge of what God has revealed to me about Himself, affect the way I think about ...? Or how should my knowledge of God affect the relationship that I have with ...? Or how should my knowledge of the commandments of Christ affect what I decide to do when ...?

We are projected into the realm of asking powerful questions, the kinds of questions that can serve our Sunday school programs very well. Try formulating a few questions of your own as you contemplate the goal grid. Try formulating one important question that will apply to the Sunday school lesson you plan to teach next week. The goal grid should give you plenty of room to stop and think.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Please contact Bro. Jim at 2harps4u@gmail.com

Notes:

1. This point is effectively developed by Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, chapter 3, "Catharer" (meaning cleansed).
2. All references are from the ESV
3. Develop your own set of goals. You may also want to think about the order in which you sequence your goals.

What Are You Doing?

This story was told of the noted English architect Sir Christopher Wren. He was supervising the construction of a magnificent cathedral in London. A journalist thought it would be interesting to interview some of the workers, so he chose three and asked them this question, "What are you doing?"

The first replied, "I'm cutting stone for ten shillings a day."

The next answered, "I'm putting in ten hours a day on this job."

But the third said, "I'm helping Sir Christopher Wren construct one of London's greatest cathedrals."

First Principles

The Nature of Man

Responsibility for wrong doing is something that no one has ever wanted to accept. Thousands of years ago in the Garden of Eden, Adam ate of the fruit that was forbidden to him. When approached by God, he blamed Eve for giving it to him. When God confronted Eve, she claimed that the serpent deceived her into partaking of the fruit. So, who was to blame? Was the serpent really responsible for Adam and Eve? Is human nature naturally good, or, are we more inclined to evil? An incorrect understanding of our nature may lead us down the same path that Adam and Eve took. They tried to pass sin off on someone else! We, therefore, must turn to the Scriptures for instruction and clarification on the subject. What is God's explanation for what happened in the garden, and, how does it affect us?

Made from the Dust

It is essential to build the correct foundation for understanding the true nature of man, and that begins with looking at how man was created in Genesis. Genesis 1:27 reveals *"So God created man in His own image."*¹ In Genesis 2:7 the process is described *"the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* And in Genesis 1:31, *"God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good."* It is very clear from this account that man is nothing but dust without God. The key to man becoming a living being is the 'breath of life' that comes from God. Job reiterates this in chapter 33:4 *"The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."* The simple formula that is presented in Scripture is: Dust + Breath of Life = Living soul/being.

Life contingent on Obedience with a Nature inclined to disobey (sin)

God gave life to man freely, but made life contingent on obedience to His command that man should not eat of the Tree of Life, or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God's first test for man — the centerpiece of his creation — was for Adam and Eve to willingly obey Him. Unfortunately for Eve, obeying God required restraint and discipline. Even with more than enough food provided in the garden she was tempted by the beautiful fruit on the forbidden tree and was overcome. John Thomas expounds on this situation in Elpis Israel:

"The reasoning of the Serpent operated upon the woman by exciting the lust of her flesh, the lust of her eyes, and the pride of life. This appears from the testimony. An appetite, or longing for it, that she might eat it, was created within her. The fruit also was very beautiful. It hung upon the tree in a very attractive and inviting manner. 'She saw that it was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes'. But there was a greater inducement still than even this. The flesh and the eyes would soon be satisfied. Her pride of life had been aroused by the suggestion that by eating it their

eyes would be opened and that she would be ‘made wise’ as the glorious Elohim she had so often seen in the garden. To become ‘as the gods’; to know good and evil as they knew it — was a consideration too cogent to be resisted. She not only saw that it was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, but that it was a tree to be desired as making one wise ‘as the gods’; therefore she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.’ Thus, as far as she was concerned, the transgression was complete.”

Just as Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit, we are susceptible to the same cycle of sin she experienced. She saw the fruit, she inquired of the fruit, she partook of the fruit and, thus, sin was conceived along with separation from God. Eve was now aware that she was naked, she was ashamed and, therefore, looked for clothing to cover herself.

The Results of Disobedience.

The more we participate in this cycle and allow sin to infiltrate our lives, the more we separate ourselves from God. This is the consequence that God has set in place. As Adam and Eve were rejected and removed from the Garden because of their sin, we, similarly, become removed from our relationship with God. This separation process takes place in three different ways: Mental, Moral and Physical corruption. Mental corruption occurs as our natural desires (lust of eyes, lust of flesh, and pride of life) are aroused and fulfilled. The more these desires are satisfied the stronger they become and the shame that was experienced with the first sin begins to fade. As this cycle continues we become like the wild animal described in Jeremiah 2:24 *“A wild donkey used to the wilderness that sniffs the wind in her desire.”* Moral corruption will displace the Godly lifestyle we’ve established by the renewing of our minds through the Scriptures. Our lives become stained by fulfilling the desires and temptations that enter our hearts. The ultimate effect of sin is physical corruption. This is experienced by the limitations of mortality, decay of our body, and ultimately death. James 1:15 reads, *“...when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”* The process of sin can be stated in a simple formula: Living Soul/being + Sin = Death.

Death — Returning to Dust

Death is the end result of sin, the effects of which we will all experience. Because we have sinned, we will perish and return to the dust again. God gave this sentence to Adam after he disobeyed the command and ate of the tree. By partaking of the fruit, man acquired the ability to know good and evil, so God needed to establish that to disobey is evil(sin) and the result of this sin is death. God condemns Adam in Genesis 3:19, *“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. Till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”* This sentence is passed down to all men and women that are the seed of Adam because all men sin as we see in Romans 5:12, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”* Death is the cessation of life, an end to our existence on earth. Death occurs when the breath of life that God used to create us goes back to him and we return to the dust. Psalm 104:29 reads, *“Thou takest*

away their breath, they die and return to the dust.” Abraham knew this to be true as he declared his condition before God when negotiating for the city of Sodom in Genesis 18:27, *“I who am but dust and ashes.”* We can again extract a formula from Scripture: Living Soul\being – Breath of Life = Dust.

There is Hope

We all face the consequences of Adam’s sin and the nature we have inherited, but God has promised a way of escape, just as He did for the Israelites in the wilderness. In Numbers 21 God sent fiery serpents among the Israelites because they complained against Him, and many of them died. But when they recognized their sin and repented, God heard their cry. He commanded Moses to make a serpent out of brass and put it on a pole in front of Israel. He promised that whoever was bitten by a serpent could look up at the bronze serpent on the pole and recognize that sin (represented by the snake) needed to be put to death in their life. Once they understood this they would be saved from the bite of the serpent. Like Israel, we have been sentenced to death because of sin, but if we recognize our sin and put it to death, God will provide salvation for us, as John 3:14,15 says, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

What we must do

We must make the choice between good and evil in order to prevent the cycle of sin from repeating itself in our lives. Recognizing and putting sin to death must be a constant battle, but God has promised that he will be with us and assist us, if we follow his commands. We must ask God to help keep us from temptation, so that we might not fall into the trap as Eve did when she ‘saw’ the fruit. Even when we are tempted we must not give in to the desires of our flesh. God sent this message to Israel in Jeremiah 4:3,4, *“Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and take away the foreskins of your hearts.”* The analogy of circumcision is helpful in understanding how we must rid our lives of sin. The cutting off of the flesh (sinful desire) will be painful, but it is the only way to eradicate sin. We can be assisted in this battle with our nature by reading God’s word every day and letting it affect all aspects of our lives. Moses instructs in Deut 10:16-17, *“...lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign to your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

The Reward

If we can understand our nature and use the tools God has given us to combat it, the reward is wonderful. In submitting to God’s word and laying it up in our hearts we can actually reverse the corruptive effects of sin. Mental regeneration is provided by an active belief in the gospel of Christ, as we no longer become slaves to our natural desires. Moral regeneration is brought on by baptism and the forgiveness of sins provided through the sacrifice of Christ and obedience

of God's commandments. Finally, we will, by God's grace, experience a physical regeneration and be given immortality if found worthy at the judgment seat of Christ. If we can overcome the desires of the flesh and the temptations of sin, we will be given a new heart and a new spirit by the grace of God and will no longer be prone to sin. Perhaps, then, the final formula we can commit to memory is: Resistance to sin + God's grace = Eternal life!

Johnnie Abel (Brantford, ON)

Notes:

1. All references are from the NKJV.

Reflections

KJV 400th Anniversary “If God Spare My Life...”

In early 1428 AD, the mortal remains of a former rector of a parish were exhumed from beneath the flagstones of church property in Lutterworth, a town in the English Midlands. An array of powerful men stood out from the crowd of locals. The vicinity's bishop, along with other ecclesiastical dignitaries, the High Sheriff and his officers, canons and lawyers, watched as gravediggers unearthed a coffin, raised it, opened it and exposed its contents to the curious onlookers. The remains of the man who had died 44 years earlier were then taken out, carried in a solemn procession along the streets of the town and down to a wooded hillside to a field of execution by a bridge on the River Swift. A Catholic ceremony thus began and under a decree from the Pope, the desecrated body was 'damned', unfrocked, chained to a stake and burned... the bones broken, ground to powder and the ashes deposited into the river. All visible trace of the one who was accused of "treason against God" was destroyed. The accusation? Heresy. His name? John Wycliffe. His crime? Attempting to bring the Word of God to the common man.

And so, here we are, 400 years after the Bible was put into the hands of English speaking people — blessed with possessing the Word of God as a result from dedicated men like Wycliffe, whose efforts brought its sacred message to us. Millions of faithful men and women the world over for centuries, have been richly blessed by their access to and subsequent acceptance of Scripture and in the witness of these glad tidings.

Yet, Wycliffe at least died of natural causes — not so with William Tyndale. Within a century, the Catholic influence was still seeking to burn 'heretics', but this time alive — if they could! It is a proven fact that the "arch-heretic", William Tyndale, is credited for writing no less than 80% of the King James Version Bible and, in turn, has been a bigger influence on the English language than William Shakespeare. His only crime? One of such passion that he had no other recourse than to leave his homeland for the continent — to continue his work of translating the Greek New Testament for the sake of the everyday man, that he might have

God's comfort revealed to him in his own tongue. The man who became known as "God's Outlaw" could readily identify what we in our own community are at times too fearful to examine (read the "Epistle Dedicatory" in your KJV and see their view as to the 'man of sin' being that 'Popish Person'). Tyndale spoke vehemently against indulgences, purgatory, Papal intercession, the immortality of souls, exaltation of saints, and prayers to saints. He knew all too well of the 'antichrist' system, condemning the 'priestcraft' as he called it, denouncing the 'Popes' bloody dogma, reviling the 'mitred monster'. He daily risked his life from Romish spies for the sake of printing and smuggling his Bible translations back into England. He taught himself Hebrew after arriving in Europe, so that he began to translate the Old Testament as well! His immortal words live on and are truer than ever. His response to a clergyman's statement was, "We were better off to be without God's laws than the Pope's." He also said, defying the Pope, "If God spare my life, 'ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!" In the end, it was the love of his fellow man and God's Word which led to him being martyred in 1536, knowing that all who would enter into the reward would face persecution. We now have entered 2011 and plans are being readied to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his work...and so we ask, dear reader, what compels you to carry on The Work?

Peter Wisniewski (Toronto Church St, ON)

"Who are You?"

Many years ago, I was about to retire for the night at a rest house in the tropical rainforest of Guyana. Suddenly from the pitch darkness outside came a voice loud and clear: "Who are you?" I was obviously an intruder, but who was challenging my presence there? Again there came the insistent query: "Who are you?" This was no human voice; it turned out later that it was the typical call of the burrowing owl, busy about his nightly business. But the question had to be answered — who was I? It's a question we all have to answer sooner or later. Are we who we think we are, or have we perhaps a split personality? The matter is important because it could affect our standing at Christ's judgment seat. The Lord had some severe words to say about those who thought they were righteous and despised others (Luke 18:9-14).

When Moses looked upon the burdens of his fellow Israelites in Egypt and felt moved to correct injustice, one of those same Israelites challenged his authority: "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" (Exod 2:14) ¹. As we would put it, "Who do you think you are?" Moses fled to Midian and spent 40 years learning to be a shepherd, after which God did appoint him to be a ruler and judge. This time it was Moses who asked, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exod 3:11), to which God replied, "I will be with you." It was a humbler Moses who, when confronted with the people's complaint about lack of food, said: "Who are we, that you should grumble against us? ... Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD" (Exod 16:7-8). It was God who had brought them out from slavery and it was God who would provide

for all their needs in the wilderness. Moses had learnt to trust God, “as seeing the invisible”, and he had no pretensions to greatness.

Later, when Miriam and Aaron criticized him, and accused him of high-handedness, God intervened and justified His servant. Significantly, the record adds, “*Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth*” (Num 12:1-3).

So the first rule of self-examination is: are we humble? How do we react to criticism? If it is unjust, do we take it personally, or are we sad that others have misunderstood us? And then are we patient enough to explain matters carefully to avoid that same criticism being repeated? If it is a valid comment, then can we take it and do something about it? A great deal of 2 Corinthians is taken up with Paul’s defense of his Christ-given authority, couched in terms that honor the Lord who called him but also sensitive to the criticism that he was exploiting the Corinthians for his own ends.

We are blessed with more examples in Scripture of those who have examined themselves and committed themselves wholeheartedly to God. Take David, the “man after God’s own heart”. After Nathan had revealed to him the wonderful covenant God was promising, David found it hard to believe that this was real. “*Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?*” (2Sam 7:18) He was overwhelmed by God’s grace. He didn’t see this as some kind of reward for his faithfulness but recognized it as part of God’s unfolding purpose: “*For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing...*” (v.21) He then launched into a great paean of praise and thanksgiving.

Let us ask ourselves the same question: who are we, that God should have made great and precious promises to us, sinful and erring as we are? Has time blunted the freshness and beauty of those promises? Or, are we still left breathless by God’s grace and rejoicing continuously in His mercy?

Chris Tarry (Walsall, U.K.)

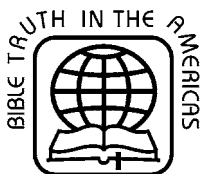
Notes:

1. All references are from the NIV.

Many of us spend countless hours dreaming about something we truly want in our lives. We spend our waking days thinking about it. We talk with others about our dreams. We feel convinced that we are fully committed to pursuing our dream. But we fail at ever bringing these dreams into reality because we hesitate to take the first step toward making them come true. We fail to take action.

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.” Are you moving in the direction of what you desire in life? Because if you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up someplace else. Aristotle, the great philosopher, was asked one day by a young man, “How do you get to Mount Olympus?” To which Aristotle replied, “By ensuring that each step you take is in that direction.”

Monte Schumaker



Bible Mission News

Jamaica — Short but Strengthening Visit

Our visit to Jamaica (October 9 to 16, 2010) was a very successful and spiritually encouraging trip. We loved every moment of our stay in which we saw and experienced the beauty Jamaica has to offer. Both in the people we met and in the scenery of the Island.

We were greeted with love and open arms at our Brother Melvin and Sister Gerzel Gordon's home in May Pen. They were very hospitable and made us feel right at home. The Sunday was packed full of classes. We were pleasantly surprised to see some of the Sunday School kids come to the Gordon's house to make sure their teacher was coming! The day started with Sunday School for both adults and children, followed by a brother's and sister's class after memorial where we focused on prayer. It was amazing how short a time we spent with them and how much of a bond we shared in the discussion throughout our classes.



Jochem and sister Gerzel leafletting around the May Pen ecclesial hall.

Monday and Tuesday morning we went leafletting, together with a group of sisters, under the nice and hot Jamaican sun. In the afternoons we had fellowship with the Gordon's and Sister Iris Grant. Jochem prepared a class for the Tuesday night Bible-Seekers class on the pamphlets we distributed with the subject of "Life after Death". When we went leafletting everyone was very friendly and approachable. We were excited because we thought we had stirred a lot of interest in our billing efforts, only to our surprise there were far more children than adults that attended. After realizing how many children showed up Jochem changed

his class to gear it more towards them. This small ecclesia definitely had a spirit of Christ, and it was encouraging to see all of the children that came out and their excitement to be there. The energy that the brothers and sisters in May Pen put into their young ones is really admirable.

After three days we went to the Round Hill Ecclesia from Wednesday till Friday afternoon. Their Bible class was a great way to get everyone involved. Everyone



**Above: The brothers and sisters at the Bible seekers class
Below: The children at the midweek Bible seekers class in May Pen**



sat in a circle and had to present their thoughts on what Jesus Christ's death and resurrection meant to them. It was a really great format because it got everyone involved no matter how elaborate or simple their thoughts were.

On Thursday we visited two sisters, Sis. Sislyn Wilkie and Sis. Jannette Elliott. These sisters are unable to attend the meeting due to their physical condition. We tried to encourage them by reading with them a portion of the daily Bible readings, singing and prayer. On Thursday night there was a brother's class where we discussed God's Word for more than three hours which was definitely one of the

highlights of our trip. In this ecclesia with only three brothers they have some kind of class or ecclesial gathering every day!

It was really great to see the uplifting spirit for the Truth in Jamaica and to bond with our lovely brothers and sisters in our shared faith. The week seemed to fly by and we wish we could have stayed longer, but in what we thought would be a short visit to strengthen our brothers and sisters, we feel that we have been strengthened by them in many ways!

*Jochem & Emily Hale
On behalf of the CBMA*



**Visiting Sis. Sislyn
in Roundhill.**

**Bro. Leecroft, the recording
brother of Roundhill
Ecclesia.**



**Visiting Sis. Janette's
home with the young
people from Roundhill**

San Salvador

Ending the year with a new beginning



Bro. Melvin is on the left, being received into fellowship by Bro. Douglas Mate, both of the San Salvador (capital) Ecclesia.

On Sunday, December 19, 2010, the San Salvador ecclesias were privileged to carry out the baptism of Melvin Rodriguez, husband of Sis. Irasema Alvarado. Bro. Melvin is a school teacher and a dedicated Bible student and we pray that God will bless his new life in Christ and in the ecclesia.

As is the custom in El Salvador, the two satellite ecclesias (Sonsonate and Usulután), including friends and young people, bussed in to the capital city to help celebrate the event. This meant that the San Salvador hall was packed, with more

than 120 in attendance. The baptism was first on the agenda, followed by the breaking of bread with the receiving into fellowship and then the public lecture and Sunday school held simultaneously.

Since we traditionally put on a meal after a baptism, a team of sisters arrived at the hall at 7 am to start preparing chicken, vegetables, rice and salad in addition to making tortillas by hand from scratch. To economize we don't use disposable plates or cups, and so all the dishes had to be hand-washed after lunch, but many helpers pitched in and made short work of the job.

After lunch was over, conversations continued until late into the afternoon, when those from the satellite ecclesias had to get on the road to reach home before dark. It was a wonderful day of fellowship for the Christadelphian community of El Salvador and we are deeply grateful to our Heavenly Father for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us.

*Submitted by Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

"He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue" (Prov 28:23).

There is the story about the monarch who dismissed his counselor. When the counselor asked why, the king replied, "For one of two reasons. Either you didn't notice my faults, which proves your ignorance. Or you chose not to rebuke me for them, which proves you were serving your own interests and not mine!"

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For those of you who are using Facebook, there is now a link to the Thisisyourbible.com website. It is intended for tutors, inactive and active students as well as anyone else who wants to become a friend. So if you are on Facebook a lot please check it out and see what is happening. I heard a statistic last night that **1 in every 14 people in the world** is on Facebook. For a fossil like me, that is hard to understand — but we constantly need to update our preaching methods and continue to preach the Word in every way we can.

*Submitted by Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

We are All Priests

We are priests of God (Exod 19:6; 1Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6; 5:10). The work of a priest involved blood, sweat and tears; smoke, dirty ashes, and much manual labor. The priest washed, but was never clean for very long, the work being messy. And the work of cleaning out the altar, the surrounding area, and the furnishings was never finished. The priest got his hands dirty, immersing them in filth, blood, and broken tissue continually. And his neighbors brought their diseases, their lesions, close to his face seeking compassion, seeking diagnosis, seeking healing. Lifting, cleaning, scouring, teaching, eating and fellowship — all in the presence of God. What a picture of effortful service. Is this not ecclesial life?

Dev Ramcharan

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
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Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2. 519-837-9094, Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com
Website: www.agapeinaction.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BRANTFORD, ON

On December 5th, we warmly welcomed, by way of transfer from the Detroit Royal Oak, MI, Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles and their two daughters, Ella and Esther, to the Brantford Ecclesia. We thank our Heavenly Father for the blessing of their fellowship and pray that we might mutually edify one another as we await the return of our Master. On another joyous note, we rejoiced with the heavenly host to witness the baptisms of two more of our Sunday School scholars. On December 11th, SARAH WISNIEWSKI, the daughter of Bro. David and Sis. Nicole Wisniewski, and REBEKAH ROBERTSON, the daughter of Sis. Jennifer Robertson, after a sound confession of their faith put on the saving name of Christ. We give thanks to God for His mercy and abundant longsuffering in calling these young people to the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord in these last days.

In preparation for next year God willing, should our Master remain away, we are delighted to extend a warm invitation to young people near and far to attend two upcoming gatherings. The first, which is our Winter Gathering on February 12th, 2011, is for the Junior CYC and Little Disciples. Our Heavenly Father has blessed us with a tremendous new facility at Camp Trillium — Rainbow Lake near Waterford, ON. The topic for the day will be “Daniel” and the day itself is scheduled to start at 10 am. Three weeks later, our Bro. Dan Osborn from BC will be joining us to lead a series of studies for the Senior CYC. The main gathering on March 5th, 2011, which commences at 12:30 pm, will be on the theme of “Jehoshaphat — Lifted Up in the Ways of the Lord.” The day will finish with a hockey challenge. Other classes and activities for the young people will take place on the Friday and Sunday for those who can join us. Additional information about these events will be circulated in the coming weeks by the respective committees. We thank God for rich opportunities to care and up-build our precious young people in these challenging times.

Don Luff

CAMBRIDGE, ON

We are pleased to announce with the best wishes of the ecclesia the following weddings: Bro. Rob MacIver and Sis. Hannah Badger (daughter of Sis. Cathy and the late Bro. Colin Badger) on May 15, 2010. Bro. Dennis Culver (son of Sis. Susan Smidt) and Sis. Abigail Easton (daughter of Bro. Keith and Sis. Caroline Easton) on July 3, 2010. Bro. Jonathan Luff (son of Bro. David and Sis. Edith Luff) and Sis. Jennifer Baines (daughter of Bro. Phil and Sis. Janice Baines) on September 3, 2010.

We thank our heavenly Father for the following members who have transferred to our ecclesia. Bro. Andy and Sis. Sharon Caetano from the Book Road, ON Ecclesia. Sis. Verity Cotterell from the Shelburne, ON Ecclesia. Sis. Abigail Culver, Bro. Andy and

Sis Allison Glen, and Sis. Amy Hill from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia. Bro. Steve and Sis. Cheryl McKay from the Kitchener Waterloo, ON Ecclesia. Bro. Tom and Sis. Lynn Northcott from the Book Road, ON Ecclesia. Sis. Lacey Robinson from the Brampton, ON Ecclesia. Bro. Joel and Sis. Diane Siegler from the Ann Arbor, MI Ecclesia.

We are sorry to lose by way of transfer the following members. Bro. Caleb and Sis. Julia Lawrence and family to the Vancouver, BC Ecclesia. Bro. Jason and Sis. Amanda Longley and family to the Mississauga West, ON Ecclesia. Our brethren and sisters are missed but we are comforted knowing that they continue the work in the Lord's vineyard at other ecclesias.

We have accepted the resignation of Sis. Dorothy McKay. We pray for God's blessing to be upon her that she may return to us and seek the glorious hope of our Lord. We thank all those who have ministered to us in the past year. It is of great encouragement to be able to share in fellowship around God's word.

Andrew Pearse

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We thank our Bro. Eric Hall of the Manhattan, NY Ecclesia for his word of exhortation during the month and were also pleased to have the company of Sis. Bernice.

We report that Bro. Jeet and Sis. Gwen Ramjattan are no longer in fellowship. We pray that in these last days they might once again seek their Lord and Master before he returns.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting Brothers and Sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Eric and Bernice Hall, Manhattan NY; Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen, Union NJ; Ruthann Jorgensen, Rochester NY; Deborah Kellet, Atlanta North GA; and Tom and Sally Davies, Pomona CA.

Stewart Marsden

GLENDALE, AZ

In our previous correspondence we neglected to thank Bro. Ron Sprankle for his many years of service to our ecclesia as Recording Brother. Bro. Ron has taken on the role of Sunday School Superintendent and continues to be an Arranging Brother.

We would like to thank Bro. Jonathan Bowen from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia for his talks at our Study weekend in December. His topic was "Islam in the Latter Day Prophecies" and left us wanting to hear more.

We have been blessed to have visiting with us for the winter months Sis. Yvonne Teel with her husband Wendell from the Vernon, BC Ecclesia. We were also happy to have had a visit from Bro. Eric and Sis. Peggy Hoult and their daughter Margaret from the Nanaimo, BC Ecclesia. We are looking forward to future visits from the Hoult's in mid-January and mid-February.

Matthew Smith

LARGO, FL

We report the falling asleep in the Lord Jesus Christ of our dear Sis. Viola Adams on November 23, 2010, after a short illness. You may remember our last submission related the celebration of her 100th birthday in 2009 and we had just celebrated her 101st birthday in August. She was baptized at the age of 26 in Boston, Massachusetts,

and was a member of the Worcester, MA Ecclesia. Viola and her husband moved to Florida in the 1970's where they became members of the Largo, FL Ecclesia. Sister Vi was a long and faithful worker in the Lord's truth and now awaits his coming in the hope of being called to that glorious Kingdom in Zion.

We also are sad to report the falling asleep in the Lord Jesus Christ of our dear Bro. Richard Profeta in September 2010. He, too, was a long and faithful servant of the Lord, keeping him ever in the forefront through trials and tribulations.

We welcome Bro. Troy and Sis. Annette Haltom to the Largo membership and pray their sojourn with us will be mutually rewarding. And we welcome back Sis. Ann Skofield from New Hampshire where she had lived for several years.

Walt Dodrill

PARIS AVENUE, OH

The members of the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia have enjoyed fellowship with brothers and sisters from many other ecclesias during the Fall Semester of 2010. Words of exhortation were given by two of these visitors: Bre. Henry Ternent of the Pittsburgh, PA Ecclesia and Larry Cooper of the Seattle, WA Ecclesia. Bre. Peter Hemingray of Detroit Royal Oak, MI and Duncan Movassaghi of Shirley (UK) exhorted to our Columbus OH group. Our September Study Weekend was led by Bro. Paul Billington of the Brantford, ON Ecclesia on the topic "The Christadelphians: Latter Day Witnesses." Bro. Ron Kidd of the London, ON Ecclesia visited in early September to give us some cottage classes along with a Sunday School class and an exhortation for the Memorial service. Bro. Kidd focused upon the topic of Bible Prophecy. The ecclesia enjoyed fellowship at the annual picnic at Snyder Lake with visitors attending from Ontario, Pittsburgh and Atwood Lake. In September we rejoiced in the marriage of our Sis. Amanda Scott to Bro. Ben Waite of the Seattle, WA Ecclesia.

Bro. Ernie and Sis. Abby Kash were blessed with the birth of son, Ernest Alexander Kash IV, in October. We lost several of our young people to distant ecclesias due to changes in work locations. Sis. Amanda Scott transferred to the Seattle, WA ecclesia, Bro. Pierce and Sis. Holly Prater have moved to Denver CO, and Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald have moved to Simi Hills, CA. Sis. Vanessa (Flatley) Schwieger has transferred to the Pittsburgh, PA ecclesia.

This past summer the children and many adults were involved in our first ever Open House. The goal of the Open House was to get our name out in the community. We've recently moved into our new hall, and we wanted to introduce ourselves to our neighbors in the surrounding area. We arranged for a number of outside activities such as a petting zoo, games, crafts, and face painting. We also provided food and snacks. We had a large tent set up as a pavilion that provided a central gathering place. In addition, inside our hall we had a number of displays and information with which people could interact. The displays focused on Bible Prophecy, the Promises to Abraham, our various children's programs, and the ThisIsYourBible.com website. We also had a video running in the main hall that gave a brief 15-20 minute overview of our hope. We also had a large variety of literature available as take home pieces.

We advertised locally in the paper by using a flyer as an insert. It was held on a Saturday afternoon from 3:00-7:00. Most of the ecclesia were in attendance throughout, manning the booths and activities. It proved to be quite successful. We had nearly 150 people (including children) come out during the course of the day! We made a number of contacts. It is our hope that these new relationships will blossom into people responding

to class offerings, either to upcoming seminars, Bible classes or Sunday school. God willing, we hope to run the open house on an annual basis.

Currently there is a seminar on Prophecy and a Preaching Workshop taking place. The spring Study Weekend will be held, Lord willing, March 12-13 with Bro. Ryan Mutter of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia leading us in a study on the life of Gideon. We are looking forward also to a series of cottage classes each day from February 23 through February 27 by Bro. Jim Cowie from Australia. The topic has not been yet decided upon. For further information on any of these events, contact Bro. Everett Muniz at 330-497-2811 or everettmuniz@gmail.com.

Jack Vogelgesang

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

We have witnessed two baptisms, ALYSSA STEEBAR was baptised in the ocean on August 28, 2010. She has been faithfully attending our meeting for the past 10 years. Also, ISAIAH TUNNELL, son of Ethan and Shawna Tunnell was baptized December 12, 2010. May God bless them both and help us all to walk together toward the Kingdom of God. Sis. Rachel MacClellan has moved and transferred to the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia. We welcome by way of transfer Bro. Drew Lawrence from Guelph, Ontario.

On September 14, 2010, Bro. Drew Lawrence and Sis. Kelley Vaughan were united in marriage. May the Lord guide them on their way to the Kingdom. Bro. Ben and Sis. Mallory Curtin were blessed with a healthy baby girl, Katelyn Joan, on October 24, 2010. Also, Bro. Robert Jefferson and his wife Carmen, welcomed a baby boy, Timothy Wyatt, on November 5, 2010.

On January 29, 2011, our ecclesia is having a study day with Bro Arne Roberts, of the Cardiff, Wales Ecclesia. His topic is "Looking Forward to Getting Dresses". The day will start at 9:30 a.m. with lunch provided. For more information email Bro. Kent Ellis, ellisk@san.rr.com.

For more information about our ecclesia and the San Diego CYC visit our websites: www.sdbible.com and www.easysite.com/sandiegocyc.

Nick Parrino

ALIVE & WELL CAMPAIGN 2011 THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION OF THE KING JAMES VERSION BIBLE

The Toronto area ecclesias are in the process of organizing a multi-media presentation commemorating the 400th anniversary of the King James Version. With both lecture and Bro. Paul Billington's (Brantford, ON) Bible Exhibit, we wish to present to all professing Christians the real spirit of the the "Protestant Reformation" and to encourage sincere and seeking church-goers to "come out of her". (Bro. Paul's "Bible Magazine" will soon have a special edition of the KJV produced just for this occasion!)

For the first time, the Five Greater Toronto Area ecclesias are jointly involved in a campaign to witness of the miraculous Book often sitting neglected in our homes. Dates, times and venue locations are yet to be determined but we hope to keep the brotherhood updated. It is our prayer that the community all over the continent rally around this significant anniversary and that each ecclesia sets a special time aside to inform their neighbours with lectures and seminars about the "Scriptures — able to make them wise unto salvation."!

Please remember this effort in your prayers and by all means, go to the www.thebible4lifededication.org website to catch the great excitement of your brothers and sisters in the UK. Being united in zeal seems to conquer many of the other issues distracting us today. Brethren and sisters, won't you lend a hand?

Peter Wisniewski (Toronto Church St, ON)

CARING NETWORK OF CANADA SEMINAR

March 26, 2011: Please mark your calendar for this date. The Caring Network of Canada is planning a Seminar with Bro. Bill Link of Baltimore, God willing. The topic will be "Maintaining Balance in Times of Disagreement". Location: Clarkson Community Centre, Mississauga, ON. For more information or to register, please contact: seminar@caringnetwork.ca.

MID-ATLANTIC CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE SCHOOL, SHIPPENSBURG, PA — JULY 2 - JULY 10, 2011

God willing, the Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School will be held July 2-10, 2011, at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" — Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". Bro. Garth Maier, East Texas Ecclesia, US, will speak on the subject "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens. Bro. Simon O'Grady, Tawa Ecclesia, NZ, will speak on the subject "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name & Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens. Bro. Michael Owen, Seaton Ecclesia, UK, will speak on the subject "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens.

Rates for 2011 will be the same as they were in 2010: **Prior to May 1:** Adults: \$445, Teens (Ages 12-19): \$375, Ages 3-11: \$235, Ages 0-2: \$25. **May 1 or later:** Adults: \$465, Teens (Ages 12-19): \$395, Ages 3-11: \$255, Ages 0-2: \$25.

Registration forms and other information were mailed in January to previous attendees and recording brethren. This information is also available on the MACBS web site: <http://www.christadelphians.net/MACBS>

Proverbs embrace the wide sphere of human existence. They take all the colors of life. They are often exquisite strokes of genius. They delight by their airy sarcasm or their caustic satire, the luxuriance of their humor, the playfulness of their turn, and even by the elegance of their imagery, and the tenderness of their sentiment.

They give a deep insight into domestic life, and open for us the heart of man, in all the various states which he may occupy. A frequent review of proverbs should enter into our readings; and although they are no longer the ornaments of conversation, they have not ceased to be the treasuries of thought.

Isaac Disraeli

Minute Meditation

The True Secret of Happiness

Back in 1905 the Christadelphian magazine printed the wise observation, “There are two freedoms: the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought.”¹

The surprising truth is that it actually is a false freedom to be free to do whatever we like. This capability has been our downfall since the beginning of time when Cain freely acted on his desire to kill his brother, and when his father and mother yielded to their desire for the forbidden fruit.

The true freedom, to do what we ought to do, may not be as appealing, but certainly it is the better way. Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general, advised, “Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less.” We are thankful for the freedom we have to worship our God, which is what we ought to do, as Solomon tells us: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

However nowadays, the popular slogan going around advises, “If it feels good, do it.” Many people think they have the right to do whatever they feel like doing to make themselves happy; even the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to pursue happiness. People seek happiness in alcohol, drugs, wealth, or zoning out in front of a TV, and yet many marriages end in divorce, parents and children are fighting, and prospects for the future look bleak. The pursuit of happiness does not guarantee happiness.

Following the true freedom, doing what we ought to do, is actually the road to happiness. James M. Barrie explains, “The secret of happiness is not in doing what one likes to do, but in liking what one has to do.” For us, serving the Lord should bring true happiness. David declares, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Unfortunately the world has not learned this secret.

Paul is in agreement, but he also confesses that while his desire is to do God’s will, there is a conflict within him. He admits, “When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”

We also, like Paul, have this conflict. Our natural instincts make us think that we want to follow the wrong freedom and do whatever we want to do, but because we love the Lord, we also want to choose to follow the true freedom and do what we ought to do and obey our Lord. The good news is we can overcome through Jesus Christ our Lord, just like Paul did. This path of righteousness will bring true

happiness, true contentment and true peace with God, giving us that promised peace from God that passes all understanding. We then, with Paul, can joyfully proclaim our thanks to God that through Jesus Christ our Lord we can serve God instead of ourselves.

Now we can understand what Paul told the young man Timothy: “godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ... I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

May we choose the true freedom, the path of godliness, and seek the eternal riches of life everlasting in the Kingdom when Christ returns, when we will have happiness and joy forevermore.

Robert J. Lloyd

Notes:

1. Quotation is actually by Charles Kingsley, a 19th Century English professor and clergyman.

The god on the wrist

It is said that Filipinos once called watches the little gods that people carry on their wrists. They are not far off the mark. Sometime our lives may be so dictated by this little god that incessantly counts the minutes, that we cannot find time to spend with a friend, or to play a game, or to go for a walk, or to tell a story to a child. The LORD speaks through the psalmist:

“Be still, and know that I am God... I will be exalted in the earth” (Psa 46:10).

And His Son, in the midst of a violent storm, rebuked the winds and said to the waves, “Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm (Mark 4:39). We must periodically cease from our business — or our ‘busy-ness’ — to realize what is merely pressing, and what is truly important. What are we chasing so urgently, that we cannot take a deep breath, or ten, look around and look up, and see the evidence of eternal truths all around us? “Be still. Realize that I am God.”

George Booker

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

FEBRUARY 2011

4-6 Camp Ladore Youth Camp. Waymart, Pennsylvania. Theme: "Watch and Pray Always".
Speaker: Bro. Ryan King. Contact Bro. Ryan Mutter themutterteam@cyccamp.org or register online at www.cyccamp.org

12 Brantford, ON Winter gathering for Jr. CYC and Little Disciples. Camp Trillium, Rainbow Lake near Waterford, ON. Topic: "Daniel"

20-21 Study Weekend. Rolling Hills, Alberta, Canada, near Calgary. Study begins at noon on the 20th. Speaker is Bro. David Lawrence. His topic is "Abraham". Contact information 403-964-2562 or email dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab.ca. Accommodation, in most cases, can be arranged in homes of local members.

27- March 4 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Karam Ram (Birmingham, UK): "In the Image of God", and Bro. John Launchbury (Portland, OR): "Appreciating Job". The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brothers and sisters. To register contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2011

5 Brantford, ON Sr. CYC gathering. Theme: "Jehoshaphat — Lifted Up in the Ways of the Lord".

5 Victoria, BC Spring Study Weekend. Bro. John Hellowell, "David: Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen csnobelen@csll.ca 250-652-3318

12-13 Paris Avenue, OH Spring Study Weekend with our speaker Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD). His topic is the life of Gideon. Contact coordinator Bro. Everett Muniz, everettmuniz@gmail.com or phone 330-497-2811

26 Caring Network of Canada Seminar. Location: Clarkson Community Centre, Mississauga, ON. Speaker: Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD). The topic will be "Maintaining Balance in Times of Disagreement". For information or to register, please contact seminar@caringnetwork.ca

APRIL 2011

3 Boston, MA 20th Annual Spring Study Day. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman Street, Stoughton, MA. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Registration 12:30pm, classes begin this year at 1pm. For more information contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at 781-837-8865 or jimsullivan@aol.com

9-10 Sussex, NB Study day. Our speaker will be Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON). His theme will be, "Lessons from First Thessalonians"

15-17 Men in the Truth Campout. Lake Cachuma, CA. "A Godly Workout — Beefing Up Your Spirituality". Contact David Lloyd davidrlloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486

- 21-24 Annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference.** Shawnigan Lake, BC. For further information please contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen cyc@cssll.ca 250-652-3318
- 22-24 Wichita Falls, TX** Spring Gathering. T4C Camp, Freestone, Texas. Speaker Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, AU). Topic will be "The King's Manifesto For Life — Matthew 5-7". Contact Bro. John A Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com
- 23-24 New Westminster, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby) will lead our study on Easter weekend. Topic: "Events at the Time of the End"
- 23 Oxford, MA** 3rd Annual New England Little Disciples Spring Gathering. Barton Center. The topic is "Samuel" for ages 3-11. Registration to open shortly. For more information contact Bro. Jim Boyko 508-399-5038 or see nelittledisciples.com
- 30 - May 1 Pittsburgh, PA** Study Day. Our speaker will be Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON). The subject will be "The Temptations of Christ" — a look at the three periods of great temptation in Christ's life with an extended look at the Transfiguration which helped strengthen him to overcome. Contact Bro. Bill Folkerts (724) 265-3272 or willfol@gmail.com or pghecclesia@gmail.com

MAY 2011

- 6-8 Vancouver, BC** Sister's weekend. Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, BC. Sis. Jennifer Daniel: "Compassion Fatigue". Cost \$180. Deposit no later than March 1. Send registration to Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6277 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9V 1A8. For further information contact Sis. Shonna Malczewski at shonna.malczewski@gmail.com
- 21-22 Prince George, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Speaker: Bro Ted Sleeper. Theme: "Meditations on Creation". Contact: Bro Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com

JUNE 2011

- 3-5 Meriden, CT** Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Cliff Baines (Sussex, NB). Theme: "Practical Principles in Peter". Contact Bro. Stephen Harper 203-440-0504, sharper.rn.ocn@att.net.
- 19-25 California Christadelphian Kids Camp** for children ages 9-16. Held at our same location as in year's past in Ojai, CA. Speakers this year will be brethren Ken Styles and David Wisniewski and they will be leading us in a study of Elijah. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com
- 19-25 Rocky Mountain Bible School.** Glenwood Springs, CO. Speakers Bro. Mark Vincent: "The Quest for Meaning in Ecclesiastes"; Bro. Dennis Paggi: "The Miracles, Wonders, and Signs of Jesus Christ"; Bro. Simon O'Grady: "Knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles". Contact information provided at www.denverchristadelphians.org or contact Bro. Josh Livermore at 303-288-3966

JULY 2011

- 2-10 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School.** Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" – Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". The speakers are Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens; Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name & Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens; Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens. Registration forms on website <http://www.christadelphians.net/MACBS>

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10-16 Southwest Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Revelation — Exhortations from the Apocalypse"; Teen class: "Encounters with a Risen Lord"; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales): "Ezra and Nehemiah"; Teen class: "David and Solomon"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Muscle for the Five Big Mistakes"; Teen class: "Lessons from Daniel". Registration information at www.swcbs.org or by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367

16-24 Eastern Bible School. Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org.

AUGUST 2011

20-26 Winfield Bible School Theme: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in You." Bro. Stan Isbell (USA): "The House of Prayer for All Nations"; Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Australia): "Philippians: Shine as Lights"; Bro. Jim Styles (USA): "Hebrews: The Power of Faith in Jesus Christ". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca

27-2 Sept Vancouver Island Bible Camp. Camp Pringle, 2520 West Shawnigan Lake Road, Shawnigan, BC. Our speakers are Bro. Shane Kirkwood: "Encounters with the Master"; Bro. Stan Isbell: "Godly Mariners and Ships on the Sea – Lessons from the Bible of men, their ships and the sea"; Bro. Bill Link: "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion – God's steadfast purpose in Zehariah". Contact information www.vibiblecamp.com or Sharon Enns ennsranch@telus.net or 1-250-338-4812.

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, CA). Please note the year **2012**.

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
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Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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Violence is a descending spiral

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral,

Begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.

Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.

Through violence you may murder the liar,

But you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth.

Through violence you may murder the hater,

But you do not murder hate.

In fact, violence merely increases hate.

So it goes.

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence,

Adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness.

Only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate.

Only love can do that.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Editorial

Whose Writings Should I Use?

Clark Pinnock

Clark Pinnock died on August 15th last year, at the age of 73. Few of my readers will ever have heard of him, and fewer still will have known him. But I am one of those few, for while I was studying at Manchester University in England, he was also there. Although I was an engineering student, and he was studying under Professor FF Bruce, we both attended meeting of the Inter Faculty Christian Union. Perhaps not surprisingly, we came into some doctrinal discussions, particularly about the Trinity. As Clark was a post-graduate student of Theology, the discussions were somewhat intense: so much so that he suggested a public debate. There were several other Christadelphians involved in the discussions, and we agreed with his suggestion, but asked if we could nominate a representative.

So Bro. Alfred Norris and Clark Pinnock discussed The Trinity, with several hundred attending. It is the only such debate I have ever attended, and reminded me of the great debates of Bro. Roberts of old, or at least the transcripts of such. And as any who knew Bro. Alfred might realize, he more than held his own in the debate. If anyone could be said to have “won” such a debate, Bro. Alfred did. And so when I heard Clark Pinnock had died, my thoughts went back to those days, when my knowledge of the nature of Christ was greatly enhanced. Not only that, but I did take the opportunity while I was in Manchester to attend lectures on New Testament Christianity held by Professor Bruce, whose vast knowledge and respect for the Scriptures deeply impressed me. And I have also since kept myself aware of Clark’s writings, most of which I disagree with, but whose attitude toward the Scriptures and whose view of Biblical inspiration I find useful. FF Bruce’s works are prominent on my bookshelves — not just because I knew him, but because he is one of the best of the conservative New Testament scholars of his generation. Even so, one must be very careful with Professor Bruce’s writings, as with any non-Christadelphian source. His views on the Trinity and the role of women reflect views we cannot share.

So as I contemplated the death of one I briefly knew many years ago, I began to think of the ways we use the writings of others, especially the use of non-Christadelphian authors. (This is not to ignore the primacy of Christadelphian authors, but rather to address non-Christadelphian ones.)

Use of the Writings of Non-Christadelphians

There is a tendency in some sections of our community to discourage the use of the writings of non-Christadelphians. I must also say that our first priority when we study the Bible is to let the text interpret the text. In the vast majority of cases, the meaning of the passage is explained simply by looking elsewhere in the Bible, using cross-references and concordances. The use of alternative translations can also aid in this work. But in some cases, a deeper look into the historical or Bibli-

cal context is desired, and most will turn firstly to Christadelphian works. Many will also consult such works as those by Edersheim or Josephus, which are old standbys used by many. But what of the many modern commentators? There are those who will look at all non-Christadelphian sources with such suspicion as to never even consider looking at them. But this seems alien to both common sense and Christadelphian usage. Certainly both Robert Roberts and John Thomas were widely read, and used many sources in their writings. For example, in “Eureka” John Thomas surveys the whole field of the expositions of Revelation. He used some of their information, but dismissed them all as false.

One must, as I indicated above, use all non-Biblical sources with caution, especially those from non-Christadelphian authors. Almost none share our hope, and the majority of the recent commentators do not have the same view of Biblical inspiration as do Christadelphians. So the facts as discussed in these writings have to be carefully extracted from the opinions of the writers. In particular, we have to be careful not to believe all that is written, and to test everything by the Scriptures and by our knowledge of the Truth. Indeed, although much valuable information is available from non-Christadelphian sources, it all must be filtered through our knowledge of the inspiration and veracity of the Scriptures. Many modern commentaries are probably best used by those mature in the faith, although some are quite helpful to most. I might mention the Tyndale Commentaries, which are available from the Christadelphian Office, and the ones by William Barclay on the Synoptic Gospels — I have found these to be quite useful.

If we have to rely only on Christadelphian works, there are some books of the Bible that have a great abundance of material. The most obvious is Revelation — there are at least 14 commentaries available, and that section of my bookshelf is replete with quite a few of them. And in the Old Testament, both the Psalms and Job have quite a wealth of information. On the other hand, for some areas my shelves are quite lacking in Christadelphian works. Books on the Kings and Chronicles are almost non-existent, apart from a survey of the Kings by Michael Ashton. As far as I know, there is no stand-alone commentary on Ezra, likewise for the Gospel of Matthew, although of course Bro. Harry Whittaker covers this latter area in his “Gospels.”

The example of Paul

In some Bibles, you might glance in the marginal references — and find some quite unusual ones. Look at Acts 17:28 and you will find that Paul is quoting from the Greek writers Epimenides, Aratus and Cleanthes. And Epimenides comes up again in the citation about the Cretans in Titus 1:12. Of course, neither of these quotations are commenting on the Old Testament, but it shows the knowledge of Paul about the general writings of his era. (It is of more than passing interest that there are no direct quotations in the New Testament from what is known as the Old Testament Apocrypha, despite its presence in Catholic Bibles of our era.)

None of this directly proves that we should use sources other than the Scriptures in our studies, but it does show the breadth of Paul’s reading. It also shows that Paul reached out to his audience using referents they were familiar with, an example

we should (and often do) use in talking to our friends and acquaintances. Also, I cannot leave the topic of Biblical references without mentioning that among the Dead Sea Scrolls were several commentaries on books of the Old Testament, including ones on Habakkuk, Micah, Zephaniah and the Psalms. Of course, none of these are mentioned in the New Testament, which is not surprising since the only method of distribution of writings was by laborious hand copying. Almost all except the very rich could only hope in vain to actually own any copies even of the Books of the Bible — and note how Paul asked for the Books and Parchments he owned (2Tim 4:13). Together with the cloak he also asked for, they must have represented the bulk of Paul's possessions — and certainly the most valuable.

The Misuse of Commentaries

It is all too easy, when asked to prepare a Bible class, or when engaged in Bible study about a passage, to simply reach for an available commentary and rely on that author's opinions. As I have mentioned above, this is not how one studies the Bible. In addition, in this issue of the "Tidings", and God Willing to be continued in the next, is a brief look at the "why" and "how" of Bible study.

I must admit I have been a little guilty of the "Bible Study by commentary" myself. While studying in Manchester, the Christadelphians at the university held a little study group on Galatians. So I went along to the university library, which was well stocked with commentaries because of its Religious Studies Department. Out of the dozen or so on Galatians, I borrowed several and attempted to make sense of them — but in the process I somewhat ignored the Biblical text. The result was that for many years my view of this book was more influenced by debates on its chronology and the location of the Galatian church than the essence of its message.

So, although these types of questions are of interest, they are not what we should focus on. Sometimes commentaries can help us tease out the most important message of a passage, but all too often they focus on the trees in the forest — or even on the twigs, while often ignoring the important message of the text. (And this is true of some Christadelphian commentaries as well.) I am sure at least some of you have been present at Bible classes where the method seems to be to find out where else in the Bible each Hebrew (or Greek) word was used, which is an exercise in the use of concordances, not Bible study.

Conclusion

We should be careful in how we use sources from outside of our community. But we should also be careful in how we use any commentary. Letting the Bible speak directly to us, and letting it interpret itself, is the bedrock of any study. And most of all, Bible Study by commentary is a great danger, especially in these days when one's shelves groan with such books.

Peter Hemingray

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged— the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

Wait

I would like to consider something that we all are doing. Something we are actually doing at this very moment. Something we pesky humans are not very good at doing. We are waiting. Some are waiting for it to rain. Some are waiting to take a trip. But most of all we are waiting on the return of the Lord Jesus. I will take a look at some examples of those who waited on the Lord, and also one who fell away during what should have been his wait for the Lord.

The Exodus

When God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, it was with mighty works and wonders. Exodus tells us how God remembered his covenant, and now he had come to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. First of all, God did not just remember his covenant. It was not like we might say, "Oh, I forgot milk and bread: now I need to go back to the store." God never forgets. God was waiting. Waiting for what? God was waiting for the right leaders to come along that would do his bidding. He was waiting on Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb and all the others who would faithfully follow his commandments and directions. With each passing plague that touched Egypt, the faith of the children of Israel in God must have increased. It is in that show of faith that they placed the blood of the lamb on the door post of their homes that the destroying angel might pass over them. At this point the children of Israel were ready to faithfully follow God wherever he might lead them.

I really believe that they actually felt that way. At this time they were ready, willing and wanted to be faithful to do the will of God. But when they were lead to the Red sea with no visible way of escape, that faith began to slip away, and with the tests they faced in the wilderness that strong faith had all but disappeared. So it was in unbelief that they would not enter the land that God had promised to give them.

We might ask ourselves, "How could they have lost faith in God with all the miracles they witnessed"? We might also ask ourselves, "Would we have really done any better"? Maybe we would have, but maybe not. The Psalmist speaking of the exodus from Egypt, sums it up perfectly; *"Then believed they his words: they sang his praise. They soon forgot his words: they waited not for his counsel"*(Psa 106:12-13).

God could have led them out of Egypt a different way. God could have led them in a way that would have avoided all the distress they experienced in the wilderness. God was well aware of the problems and the hardships they would face along the way, and yet he led them into these difficult times. The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to Timothy that these Scriptures are written and saved for our learning. So, what lesson has God recorded for us to learn? I think the Psalmist understood clearly what was being recorded for our learning. I think that is clearly indicated in the 13th verse we just read. *"They soon forgot his words: they waited not for his*

counsel.” It is left recorded for us, that when we are led into difficult time, we can hold fast to the faith that God has built in each of us. That we never forget his great deeds in the past and towards us, and as the Psalmist says, wait upon his counsel.

There are lots of examples of those who waited on the LORD. Far more than the few I will discuss here. As we do our daily reading of the Scripture, I challenge you to recognize those times when God reveals to us those who chose to wait on the Lord and not lose faith.

Waiting sometimes implies non-action; sometimes that is true, but it can also mean a time to reflect and prepare for whatever is the required action. The poet John Milton wrote a sonnet in 1655 the last line of which is often used to describe people in the military (although it was written of our service to our Maker). The line goes, “They also serve who only stand and wait.” No one would ever accuse the military of being a non-action group. The point of the line is that waiting is a time to ready oneself for the required duty, to be prepared and wait for directions on how to proceed. We are all soldiers of Christ and right now we are preparing ourselves spiritually for a life with Jesus as we await his return.

Joseph

We have the example of Joseph. In dreams God had promised him great things to come. I have little doubt that when Joseph left Jacob’s house that fateful morning to go and see how his brothers were getting along, that he did so with a light and happy heart. Genesis 37 tells us that Joseph was a young man of about seventeen years, just out on an errand for his father. There was no difference here than if we were to send one of our children on some sort of errand for us. But as we all know this was not to be just an errand. In the space of a few short days, this light-hearted young man was cast into chains and sold into slavery by his own brothers for twenty pieces of silver. I think it is a fairly easy picture to bring to mind, of this young man walking in the desert chained to other slaves. I am sure he would have had tears of fear and uncertainty on his cheeks. I am sure when he lay down at night that he would pray that God would deliver him. I don’t think it is too big a stretch to imagine the sense of desolation that Joseph must have felt. Yet, there is no record that a direct answer was ever given to Joseph.

When Joseph arrived in Egypt he was auctioned off and sold to Potiphar. He now lived in a strange land with a foreign language. How often, do you think, Joseph must have prayed in sorrow for his freedom? But still there was no answer from God. All that Joseph had to help him was the natural circumstances of each day. There are no outward miracles displayed in the life of Joseph, for all intent and purpose everything followed a very natural and normal pattern. But Joseph kept his faith alive. In all his sorrow and distress he knew that God was with him. He was positive and faithful that the God of his fathers had not forgotten him. He continued to believe those promises that God had made to him. He waited for God to act.

Most of us are familiar with how Joseph’s troubles became worse with the pressures that Potiphar’s wife placed on him. I have no doubt this was a great trial

and temptation to him, as Joseph had no wife of his own. But Scripture make it clear he was able to withstand this temptation of the flesh. Genesis 39, tells us that Joseph stated; *“How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”* He had not forgotten what was expected of him by his God. To anyone unfamiliar with the story of Joseph’s life, you might think that with all this faith, surely God would now deliver Joseph from his trials. But as we know, this was not the case. The time was not right for God to intervene on Joseph’s behalf. Joseph was now thrown into prison.

Again, we can look to the Psalms for comments concerning Joseph which read, *“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him”* (Psa 105:17-19). In the first part of verse 19 it said, *“Until the time that his word came:”* Whose word? God’s word. Until the time when God said the time was right for Joseph. Joseph waited for God and God delivered him. We know that Joseph went on to become second in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Life can be like this for us brothers and sisters. We can have trials and difficulties springing up very naturally in our lives, or at least they appear very naturally. We may pray and seem to get no answer to our prayers. We may even begin to think that we are praying wrong or that we are praying for the wrong thing. But what we are really doing is learning to wait. Learning to do that thing that is so difficult at times for me.

Learning to be patient. Learning to wait and lean on God, who will in his time provide us with an answer. Maybe the answer will not come today or even tomorrow, but if we keep waiting for God faithfully, he will provide the answer or best course of action for us.

While Joseph was in Egypt, a grieving father was heartbroken in the land of Canaan. He was mourning the son he loved. God had told Jacob, *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”* What a trial for Jacob, all those years of mourning for Joseph.

It would have been easy for God to send an angel to tell Jacob that everything was in control, and in control by God. He could have told him that Joseph was alive and safe. Jacob must have prayed often about his son. In his time God did give Jacob an answer, but until there came a famine in Canaan, Jacob had to wait.

This is the way life will be for us. This is the type of experiences needed to develop the new person in each of us to be like Christ Jesus. Faith must be tried and developed to become the true gold that it is. We all have our problems. We may sometimes feel cut off or desolate. We might even feel a little like we are not getting through to God. The times of our trials may require that this pressure, whatever it may be, must remain with us for a short time or a long time, but in the end God will reward our faithfulness and extend to us his graciousness.

As Jacob’s life was now unfolding in Egypt, he told Pharaoh, *“Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been”* (Gen 47:9). Years later when he had had time to consider his life and God’s dealing with him, Jacob saw things differently. In his last days he called for Joseph’s sons to bless them. We read:

“And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my lifelong unto this day, The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads: and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Gen 48:15-16).

We can't really expect things to be much different for us, can we? We must always remember we cannot expect answers to our problems overnight. They might be answered overnight, but we cannot expect it. What we must remember is that we must wait on the LORD and His time to answer us. God has recorded these experiences for us. Why? So, we can see how life was and is and how God wants us to face it.

David

Let us consider another of God's servants who had to wait. This time to wait for punishment and not for comfort. David who was a man of strong faith even very early in his life. Who else could have faced the challenge of Goliath as David did? Not to mention the bear and lion. To David God promised great things. He was promised the throne and glory over Israel. God's promise was closer at hand when David went into the king's service. But this was not the appointed time because within a very short time, David was an outlaw. On the run, hunted by the king, his father-in-law. David could have thought, where now is God's promise, where now is His care for me? But as we know David did not feel that way. For seven long years he fled from the hand of Saul. But the time came when God lifted the pressure from David and kept His promise. The kingdom was in David's hands and it grew in strength. And then the pressure was on again. There was a battle, one of many in David's life. But to this battle David didn't go, and we know too the sad and bitter outcome of that battle.

It could have been avoided. God could have caused David not to go up on his housetop or he could have arranged Bathsheba's circumstances, so that she was not bathing at just that time. But he allowed the events to take their course. The sometimes sad results of the free will God has given us. God tells David of his punishment.

“Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun” (2Sam 12:11-12).

For many years David waited under the knowledge of this punishment, that he knew God would carry out, but not knowing when. Then came the punishment, the events seemed almost natural, through Amnon and Tamar. Then the murder of Amnon by Absalom was followed by Absalom's attempt to take control of the kingdom and to kill his father. David's love for his son Absalom can be seen in the last verse of 2 Samuel 18, when David had been told of the death of his rebellious son.

“And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he wept, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2Sam18:33).

David I am sure felt the guilt of his transgressions long ago.

Some of us may have experienced the torment of heart, the nights of sorrow and sadness, anguish and desolation such as these that David experienced. We know that this is how life really is. We can feel crushed under the pressures of circumstance until we can barely stand it, just as David felt. But there is a reason for it. As hard as it may appear or feel, it can be and often is part of our development. It can be God’s way of helping us, forming us like David, to be brethren after God’s own heart as long as we keep faith and wait upon our God. David expresses the attitude that the experiences he encountered was designed to produce.

“And the king said unto Zadok, ‘Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him’ ” (2Sam 15:25-26).

Here God found the real David, the real man. David came to realize that he just did not count, unless it was God who did the counting. That is a lesson, sometimes hard, that we all must learn and remember.

Judas

There is one last example, of someone who did not wait for God to do the counting. Judas acted for whatever reason: greed, or else a desire to force Jesus to bring about the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Judas was not prepared or willing to wait for what God wanted. So, like so many, he took matters into his own hands. We all know the results. Our Savior died once, but now lives forever. Judas lost his life also, but he also lost any hope of a future life with Christ. This might be our lot also, if we are unable to wait in faith upon the Lord.

Ourselves

Sometimes we think the pressures of this life are more than we can bear. But never let us forget, God has promised he would never put more on us than we can stand. And if we ever do begin to feel that we have more of a trial or pressure on us than we can stand, just remember what Job withstood: The loss of his children, the loss of his livestock, his property, his money and even his health. But never, never did he lose his faith in God. And he waited for God’s answer. Who here will ever be tried as Job was, hopefully none of us, but if God does, he will stand by us and see us through those times and trials. All he asks of us is to keep faith in him and wait for his counsel.

For some of us pressure is a constant everyday thing, while for others it is an on-again, off-again experience. No two trials are ever the same. Each trial we encounter requires us to come closer to our God, and to continually wait on his guidance and counseling. But one thing is certain: at different times in our lives we all come

under the pressure of trials. This is true whether it be a trial that affects all of us as a family, or each of individually. The special symbols of the Lord Jesus Christ are the bread and the wine. We pass them from hand to hand in remembrance of his sacrifice. When we are here or when we are away, let us always be mindful that we are awaiting his return. We must remember that he has given us certain task and responsibilities, one of which is to be waiting and watching for his return. We are being prepared now for an existence in eternity, for everlasting fellowship with Christ, with the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and with His holy angels. We are being prepared for a life which this world has no conception, nor does it have words to describe it. Finally, let me leave you with two thoughts: To wait patiently in all your trials. And always remember, *“If God be for us who can be against us.”* Let us always look for and wait for God’s counsel.

George Brown (Austin Leander, TX)

“Give me this mountain” (Joshua 14:12)

Caleb was now 85 years of age, and was still in possession of full vigor. He it was who, with Joshua, 45 years before, had seen the truth about the land, for he had not only seen the difficulties, he had seen God. The victory of his faith at Kadesh-Barnea had been that of a man who “wholly followed the LORD”. For 40 years he had shared the wanderings and discipline of those who had not shared his faith. For five years undoubtedly he had taken part in the conflict which had resulted in their coming into the land. During all that period he had never been uncertain of the issue. He had apparently occupied a comparatively quiet and obscure position among his people, while his friend Joshua had been called into the place of conspicuous and powerful leadership...

Caleb came while there was still much to be done; and urging his unabated vigor as constituting fitness for the work, he asked for a possession in the land, which would make stern demands upon him in order to make it his own. On that mountain the Anakim had dwelt; on it there had been great and fortified cities in the day when his faith had triumphed. They were still there, and he asked for the privilege of demonstrating and vindicating faith by works...

Joshua granted him the mountain he asked, and blessed him. In the history of Caleb three things are illustrated concerning faith. Faith sees and dares in the day of overwhelming difficulty. Faith waits patiently through delays caused by failure in others. Faith acts with courage in the day of opportunity.

G. Campbell Morgan

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (4)

At last we are ready to see the connection between Leviticus and the physical layout of the Tabernacle. Let's begin by reviewing a few things we have seen to this point.

The first article (December, 2010) highlighted that God repeats the elements of the Tabernacle and their arrangement seven times in the book of Exodus. He gives a detailed verbal blueprint in the "thou shalt make" section (Exod 25-30) and a near duplicate account of its execution in the "and he made" section (Exod 35:20-39:32). In addition, He gives five summaries (Exod 31:1-11; 35:1-19; 39:33-43; 40:1-16; 40:17-33), three in the last chapter and a half. With such emphasis, it is clear that God intends us to remember the layout of the Tabernacle.

The second article (January, 2011) showed that the Tabernacle was a portable continuation of the theophany on Mount Sinai. In both, God meets with His people. In both, the people, priests, and place are sanctified. In both, the LORD manifests Himself in a cloud of glory. Finally, in both, there are three zones of holiness and restricted access. The Outer Court corresponds to the base of the mount, to which the people have access, and where there is an altar for offerings to the LORD. The Holy Place, which only the priests can enter, corresponds to the location up the mount short of the summit, where Moses, Aaron, his sons, and the 70 elders saw God through the sapphire pavement under His feet. The Most Holy Place, to which only the High Priest was allowed to enter, corresponds to the summit, to which only Moses was allowed. The tables of the law that Moses received on Mount Sinai are kept in the Most Holy Place in the ark, reminding the children of Israel of their covenant relationship with the LORD: they are His people, and He is their God.

The third article (February, 2011) demonstrated that the Tabernacle was also a microcosm of Creation. God will dwell in the earth just as He dwelt in the Tabernacle. The glory of the LORD will fill the earth just as it filled the Tabernacle.

Moses called into the glory to receive instructions

As the LORD had commanded him, Moses rears up the Tabernacle on the first day of the first month (Exod 40:2, 17). Once Moses finishes the work (Exod 40:33), events proceed as they did on Mount Sinai.

Cloud of glory: *"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:34) echoes "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai" (Exod 24:15-16a).*

Delay: *"And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:35) parallels "and the cloud covered it six days" (Exod 24:16b).*

God calls Moses and speaks to him: “And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying...” (Lev 1:1) echoes “and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud... And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying...” (Exod 24:16c; 25:1).

Instructions: Continuing these two parallel sequences of events, we see that the instructions that Moses records in the book of Leviticus parallel the instructions concerning the Tabernacle that Moses records in Exodus 25-40. This parallel is a first clue that Leviticus aligns with the Tabernacle.

A spatial mnemonic

The rest of this article and the next show that there is indeed a profound alignment between the two: the physical layout of the Tabernacle provides a spatial mnemonic for the literary structure of Leviticus. Figure 3 positions the chapters of Leviticus on the floor plan of the Tabernacle. This diagram is like the map of a museum with numbered stations identifying the various exhibits. Think of Moses as a guide leading the children of Israel through the Tabernacle and reciting the relevant laws at each station.

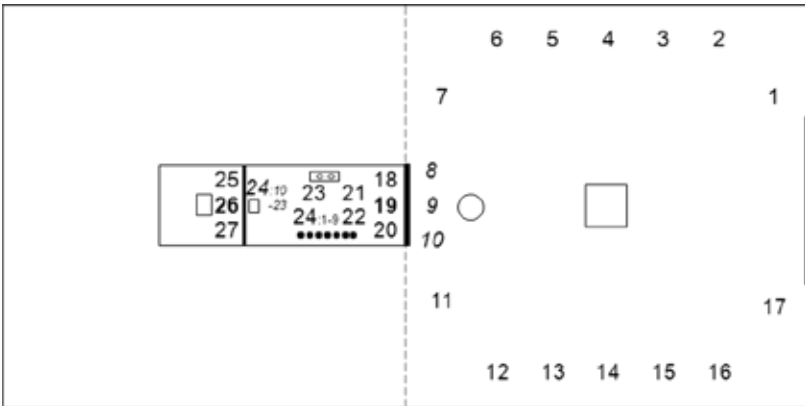


Figure 3. The chapters of Leviticus projected onto the floor plan of the Tabernacle; based on Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, p. 223.

This projection of a literary structure onto a physical space is similar to the zodiac (“circle of animals”), which specifies a celestial coordinate system defined by twelve easily recognizable signs. Sailors used this spatial mnemonic to help them quickly determine their location on the earth (this was long before today’s satellite-based Global Positioning System). Similarly, because God has drilled into our heads the layout of the Tabernacle, aligning Leviticus with the Tabernacle makes it easier to remember His law.

As Figure 3 indicates, Leviticus 1-17 corresponds to the Outer Court, Leviticus 18-24 to the Holy Place, and Leviticus 25-27 to the Most Holy Place. I have found it useful to keep track of the number of times key ideas occur in each of these three sections; I use the notation (x, y, z) to indicate that a word or phrase occurs

x times in the first section (Lev 1-17), y times in the second (Lev 18-24), and z times in the third (Lev 25-27).

The Outer Court (Lev 1-17)

Leviticus 1-17 forms a circle around the Outer Court: “the altar (of burnt offering)” (83, 2, 0) and “the door of the tabernacle” (22, 1, 0) are repeated throughout.

Leviticus 1-7 describes the altar offerings — we should think of these chapters being recited on the north side of the court with the hearers’ eyes focused on the altar itself; when they hear of washing, bathing, or rinsing with water, they would think of the laver. These seven chapters are summarized at the end of this section:

“This is the law of the burnt offering [Lev 1; 6:8-13; 7:8], of the meat offering [Lev 2; 6:14-18; 7:9-10], and of the sin offering [Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30], and of the trespass offering [Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-7], and of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace offerings [Lev 3; 7:11-21, 28-34]; which the LORD commanded Moses in mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations unto the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai” (Lev 7:37-38; cf. 6:9, 14, 25; 7:1, 11).

The allusions to Sinai remind us of the connections between the Tabernacle and the events on the mount.

Leviticus 8-10 describes the consecration of Aaron and his sons, followed by the execution of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire. This is the first of two narratives in Leviticus; the second is the blasphemy and execution of the son of an Egyptian man and Israelite woman (Lev 24:10-23). These narratives break up the detailed legal material that makes up most of the book. Figure 3 indicates that we should think of these two narratives being recited, respectively, just outside the door of the Tabernacle and just outside the veil that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. In both episodes, sinners are executed, thus preventing them from entering the next zone of holiness. The law of equitable retribution (*lex talionis*, cf. Lev 24:15-22) is followed in both: in the first, the burners are burnt (Lev 10), and in the second, the curser is cursed (by being stoned).

Leviticus 11-17 contains the laws of purification. Figure 3 indicates that we should think of these as being recited on the south side of the court. These chapters include laws for food (Lev 11), childbirth (Lev 12), leprosy of the skin, garment, and house (Lev 13-14), and issues (Lev 15), as summarized at the ends of these chapters:

“This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: to make a difference between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten” (Lev 11:46-47).

“This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female” (Lev 12:7).

“This is the law for all manner of plague of leprosy, and scall, and for the leprosy of a garment, and of a house, and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot; to teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean; this is the law of leprosy” (Lev 14:54-57; cf. 13:59; 14:2, 32).

“This is the law of him that hath an issue, and of him whose seed goeth from him, and is defiled therewith; and of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that is unclean” (Lev 15:32-33).

What does all of this have to do with the Outer Court? This question has two answers. The first is simple, yet vital: the purification laws frequently include altar offerings, establishing the fundamental principle that cleansing requires the shedding of blood for forgiveness and atonement. This principle is summarized succinctly in Hebrews, *“The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22, TNIV).*

The second answer is perhaps more surprising: having the purity laws recited in the Outer Court across from the altar offerings encourages hearers to see a parallel between the altar offerings and themselves as individuals. For example, individuals were not allowed to eat blood, just as the blood of the sacrifices was not consumed on the altar, but sprinkled on the furniture of the Tabernacle and poured out beside the altar. This connection between individuals and the offerings forms the basis of several challenging exhortations in the New Testament: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1)* and *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1Pet 2:5).*

This parallel is also the basis for the importance of obedience over sacrifice:

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1Sam 15:22).

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:6-8; cf. Heb 10:5-10).

“O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:15-17).

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6; cf. Matt 9:13; 12:7).

Further, it underlies the idea of song and thanksgiving being compared to sacrifices:

שִׁיר
shiyr (song)

“I will praise the name of God with a song <7892 shiyr>, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox <7794 showr> or bullock that hath horns and hoofs” (Psa 69:30-31; notice the pun based on the similarity of the Hebrew words for “song” and “ox”).

שׁוֹר
showr (ox)

“Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips” (Hos 14:2).

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb 13:15).

Leviticus 16 records the laws for cleansing the high priest, the people, and the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement. Much of the activity is to take place in the court at the altar and the laver. The path of the High Priest into the Most Holy Place within the veil and back out to the Outer Court is explicitly laid out.

Finally, **Leviticus 17** completes the circle:

“What man soever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the LORD ... Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD” (Lev 17:2-4, 8-9).

ties back to the opening chapter:

“If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD” (Lev 1:2-3).

Leviticus 17 also repeats the law forbidding the eating of blood (Lev 17:10-14; cf. 3:17; 7:26-27), which is another signal that it is closing the loop on the earlier chapters.

The next article will continue into the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place sections of Leviticus.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our communities, we print this invitation:

You, your family and friends are invited to the

*36th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
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*Main Speakers: Bro. Ted Sleeper — “Meditations on Creation”
Bro. Tim Galbraith — “The Tabernacle: A Magic Mirror for Disciples”*

Bro. Ed Carpenter — “The Light of the Gospel”

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Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah”: (3) The world of the ungodly

Antediluvians

The people who lived before the Flood are commonly called “antediluvians.” The word is a combination of the Latin prefix “ante,” which means “before” and the Latin word “diluvium,” which means “flood.” So, what were the antediluvians like?

They lived a long time. The average lifespan of Noah’s antediluvian ancestors, as listed in Genesis 5, was 907 years. (That average does not include Enoch, who was translated at the very “young” age of 365. That age is the equivalent of being about 30 in terms of today’s lifespan.)

Since the antediluvians lived such a long time, they were probably extremely accomplished people. In fact, as we noted in the previous article, the worldly achievements of the House of Cain are a point of emphasis in the Bible’s record of their lives. Consider what is written about Lamech’s son, Jubal, for example: “*His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe*” (Gen4:21, *ESV*). Notice how Jubal’s accomplishments are highlighted in this verse.

Imagine what a person could achieve with the number of years that the antediluvians were given. A person can become pretty good at playing an instrument if she devotes five or six years to it. But what if she had 900+ years? Today a person can become a medical doctor with around ten years of training. But what if that amount of time was just over one percent of his life? He would still have time for many additional pursuits and to learn so many more things. So, the antediluvians were probably very sophisticated as far as the wisdom of this world is concerned. Of course, for time devoted to an activity to have eternal value, it needs to be spent in service to God.

Population of Antediluvians

Another aspect of the antediluvians was that there were a lot of them. I used a population formula derived by a researcher named Henry Morris and estimated that there were around 610 million people living at the time of the Flood. (See Appendix.) In order to arrive at that figure, I had to guess the average number of children that an antediluvian family had. I assumed that they had an average of 10, but there is a whole range of numbers that is plausible. The Bible gives us only limited insight into the size of antediluvian families. The most information comes from the structure of the “generations of Adam” in Genesis 5. For each generation, the father is named, his firstborn son is given, and then the record states that he “begat sons and daughters.” (See Genesis 5:7, for example.) That implies that each family had a minimum of five children (i.e., the firstborn son, two more sons, and two daughters).

Alfred Rehwinkel, who has written a number of books on the Flood, relied on a completely different approach than the one that I used to estimate the pre-Flood population, and he arrived at a figure of 900 million.¹ The 18th century mathematician, William Whiston, estimated that there were 500 million people alive at the time of the Flood.²

Of course, it is not necessary for us to know the exact population of the world before the Flood. But it is very satisfying that a realistic estimate can be derived from looking at the information the Bible provides. The Bible is not a scientific textbook. But when it is examined logically, its narrative of events will be shown to be sound. Thus, it is worth noting that the pre-Flood population was probably considerable. It is certainly reasonable to believe that it was two to three times the current population of the United States. Yet almost all of those people with all of that time and all of those talents did not use them as God had intended. Peter refers to the time before the Flood when the antediluvians lived as *“the world of the ungodly”* (2Pet 2: 5).

Warnings

Most of the antediluvians had banished God from their thoughts. But God continued to exist despite the antediluvians best efforts to ignore Him. And their indifference towards His commandments did not negate them or excuse them from having to keep them. The same is true today. So, it is of the utmost importance that we keep society’s increasing lack of regard for God’s way from influencing our thinking and behavior.

God sent warnings to the antediluvians to urge them to change their ways. The first ones that are recorded came from Enoch and were given nearly 1,000 years before the Flood. The next warning is recorded in Genesis. It was given in response to the people of God choosing marriage partners based on physical appearance alone instead of a common commitment to the things of God: *“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years”* (Gen 6:3).

There is some debate about the meaning of this passage. It has been suggested that God was stating his intention to limit the human lifespan to 120 years. However, that interpretation is not entirely supported by the text, and it is not in harmony with the record of subsequent events in the Bible. The descendants of Shem, who was one of Noah’s three sons, are listed in Genesis 11. They lived an average of 330 years. So, the human lifespan continued to be longer than 120 years after this prophecy was given.

What else could the passage mean? Let’s consider its different components. There is pretty strong agreement that the Hebrew word translated “strive” in the King James Version is better rendered “abide in.” That is how it is translated in the English Standard Version and the Revised Standard Version. That rendering is also supported by the Greek-language version of the passage in the Septuagint, which gives it as *“My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men for ever, because they are flesh.”* So, God said that His spirit would not remain among the

antediluvians for ever. But what does that mean? Elihu characterizes death as the withdrawal of God's spirit: *"If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust"* (Job 34:14-15). So, God was expressing His intention to take away life (i.e., withdrew His spirit) from those who would not use it to give glory to Him.

The second half of the verse was a warning about the timing of this punishment that was coming to those who would not repent. William Tyndale translated it as *"Nevertheless I will give them yet space, an hundred and twenty years."* Enoch had given the fairly general prophecy that when his son, Methuselah, died, judgment would come. But the wickedness of man had increased, so God provided more specifics to convey a greater sense of urgency. He told people that they had 120 years to repent. Then disaster would strike those who refused.

Genesis 6: 3 is a powerful illustration of the character of God and His plan and purpose for His Creation. He shows incredible mercy towards us by giving us repeated opportunities to turn from the foolish thinking of our flesh. Yet He is unwavering in His requirements that we serve Him and obey His commandments. And if we refuse to submit to Him, we will perish.

If the message of Genesis 6: 3 had an impact, it did not last for long. Most people continued on with their lives and kept their focus on accomplishing their goals and enjoying themselves. And God was saddened by what was occurring: *"And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart"* (Gen 6:6). The Hebrew word *nacham*, which is translated "repented" in the King James Version, has a whole range of meanings. One of them is "to be sorry" or "to regret." The English Standard Version renders the passage as *"And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth."* The verse continues by saying that man's behavior grieved God *"at his heart."*

We are told repeatedly that God feels strongly about us. We are assured that He knows us:

"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7, NKJV).

And it is extremely moving to note that the Creator of the heavens and the earth responds with great feeling to our service to Him. God and the angels rejoice over the repentance of a sinner: *"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:10). And the joy that God will experience at the salvation of His people is expressed in terms of what is probably the most powerful emotion that a person is capable of experiencing. That is the feeling that a young man has on the day that he marries the person that he loves: *"For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee"* (Isa 62:5). God will share this joy with us if we are among His faithful followers: *"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice*

over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zeph 3:17, ESV).

But just as God feels great joy when we choose to obey Him, He is also greatly saddened by our acts of disobedience. Therefore, we are urged not to “grieve” Him by the things that we do or say:

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:29-32).

Most of the antediluvians had no regard for God’s feelings. And what could have been a wonderful world was being wasted from God’s perspective. So, He stated His intent to undo Creation, as it were: “And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Gen 6:7).

Noah, however, gave heed to God’s words. And in the next article, we will consider why it was written that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6: 8).

Appendix

The population of the world before the Flood can be estimated using the following formula derived by Henry Morris:³

$$P_n = \frac{2[C^{n-x+1} - C^{x-1}]}{[C - 1]}$$

where P_n is the population in generation n , n is the number of generations that have occurred, x is the number of generations alive, and C is half the number of children in the family.⁴

Noah was the tenth generation from Adam. He had children that were old enough to have children. Include another generation since Noah was unusually old when he began to have children. Assume, therefore, that n is 13. Further, Assume x is 6 (i.e., Noah and three generations following; Methuselah and Lamech). Assume 10 children per family. Therefore, C equals 5. This yields a population of 610,351,563.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. Alfred Rehwinkel. *The Flood: In the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology*, (Concordia, 1957).
2. William Whiston. *A New Theory of the Earth, From its Original, to the Consummation of All Things, Where the Creation of the World in Six Days, the Universal Deluge, And the General Conflagration, As laid down in the Holy Scriptures, Are Shewn to be perfectly agreeable to Reason and Philosophy*, (London: Benjamin Tooke, 1696).
3. Henry Morris. *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science, Appendix 6*, (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, 1984).
4. For more information on this formula, see <http://www.ldolphin.org/popul.html>. Accessed November 14, 2010.

Jesus' Instruction for the Ecclesia in Matthew

Introduction

One primary purpose of the gospel records is to furnish us with how Jesus overcame temptation and sin, in order to ultimately “*save his people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21). Besides that, Jesus gives us vignettes of a time afterwards where many people would come to believe and be saved through the words of the Apostles (John 17:20-21). Yet, even in this it would be the Lord Jesus who would work through his believers (John 10:16). The principle verse in this regards is

*“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt 16:18).

The Lord Jesus reveals that the events in the Acts would be a very personal and intimate expression of his work to build his church. This word church in the Greek is “ecclesia” meaning, “an assembly of called ones”.¹ This is the first use of the word ecclesia in the New Testament, and surprisingly its only other usage in the Gospels is Matthew 18:17. Based on this scarcity, we would assert that Matthew 18 is Jesus' core teaching for us concerning how to govern and conduct ourselves in his ecclesia.

Of course, there are many principles in Jesus' teachings that apply to ecclesial life, but we are searching to find any direct guidance for ecclesial practice and administration. The intent of this study is to draw any practical value we can from Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:15-20. We will see that his teaching is not new but is based on an Old Testament foundation. These echoes will further elaborate the intent of his instruction. We will also explore the enigmatic statement that links the two passages together — “*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*” (Matt 18:18)

The Context of Matthew 18

Matthew 18 is a complete discourse that Jesus gives to his disciples (v. 1). In the middle of this is the mention of the future ecclesia (v. 17). Any consideration must include the overall context of the chapter. As many commentators draw out, the main thrust of the chapter is the restoration and forgiveness of those offended.

- V. 6: “whoso shall offend one of these little ones...”
- V. 12-14: “the parable of the lost sheep”
- V. 21-22: “Peter's question about how many times to forgive”
- V. 23-35: “the parable of the unforgiving servant”

The key verse would seem to be verse 11, “*For the son of man is come to save that which was lost.*” The implication is that this should be our purpose too.

That being said, there is also an aspect of “cutting off” those that do offend. In this context, it would seem that verse 7-9 could also apply to the ecclesia,

“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better

for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”

Could this also be referring to disfellowship in the body of Christ? The members and body are the same words used of the ecclesia in 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4-5 and James 3:2, 6. “Cut off” is the phrase used for excommunication under the law (e.g., Lev 20:17, 18). Cutting off members from the ecclesia is sometimes a necessary, if unsavory, task but, as this chapter indicates, the purpose behind it is twofold. It is firstly for drawing repentance from the offender, and secondly for the safety of the little ones — the ecclesia.

Matthew 18:15

It is in this context that Jesus says,

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

The only motive for this confrontation is love. If the intent is to seek after that which is lost then it cannot be done out of spite, anger, revenge or malice. Jesus’ teaching seems to have a direct connection from Leviticus,

“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:17-18).

One of the greatest of commandments “*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Matt 22:39) is built on the principle of reproving the sins of your brother. The phrase “*not suffer sin upon him*” is an obscure Hebrew phrase. Most modern translations have something like the NET translation, “*You must surely reprove your fellow citizen so that you do not incur sin on account of him.*”² The implication is that you sin if you do not call out the sin in the manner Jesus prescribes in Matthew 18. To ignore it is wrong.

The beautiful principles of our Lord Jesus are the best way to deal with transgressions. This teaching is in Proverbs 10:12, “*Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins*” (Peter quotes this in 1 Peter 4:8). There is another like it: “*He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends*” (Prov 17:9).

To cover a transgression does not mean to sweep it under the rug and forget about it, for the Proverbs state repeatedly that sins have to be openly confessed to be forgiven. The true meaning of the proverb is in Matthew 18. This is how love handles transgressions. Hate would broadcast your brother’s sins to others that do not need to be involved. Love covers them over. It is between you, them and God: these are the only parties that really need to know. Many bad feelings and unnecessary hurts are caused when we do not follow this pattern set out by Christ in Matthew 18. (See also James 5:20).

Matthew 18:16

In the case of a brother's transgression being real and he is unrelenting to your reproof, Jesus prescribes the next step,

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

This is a quote taken directly from Deuteronomy 19:15. That Jesus would quote the words directly from the Law of Moses is very interesting. Of course, we know the Law to be just and good with many principles that would later be adopted by the Apostles as recorded in Acts. Jesus directly draws our attention to the context of this passage:

*“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: **at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.** If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you” (Deut 19:15-20).*

Under Jesus' new direction, the cause is brought before the ecclesia rather than the priests and judges of the day.

There are unmistakable parallels of Deuteronomy 19:15-21 to personal cases in Deuteronomy 17:2-7 and community relations in Deuteronomy 13:12-18. The table below shows the key connections while also showing the New Testament passages that also take up these concepts. It proves that this aspect of the law was a principle that was well established and acted upon in the early ecclesia.

| Deuteronomy | 19:15-21 | 17:2-13 | 13:6-18 | New Testament |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------------|---------|------------------------------------|
| if thou shalt hear in the city gates | | v. 2, 4, 8 | v. 12 | |
| 2 or 3 witness | v. 15 | v. 6 | N/A | 2Cor 13:1; 1Tim 5:19; Heb. 10:28 |
| brought before judges | v. 17 | v. 8-9 | | |
| diligent search | v. 18 | v. 4 | v. 14 | |
| Hands of witness first | | v. 7 | v. 9 | |
| put away the evil | v. 19 | v. 7, 12 | v. 5 | 1Cor 5:13 |
| learn to fear | v. 20 | v. 13 | v. 11 | 1Tim 5:20 (cf. Acts 5:5,11; 19:17) |

There are some key lessons to learn from these passages.

The phrase “*if thou shalt hear*” shows us that problems are to be dealt with only when brought to your attention. There is to be no seeking out false teachings based upon suspicions. The person or city does have a responsibility if it is brought to their attention. It teaches us that problems in fellowship are to be dealt with actively and not passively.

Any problem that comes to your attention should only be given serious consideration if given by two or three witnesses. Individual accusations should be suspect, especially if not following the course of Jesus in Matthew 18.

Those involved in the matter are to make “diligent inquisition”. They must resist every natural impulse for a quick and hasty decision based on human biases. Both sides of the case need to be thoroughly investigated. This was necessary under the law because the final judgment was often death, but the cause is just as serious by the ecclesia for it is a matter of life eternal (see Heb 10:28-29).

The ultimate purpose is to “*put away evil*” from among the ecclesia, but also it serves as an example for others so that they may “*learn and fear*”. There is a fine balance between being lenient and forgiving on one hand, and readiness to make an example of blatant sinners so others in the ecclesia learn to fear. The “fear” spoken of must be the fear of God (e.g. Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17) as the judgment was God’s (Deut 1:17).

The cities of Israel were autonomous in that they judged within their gates (Deut 17:2) yet this did not absolve them of dealing with problems in other cities (Deut 13:12; see also Josh 22:10-34). So it is in our day. Ecclesias have autonomy to deal with their own matters yet they also have to be ready to judge serious problems in other ecclesias if they should hear about it. Practically, this could only mean, as it did in Israel, that one ecclesia deals with another ecclesia only in their own local area, and not half way around the world.

Matthew 18:17

In the Old Testament those who had a dispute stood before the priests and judges. Under Jesus’ new commandment, the case would now go to the ecclesia. It has the final say in matters of fellowship.

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”

The treatment for someone who rejected the ecclesial ruling was to treat them as a heathen and a publican. Jesus did not have kind words for heathens (Matt 6:7) or publicans (Matt 5:46), yet when they were willing to listen Jesus was there to teach them (Luke 15:1 — see the following parable at v. 4ff; 18:13; 19:2). There is a tendency to treat a disfellowshipped brother or sister as the Pharisees did to publicans and sinners, but Jesus’ methods were wholly different. As the context of Matthew 18 suggests, we should be seeking for every opportunity to bring the lost sheep back into the fold.

Matthew 18:18

The importance of the ecclesial decision comes in the next enigmatic yet powerful verse,

“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”³

Jesus conferred upon Peter the exact same phrase in Matthew 16:19. So, in the only two places the word ecclesia is used in the Gospels it is married with this saying. We can conclude then that this was not Peter’s alone but collectively for the whole ecclesia.

In Matthew 16:19, Peter is given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven”. The keys represent a certain knowledge or power to open and close. It is an allusion to Isaiah 22:22⁴,

“And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

This is a similar phraseology to “binding” and “loosing”. The context of Isaiah is about Eliakim, a servant in Hezekiah’s time, who undoubtedly is a Messianic type. The keys are meant to symbolize somebody who has authority. In Old Testament times this would be the priest, judges and elders of the people. It was something the authorities of Jesus’ time had neglected and abused (Luke 11:52; Matt 23:13). These keys were now given to the apostle Peter and the ecclesia.

But what does the phrase really mean? How does an ecclesia “bind” and “loose”? Can we do it in this day and age? The answers to these questions start in John 20:23,

“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

It is hard to escape the similar cadence of words that Jesus uses here. This was said to his disciples and not just the apostles. Does the “binding” and “loosing” have something to do with the forgiveness of sins? We shall see that it does.

Matthew 18:19

The next verse in Matthew 18:19 must be a further elaboration on verse 18 as Jesus says “Again I say to you” and then uses the words “heaven” and “earth” again.

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”

What is it that we are to be asking for? When Jesus mentions “anything” does he mean “everything” or does it still have to be in accordance with the will of God (John 15:7, 16; James 4:3; 1John 3:22)? A similar phrase is said in Matthew 21:22 and the parallel account in Mark connects it with the forgiveness of sins.

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven

may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:24-26).

This is very interesting as the passage leads us once again to the forgiveness of sins just as we have all ready seen in John 20:23. Apparently, Peter understood this as he continues in Matthew 18:21ff to ask how many times we should forgive our brother (cf. v. 35 with Mark 11:25-26). The apostle John ties the same thoughts together:

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1John 5:14-15).

This is exactly the same phrasing that Jesus used in Matthew 18:19 and Mark 11:24. Is it any wonder then that the next verse in the epistle sounds exactly like Matthew 18?

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1John 5:16).

The sin unto death is the lawless unrepentant sin (1John 3:4). The sin not unto death are confessed sins (1John 1:9). The “anything that we shall ask” (Matt 18:19) then is anything according to the will of God (1John 5:14) or what he is willing to do.⁵ The “binding” and “loosing” has to do with forgiveness of sins. Whatsoever we forgive on earth then God will forgive us and, vice versa, whatsoever we do not forgive then God will not forgive us (Matt 6:14-15).⁶

Matthew 18:20

This section concludes with Jesus saying,

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The “two or three” must refer back to the two or three witness of verse 16. This would suggest that the original witnesses are the responsible ones, who should either judge against or pray for forgiveness of the brother. Jesus reiterates that as he would build his church (Matt 16:18) he promises us through judgment or repentance he will be there.

In the case of the Corinthians Paul seems to have a sense of this. The word “gathered” is *sunago* (G4863) which is in

*“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are **gathered** together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1Cor 5:3-5).*

This is the passage where Paul pleads with the Corinthians to put away (v. 13) a brother who had committed an egregious sin in marrying his father’s wife. Paul

is saying he is judging as if he were present as a witness along with the presence or power of the Lord Jesus Christ. This follows with the promise of Jesus that he would be in the “midst of them”.

Of course, Paul was saying this with all the proper motives. It was so that the offender might be saved “in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Paul would have been ever looking for some sign of repentance and restoration. This comes in 2 Corinthians,

“Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2Cor 2:6-8).

It is very appropriate that in the following verses Paul uses the language of forgiveness in an echo to the “binding” and “loosing” of Matthew 18.

“To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ” (2Cor 2:10).

A further connection is established in that he forgave it “*in the person (or presence) of Christ*”. Thus he always felt in judgment or forgiveness that Christ was in the midst.

Conclusion

In typical fashion, Jesus has given us much teaching in a few verses. Firstly, we’ve seen a very wise and practical approach to problems. By following this, it decreases the need to escalate matters out of hand. Jesus firmly cements the fact that love is the chief motivator for restoration and healing. Secondly, there has been established a clear Old Testament connection, which has shown an individual and community based application relevant to Matthew 18. In the Old Testament, it was the priests and elders, but now it is the ecclesia which has the final say in determining fellowship. Finally, the matter of “binding” and “loosing” has been shown to apply to forgiveness, and is wholly applicable to our day and age.

Tim Young (Cambridge, ON)

Notes:

1. See “Ekklesia – The Church of God” in *New Testament Words*, William Barclay, pp. 68-72
2. The NET Bible footnote says, “*Heb ‘and you will not lift up on him sin.’ The meaning of the line is somewhat obscure. It means either (1) that one should rebuke one’s neighbor when he sins lest one also becomes guilty, which is the way it is rendered here (see NIV, NRSV, NEB, JB; see also B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* [JPSTC], 129-30, and J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus* [WBC], 303, and the discussion on pp. 316-17), or (2) one may rebuke one’s neighbor without incurring sin just as long as he does not hate him in his heart (see the first part of the verse; cf. NASB, NAB).”*
3. The NASB (also NET) has, “*Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*” I’m not sure if this helps us interpret the passage any better.
4. See also Rev 3:7-8
5. See HAW, “Seven Short Epistles”
6. Could James 5:14-16 also have an application in this case?

What is the Purpose of Bible Study?

“What is the purpose of Bible study?” That’s an interesting question, isn’t it? Because at first it seems like there would be such an obvious answer. Yet, as we stop to ponder it, we see that there might be several arguable answers. One person might answer that studying the Bible is a way in which we serve God, and that therefore, Bible study itself is a righteous thing. Another might reply that we study the Bible in order to prove that our beliefs are true, and that the beliefs of other religions are false. Others might argue that Bible study is all about finding solutions to our everyday problems. Still others might contend that it’s a combination of these things. What we are going to see in our short study on this subject, is that the purpose of Bible study is actually all of these things and yet none of these things, all at the same time. Although these responses are certainly partially correct, they fail to truly get at the heart of the answer. What we hope to do in this article is to peel back the layers and really get at the crucial root answer of our original question: “What is the purpose of Bible study?”

Our devilish little human minds...

If we are going to talk about studying the Bible, the first thing we need to talk about is our thoughts. This is going to seem a little off track at first, but trust me, there’s a spiritual GPS keeping us on the right path. To begin, let’s examine some familiar words of the Lord Jesus:

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

These verses are pretty convenient because they are so cut and dried. There is no other way to put it — we humans have evil hearts, and a bunch of bad stuff comes out of those hearts. Horrible things. You watch the news and hear about a murder? That came from the heart. Read about a greedy, embezzling banker? Yes, that came from the heart. All of the disgusting things we hear on the news every day, and all the awful things that we ourselves have done and are ashamed of, come from our fleshly, human hearts.

We know this. We know that our hearts are deceitful. We know that we think and do evil things all the time. We know that there is a raging war of the spirit versus the flesh inside of us. The real question is — what does this have to do with Bible study? To answer this question let’s look at Isaiah. I am quoting the verses, and will continue to do so throughout, however, I recommend that you turn them up in your own Bible so that they become more familiar to you.

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and

let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:6-9).

We already examined how our own thoughts are impure, dark, and full of evil. God calls us to forsake our crooked ways and to forsake our fleshly thoughts and to instead turn to His thoughts! God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s thoughts higher than ours. That is to say, God’s thoughts are on a totally different plane than ours. This is a simple point, yet one of the most profound in the entirety of Scripture. It shows us that all evil comes from our own thoughts, and that all righteousness comes from God’s thoughts.

Following Directions

There is a perfect Biblical example of this principle in the story of Cain and Abel. We all know the story: Cain offered “the fruit of the ground,” which was unacceptable to God, and Abel offered a lamb, which was acceptable to God. Both offered an offering, why couldn’t God just accept both? The answer is that one offering was based on God’s thoughts, but the other offering was based on man’s thoughts. Let me explain. If we refer back to the preceding chapter of the Bible, we remember that Adam and Eve attempted to cover themselves with fig leaves. God found this covering to be unacceptable and gave them animal skin coverings instead. Wait a second... doesn’t this sound an awful lot like the two offerings of Cain and Abel? Just like the plant covering wasn’t acceptable, so Cain’s plant offering wasn’t acceptable either. God had already set up a principle for Adam and Eve that they surely would have taught their children; however, Cain decided to ignore what he had been taught. Because Cain ignored Godly principles, he didn’t know how to serve God correctly.

In light of this point it becomes quite apparent why Bible study is so crucial — because looking into the Word of God is the only way that we’ll know what is God’s way. It’s a look into the mind of God! Reading the Scriptures allows us to, as we read earlier in Isaiah 55, forsake our lowly, earthly plane of human thoughts and ascend to the higher, heavenly plane of God’s thoughts. If we neglect the reading and the pondering of the Scripture then we are only left with our own, sinful, dying ways. The familiar passage of Proverbs 3:5-6 is very relevant: “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*” Perhaps the most critical phrase in that verse is, “*and lean not unto thine own understanding.*” Anytime we listen to music, travel, eat, drink, choose a home, think about the future, make decisions or anything else, we can either lean on God’s understanding or on our own understanding. Cain ignored God’s way and leaned on his own thinking. In the same way, when we do any of these things without the influence of the Scriptures, we lean on our own understanding rather than God’s. Therefore, if we want to “*trust in the LORD*” with all our heart, it is imperative that we are careful to study His divine Word.

But I'm not good at studying!

A common misconception — a misconception that I used to have as well — is that there are a select few people who are intelligent enough to do Bible study, and it's appropriate for us to just leave it up to those people. It may surprise you to read this, but Bible study is not only for intellectuals. It's not just for the academic, scholarly, intelligent, smart people. Bible study is for everyone. Let's check out a passage in the book of Deuteronomy. This is Moses speaking God's words:

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deut 6:6-9).

God's words weren't just for the priests. They weren't just for the scribes either. They weren't even just for the adults; they were for the children too! In fact, just one chapter earlier, it says, *“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them...”* (Deut 5:1). Moses was speaking to all of Israel. God wants all of us to think on His Word, and He wants all of us to think about it all the time: when we lie down, when we get up, when we hang out together, and even to put His Word on our “doorposts” and “gates”! In modern day terms, that's just like when we go into our fellow Christadelphians' homes and see that they have verses hanging on the wall.

If we remember our point from earlier, God's thoughts are way above and beyond our own. Doesn't it make sense that God would want everyone to be able to know His thoughts? That He would want everyone to be able to come to Him? Of course it does! God is a merciful, loving, God and it is His will that everyone should come to Him.

Bible “study” is a bad word...

Ok, I'm kidding, it's actually not a bad word at all. However, I do think that our common understanding of the word “study” has some unfortunate effects on the way we think about meditation on God's Word. It tends to make us associate “Bible study” with a scholarly, scribe sort of person — sitting at a large wooden desk piled high with books, concordances, notes, and the like. Although this is an important part of Bible study, it isn't the only part of it. We often feel that we have to specifically be an intellectual person to study the Bible, when really we know that God wants all of us to think on His Book. The word “study” sounds very academic, and tends to make us think of universities and schools. As we already discussed, Bible study is not only about academics, but it's about knowing the mind of the Father. So when we use the word “study,” we should be careful to realize that we aren't necessarily talking about getting out Hebrew scrolls, but we can simply be speaking of the reading or thinking about God's Word. Therefore, in addition to the term “Bible study” I will also use the phrase “Bible meditation.” This will help us keep in mind that “study” of the Scriptures is not an academic exercise, but rather it is a way for us to learn God's thoughts and make them our own.

Conclusion

To sum everything up, we began by looking at how gross and fleshly our own thoughts are. We then examined how God's thoughts are pure, and elevated far above our own. Next we considered that the only way to get God's thoughts to be our thoughts is to meditate on His Word. Through meditation on the Scripture, we can learn the correct way to serve the Father, what His mind and will are, and then can make our minds conform to His as much as possible. We then looked at how God doesn't just want a select group of people meditating on His Word, but rather that He wants everybody to come and examine it. Finally, we looked at the suggestion that "Bible meditation" is a more appropriate term for "Bible study" because it sheds the associated ideas of textbooks and schools, and is also more Biblical. We therefore see that Bible meditation isn't drudgery, but really it's a beautiful action we can take as humble children — that we might know more fully the love of our gracious Father.

In this article we have examined the "why" of Bible meditation, and in our next article we look forward to answering the "what" and "how" of it. What exactly is Bible meditation, and how does one go about doing it? With that little tidbit to whet your spiritual appetite, I bid you farewell. God bless!

With much love in Christ to all of God's children who read this,

Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

What's the Goal? Part 2

God's truth is revealed truth. To learn it is to be informed by God. It is also to be transformed by Him. This is what life is about, and it is what God has sent His word to accomplish in us. Learning God's truth is cultivating godliness in mind and manners.

In keeping with this, a set of **information goals** for Sunday school teaching was defined in last month's article.¹ Our children need to learn about Bible contents, God, Christ, man, the ecclesia, doctrine, and God's commandments.²

The acquisition of Bible knowledge changes our children. As they learn the revealed things of God, they are never exactly the same again. But knowledge by itself is not everything. What our Sunday school children do with the knowledge they acquire determines how they develop in the likeness of God.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!" (Psa 111:10)³.

Letting God's truth live in us is vital. In keeping with this, we also identified a set of **transformation goals** for Sunday schooling.¹ Starting with the acquisition of Bible knowledge, we look for our children to make positive changes along all of

these lines: Knowledge, attitudes, effective thinking, relationship with God and Christ, relationship with others, and personal life practices.²

Focusing on Sunday school goals

By themselves the two lists of goals are pretty academic. As Sunday school teachers we can easily give assent to them and move on, all but ignoring them under the constant pressure of getting lessons ready every week. It is helpful, I believe, to place the two sets of goals against each other and get into the habit of thinking how they relate to each other. A two-dimensional array — the educational goal grid — encourages this kind of thinking. It also helps us identify essential things to build into our lessons.

Educational TRANSFORMATION Goals

| | | Knowledge | Attitudes | Effective thinking | Relationship to God, Christ | Relationship to others | Personal life practices |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| I N F O R M A T I O N | Bible contents | | | | | | |
| | God | | | | | | |
| | Christ | | | | | | |
| | Man | | | | | | |
| | The Ecclesia | | | | | | |
| | Doctrines | | | | | | |
| | Commandments | | | | | | |

Every blank space on the goal grid invites us to ask how an information goal impacts on a transformation goal. How, for example, does our knowledge of Christ affect our attitude toward him and toward others? How should it change the way we think and make decisions? How should our knowledge of Christ also affect our relationship with God and our relationship with others around us? How should it change our private and public lives?

In other words, how should our knowledge of Christ change us as persons? And are we willing to change? Transfiguration is an essential aspect of salvation.

It is not just Sunday school teachers that need to think about questions like these. The children also need to think about them. They need to learn what to do with the information they are taught in Sunday school. And they need to begin identifying the opportunities they have in life to put the lessons into practice.

Framing goal-based questions

Take a good look at the questions that we ask our children in any Sunday school lesson. How many of them are **information questions**; simple matters of recall, perhaps requiring the child to restate what he or she has been told? These are important questions. Properly framed, the answers can tell us whether or not a foundation of knowledge has been laid. But we must not assume because a foundation is in place that the house will build itself. We need to ask **transformation questions** as well.

Transformation questions are different from information questions, so this point needs to be developed more fully. To do this, it will be helpful to work within the framework of a Sunday school lesson.

Feeding the 5,000.

We will take Christ's feeding of the 5,000 as the Sunday school lesson, and choose **knowledge of Christ** as the primary information goal for our children. Beyond this, we will build on the children's knowledge of Christ and take them into areas of personal transformation. Let's start with the story.

“The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.’ But he answered them, ‘You give them something to eat.’ And they said to him, ‘Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?’ And he said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have? Go and see.’ And when they had found out, they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men” (Mark 6:30-44).

Now that we have the story, we need to be sure to address the information goal we have set for the children. In this case, it is **knowledge of Christ**.

To simply tell the story to our children is to enhance their **knowledge of Bible contents**. It is to help them acquire valuable Bible literacy. This is a legitimate information goal, but it is *not* the goal that we set for this Sunday school lesson.

Telling the story of the 5,000 fits in the upper left-hand corner of the goal grid; it does *not* specifically focus on knowing Christ.

If we go a step farther and interpret the story for our children – that is, tell them what the feeding of the 5,000 means – we will probably add **knowledge of Bible doctrine** to their **knowledge of Bible contents**. This, too, is a legitimate information goal, but it still does *not* have the focus that we want.

Let's go back to the story of the 5,000, therefore, and focus on Christ. What can the children learn about Jesus as a person from this story? What is revealed about him? Here are some questions that focus on the **knowledge of Christ**:

- What did Jesus do in this story that no other person could have done? What does this tell us about him?
- What did Jesus do that we can also do? What does this tell us about him?
- Identify details in the story that reveal the kinds of **attitudes** that Jesus had toward life and people?
- What **decisions** did Jesus make in this story? Could he have made different decisions than these? What does this tell us about him?
- What does the story tell us about the **relationship** that Jesus had **with God**?
- What does the story tell us about the **relationship** Jesus had **with his disciples**?
- What does the story tell us about the **relationship** Jesus had **with the ordinary people** of this world?
- What **characteristics** of Jesus are familiar to you in this story because he shows the same characteristics elsewhere in the Gospels?

Once the children know something about Christ from the 5,000 story, we need to turn the spotlight on them. What are the implications of Christ for our children? This is where we can begin to frame useful transformation questions. Here are a few to consider. You might well want to frame a different set of questions for your children.

- Would you like to have Jesus as a friend? Why? How does Jesus become your friend?
- Would you make the same **decisions** that Jesus did under similar circumstances? For example, would you give up your desire for “rest and leisure” to meet the demands of someone else? What would it require of you to do this?
- Would you like to have the kind of **relationship with God** that Jesus had? How do people like us begin to develop a good relationship with God? How can we help each other in the process?
- What is one specific thing that you can do in the week to come to show “compassion” on others **like Jesus** did when he fed the 5,000? Let's pray together that God will help you do it.

These questions address transformation goals. With **older** Sunday school children you could occupy a full class period or more discussing a set of questions like these. They are pretty intense! Given the length of time we usually have for Sunday school, we have to be realistic. One or two well-chosen transformation questions are probably all that can be handled on a given day.

And, of course, the questions that we ask need to be designed with the children in mind. I tend to think in terms of older children because I worked with teenagers all my teaching life. Ultimately, as the teacher, you have to decide what goal-based questions are appropriate for your class of Sunday school children.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Please contact Bro. Jim at 2harps4u@gmail.com

Notes:

1. See “What’s the Goal – Part 1” in last month’s issue of The Tidings.
2. Develop your own set of goals. You may also want to think about the order in which you sequence your goals
3. All references are from the ESV.

Music in Worship

**Articles, questions, and letters may be submitted to
Section editors Ken and Joan Curry
krcurry@sympatico.ca
Markham and Eglington
P.O. Box 90525
Toronto, ON M1J 3N7**

What’s in our Hymn Book?

There is a lot of interesting information in the green Christadelphian Hymn Book (2002) about the hymns we commonly sing. The hymn book has the lovely inscription on the front cover “Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs”. We are told to be filled with the attitude of Christ, *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” (Eph 5:19-20).*

We are encouraged to use the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs contained in our hymn book to teach and give thanks to God.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father” (Col 3:16-17).

Playing a hymn and thinking about the words, even at times when I do not feel like doing it, helps me do what Peter says when he admonishes us to **REMEMBER**. To remember God’s promises, blessings, and the joy that is set before us. *“Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you” (2Pet 1:12).*

Here are some ways to bring even more value and meaning when we sing the magnificent songs in our hymn book.

- 1) **Read the hymn.** Sometimes the words used in a hymn are difficult to understand because we don't know the meaning of the word. After I get the tune it's necessary to understand what is being sung. The songs are poetry, and sometimes the way the lines are written so they can rhyme, or fit the music, can be confusing. When I encounter a word or a phrase I don't understand in a hymn I find out what it means and write down the meaning beside it (yes, in the hymn book!). Examples:
 - a) Hymn 14, v. 2 – “affiance”: it means trust, confidence, reliance
 - b) Hymn 310, v.2 – “Robes whose lustre...” (or luster in the U.S.). It means the “quality of shining by reflecting light”!!
- 2) **Echo...echo....** We are told to be aware of echoes in the Word as we read the Bible. Many of the hymns chosen for the Christadelphian hymn book teach various principles from the Scriptures. I have several of my hymns “Bible-marked” as I read phrases that remind me of a verse here and there. Years ago a brother gave a fantastic exhortation on Hymn 361, doing echoes for almost every line to an event in the Bible. Now that hymn really means something to me and I can sing it with more understanding and fervor (okay, enthusiasm). Examples:
 - a) Hymn 435 “God be with you...”. Where did that phrase about God's wings come from? Ruth 2:12 is one echo, or Psalm 36:7. See if you can find more!
 - b) How about Hymn 340: the phrase in verse 1 about “with Christ in the vessel” immediately brings to mind Matthew 14:23-33. In the second verse, the broken cisterns come from Jeremiah 2:13, which we almost need to read to understand what the hymn's author has in mind. And then in verse 3, we all know the passage about tribulation is from Acts 14:22.
 - c) Finally: Hymn 347, verse 5: where does the phrase “thrice holy is the Lord” come from? Read Isaiah 6:3 to see if that's the “echo”. Page 651 of our hymn book starts an Index of Scriptural References that is looking at “echoes” from the other direction. You know a Bible passage and want to see if there is a hymn in our hymn book for it.
- 3) **Written by whom?** How can you tell if the words were written or the music composed by a Christadelphian? On page 630 (in both the standard and pocket size!) is an index called “Source Details Listed by Hymn Number.” The introduction on that page informs us that, “An asterisk * indicates Christadelphian sources.” So what I have done is write by the hymn the name of the Christadelphian author of either the music or words or both. When I see that the hymn is written by a Christadelphian that hymn means even more to me when I sing it.
- 4) **Tunes.** When I don't know the tune to a hymn, but I love the words, what do I do? Well, I do some mixing and matching. On page 642 the hymn book starts listing the Alphabetical Index of Tunes. Right after that, starting on page 646, the “Metrical Index of Tunes” is given. What are these used for? When you look at each hymn, at the top of the hymn, above the music, is the name of the music, and often, the “metrical” tune. The name for the music of the tune usually has an interesting history. For example, “Darwall's 148th”, the

tune as was used for hymn 73, is based on Psalm 148. The metrical tune is the beat, or rhythm of the tune. If you see a hymn with the metrical tune of 88.86, you can find that the words to another hymn with the same metrical tune and it will go with that original tune. Another example: you can sing the words to hymn 431 (88.86 metre) to the tune of hymn 405 (also 88.86 metre). On pages 646-647 you can also see by the headings what S.M., D.S.M., C.M., D.C.M., and L.M. mean!

- 5) **First Lines.** When asked “what is your favorite hymn?” we may answer, “Oh, the hymn starts with ‘Joy cometh...’ ” but you can’t remember the number of it! You can find the hymn number on Page 655 where hymns are listed alphabetically by their first line. Also, if you are searching for a particular theme, such as joy, or “holy”, there is a simple concordance available for your computer for the hymn book. (see <http://www.christadelphianmusic.org/info/index.html> for all this information and more!)
- 6) **Prayers and Praise.** It is sad to hear mournfulness in people’s voices when they are singing of the joy of being in the kingdom! Feel the emotions of the phrases being sung. Smile with joy when singing of rejoicing!! One favorite hymn that is a good example of various emotions is Hymn 135. We usually sing Verse 5 with emotion. We know to sing loud the two lines in Verse 5, “let sense be dumb, let flesh retire, Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,” and then go down to practically a whisper when singing the last two lines, “O still small voice of calm!” But what about the rest of that hymn? Verse three speaks of “rest,” and “calm,” and “silence”. Do we sing that verse that way? In verse four the first two lines are about being quiet, while the 3rd and 4th lines are louder, while the last two lines are peaceful and quieter. Do we sing it that way with feeling, meditating on the words as we sing?? It is helpful to prepare our songs of praise by reading over the hymn words, quietly and reflectively, thinking about the author’s words and their meaning.

All these are ways to help us to better give our God sacrifices of praise. As stated in Hebrews 13:15, “*Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*”.

Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX)

I admonish every pious Christian that he take not offence at the plain, unvarnished manner of speech of the Bible. Let him reflect that what may seem trivial and commonplace to him, emanates from the high majesty, power and wisdom of God.

The Bible is the book that makes fools of the wise of this world; it is only understood by the plain and simple-hearted. Esteem this book as the precious fountain that can never be exhausted. In it thou findest the swaddling-clothes and the manger whither the angels directed the poor, simple shepherds; they seem poor and base, but dear and precious is the treasure that lies therein.

Martin Luther

Reflections

Faith to Move Mountains

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance” (John 20:1, NIV).

Was ever a mountain so “large” as the great stone which sealed Christ’s tomb? Truly, as miracles go, no miracle has been or could be so great as the one that caused this “very large” (Mark 16:4, NIV) stone to be removed, and thus proclaimed Christ’s tomb to be open, forevermore.

Jesus had told his followers,

“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him” (Mark 11:23, NIV).

Of course, we have trouble with moving literal mountains, even as we have trouble explaining this passage.

But seen from a spiritual perspective, isn’t the greatest “mountain” of difficulty, which no man can move, the figurative “mountains” of death and the grave? Engineers with bulldozers and explosives can move even literal mountains. But who among them can move the mountainous “stone” that covers the grave? Not a one!

Even the disciples of Jesus could not move such a stone from the mouth of his sepulcher, not at that time; they were weeping in sorrow, and hiding in fear. It was the faith of Jesus alone — though he was dead and unconscious in the tomb — that moved the hand of the angels of God, who in turn rolled back the stone. It may be said that the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performed was this: the blood of this wholly righteous man cried out from the depths of the earth, and the Father heard!

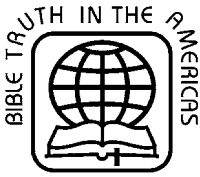
Do we, today, have faith to move mountains? The answer, I believe, is really another question: ‘Do we have faith that the greatest “mountain” has already been moved?’

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24, NIV).

Our faith ought to be, not just a prospective, but also a retrospective faith: we look backward, and ask, ‘Do I really believe that the “mountain” has been moved?’ If we truly believe that, then — it is absolutely sure and certain — all things are possible for us!

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

*“The Bible is like a mine;
its jewels are not to be picked up on the roadside” (Selected).*



Bible Mission News

El Salvador Bible School

In the pine forest of northern El Salvador about 130 brethren and sisters, young people and children came together in December for the annual El Salvador Bible school. Besides 19 visitors from Costa Rica and five from neighboring Guatemala, there were nine young people from New Zealand and three Canadians. The Kiwis really added to the international flavor of the camp and many friendships were made or renewed (Bro. Brydyn and Sis. Yaana Melles lived in El Salvador and Guatemala when they were younger).



The El Salvador Bible School

The main speaker was Bro. Douglas Vanegas, a Salvadoran brother who lives in Costa Rica, on the theme of "Learning from the Prophets". He helped us to realize that we are all potential prophets charged with taking God's Word to the world. The teen class (with 33 students!) was on "Lessons from the Wilderness" and there were two more classes for the younger children, one given as usual by Bro. Jeff Hibbs of Victoria.

The traditional Bible competition between the Sheep and the Goats was held with much enthusiasm and noise. It was wonderful to see the love for learning the Scriptures.

Saturday evening was set aside for presentations by the different youth groups. The Costa Rican young people showed a video they had prepared on the importance

of forgiveness. The Kiwis sang and enacted a couple of Maori songs, a new and exotic experience for the rest of us, while the Salvadoran young people presented the story of David and Goliath with the 9-foot Philistine (Bro. Manuel Fernández inside!) stomping around and terrifying Israelite soldiers. The final event was an Israeli folk dance choreographed by Sis. Magdalena Ventura and featuring 30 costumed children and teenagers holding candles — very exciting! The night ended with a hymn-sing around a bonfire, coinciding with our annual blood donation to the local mosquito population.

On Sunday afternoon, after the breaking of bread and the final class, there was distribution of prizes to all the children and teens. It was heartwarming to see the grinning youngsters, about 50 in all, being cheered by the audience as each received his gift.

May God continue to bless the ecclesias in Central America as we walk together to His kingdom. A special thank-you to all those who support the preaching south of the border. Your help is sincerely appreciated by the brothers and sisters who are working to establish and nurture ecclesias in these faraway places.

Submitted by Jim and Jean Hunter

Trinidad and Tobago

Enduring to the End and Attending to the Young

Once again I was encouraged spiritually as I visited the four ecclesias in Trinidad and Tobago. Whether a small ecclesia meeting in a home or a “larger” ecclesia meeting in its own hall, we have brethren in T&T that are pressing on toward the mark of their high calling. They are diligent in their preaching of the Word through radio programs, seminars, and personal contacts. Every year preaching efforts are part of the regular budget, not just special efforts in certain years or months as it is in some North American ecclesias.

Their efforts with the children and young people are ongoing as well no matter how few or how many are found in their midst. I was particularly impressed with one ecclesia’s efforts in the neighborhood of their hall. It was my pleasure to witness the year end Sunday School program. The recitations, singing, and skits were a joy to behold, but here was the most amazing aspect of the day. The 18 or so young people who participated were all from the neighborhood except two of the youngest, who were children of ecclesial members! And, the ages ranged from 4 to 18!

Two of the teenagers have attended youth camp in T&T and seem quite connected to the other Christadelphian youth of the islands. One of the little girls, an eight year old from the neighborhood, sheds tears if her mom does not send her to Sunday School! Her mom did step up on this day. She made sure that little Erica and her younger siblings made it to the year-end program on the same day that her mother-in-law passed away!

One entry on the program was listed as a “Surprise”. The surprise was a skit (The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant) put on by the adults. You see, the teens had complained during rehearsals that they were providing all of the “entertainment”

(teens can be the same no matter where they live), so the adults secretly practiced a skit of their own. The teens and children loved it, of course, just as students at school enjoy seeing their teachers “perform”. The adults confided in me that they enjoyed the fellowship with their peers during the rehearsals for their part in the program.

Who was leading all of these participants and teaching the youngsters throughout the Sunday School year? Essentially, the job rested on the shoulders of one brother and two sisters in a ecclesia where there is an aging membership and only two exhorting brethren! It is a proactive and consistent effort on the part of this little meeting which, God willing, will reap benefits down the road. Needless to say, I was blown away, and came home with some good ideas for our own Sunday School.

I was also pleased to meet and welcome to the brotherhood most of the young people who put on the saving name of Christ this past year. There were eight baptisms in Trinidad and Tobago in 2010 and seven of the eight were young people!

While there was much I gained from this second trip, I also learned, once again, that the brothers and sisters are struggling with the issues of these last days that we live in. Strained relationships, employment challenges, and the lure of the world are all part of what our brethren are facing. In that regard their experience is not too different from ours further north. They will be in our prayers as we are in theirs. May we all endure to the end and continue to encourage our young people and others in the time that remains before our Lord’s return. And may our prayer for His return, be answered soon.

Submitted by Bro. Brad Butts, Linkman for Trinidad & Tobago

Photos of the Marabella Sunday School/CYC year end program, Trinidad and Tobago

The whole group of young people, most of whom are children from the neighborhood around the hall!



Helping the crippled man to the temple gates, who would soon be healed by Peter.



The Senoir CYC (Teens)



The younger children (Erica, who sheds tears when she can't come to Sunday school, long dress in front row)

News from the Guyana Ecclesias for 2010

In February, Mr. JAMES CUPERTINO put on the saving name of the Lord, Bro. Derek Sohan of the Kilcoy Ecclesia fell asleep, and Sis. Esther Worrell returned home to Canada from her visit to Guyana. In March, Bro. Vernon Yearwood of the New Amsterdam Ecclesia fell asleep. He was 95 years old and the last of the early generation of Christadelphians. We pray we will meet again when our Lord returns.

In April, the Georgetown Ecclesia hosted the 39th Annual Guyana Bible School over the Easter weekend. The theme, “Thy Kingdom Come”, was shared by Bre. Tim Young and Mark Giordano. The Bible School was well attended by local and overseas brethren, including Bro. Joe and Sis. Vee Baldu (NY, USA), Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul (NY, USA), Bro. Lennox Prashad (Canada) and Sis. Yvonne Horton (NY, USA).

In May, we bade farewell to Sis. Kamice Bailey who migrated to the USA. A Sisters Seminar was hosted by the Georgetown Ecclesia with the theme ‘Bearing the Yoke in Youth’. In June, we welcomed Bro. Ted and Sis. Dolores Sleeper (CA, USA) and Bro. David Worrell (Canada) around the table of our Lord.

In July, we gathered at the Eccles Ecclesia for the annual fraternal gathering and celebrated the baptism of Ms. SHELLANA BAYNES. In August, we welcomed Sis. Vaulda Caesar (Bahamas), and many of us participated in the annual youth camp at Plegt Anker (August 14-21). We also welcomed Bro. Tyrone and Sis. Carol Smartt (NY, USA) on their brief visit to Guyana due to a family loss. In September, we welcomed Bro. Andy Bradshaw (UK).

In December we welcomed Bro. David Andrews who has relocated to Guyana from Trinidad to help support the outreach, the youth, and baptismal instructional work among the six ecclesias. His return is expected to be a huge benefit to our ecclesias. His wife, Sis. Joan (Trinidad) joined him at the end of December.

Bro Anthony Semple

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2. 519-837-9094.
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com
Website: www.agapeinaction.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

AVON, IN

The Avon Ecclesia has much to report. Our small meeting has been blessed with a number of baptisms. On August 15, 2009, our HOLLY HATCH, daughter of Bro. Jordan and Sis. Susan Hatch was immersed. CALEB PLEW, the son of Bro. Sam and Sis. Cassandra Plew took on the saving name of Christ on January 23, 2010. MARJORIE BINCH, the daughter of Bro. Ed and Sis. Beth Binch was baptized on April 28, 2010. Late last year on December 11, 2010, LUKE BROWN, the son of Bro. Dean and Sis. Marcia Brown joined our group of believers through the waters of baptism. We rejoice to see our young people so eager to walk together with us toward the kingdom.

We also welcome by transfer our Bro. Jon Mumaw and Sis. Susan Williams, both of the Kouts Ecclesia, to our meeting. Bro. Jon married our Sis. Katy Wuthrick.

On the sadder side of the news, the Avon Ecclesia lost three beloved members in 2010. On January 2, 2010, our Bro. Jim Davis, Sr. fell asleep in the Lord. On March 28, 2010, our Sis. Patty Jones passed away after a long struggle with dementia. With her exuberant and outgoing personality, Sis. Patty was well loved by so many that she embraced throughout her life in the truth. On June 2, 2010, our Sis. Margaret Evans fell asleep and is waiting peacefully for Christ's return.

The undersigned is the new recording brother. Please address correspondence to 10919 Olivia Court, Indianapolis, IN 46234; or email llivermore@hotmail.com; or phone 317-602-6611.

Lee Livermore

BRANTFORD

Much has happened within the Brantford Ecclesia since our last update. On December 19, 2010, Bro. John Easton of our light stand was joined in the Lord to Sis. Natalie Bruce from the North Houston Ecclesia. Returning to Brantford, Sis. Natalie was welcomed as a member of our ecclesia on January 16, 2011, and we had the opportunity to also welcome their son Nicolas to our Sunday school and CYC. We pray that our heavenly Father will bless this new family.

On January 2, 2011, we were reminded of the frailty of our mortal frame with the unexpected falling asleep of our Bro. David Casson. We were, by God's mercy, able to share the feast of remembrance with him hours before he gave up the spirit. A long time member of both the Brantford and the Barrie Ecclesias, his gentle spirit and love for rendering praise to our God through music will be deeply treasured. May the time of our separation be short, dear brother.

On January 12, 2011, Bro. Lloyd and Sis. Joan Newth celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for their example of steadfastness. Our ecclesia has truly been enriched with the blessing of having this faithful and compassionate father and mother in this encampment of spiritual Israel.

On January 24, 2011, our ecclesial family rejoiced with the safe arrival of a son, Jonadab Roy, to Bro. Tim and Sis. Hadassah Styles. May our Lord bless this young family as they nurture His precious heritage.

On October 8, 2011, God willing, we look forward to having Bro. Roger Long speak at the Thanksgiving gathering, which will be hosted at the Copetown Community Centre. Further details will be provided later in the year.

Michael Moore

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are pleased to report that we have begun our next round of Bible Seminars. They are proceeding well with a number of interested people attending.

We sorrow with members of the Union Ecclesia in the falling asleep of our Sis. Elizabeth Packie.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Eric and Bernice Hall (Manhattan, NY); Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Jeremy and Naamah Newth (Perth, Aust.); Keon Charles (Georgetown, Guyana); Phil Taylor (Boronia, Melbourne, Aust.).

Stewart Marsden

GLENDALE, AZ

We rejoice greatly with our new brother, BRIAN BAILEY, who was baptized on January 23, 2011. Brian has studied with us in Glendale, asking many penetrating questions, as well studying online on the “This Is Your Bible” website with Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). We pray that God will continue to bless him and his studies of the Bible.

We are also very happy to report the birth of Claire Marie DeCaussin on January 11, 2011. Claire is the second child of Bro. Brad and Sis. Sarah DeCaussin, and younger sister of Jack. We ask that God will continue to watch over this wonderful young family.

We would like to thank Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) for his talks at our Study weekend in January. We were also happy that his wife, Sis. Delores, was able to be with us as well.

We have been pleased to have visiting with us Sis. Peggy Hoult (Comox County, BC) and Sis Myra Lucke (Victoria, BC) and Bro. Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA).

For those wishing to visit the Glendale, AZ Christadelphian Ecclesia, please check our ecclesial website: www.azchristadelphians.com, in which is our current schedule, location (which sometimes changes) and upcoming events.

We have received a letter of resignation from Bro. Stephen Smith.

Matthew D. Smith

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

We look forward to our annual fraternal gathering on May 21-22, 2011. Our speaker this year is Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The theme is, “Meditations on Creation”. We extend a warm welcome to any who are planning to attend. Please contact Bro. Rod Massey at 1masseyrd@gmail.com for accommodations during the fraternal weekend.

We welcome into fellowship Bro. Eric and Sis. Lisa Evans who have transferred from Nanaimo, BC.

We have enjoyed the ministrations of visiting brethren: Jim Cowie, Theo Readman, Malcolm Shrimpton, Dev Ramcharan, Daryl Wiens, Stephen Bartholomew, Terry Houghton, Eric Evans, Bill Hlina, Martin Webster, and John Gareau.

Rod Massey

SHENANDOAH VALLEY, VA

It has been a while since we have updated the news for the Shenandoah Valley Ecclesia located in Star Tannery, VA near Winchester. We encourage visitors. Please call for information from Bro. Craig McInturff at 540-877-3178.

In January 2009, our Bro. E. F. "Whitey" Sauer sold his house in Mountain Falls Park, VA and moved to Sun City, AZ. He was a founding member of this ecclesia along with his sister/wife Nancy, and Bro. Tom and Sis. Leslie Colby. He has transferred his membership to the Glendale, AZ Ecclesia. May God continue to care for our brother.

We have grown by way of transfer and baptisms. On August 29, 2009, JACLYNN DIANE JENSEN, and on July 25, 2010, JULIA DAVISON ARIEL JENSEN were immersed. These are the daughters of Bro. Jeffrey and Sis. Ruth Jensen. August 1, 2010, MICHELLE COLVIN was baptized. Sis. Michelle and her daughter are a helpful and bright addition to our spiritual family. Michelle's daughter, Melissa, is one of the children that ride Bro. Craig's school bus. This just goes to show that we can all preach everywhere God puts us to serve. Melissa is a nice addition to our Sunday school.

On October 10, 2010, by way of transfer, Bro. Noah Bradburn changed ecclesial membership from the Washington DC Ecclesia to our meeting. We are pleased to have Bro. Noah to help fill our ranks and give tender and uplifting words of exhortation.

We continue to have a close relationship with the Washington DC Ecclesia and they lovingly continue to send a brother every month to give us words of exhortation. We are very appreciative. Therefore we have many visitors, too numerous to write. Thank you to all who have come.

David Anderson

UNION, NJ

Our Sis. Elizabeth Packie fell asleep in Christ on January 4, 2011, at the age of ninety-nine. Sis. Elizabeth was baptized in 1933 at the Jersey City, NJ Ecclesia. She was the caring wife of Bro. Montel Packie who fell asleep in 1994. Sis. Elizabeth will be missed and remembered for her good words to all, her dedication and her positive attitude. Our condolences to her three nieces, Sis. Virginia Packie, Sis. Margret Packie and Sis. Carolyn Antonaccio all of the Union, NJ Ecclesia and also to her sons, Kenneth and Robert Packie.

David Jorgensen

VERNON, BC

It has been some time since we have updated our ecclesial news. In December of 2009, our Bro. Mark and Sis. Kayla Higgs welcomed a son, Shane, into their young family. We welcomed via transfer from Okanagan Central our Sis. Tamar Goltz. Our sister is a wonderful addition to our midst, however has been away for the past several months staying with family in the U.S.

The duties of recording brother are now the responsibility of Bro. Ben Cawston — he may be contacted at ben_cawston@yahoo.ca.

David Zantingh

KNOW QUESTIONS ON THE BIBLE

The book *Know Questions on The Bible* by Aquila N. Priscilla is now available for purchase directly from the Lulu Press or from Bro. Tom Graham in the USA.

The following informative note is found on the first page of this book, “It was many years ago that a young family was eager to have discussion after doing their Bible reading together each night. As a result they took time preparing questions to ask each other on the chapters that they had read. Soon there were many other moms, dads and older brothers and sisters involved. All were eager to learn from God’s word and delighted in the law of the LORD.” (Psalm 1:2)

Know Questions on The Bible contains questions on every day’s Bible readings, made up and answered by many Christadelphians. The fruit of their labours can be yours for \$19.95 US for the soft covered version.

A perusal of the following web page will describe the book as well as provide several sample pages for one to view. Just type the following web address in the browser window: <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=18046759>.

An early version of “Know Questions” was produced in 12 monthly issues in the late 1980’s. Now the complete revised series is available in this single volume of 581 pages. For more information contact the editors at postphosprod@hotmail.com.

Jack and Shirley Robinson

SOCIAL NETWORKING

The Australasian Bible Mission is concerned at the growing presence of Mission activity appearing on Facebook and other social media.

We are aware that the Internal Security Organizations, of some countries in which we work are accessing the social networking media to seek out information on local brethren and sisters and contacts. This was highlighted earlier this year when a photograph and information of a local brother was posted on Facebook by a fieldworker returning home. This information was accessed by the Internal Security of the country concerned and created considerable difficulties for the local brother.

Our request is that brethren and sisters should be circumspect about what is placed on Facebook and other social media websites, and that no information about our work should be exhibited at all in respect to countries such as Vietnam, China, Pakistan etc., which disapprove of evangelization.

*Sincerely your brother, Australasian CBM
Keith Pearson*

Note: this concern also applies to any Muslim country in the world, as well as such areas as China.

Minute Meditation

Doing Acts of Kindness Every Day

Charles Hummell once said, “The past cannot be regained, although we can learn from it; the future is not yet ours even though we must plan for it ... Time is now. We have only today.”

Far too many people waste their time living in the past or worrying about the future. We actually have only today to live, and it is foolish to spend that time preoccupied with the past, which we cannot regain, or fearing the future, over which we have little control. We need to appreciate the gift of today and use it wisely, remembering the Psalmist’s words, “This is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Our Lord gives us wise advice when he says, “Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

How should we spend our time each day? So many folks never think ahead and just stumble through the day letting the surrounding circumstances guide their actions. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if each of us every morning before getting out of bed asked ourselves, What can I do today that will help someone else? Instead of thinking of ourselves, if we would try to dedicate each day to serving others, how much happier not only would we be, but also those who benefit from our thoughtfulness.

Certainly our Lord was constantly thinking of the needs of others. Jesus himself went forty days without food, but when he preached to the multitude, he was so concerned that folks might faint if they were not fed that he provided food, even though they had only missed a meal or two. He had compassion for the multitudes that followed after him even when he was desperate for solitude in the wilderness after the shock of the death of John the Baptist. When he was being arrested by the mob, he healed the man whose ear Peter had chopped off, and then negotiated so that all his disciples could escape. Paul tells us to follow his example, saying, “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself.”

Thinking of others does not necessarily require us to do great spectacular deeds. No, often a little action, that helps someone when needed, is sufficient. Jesus gives the example of a drink of water, saying, “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

How often do we think about what simple acts of kindness we might be able to do that will help someone along who might need it? If we ask ourselves this question every morning before arising, will it make a difference in what we do during the day? Stephen Covey once said, “How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters most.” Jesus never lost sight of his purpose. He said that the Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister and told his disciples that anyone who wants to be the greatest must serve others. We need to serve by filling each day with acts of kindness to others. When we are so busy serving our Lord, we actually will not have time to worry about the past or fear the future.

Sometimes an act of kindness can be misunderstood. There is the story of a mother who asks her daughter to check on an elderly neighbor. She says to the little girl, “Go next door and see how old Mrs. Jones is today.” The girl comes running back a little frightened having done just as her mother asked. The neighbor’s response? It is none of their business how old she is today!

The story is humorous, but the point is, we should not hesitate to be kind even though our efforts may be misinterpreted. A little misunderstanding can be quickly corrected, and no doubt in this case after hearing the explanation, the neighbor would appreciate the mother’s thoughtfulness.

Jesus tells us what he will say to the righteous when he judges them: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” The righteous reply that they do not remember having done these things for Jesus, but Jesus explains, “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Let us resolve to fill our days doing kind things for others so that the Lord will say to us, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

**(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)**

MARCH 2011

5 Brantford, ON Senior CYC Gathering. Theme: “Jehoshaphat — Lifted Up in the Ways of the Lord”

5 Victoria, BC Spring Study Weekend. Bro. John Hellawell, “David: Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign”. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen csnobelen@csll.ca 250-652-3318

12-13 Paris Avenue, OH Spring Study Weekend with our speaker Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD). His topic is the life of Gideon. Contact coordinator Bro. Everett Muniz, everettmuniz@gmail.com or phone 330-497-2811

19-20 Lompoc, CA Annual Bible Study weekend. Subject: "Male and Female, Yet Heirs Together" Study Leaders: Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide, AUS) and Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Valley, CA). Limited Seating! To register, please notify Bro. Ron Stewart, 275 Oakwood Circle, Lompoc, CA 93436, (805) 733-5577, rmsmstewart@aol.com

26 Caring Network of Canada Seminar Clarkson Community Centre, Mississauga, ON. Speaker: Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD). Topic: "Maintaining Balance in Times of Disagreement". For information or to register, contact seminar@caringnetwork.ca

APRIL 2011

3 Boston, MA 20th Annual Spring Study Day. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman St., Stoughton, MA. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Registration 12:30 p.m., classes begin this year at 1 p.m. For more information contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at 781-837-8865 or jimsulliv@aol.com

9-10 Sussex, NB Study Day. Our speaker will be Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON). His theme will be, "Lessons from First Thessalonians"

15-17 Men in the Truth Campout Lake Cachuma, CA. "A Godly Workout — Beefing Up Your Spirituality". Contact David Lloyd davidrlloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486

16-17 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study day. Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD 20783. Speaker: Bro. Jim Dillingham. Study day, Saturday, 1pm, topic: "Speaking the Language of God". Gathering, Sunday, 10:30am. For information contact Bro. Bob Kling 301-498-5245 or rkling@acm.org

21-24 Annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference Shawnigan Lake, BC. For further information please contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen cyc@csl.ca 250-652-3318

22-24 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering. T4C Camp, Freestone, TX. Speaker Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, Australia). Topic will be "The King's Manifesto For Life — Matthew 5-7". Contact Bro. John A. Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

23 Boston, MA Third Annual New England Little Disciples Spring Gathering. Barton Center, Oxford, MA. The topic is "Samuel" for ages 3-11. Registration and more information at nelittledisciples.com or Sis Tammy Rundle 781 829 4410

23-24 New Westminster, BC Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) will lead our study on Easter weekend. Topic: "Events at the Time of the End"

30 - May 1 Pittsburgh, PA Study Day. Our speaker will be Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON). The subject will be "The Temptations of Christ" — a look at the three periods of great temptation in Christ's life with an extended look at the transfiguration which helped strengthen him to overcome. Contact Bro. Bill Folkerts (724) 265-3272 or willfol@gmail.com or pghecclesia@gmail.com

MAY 2011

6-8 Vancouver, BC Sisters' Weekend. Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, BC. Sis. Jennifer Daniel: "Compassion Fatigue". Cost \$180. Deposit no later than March 1. Send registration to Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6277 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9V 1A8. For further information contact Sis. Shonna Malczewski at shonna.malczewski@gmail.com

20-22 Sussex, NB Youth Spring Camp. Speaker: Bro. Jay Mayock (Book Road, ON). Topic: "Landscape Parables of the Bible". For ages 12 and over. Registration: Sis. Marie Baines 506- 433-5254 sussexspringcamp@live.ca

21-22 Prince George, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper. Theme: "Meditations on Creation". Contact: Bro. Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com

JUNE 2011

3-5 Meriden, CT Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Cliff Baines (Sussex, NB). Theme: "Practical Principles in Peter". Contact Bro. Stephen Harper 203-440-0504, sharper.rn.ocn@att.net.

10-12 New York Sister's Retreat. Split Rock Resort and Golf Culb, PA. Speaker will be Sis. Letisha Blair-Lamour of Mt. Pleasant Ecclesia, Jamaica, West Indies. The topic will be "Being Born of the Spirit" on Christian Living. Registration deadline is April 15. Space is limited so please register early with 50% deposit. Cost of weekend is \$286.50 per person. Please make checks payable to "NY Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat" . Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden Street#5B, Bronx, New York, 10467. For information, contact Sis Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 or averilpsm23@juno.com

19-25 California Christadelphian Kids Camp for ages 9-16. Held at our same location in Ojai, CA. Speakers this year will be brethren Ken Styles and David Wisniewski and they will be leading us in a study of Elijah. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com

19-25 Rocky Mountain Bible School Glenwood Springs, CO. Speakers Bro. Mark Vincent: "The Quest for Meaning in Ecclesiastes"; Bro. Dennis Paggi: "The Miracles, Wonders, and Signs of Jesus Christ"; Bro. Simon O'Grady: "Knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles". Contact information provided at www.denverchristadelphians.org or contact Bro. Josh Livermore at 303-288-3966

30-July 5 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Classes will be given by Bro. Jason Hensley on the topic "The One Who Made Israel to Sin". For more information, please contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcdonald@mcdonald-printing.com

JULY 2011

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" – Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". The speakers are Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens; Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens; Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens. Registration forms on website <http://www.christadelphians.net/macbs>

10-16 Southwest Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Revelation — Exhortations from the Apocalypse", Teen class: "Encounters with a Risen Lord"; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales): "Ezra and Nehemiah"; Teen class: "David and Solomon"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Muscle for the Five Big Mistakes"; Teen class: "Lessons from Daniel". Registration information at www.swcbs.org or by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367

16-24 Eastern Bible School Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, New Zealand): "The Four

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Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org

23-31 Midwest Bible School. Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Ed Binch (Avon, IN): "Jehoshaphat: Being Saved by God's Grace"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "The Angels of God"; Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, N.Z.): "The Current Work and Role of Christ". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Drive, Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com

AUGUST 2011

20-26 Winfield Bible School Theme: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in You." Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "The House of Prayer for All Nations"; Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Australia): "Philippians: Shine as Lights"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Hebrews: The Power of Faith in Jesus Christ". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca

27-2 September Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, 2520 West Shawnigan Lake Road, Shawnigan, BC. Our speakers are Bro. Shane Kirkwood: "Encounters with the Master"; Bro. Stan Isbell: "Godly Mariners and Ships on the Sea – Lessons from the Bible of Men, Their Ships and the Sea"; Bro. Bill Link: "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion – God's steadfast purpose in Zechariah". Contact information www.vibiblecamp.com or Sharon Enns ennsranch@telus.net or 1-250-338-4812

OCTOBER 2011

8 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long.

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON). Please note the year **2012**

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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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Betrayed with a Kiss

Why was it necessary that the Son of Man be betrayed with a kiss (Matt 26:48,49)? There is, of course, the obvious symbolism: it represents the deceitful treachery of a familiar friend. But, on close examination, there would appear also to be a practical reason for Judas to suggest a kiss. The time set for Jesus' arrest was late in the evening, and the place a rather secluded garden. The Jews who were determined to capture Jesus must have realized that, in the confusion of an arrest, he could slip out of their hands quite easily. The trick would be to single him out from his followers while they were still at some distance, so that the soldiers would know which of the shadowy figures to pursue and lay hands on. (Under normal visibility there would have been no problem identifying Jesus, but this was the middle of the night.)

This explains the clever idea of having Judas precede the multitude, for only a member of the inner circle (so they would suppose) could get close enough to single out the leader from his followers.

George Booker

Editorial

2011 versus 1848

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; (Luke 21:25).

Introduction

As I thought about the current chaos in the Middle East and Northern Africa, I went back to my old history lessons on Modern European History. It was the events of 1848 that seemed most similar to the turmoil we see. It was indeed the European events in that year which formed the backdrop to the early success of John Thomas in the UK in 1848. So it was with some interest that I noticed an article¹ in *Time* magazine with the above title. In it, Kurt Anderson compared many aspects of the similarity of the events of the two years.

- The countries involved were and are ruled by Monarchies or Crypto-monarchies
- Feeble Parliaments, brutal police, limited suffrage, limited freedom of expression all are common factors.
- The news was spread rapidly in 1848 by the new technologies of telegraph, and steam powered railways and newspapers, and in 2011 by cell phones, internet and cable television.
- Both eras suffered economic woes, which impoverished most people, but not the rich.
- In France in 1848 it only took 3 days of riots to topple the King, whereas in Tunisia and Egypt earlier this year, a few weeks of protest caused the current presidents to resign.

In 1848, the Austrian Empire, Prussia, Bavaria and particularly France were all affected. In 2011, the protests are even more widespread, from Morocco on the West Coast of Africa to Oman on the East end of the Arabian Peninsula. Of particular interest are the protests in the countries surrounding Israel: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Egypt have all seen protests of one sort or another.

The great earthquake and subsequent Tsunami in Japan on March 11th only serve to remind us also that we are largely powerless against the “forces of nature” — or should I say the forces that can be unleashed by God. Despite the best efforts of a country which is certainly the best prepared of any in the world, the Japanese were totally overwhelmed by an earthquake. This, although the strongest the Japan has experienced, was much less strong than the one that impacted Alaska in 1964, but which resulted in only 125 deaths.

Preaching in 1848

In that year, John Thomas began his well know attempt to deliver his unique message to the British Isles. To quote from a contemporary Newspaper²

“On Wednesday and yesterday evening, J. Thomas M.D., a gentleman from America, wearing a black beard, lectured at the city assembly rooms on the Destiny of Nations. The theory of this gentleman, which he supports by taking isolated passages from Scripture, seems to be that God is the sole sovereign ruler, that he made man free to stand or free to fall, and that Adam having fallen, the different races of his descendants have arrogated the right of governing themselves, and in creating monarchies, republics etc., have cast off the sovereignty of the Almighty; and that ultimately all monarchies etc. shall give place to the Almighty sovereignty, God again becoming universal king of the earth, which shall be inhabited by a race of beings as immortal and sinless as the angels, the destiny of the human race being to advance from their present condition till sin and death shall be no more.”

Behind the polemics of the writer, the message is clear: the Almighty is in charge of the events of all, and we are to strive to attain a place in that kingdom: that the current turmoil is to be expected before the return of Christ. Of course, John Thomas expected that return to happen very shortly: he anticipated 1864 at the time. But large audiences welcomed his message over the next few months, and so the real beginnings of the great spread of his message took place. It was built largely upon the interest in the general populace in the Biblical significance of the current events of the time.

Preaching in 2011

Elsewhere in this article is an advance note of the availability of the special Issue of *The Tidings* on “Preaching in North America.” The effort to initiate this work took place many months ago, so it is quite unrelated to the current events in Africa and the Middle East. But it should remind us that we ought to be taking every opportunity to spread the gospel, including discussing the current events from a Biblical perspective. There are some opinions being expressed on the prophetic meanings of the current events in the Middle East, but there does not appear to be any consensus in Christadelphian circles. We can, however, be certain that the current events in that region are part of God’s plan.

It is also certain we cannot neglect this or any other opportunity to witness. As is described in the special issue, there are many ways we can preach, and many opportunities come our way in the normal course of events. Again, the disaster in Japan is serves to remind us of the mighty hand of God, whether it is simply the outcome of natural forces caused by the drift of tectonic plates, or part of a larger set of disasters causing “*upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.*”

The focus of the world on events in Israel might have shifted, but the volatile state of the nations surrounding the land is surely a precursor to many other significant events. Although we cannot perhaps predict the outcome of these events, nor should we in public, we can ponder individually on the different possibilities, and engage in debate at least internally on these matters. I am fully aware of the dangers of being too overconfident in these matters: our literature is unfortunately

littered with failed predictions about what would happen and when it would take place. So now is not a time of certainty, but of an increased level of watchfulness and interest. Not perhaps since the stirring days of 1976, when the whole Middle East was involved in one form or another, have we seen such excitement, turmoil, and rapidly changing events. Perhaps, by the time my readers see this (for I am writing at the end of March), all will be calm again in that region of the world — although what passes for calm there seems a strange term.

Conclusions

As we consider the world in 2011, we must recognize that if we were to heavily advertise a public lecture on the Biblical basis of the current events in the Middle East, we are unlikely to get a large number of attendees. As one who has given such addresses during previous Middle East crises, the response has been muted to say the least. Perhaps this lack of response is indeed a prophetic sign, for we read

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;”
(2Tim 4:3).

We are all aware of the widespread popular form of what passes for religion these days. There is the idea of the gospel of prosperity: if you only believe, God will add all your material needs (and wants) as well. Or the idea that you only have to say “Jesus is my Savior” and you will be certain of Eternal Life. With such sort of false ideas being widely promulgated, is it any wonder that the true message is little heard?

We are not thereby absolved from our obligation to spread the gospel. As Jesus said to his disciples, and indirectly to ourselves:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt 28:19-20).

Indeed, we can cite the example of Paul, who when preaching in Athens used as his basis the inscription on an idol, which was obviously of interest to his listeners. So if we use the chaos in the Middle East as an introduction to discussing the Bible with our friends, we are following the advice of Jesus — and the examples of Paul. We can also remember John Thomas who, so many years ago preached the Gospel against a similar state of world turmoil.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. Time magazine, March 21 2011, p 32
2. The Lincoln Rutland and Stamford Mercury, Friday, 25 August 1848

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

Have We Confessed?

Our focus will be on the upper room as well as the words of the Psalmist, “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*” (Psa 32:1).

Jesus said “*Do this in remembrance of me*” to the apostles in the upper room. Therefore later, when the Lord had risen and an apostle brought that evening to mind, what was it that would be forefront in his recollection? Would it be the taste of the bread or the taste of the wine? Would it be the likeness of the plate or the cup that held these things? Would he remember the furnishings of the upper room where the events took place?

No — he would remember the feelings of the moment: the impact of the words and actions of Jesus through the evening and the faces of his fellow disciples as they took in what their Master said to them. The last supper was not a content, ritual meal after Jesus had cleaned everyone’s feet. It was a Passover of surpassing emotion, of tense moments, of deep feelings.

What of us when we remember him? Is it simply a time of ritual, a time to pass quickly with little thought, or is it a time of heartfelt contrition? Indeed, if we are to enter into the spirit of Jesus’ command, “*Do this in remembrance of me*”, we would do well to sit with the apostles in the upper room and feel what they felt and listen to the words of Jesus as if they were spoken to us and not only to them. We ask ourselves, then, what did those men feel?

They first felt guilty that their master did the slave’s job. Peter gave voice to their feelings when he said, “*You will never wash my feet!*” Peter did not volunteer to wash the rest of the disciples’ feet; none of them did. Earlier, they had argued about which of them was the greatest; Jesus had told them they must humble themselves like a little child. Still, not one was willing to take the slave’s place and it was Jesus who washed their feet. One by one along the line they waited in embarrassed silence for the Rabbi to wash their feet, perhaps hoping someone else would volunteer to take his place.

Later, the apostles felt still more guilty. “*One of you will betray me,*” said the Lord. What an atmosphere! Can we imagine the lump in their throats and the sickness in their stomachs? They didn’t immediately point the finger to one disciple and say, “it’s him,” but each of them began to say, “is it I?” They each felt guilty.

Can we identify with them? If we think of our weaknesses and our sins in contrast to the perfect life of Jesus, we will. At this moment we wish there was a way to escape from sin, but there it lies: we’ve done things hidden in darkness.

But Jesus did more than point the finger; he also spoke of forgiveness; of the new covenant and of the remission of sins — of forgiveness. We again remember the words of the Psalmist, “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is*

covered” (Psa 32:1). Why did Jesus speak of the betrayer in the upper room? He spoke because his betrayal wasn’t only in the past but in the future. It’s natural to feel guilty for what we’ve done in the past, but compounding that sin is to purpose evil in our hearts even as we sit at the Lord’s Table, and still go and carry it out.

Our sin is individual. We don’t come to the door on a Sunday morning, and have the doorkeeper greet us by saying, “And what sins have you committed this week?” We usually worship as a group, as a community, but our sins are individual. Because our sins are hidden from the group does not mean we have no obligation to confess; we do have such a duty. This is no ritualistic confession but a pouring out of our soul. It is not ours to confess some of our sins and to keep other hidden, to leave some things unsaid, even to God. Remember again the words of the Psalmist again: “*Blessed is the man ... in whose spirit there is no deceit*” (Psa 32:2, NKJV).

What does deceit have to do with forgiveness? David deceived himself when he didn’t open his heart to God, when his bones grew old through lack of confession. Not only so, but Judas did not renounce his sin when Jesus called him out as the betrayer. His weakness for money was so strong that he went out into the night.

We also could come before the table of the Lord week after week and only half confess, because we don’t really plan on renouncing our sins — truly giving up what we desire. True confession involves not only telling what we have done, but confessing our underlying weakness. It is as hard to truly confess our sins as it is to say, “I need help,” because such an admission shows our powerlessness, and it is humiliating. We fool ourselves if we think we are confessing but are not asking for and taking steps to get the help we need to really renounce sin and change our life. What does it mean to really change?

Well, let’s say there was a brother, and every year he cheated on his taxes, and every year he said, “God, forgive me for cheating on my taxes,” but every year, he did it again and pocketed the money. Was he forgiven?

Forgiven is when we come out of the shadows, from under our shell, or down from our tree and ask for forgiveness like Zacchaeus, who came down from his tree and Jesus dined at his house. This man didn’t just say, “forgive me.” He acknowledged his sin. “*Half my goods I’m giving to the poor,*” he said, “*and if I’ve taken anything by false accusation I’ll give back four times as much*” (Luke 19:8, paraphrased). It’s such a short passage of scripture that we may forget how humiliating this must have been for Zacchaeus. Nevertheless Jesus said to him, “*Today salvation has come to this house.*”

Returning to Psalm 32 — David said that when he remained silent his bones got old and he felt like he was wasting away. That’s the thing about evil acts — they seem enticing but over time they are stressful. Sometimes there are real consequences, like the prodigal son whose sin forced him eventually to feed pigs, and he hardly had enough to eat. Sometimes our bodies really do waste away because we abuse alcohol or drugs. We may waste away by stress because we feel as if it’s too complicated to set things right — because we fear the consequences of sin. We fear the humiliation.

True confession is humiliating. That's what it comes down to, doesn't it? We want to preserve our ego, and it's too much to confess that we are a sinner and be seen to be a sinner — too much to have our sins brought into the light. We may even think that once this happens we can never do anything for God again because we are a "sinner", just as the Jews grumbled to Jesus because he ate in the house of Zacchaeus, "a sinner".

It is scary to confess our sins and have to do something about them, but we owe it to ourselves. We owe it to ourselves because hiding our sins and creating the illusion to others that we're perfect isn't true. It's the deceit that the Psalmist spoke about. We owe it to ourselves because we need to be converted, to become like little children and say, "I need your help." We owe it to ourselves, because sin is killing us, not only because the wages of sin is death, but because sin really does cause our bodies to wither away.

More than any of these, we owe it to Jesus. Not confessing is like saying, "I don't really care." He died for our sins: for your sins and for mine. Are we going to leave, to walk out into the night and betray him again? Or are we going to ask for help to really change?

Confessing our sins is humbling because we have to make changes that people will see. Sometimes such changes are huge. Paul went from being a Pharisee to being a member of a despised sect, The Way. His sins were great — he had cast his vote against those who were put to death, and he had dragged off believers to prison, probably to terrible conditions. But confessing his sin didn't stop him from working for God. It started him.

Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife because he was afraid. God knew, and that lie was recorded in scripture. Abraham was a deceiver, but he changed. No doubt he was just as afraid for Isaac's life as he had been for Sarah's, but he believed God's word that Isaac was the chosen son, and thus believed in the resurrection. It doesn't matter what we need to confess or how evil it is. We need to change our ways, to turn around. Remember what God says through the apostle John: "*If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1John 1:9 NRSV).

We are united in weakness but we are also united in hope. We remember Jesus in the upper room and also on the cross. Even if we are humiliated, will we endure shame like his? Jesus did no sin, but humbled himself even to the death of the cross, although he was the greatest man who ever lived, and could claim the greatest crown of men.

Confessing doesn't make us sinless, but God, in His amazing mercy, has said that if we have faith in Jesus, He will impute righteousness to us. He will make us sinless. To return to our Psalmist: "*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*" (Psa 32:10-11 NKJV).

This is the time when confession is welcome, when forgiveness is possible. There is a time coming when, despite tears and gnashing of teeth, the moment will be

gone. God is not looking for the perfect to appear before Him. Jesus did not come to save the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance. “When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Let not that death, let not God’s love, be in vain. Let us not remain silent, but confess our sins and our powerlessness, and trust in the power of God to save us.

Mike Bull (Vancouver, BC)

SPECIAL ISSUE

Preaching in North America

For the August issue of the *Tidings*, we intend to deliver a special issue on “Preaching in North America” packed with articles from a wide number of contributors, covering a range of topics related to this overall message. All are designed to help us focus on the imperative we all have in delivering the Unique Hope we all possess.

As per the notice published in the December *Tidings*, this issue will be mailed to all our regular subscribers. In addition, we hope to make it available for wider distribution. We would encourage and hope that each ecclesia will make it available to all their members, in view of the vital message it embodies.

The issue is to be designed as a resource for all those who are interested in preaching — which should be all of us.

We would like to thank all the brethren and sisters who have agreed to help. These represent truly a cross section of our community, from many areas of this continent and with many differing experiences in spreading the gospel. An outline of the areas we hope to cover (God Willing) is listed below,

- First century and early Christadelphian preaching precedents;
- Preaching by campaigns, radio, television, Internet, seminars, Sunday school, etc.;
- Individual preaching initiatives and collaborative preaching initiatives;
- Domestic missionary programs and overseas mission programs;
- Preaching: past, present, and a glimpse into the future.

Additional copies will be available at \$2.50 each (\$3 Canadian, because of the additional postage.)

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David Jennings, Jim Harper
Special issue editors

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (5)

The last article introduced the idea that the layout of the Tabernacle provides a spatial mnemonic for the book of Leviticus. It showed that Leviticus 1-17, with the descriptions of the altar offerings, the consecration of the priests, and the laws of purity, provides a circle of lessons appropriate for the Outer Court.

This article continues into the Holy Place and Most Holy Place sections of Leviticus. Figure 4 locates the chapters of Leviticus 18-27 on the floor plan of the tent of the Tabernacle, showing that Leviticus 18-24 corresponds to the Holy Place and Leviticus 25-27 to the Most Holy Place.

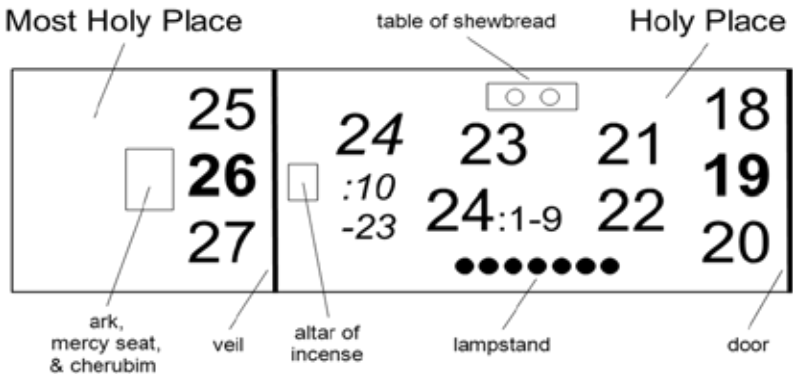


Figure 4. Leviticus 18-27 placed on the floor plan of the tent of the Tabernacle, showing the alignment of Leviticus 18-24 to the Holy Place, and Leviticus 25-27 to the Most Holy Place.

The Holy Place (Lev 18-24)

We should envision Leviticus 18-24 being recited in the Holy Place.

Leviticus 18-20 forms a “doorway composition”, a sequence of three chapters where the first (Lev 18) and third (Lev 20) discuss the same topic, thus providing a frame that focuses attention on the second (Lev 19). The framing chapters are like pillars for the door in the middle; compare them with Jachin and Boaz, the pillars in the porch of the temple (1Kgs 7:21).

In this case, the framing chapters (Lev 18; 20) contain laws concerning the sins of worshipping Molech and of having inappropriate sexual relations with near of kin. The word “Molech” (0, 5, 0)¹ occurs five times in Leviticus, and all five are in these two chapters:

*“And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to **Molech**, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD” (Lev 18:21).*

*“Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto **Molech**; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto **Molech**, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto **Molech**, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with **Molech**, from among their people” (Lev 20:2-5).*

The words “uncover” (0, 24, 0) and “nakedness” (0, 32, 0) occur throughout these two chapters, and nowhere else in Leviticus:

| | Leviticus 18 | Leviticus 20 |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| “uncover” <1540 galah> (0, 24, 0) | 18:6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 15, 16, 17, 17, 18, 19 | 20:11, 17, 18, 18, 19, 20, 21 |
| “nakedness” <6172 ʻervah> (0, 32, 0) | 18:6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 10, 11, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 15, 16, 16, 17, 17, 18, 19 | 20:11, 17, 17, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 |
| <6168 ʻarah> (0, 2, 0) | | 20:18 “discover”, 19 “uncover” |

The lists of “the near of kin” with whom sex is forbidden are essentially identical, with Leviticus 18 listing the sins and Leviticus 20 defining the punishments.

| “near of kin” | Leviticus 18 | Leviticus 20 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| near of kin | 18:6 | |
| father: mother, father’s wife: father | 18:7-8 | 20:11 |
| sister, daughter of father, daughter of mother | 18:9 | 20:17 |
| [granddaughter], son’s daughter, daughter’s daughter | 18:10 | |
| [half-sister], father’s wife’s daughter, of thy father | 18:11 | |
| [aunt], father’s sister, mother’s sister, father’s brother: his wife, uncle’s wife: uncle | 18:12-14 | 20:19-20 |
| daughter-in-law, son’s wife | 18:15 | 20:12 |
| [sister-in-law] brother’s wife: brother | 18:16 | 20:21 |
| woman and her daughter, or her [granddaughter], her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter | 18:17 | 20:14 |
| wife and her sister | 18:18 | |

| | | |
|--|-------|----------|
| woman during her uncleanness/sickness | 18:19 | 20:18 |
| neighbor's wife | 18:20 | 20:10 |
| [homosexuality] lie with mankind as with womankind | 18:22 | 20:13 |
| [bestiality] lie with any beast | 18:23 | 20:15-16 |

These two chapters are also connected by their references to these sins as “wickedness”, “abomination”, and “confusion”:

*“Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son’s daughter, or her daughter’s daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is **wickedness**... Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is **abomination** [cf. vv. 26, 27, 29]... Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is **confusion**” (Lev 18:17, 22, 23).*

*“And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought **confusion**; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an **abomination**: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is **wickedness**: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you” (Lev 20:12-14).*

These detailed connections between Leviticus 18 and 20 show that they are a frame, centering attention on the middle chapter, Leviticus 19. The importance of **Leviticus 19** is obvious.

First, this chapter includes the second greatest commandment: “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*” (Lev 19:18; cf. Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27). This by itself makes the chapter worth highlighting.

Second, Leviticus 19 reiterates the Ten Commandments:

| Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21 | Leviticus 19 |
|--|---|
| I. I am the LORD thy God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt; no other gods besides me | <i>“I am the LORD your God” (19:2, 3, 4, 25, 31, 34, 36; cf. 12, 14, 16, 18, 28, 30, 32). “which brought you out of the land of Egypt” (19:36).</i> |
| II. No graven images | <i>“Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods” (19:4).</i> |
| III. No taking the LORD thy God’s name in vain | <i>“Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God” (19:12).</i> |
| IV. Keep the sabbath | <i>“Ye shall... keep my sabbaths” (19:3, 30).</i> |

| | |
|--|---|
| V. Honor thy father and mother | <i>“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father” (19:3).</i> |
| VI. No murder | <i>“Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour” (19:16); “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life” (NIV).</i> |
| VII. No adultery | <i>“And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to a husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her... Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore” (19:20, 29).</i> |
| VIII. No stealing | <i>“Ye shall not steal... Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him” (19:11, 13).</i> |
| IX. No false witness | <i>“Neither deal falsely, nor lie one to another... Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people” (19:11, 16).</i> |
| X. No coveting thy neighbour’s possessions | <i>“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour” (19:13; cf. 19:15, 16, 17, 18).</i> |

Finally, Leviticus 19, like several other chapters in Leviticus, includes the command to be holy because God is holy: *“Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2; cf. 11:44-45; 20:7, 26; 21:6, 7, 8; 1Pet 1:15-16).*

Leviticus 21-22 contains laws specific to priests, making these chapters appropriate to be read in the Holy Place, which was restricted to the priests.

Leviticus 23 is the Calendar of Holy Convocations, the Feasts of the LORD. These days were full of activity for the priests; these Bible-School-like holidays for Israel were times of double duty or more for the priests.

Leviticus 24:1-9 describes the daily lighting of the lamps and the weekly replenishment of the table of shewbread, both of which were housed in the Holy Place. The people of Israel would mentally have their eyes on these pieces of furniture as Moses recited the laws about them.

Finally, **Leviticus 24:10-23** is the narrative of the man stoned for blasphemy; as the previous article showed, these verses would be appropriate for reading before the veil.

The Most Holy Place (Lev 25-27)

Leviticus 25-27 is another doorway composition: Leviticus 25 and 27 frame Leviticus 26. In the book of Leviticus the words “jubilee”, “redeem”, “sell”, and “wax poor” occur only in chapters 25 and 27; and the words “possession”, “buy”, and “servant” are used almost exclusively in these two chapters:

| | Leviticus 25 | Leviticus 27 |
|--|--|---|
| “(the year of) jubilee” <3104 yowbel> (0, 0, 20) | 25:10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 28, 28, 30, 31, 33, 40, 50, 52, 54 | 27:17, 18, 18, 21, 23, 24 |
| “redeem” <1350 ga'al> (0, 0, 21) | 25:25, 25, 26, 30, 33, 48, 49, 49, 49, 54 | 27:13, 13, 15, 19, 19, 20, 20, 27, 28, 31, 33 |
| “redemption” <1353 geullah> (0, 0, 9) | 25:24, 26, 29, 29, 31, 32, 48, 51, 52 | |
| “possession” <272 achuzzah> (2, 0, 8) | 25:10, 13, 24, 25, 27, 28, 32, 33, 33, 34, 41, 45, 46; cf. | 27:16, 21, 22, 24, 28; (14:34, 34) |
| “sell” <4376 makar> (0, 0, 16) | 25:14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, 34, 39, 42, 47, 48, 50 | 27:20, 27, 28 |
| “sale” <4465 mimkar> (0, 0, 7) | 25:14, 25, 27, 28, 29, 33, 50 | |
| “sold” <4466 mimkereth> (0, 0, 1) | 25:42 | |
| “price/bought” <4736 miqnah> (0, 0, 4) | 25:16, 16, 51 | 27:22 |
| “buy” <7069 qanah> (0, 1, 8) | 25:14, 15, 28, 30, 44, 45, 50; cf. | 27:24; (22:11) |
| “wax poor” <4134 muwk> (0, 0, 5) | 25:25, 35, 39, 47 | 27:8 |
| “servant” <5650 'ebed> (0, 0, 9) | 25:6, 39, 42, 42, 44, 44, 55, 55 | (26:13) |

These topics are appropriate for the Most Holy Place. For example, in the year of Jubilee, liberty was to be proclaimed throughout the land (Lev 25:10): this command is associated with the covenant (Jer 34:8-22) and the kingdom age (Isa 61:1; Ezek 46:17).

These two framing chapters (Lev 25; 27) focus attention on **Leviticus 26**, which rehearses the stipulations of the covenant between God and His people Israel. The word “covenant” <1285 beryith> (1, 1, 8) occurs eight times in this chapter, reminding us of the tables of the covenant in the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place:

*“For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my **covenant** with you” (Lev 26:9).*

*“And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my **covenant**” (Lev 26:15).*

*“And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my **covenant**: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy” (Lev 26:25).*

*“Then will I remember my **covenant** with Jacob, and also my **covenant** with Isaac, and also my **covenant** with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land... And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my **covenant** with them: for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the **covenant** of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD” (Lev 26:42, 44-45).*

Leviticus 26:11-12 summarizes the very essence of the Tabernacle and Most Holy Place:

“And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev 26:11-12; cf. Exod 25:8, 21-22; 29:45-46; Num 7:89; Psa 80:1; 99:1; Rev 21:3).

The following concepts related to the provisions of God’s covenant with Israel occur in Leviticus only in chapter 26: “enemy” <341 *oyed*> (26:7, 8, 16, 17, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 44), “remember” <2142 *zakar*> (26:42, 42, 45), “sword” <2719 *chereb*> (26:6, 7, 8, 25, 33, 36, 37), “punish/reform/chastise” <3256 *yacar*> (26:18, 23, 28), “despise” <3988 *ma’ac*> (26:15, 43, 44), “abhor” <1602 *ga’al*> (26:11, 15, 30, 43, 44), and “contrary” <7147 *qeriy*> (26:21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 40, 41).

Finally, Leviticus 25-27 has three explicit reminders that these are the words the LORD spoke to Moses in Mount Sinai:

*“And the LORD spake unto Moses in **mount Sinai**... These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in **mount Sinai** by the hand of Moses... These are the commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in **mount Sinai**” (Lev 25:1; 26:46; 27:34).*

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. As defined in the last article, the notation (x, y, z) indicates that a word or phrase occurs x times in Leviticus 1-17, y times in Leviticus 18-24, and z times in Leviticus 25-27.

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our communities, we print this invitation:

You, your family and friends are invited to the

*36th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2011.*

*Main Speakers: Bro. Ted Sleeper — “Meditations on Creation”
Bro. Tim Galbraith — “The Tabernacle: A Magic Mirror for Disciples”
Bro. Ed Carpenter — “The Light of the Gospel”*

*Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com
Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>*

Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah” (4) “Grace in the eyes of the Lord”

Warning and Grace

Genesis 6: 3 records a warning that was given to the antediluvians: “*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*” Another warning follows in verse 7: “*And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*”

It appears that the warnings of Genesis 6: 3 and 7 were not given to any person in particular but were announced generally. But afterwards, God began to communicate specifically to Noah and to the world through Noah since “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*” (Gen 6: 8).

So, how did Noah find grace in the eyes of God? The answer is indicated by: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*” (Eph 2: 8). It had something to do with faith. But before we talk more about that, notice that Ephesians 2: 8 is directed to the ecclesia. It is about us. So, the example of Noah provides a pattern of the means by which we find grace in God’s sight. Now consider the context in which the statement about Noah finding grace in the sight of God is made. It occurs in Genesis 6:8. The preceding verses consist of warnings from God about events that were coming on the earth. Most of the antediluvians disregarded them. But it is evident that Noah believed what God had said. And his example is extremely important for believers of all generations. That is why Peter makes so many references to Noah in his words about coming judgments. Peter wanted the people of his day — and his message applies to our time as well — to earnestly believe what God had revealed about events that were going to take place on the earth, especially as apathy towards spiritual things increased:

“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water (2Pet 3:3-6, NKJV).

Noah stood out in his time by believing God. That is the reason that he found grace in God’s sight.

Noah’s beliefs pleased God in the same way that Abraham’s did. Abraham believed the things that God said, and that belief was counted unto him for righteousness:

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3).

The same is true for us. When we believe the things that God has stated concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and are baptized on the basis of that belief, righteousness is imputed to us: *“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:23-24).* It is also critical that we believe the things that God has said about the return of Christ and the events that will take place afterwards. Belief in them will help keep us from getting caught up in the cares of this life since we will know that the things of this world will pass away.

Our beliefs are essential to our salvation, and they should drive our actions. Noah's beliefs motivated him, and he acted on them. Genesis gives a summary of his character: *“These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9).*

The Hebrew word translated “just” in the verse is tsad-deek. It means “righteous.” Noah was counted as righteous by God because of his belief in what God had said. The Hebrew word rendered “perfect” means “complete” or “whole.” Noah was complete in his service to God. He both avoided the evil that was around him and actively sought to do good. Although he did not participate in the ungodly activities of his contemporaries, he still engaged them and tried to get them to turn to God. Preaching was a major component of his service.

Noah is commended because he was able to save others by the influence of his example. Ezekiel 14 mentions three outstanding men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, who had the common characteristic that others were saved because of them. The friends of Daniel, the friends of Job, and the family of Noah were all preserved because of the influence of those godly men. Ezekiel 14 describes how things had gotten quite bad in Israel. God was going to send severe judgments against the people. He said that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they would not have been able to save others by their righteousness (Ezek 14: 14, 16, 18, 20). The implication is that under other circumstances they would have been able to do so: *“Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 14:14).* The invocation of Noah's name in this context indicates just how exemplary his character was. It also reminds us that a good example can have a powerful, life-altering impact on others.

Noah was faithful even though there were bad examples all around him. Genesis 6: 12 states that people had “corrupted” God's way on the earth. Therefore, God stated his intention to “destroy” in verse 13. There is a play on words in the original Hebrew. A very similar word, shaw-khath, is used for “corrupted” and “destroy” in both verses. The idea is that because people had “destroyed” God's way on the earth, He was going to destroy them. It is a turn of phrase that is echoed in a number of times in the New Testament, including a verse about the judgment that is coming on our world: *“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy*

servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth” (Rev 11:18).

Revelation 11 is one of many examples of the principle that God tells His servants about events that are coming on the earth. *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).* God told Noah that a Flood was coming. And He instructed him to prepare for it by building an ark.

“Make thee an ark”

The ark is described in Genesis 6: 14-16. Not too much detail is given. We would be hard pressed to reconstruct an exact replica of the ark using the information that the Bible gives us. But we do not need to know how to rebuild the ark. That is not the point of the record. Instead, we need to replicate the lessons of the ark in our lives.

The Hebrew word translated “ark” is *tebah*. It is not the same word that is used for the Ark of the Covenant.¹ In fact, the only other use of the word in the Bible is the basket in which Moses was placed as a baby (Exodus 2: 3, 5). It was basically a box designed to float and to preserve the lives of those inside.

It is interesting to note that there is no steering mechanism described for the ark. There was no rudder, and there were no oars. God was completely in charge of directing it and deciding where it should go. So, those who entered it had to place their trust in Him to guide them. Therefore, the ark is a fitting symbol for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to him, we forsake the direction in which our natural inclinations would take us. We look to God to steer us, and we place our lives in His care.

The ark was to be constructed of “gopher wood” according to Genesis 6: 14. We do not know, however, what sort of tree, if any, produces “gopher wood”. (There was once a hoax where a man claimed to have found the ark protruding from a glacier in Turkey. He said that he knew that it was the ark because it was made of gopher wood. That was a pretty strong clue that he was lying.²) The Hebrew word used in the passage is rendered “gopher” in the English because the translators were not quite sure what to make of it. So, they just wrote down what it sounded like. That is called “transliteration.” Since the Hebrew word sounds like “gopher” when it is pronounced, that is how the translators rendered it.³

Some commentators believe that the Hebrew word used is a variant of the verb *kaphar*, which means “to cover;” *kaphar* actually appearing later in the verse. It is the first word translated “pitch” in the King James Version. It is used to mean “to cover with sap.” Noah was supposed to cover the boards of the ark with sap to make them watertight. The second word translated “pitch” in Genesis 6: 14 is a noun derived from the verb *kaphar*. It could mean “tree sap” in this context, although usually translated “ransom”.

So, if “gopher wood” implies wood that has a lot of sap, like pine, then the verse would read something like this: “Make thee an ark of wood that yields sap. Make rooms in it. And seal it on the inside and the outside with sap.”

Think about the process of building the ark for a moment. Noah had to cut trees down. That meant that he had to kill them. He would have taken sap from cuts and punctures in the trees. And he made the ark safe for everyone inside by completely covering it with that sap. Using sap on the inside of the ship might have seemed like overkill. In fact, it might have made it a bit sticky to walk around, but that sap would be a compelling reminder that the ship was safe.

It also made the ark an incredible visual representation of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. For the ark to offer salvation to Noah and his family, trees had to die. The process of cutting down the trees might remind us that death had to occur for salvation to be possible. The sap from those trees would have issued forth like blood from the slices, holes, and wounds in the trees. And that sap provided a covering that saved Noah and his family. It might make us think of the blood of Christ, which John says “cleanseth us from all sin” (1John 1: 7) and “hast redeemed us to God” (Rev 5: 9).

The other uses of the word kaphar in the Bible encourage us along this line of thinking. That word is translated “atonement,” “purge,” “reconciliation,” “reconcile,” “forgive,” and “pardon” 91 times in the Bible. It is used in passages such as *“And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin”* (Exod 32:30).

The ark, therefore, is yet another foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ and a reminder of his importance. The description of the ark, like so many sections in the Bible, teaches that Christ is the means by which we can be saved. Yes, Noah labored hard. But he and his family had to be inside the ark, or they would have been lost. The same is true for us. We must be baptized into the Lord Jesus. Good deeds alone cannot save us and are not enough to make us pleasing to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is so important. And our minds are so inclined to forsake his way and focus on this world instead. Therefore, we need to call him and his example to mind often. We need to contemplate his offering and its implications throughout the day, just as Noah and his family would have thought about the protective covering on the inside of the ark — that sticky sap — as they went about doing their daily tasks while inside of it. We will continue our consideration of the ark and the lessons that we can learn from it in our next article in the series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. In the New Testament, however, the words are the same (cf. Hebrews 9: 4 and 11: 7).
2. P. H. Adams. “Noah’s Ark Discovered?” *The Testimony*. 1947, p 171.
3. For more information, see <http://biblelexicon.org/genesis/6-14.htm>. Accessed November 29, 2009.

“By perseverance the snail reached the ark” (Charles H. Spurgeon).

“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb 12:1).

Youth Speaks

How Do I Study the Bible?

The title of this article contains such a key question: how exactly do we go about meditating on God's Word? In our last article (*Tidings*, March-April 2011) we examined how bible meditation is crucial for forsaking our naturally fleshly minds and raising our thoughts higher to Godly thoughts. We saw that meditating on the Scriptures is critical if we want to truly become children of the Father. While last time we looked at the purpose of Bible study, in this article we will examine how we do Bible study. We will take a look at the two main types of meditation, and then discuss a couple Bible study tools.

Siyach and Nabat

Let's take a look at Psalm 119, the longest chapter of the Bible. This psalm contains a variety of good points about Bible meditation, but for now we are going to zero in on one verse. Take a look at Psalm 119 verse 15:

"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Psa 119:15).

The word for "meditate" here in the Hebrew is "siyach" (pronounced "see-yock")¹. It means both "to ponder" and "to converse with oneself." Therefore, the idea conveyed by "siyach" is that we are to sit down and simply think about God's principles. I especially like the idea of "conversing with oneself." We can literally discuss God's Word with ourselves in our own minds. We might ponder, "Why did God make a law like that in the Law of Moses? Perhaps for this reason... maybe this reason..." You get the basic idea. We do the same sort of thinking all the time with personal problems, about whether we made a right or wrong decision, about solving a puzzle from school or work, and a myriad of other things. So the nice thing about this is that it really isn't a new idea to us; we just have to take it and apply it to the Scripture!

Now let's take a look at a phrase from this verse, "have respect unto." The Hebrew is "nabat" (pronounced "naw-bat"). "Nabat" means "to scan" or "to look intently at." This is the usual Bible study idea of sitting down and pouring over the pages of Scripture. Therefore, we see that it isn't just about pondering God's Word, but it's also about diligently scanning the pages as well. Sitting down with the Word of God is a huge part of our meditation, and we can't neglect it. It can be difficult, because this part of bible meditation is the one of which everyone is scared. I know that sounds funny, but it's true. We don't like sitting down to look intently at the pages of Scripture because we feel like we don't know how. When I was first baptized I hardly read my Bible because I felt like I wasn't good enough or smart enough to find anything worthwhile. That type of thinking is dead wrong. God designed His Word so that — as we have said before — everyone could find His principles there. Let's take a quick look at another verse from Psalm 119.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the

simple” (Psa 119:130).

God assures us that even if we think of ourselves as the simplest of people, His Word can still be a shining light to us. So if you feel like you aren't smart enough to find the gems of wisdom in God's word, think again, because you can!

Powerful Bible Meditation Tools

So we just looked at how there are two main types of Bible meditation: we can indirectly meditate on the Scripture when we don't have a Bible with us, and we can directly scan the pages when we do have one with us. Keep in mind that often Bible meditation will be a mix of these two things, and not just one or the other. The tools we will be looking at will usually be useful for both types of meditation. So let's begin! Our first Bible meditation tool is...

Asking Questions. Wow, I cannot stress this enough. Asking questions is an incredibly powerful tool for searching the Scriptures! When we ask questions it does a few different things. Firstly, it shows us what we don't know. Secondly, it gives a focus for study: instead of meandering around the pages and picking up general points, a question makes us focus on finding a specific answer. In other words, it gives us a goal that we can work towards. Thirdly, questions force us to get our mental turbines revved up to start thinking about or searching for what the answer could be.

Jesus gives us great examples of this. Let's turn up one so that we can see the power of a question in action.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Matt 22:41-46).

Again and again in the Gospels we read about how Jesus is the son of God, yet the religious leaders refuse to accept that the Messiah could be God's son. In fact, they outright called it blasphemy! In this passage from Matthew, Jesus forced the religious leaders to think about their understanding of the Scriptures by posing two questions. The second one he asked was, *“If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”* See, a son was lower than his father and therefore could call him “lord,” but never the other way around! Sons are always subservient to the father. The implied answer is that even though the Messiah is a descendent of David, he is also the son of God, and therefore, David could call him Lord. When the Pharisees were forced to stop and think about the question they slowly began to realize the answer...and they didn't like it one bit. In fact, they were afraid to talk to him anymore!

So we see that Jesus used questions about the Scripture as an impressively effective teaching device. In the same way, instead of assuming we already know the answers like the Pharisees, we can learn from the Word by asking questions.

The Three C's.

Like questions, the “Three C's” is a simple concept and easy to remember. They are: **Context**, **Cross-references**, and **Common Sense**. Let's begin with Context.

Context is basically just looking at where a single verse, passage, chapter, book, or group of books fits into the surrounding verses, passages, chapters, book, or books. Verses may appear to say one thing until we take the time to look at the context...after that we will realize they were saying something quite different! A good example of this is in Corinthians.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Cor 2:9).

This verse is commonly interpreted to indicate that the Kingdom will be so good that we haven't seen, heard, or even imagined how good it will be. It certainly seems to say that doesn't it? Let's take a look at the verse in its context by including the verse before it.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1Cor 2:8).

In this chapter Paul described how the “princes of this world” did not understand the wisdom of the Scripture, and because they did not understand, they ended up crucifying Jesus! Paul supported this with the verse, “Eye hath not seen...”² This verse describes how men ignored the Word of God and because of that, ended up murdering their Messiah! Clearly, this is not a reference to the Kingdom.

The next “C”, **cross-references**, are pretty simple and self-explanatory, but all too often overlooked. If you aren't too sure about a verse, or you simply want to find more information, check your cross-reference column and look up those verses! You'd be amazed at how much you can learn just by looking up another passage.

Finally, **common sense** is describing how we need to think about what we are reading. From this we can learn obvious details from the divine Word that aren't explicitly stated. For example, think about the “woman with a flow of blood” described in Matt 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8. Here is a quick quote from Luke's account.

“But as he went the people thronged him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd” (Luke 8:42-44).

It seems like just a simple little story at first doesn't it? However, if we apply “common sense” then we'll see some details come to life. It isn't explicitly stated in the gospels, but the woman was “unclean” by the Law of Moses (Lev 15:19, 25). Anyone and everything she touched would also be made unclean. Imagine how this woman would have been shunned by society! She also went to many physicians, but none of them could do a thing. She was feeling shamed, weak, and hopeless by this point. We read in the gospel accounts that crowds of people were packed around Jesus; perhaps hundreds or thousands of them. This poor, sick woman

has been losing blood for twelve years; think of how difficult it would have been for her to reach him! She was desperate, and it took every last ounce of strength she had to just barely reach out and touch the fringe of his garment. Ever think about that? Why did she touch the fringe of his garment? Perhaps because she didn't have the strength to get any closer than that!

Now take a step back and look at all we put together just by using a bit of common sense! These were all details that, though they were not stated, seem true when we take a moment to think about the story. The story really came to life, and this was only with a quick look!

Conclusions

You may feel that even equipped with these tools that you still won't be as great at Bible study as John Thomas, or Robert Roberts, or some other student. The good news is...you don't have to be! God doesn't expect us all to be at the same level in terms of what we can find in His Word. What God does expect of us is that we put our whole hearts into the effort of meditating on His Word that we might think and act like Him.

God, in his wisdom, has also designed the Bible so that there is something for everyone: little children can learn from a bible story like Noah's Ark, but then a seasoned bible student can come along and learn different lessons from the same exact story! As long as we put in our best efforts then we will, indeed, reap spiritual benefits.

I hope that this two part meditation has been useful to you in understanding the importance of knowing the mind of the Father. May He bless you and keep you until our Lord Jesus returns.

With much love in our Master's name,

Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA)

Notes:

1. By far the easiest way to look at the original Hebrew and Greek is to use a free computer Bible such as the Online Bible or E-Sword.
2. Reinforced by the OT passage cited, Isa 64:4 (NIV)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Sunday School Prize Giving

How is this for a list of prizes to give to your Sunday school children?

Bible, Hymn Book, Elpis Israel, Twelve Lectures, Bible Atlas, Josephus, Hallam's Middle Ages of Europe, Throne of David, Pillar of Fire, St. Paul at Rome, From Egypt to Sinai, The Land and the Book, The Judgments of Jerusalem, Stories from the History of Rome, The Treasures of the Deep, Natural History of the Bible, Stories of the Reformation, The Ocean and its Wonders, The Exodus, Egypt, Prince of the House of David, Treasury of the Animal World, The Kings of Israel, Narratives from the Old Testament, Manners and Customs of the World, Threads of Knowledge, Bible

*Jewels, Daily Texts, Bible Pictures, History of Solomon, The Book of Books, Ruth, The Prodigal Son, Ark Alphabets, Sketches of Jewish Life, Hebrew Heroes, Natural History, Bonar's Days and Nights in Eastern Lands, Thompson's Scripture Characters, Nimmo's Young Men of the Bible, Cruden's Concordance, Ruined Cities of Bible Lands, Bible Dictionary (Beeton), Traditions of Palestine, History of Crusades, Lost Cities brought to Light, Jerusalem, Pictorial and Descriptive, Jordan and its Valleys, Tables of Stone, Story Pictures from the Bible, Thompson's In the Holy Land, Scripture Manners, Kitto's Palestine, Eastern Manners, Wanderings over Bible Lands and Seas, Browne's Tabernacle, Reformation D'Aubigne, Travels in Many Lands, History of the Saracens, Jerusalem and its Environs, History of Joseph, Moses, &c., Naomi, Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.*¹

This list appeared in *The Christadelphian* magazine, December, 1879, and was supplied by Sis. Mary Turney, Sunday School Superintendent and occasional music director of the Birmingham Ecclesia in England. It was described as “a list of books that have been used as prizes in the Birmingham Sunday School.”

If nothing else, the compilation and publication of such an extensive list tells us that Sis. Turney took Sunday school superintending very seriously. I am not sure what the list tells us about the reading habits of young people back then, but at least the expectations that were set for them were very high, and it is safe to say that they had far fewer distractions than young people have today.

The tradition of Sunday school prize giving continues amongst us more than 130 years later. We still give our children some of the same books: Bibles, the Hymn Book, Bible Atlas, Concordance² and Bible Dictionary. But it is always a challenge to find other good, spiritually helpful books that are likely to be read and valued by our children.

Two new books

Let me start with a couple recommendations. Beyond these, I invite *Tidings* readers to send me additional recommendations. With your help, it may be possible to compile and publish a list of current titles, suitable for prize giving, that begins to measure up to Sis. Turney's impressive list of 1879!

In Sydney, Australia, recently, some of the “seniors” (ages 15 to 25) knew exactly what Sunday school prize they wanted. They asked their Sunday school teachers for copies of Bro. Ron Hicks' new book, *My Journey in Faith*. Anyone who has read Bro. Ron's book (2010) will know what a good choice these young people made. In many respects, this is a book about life choices founded on enlightened faith. What more could any Sunday school teacher want his or her students to contemplate and pursue? Copies of *My Journey in Faith* can be obtained for \$10 (U.S.) through the *Tidings*. Details are given below.

Test Case for Canada '3314545', by Bro. E. R. Evans, is not a new book. It was first published in 1972. The book relates the experiences of Bro. John Evans, a Christadelphian conscientious objector in World War I. What is new about this book is the fact that it has been republished (2009) by the Christadelphian Scripture Study Service in South Australia and now comes with a DVD. The DVD is a

portrayal of Bro. Evans' life, very effectively enacted by the Christadelphian young people of Adelaide.

It is important for us to keep before our young people the issue of conscientious objection to participation in war. In the current era of all-volunteer armies, at least in western countries, it is easy to forget that military conscription puts the consciences of all Christadelphians to a stiff test. The republication of Bro. John Evans' story is a timely reminder of this fact. The book and DVD can be obtained for \$14.50 (U.S.) from Bro. Tom Graham at The Thousand Oaks Christadelphian Library. Go to www.christadelphianlibrary.com and click on Newest Publications.

Some other suggestions

In this day and age, the prizes we give to our Sunday school children do not always have to be books. If sales at our Bible school bookstores are any indication, the young people very much enjoy the music CDs that other Christadelphian young people have produced. Selected DVDs can also make good Sunday school prizes. If the young people in your ecclesia have never seen the *God's Family Around the World* series of DVDs, these will greatly enrich their appreciation of the worldwide nature of our brotherhood. The series is a set of professionally produced documentaries on the brothers, sisters and children of Jamaica, Ireland, El Salvador, Russia, India, and Nigeria. For more information go to new.wcfoundation.org and click on WCF Online Store, Video (DVD).

And how would you like to give the serious young Bible students in your Sunday school a prize like this one: 30 English versions of the Bible, 10 ancient language versions (including the Interlinear Greek New Testament, the Septuagint, and two Hebrew texts), three lexicons, 20 Bible dictionaries, and a wide range of commentaries — all rolled into one, at a cost that is no more than the price of a single printed Bible? I am referring to a Bible software package called the *Online Bible*. (While you can go online and download a free starter version of this software, the name *Online Bible* refers to the software, not the way the material is accessed.)

The *Online Bible* comes on a DVD and can be loaded onto the hard drive of any computer. It comes in Windows and Macintosh versions. It is a Bible software package that students can grow with. The *Online Bible* can be used for tasks as basic as doing the daily Bible readings in any version you like. Cross referencing³ is quick and easy. Word searches⁴ can be instantly carried out in any version of the Bible or in any of the Bible commentaries that are included. OLB also supports tasks as sophisticated as searching the Septuagint for the use of a Greek word, or carrying out logic searches⁵ that go well beyond the routine concordance search, or studying the parsing⁶ of Greek and Hebrew verbs.

In my estimation, the *Online Bible* is one of the most versatile Bible software packages for the price, and it is easy to use. A single copy of the Windows version costs \$39.95 (U.S.). Purchasing multiple copies for prize giving reduces the price considerably: the price for five copies is \$24 each, and the price for ten copies is \$20 each. If you think this prize-giving idea is an interesting one, go to www.online-bible.com and find out more about it.

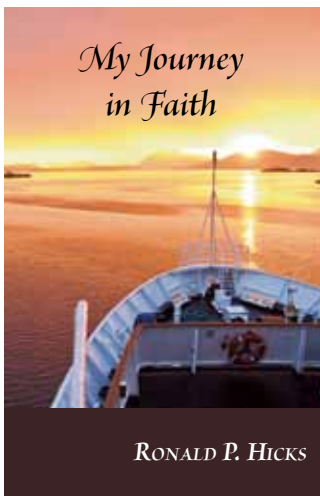
Your recommendations invited

With this, I again extend the invitation to you to send me additional recommendations for Sunday school prize giving. Prize suggestions for younger children are just as important as those for older ones. Please tell me about your top picks. If I get a good response to this request, I will do my best, God willing, to compile a 21st century list of suitable prizes and publish it for any Sunday school superintendent, teacher, or thoughtful gift-giver to use.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): 2harps4u@gmail.com

Notes:

1. The Christadelphian, 1879, p.618.
2. Note that the KJV concordance given to Birmingham Sunday School children in 1879 was Cruden's Concordance. Robert Young's Analytical Concordance had only just been published that year, and James Strong's Exhaustive Concordance would not be published until 1894.
3. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge is one of the best cross-referencing systems available.
4. Word searches can be carried out in original languages as well as English. They can also be carried out using Strong's Numbers in the versions where these apply.
5. Online Bible supports AND (&), OR (!), and NOT AND (~) searches. For example, the AND search can be used to show that the words soul & heaven do not occur together in any verse in the New Testament.
6. Verb characteristics such as tense, voice, and mood.



Now Available *My Journey in Faith*

Bro. Ron Hicks shares his life journey, from his early days in a very large, established ecclesia, to his later years, including his final career posting in a country where there had been no Christadelphians at all. Through his travels he has discovered the many faces of Christadelphia around the world – and the joy of mission work in developing countries with diverse cultures and challenging social conditions. This is the story of a life guided by faith in Christ, written by a brother with much experience and spiritual insight to share.

Order at www.tidings.org – click Books.

Reflections

Earthquake: 9.0

Thoughts on watching news coverage after the earthquake in Japan

We are Christadelphians.

What do we value above all else?

“We are Japanese.

You do not understand our culture.

*We value order and civility above all else.
When disaster comes we accept it without complaint.
We extend a helping hand to one another.
We wait patiently for our turn.
If there is not enough, we see that
the elderly and children have and we do without.”*

*What can we learn?
We are Christ's brethren.
We are the light of the world among whom we shine,
holding fast the word of life.
We fight, we rebuke, we defame, we demean, we demand...
How can this be? Who are we?
There but for the grace of God go we.*

Dolores Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Gaman

Gaman. It's a Japanese word we've heard several times recently, a quality which Japanese people traditionally cherish. It has no single English equivalent, but may be summarized in a phrase: patience, acceptance, civility, courtesy and quietness... in the face of great suffering.

The poet D.H. Lawrence wrote some simple words which seem to capture the Japanese concept of gaman:

*“I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself.
A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough
without ever having felt sorry for itself.”*

Recent events have reminded us of what, as Christadelphians, we should already know: We live in a world of uncertainty. We draw breath each day by the grace and mercy of Almighty God. Nothing in this life should be taken for granted. At any day, and at any time, without warning, the “book” which is my life, or yours, may be closed, after which we will be required to give account of ourselves. Who are we, indeed? What is important to us? What do we hold as most sacred, most meaningful, most valuable?

Somewhere, underneath us or nearby, the earth itself, on which we stand this moment, may be preparing to rumble, and move, and shake.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)



Letters

To the Editor:

In your judgment, what new understanding, what clarification, does the NASU document bring to the BASF?

This is THE key question regarding the need for and the legitimacy of any NASU-based unity effort. This question has been repeatedly asked of many UA08 committee and signatory ecclesial leaders, and this enquiry is now going on three years without a response.

If there is not a single brother in the Amended UA08 community that can answer this question and show how the NASU modifies the BASF, how can they realistically expect other Amended ecclesias to join them, or even understand them?

If the NASU document clarifies the BASF, surely someone can simply explain how! If the NASU does not clarify the BASF then why is the NASU document needed?

Let us simply use the BASF and invite everyone to join us on that basis alone. Such an approach to true unity is clear, consistent and honest with the Brotherhood worldwide.

Dan McDonald (Paris Avenue, OH)

Dear Brother McDonald,

Thank you very much for your enquiry — we will attempt to shed some light on the questions you have raised, bearing in mind that these answers are strictly on behalf on the Tidings Publishing Committee and do not necessarily represent the views of the signatories of the UA08 document.

You ask what legitimacy the NASU document has for current Unity efforts. Virtually all other Unity efforts that were successful had supplemental documents to clarify long-standing issues that had separated brethren. In Australia there was the so-called Carter-Cooper Addendum and a much longer Unity Book (see <http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/accsc/index.html>) that clarified the issues involved in that continent. In the United Kingdom a document known as the English Final Statement was an integral part of the Unity agreement. A little over 100 years has passed since the Birmingham Statement of Faith was Amended to exclude the extreme restrictive view that only those in covenant relationship (be it baptism or circumcision) are subject to the judgment seat of Christ. In view of lessons learned in other Unity efforts just cited it seems perfectly reasonable to implement a Unity agreement in North America with a supplemental document, which expansively clarifies the issue while at the same time not replacing the BASF in any way; hence, the apparent justification for NASU.

The question yet remains — does the NASU indeed clarify the issues between the Amended and Unamended — or at least that part of the Unamended community that seeks fellowship with us. Please note the following:

- A preponderant majority of Amended Ecclesias have endorsed the NASU doctrinal clarification. In contrast, the NASU document has been rejected by a faction of the Unamended Community. This group, we can unfortunately say, still adheres to the J. J. Andrew position on resurrection responsibility. This was demonstrated by a recent *Christadelphian Advocate* Magazine article repudiating those Unamended Ecclesias who have signed on to the UA08. Clearly then the NASU has done a good job of identifying those Ecclesias in both the Amended and Unamended Ecclesias in North America that share

the same doctrinal position on the issues that have long separated us.

- The NASU document is valuable for the Unamended in that it addresses the nature of Christ in such a way as to exclude the “Clean Flesh” views that some in the Amended community are said to hold.
- It is also valuable to the Amended community in that it excludes the Andrewite views on the nature of Christ, which are said to be common in the Unamended community.

It should be noted that the last two issues mentioned above are doctrinal errors that have cropped up over the years, but are not specifically excluded by the BASF — hence the need for clarification on these points.

In summary, the NASU appears to play a role similar to clarification documents used in other successful reunion efforts, and if it were coupled with a clear cut fellowship implementation policy could go a long way towards ending the painful separation that has been so hurtful to the Christadelphian Community in North America.

Tidings Publishing Committee

Letter to the Editor

I am writing concerning the article “The Nature of Man” by Bro. Johnnie Abel (*Tidings*, Feb 2011).

Most of this article was on target but there were a few concerns with the following phrases: “Life is contingent on obedience”, “obeying God required restraint and discipline”, “but God has promised that He will be with us and assist us IF we follow His commands”, and “cutting off of the flesh (sinful desire)...is the only way to eradicate sin”

I think the emphasis does not reflect the full breath of scripture and while it is perhaps traditional, it is not particularly helpful in our struggle against sin. The implication is that if we exercised restraint and discipline and applied ourselves to eradicating sin so we could obey God’s command, then God would help us out and we could in the end be given a new heart and spirit. It’s really up to us. The contrast is I think more scripturally sound. It is because we trust and believe God that we can be considered righteous (Rom 4) (not because we have won our battle against sin) and despite our failures and weaknesses (while we were yet sinners) we are forgiven. Like Israel, we deserve none of this and have earned none of it. We certainly must not continue in sin that grace may abound but it is in God’s mercy that we trust, not in our valiant efforts. When we look in the mirror each morning and see a person who struggles each day with sin and each day fails in some way big or small, we do not lose heart, we look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our salvation. In him we see a man beset by our same weaknesses and yet without sin. We see him crucified and we know it is each of us that should be there. But for the grace of God, we are not. When we are led to believe that this is what God requires of us, we either become discouraged with our failures and give

up, or we become arrogant and prone to search out the splinter in one another's eye. We need to daily remind ourselves that we live by faith. Life, eternal life, is contingent on faith, our absolute trust in God, not on obedience.

I am writing this to broaden the emphasis and help us to in reverence and awe understand the privileged relationship we have to approach unto the throne of grace in time of need.

Dolores Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

In response to the 'Letter to the Editor'

Sister Delores is right that we are reliant on God's grace not our own efforts, but we cannot disregard the relationship between faith and obedience. Her statement "Life, eternal life, is contingent on faith, our absolute trust in God, not on obedience" does not make this relationship apparent.

While we are justified by faith, it is misleading to say that eternal life is contingent on faith and not obedience. As the article on the nature of man discussed, obedience to God (resistance to sin) must be present in our lives. Galatians 5:16-21, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh... Now the works of the flesh are evident... That those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." The message here is clear — what we 'do,' especially in response to our inherent nature, will directly affect our opportunity for eternal life.

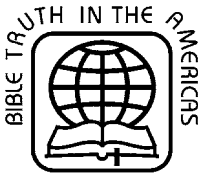
The example for us is set by our Lord Jesus Christ as described in Hebrews 5, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" Christ is the author of salvation because his faith in God's plan was perfected by his complete obedience to the law. Does this mean by our obedience alone we can be saved? Of course not! We all sin and, therefore, deserve the consequence of sin, death. So why is our obedience important?

James in his letter (Ch 2) writes, "I will show you my faith by my works." Abraham had his belief accounted to him for righteousness because by faith he obeyed God's command to offer up his promised son. We see then how our obedience is evidence of our Faith. Baptism is an example of this. Believers are baptized (obeying a command of God) and put on Christ (Gal 3) because of faith in God's promise to forgive sins and grant eternal life through Christ. Baptism is not only an act of our faith, but obedience to God's command. Claiming to be faithful but refusing baptism would be similar to confessing that faith only is required for salvation.

Faith, then, motivates us to exercise restraint and discipline in our lives with the knowledge that through Christ's sacrifice God counts our acts of faith (obedience, resisting sin) as righteousness. By contrast, continual disobedience results in the hope of eternal life exchanged for God's wrath (Rom 2:7).

Life, eternal life, is contingent on faith, shown by our resistance to sin and obedience to God's commands.

Johnnie Abel (Cambridge, ON)



Bible Mission News

Guadalajara Visit – January 2011

The visit here was once again a very pleasurable experience, renewing acquaintance with the brothers and sisters. I was invited to do the Bible Class study on Thursday night, two studies on Saturday, the exhortation and a further study Sunday afternoon. All the studies were based on the first epistle of John.

It was nice to be able to meet Sis. Malú Farías who was visiting from Campeche, Yucatan and planned to stay until January 24, God willing.

My stay this time in a small hotel near the “Centro Biblico” proved to be very convenient and economical.

I was also pleased to meet briefly with Bro. Michael Connor who was on business in Guadalajara. Bro. Michael exhorted on the Sunday just prior to my arrival. The ecclesia is looking forward to the visits of the Rawsons in February and Bro. Dennis Paggi in April.

During my stay the ecclesia was able to secure a different meeting place nearer to the city centre at considerably less cost than they are currently paying. This new venue will have more walk-by traffic and the brethren were impressed with the improved state of the premises over their current location. Some work will be required to install an interior screen wall at the front, but there is nothing too extensive anticipated. The change in location has become necessary due to the gay bar beside the Bible Centre being granted a lease for the upstairs over the hall which would create even more noise from loud music than what they are currently experiencing. All things considered this move at this time is no doubt a blessing being granted by God at the right time. The brethren expect to be in the new premises for March 1, 2011, God willing.

During my stay, I was able to experience first-hand the amount of activity that takes place at the Bible Centre. Sis. Cynthia opens at 9 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday, in addition to the time that it is open on Sundays. Some of the brothers help out when they have the time to do so. In addition to the daily reading session at 3 p.m. when there were at least four present each day during the week that I was there, there are the ongoing discussions with people who drop in. With the anticipated increased exposure in the new location the new “Centro Biblico” will be a busy place indeed!

With the relatively close proximity to the US it would be hoped that ongoing support for this ecclesia on a regular basis should be possible. I feel that there is

a good solid base with the leading brothers and with the considerable amount of preaching effort being undertaken let us hope and pray that we can continue to support the work in Guadalajara .

Submitted by Bro. Gordon Dangerfield



**Bible Study class in
Guadalajara**

Costa Rica Bible School Dec 29, 2010 – Jan 4, 2011

The Annual Gathering in Costa Rica is held at a Retreat facility in La Garita, approximately half an hour by bus from the ecclesial hall in Santa Barbara. A total of 60 attended including two from El Salvador, two from USA and two from Canada.

Bro. Dennis Paggi and I presented the adult studies and Bro. Jeff Hibbs led the youth studies.

This was the second time the gathering was held at this facility and again was well organised by the brothers and sisters in Costa Rica. It was a welcome surprise to see Sisters Guiselle and Damaris from Guadalupe (former San Jose ecclesia) who have become more involved with the ecclesia in Santa Barbara over the last year due to the efforts of some of the brothers in making the trip to Guadalupe on a biweekly basis to get the sisters to the meeting in Santa Barbara. The sisters are very appreciative of the brothers' efforts and are enjoying a renewed enthusiasm as they enjoy the fellowship that they have not had for many years.

Sis. Veronica Porterfield (Washington DC Ecclesia) attended the gathering with her ten year-old daughter Zoe and greatly enjoyed getting to know the brothers and sisters and was able to communicate fluently in Spanish, being of Colombian descent.

One of the features of the gathering is the Saturday night presentation of "Teatro Negro" (Black Theatre) and this year a dramatic presentation of four parables involving young and old impressed the audience with a variety of action and art work illuminated with black lights and dramatized with music. This work involves almost all of the Sunday School scholars and young people who work on the pre-

sentation for most of the year. There is a notably improved cohesion of the young people and adults as a result of this very involved activity.



Costa Rica Bible School

We were very pleased to learn of the engagement immediately after the gathering of Sis. Zuelen Arias of Costa Rica to Bro. Neftali Espinosa of El Salvador. With the increased interaction between the Central American ecclesias it is encouraging to see the friendships blossoming between the young people, giving them an increased sense of belonging to a larger community and not being confined to the limited number of friends that they have in their own areas.

*Submitted by Bro. Gordon Dangerfield
Linkman – Costa Rica*

Trip to Panama

The original plan for my stay (after the Costa Rica Bible School) was that I would spend some of the time at the condominium in Panama City owned by the Sobers, however on arrival in Panama we discovered that most of Panama City was without water due to the heavy flooding. This strange paradox of no potable water was due to the heavy silting of the water supply resulting in the failure of some of the equipment used for purification and pumping of the water into the city supply system. We were thankful that Colon was not affected and so my accommodation plans were changed and I stayed at the Sobers for the duration of my time in Panama.

It was a pleasure getting to know Bro. Ian and Sis. Nishla Neblitt and their one year old daughter Nylayah. They have settled in nicely in Panama and the Sobers (Nishla's parents, Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa) are having an addition built onto their house for them to live in. Ian and Nishla have bought a catering business in Colon and this appears to be doing quite well for them. The previous owner has been very helpful in getting them adjusted to the business and helps them with the bigger events.



At this time Bro. Ian has indicated his willingness to assist with the Panama City meeting on a once a month basis. This help will no doubt be appreciated by the small group at Juan Diaz and also help in keeping contact between the two ecclesias.

Submitted by Bro. Gordon Dangerfield

Sis. Nishla, Bro. Ian and Nylayah Neblitt, our missionaries in Panama

Visiting Jamaica Fellowship in the One Faith — January 2011

What a contrast! Leaving Toronto on Tuesday, January 18th in blowing snow at -5C and arriving four hours later in Montego Bay in 30C sunshine gave my six days in Jamaica a warm start. Rather than returning home to Vancouver following a commitment in the Midwest, I joined Bro. Ray Arthurs at his home in Negril, three days in advance of the CBMJ board and delegates meetings scheduled for January 21st and 22nd. While three days of sunshine and early morning walks on the beautiful beach across the highway from Ray's added a bonus to my visit, the real joy came from quiet conversation and daily readings with Bro. Ray. Ray's energy and breadth of experience are evident from discussions that ranged widely, revealing his love of the Truth and concern for the brethren and ecclesias in Jamaica, while tempered with his recognition that his advancing years and less than robust health will soon necessitate taking up a quieter life closer to his home ecclesia in Broughton. Wednesday Bible reading class at the Broughton ecclesia hall was a special blessing. Sisters, whom I had met at their Sister's class in May 2010, braved the showery evening as we shared discussion around the daily Bible readings. What a rewarding experience! With a common faith and a warmth of fellowship, together we shared the message of Scripture. We truly have a precious gift, one in faith and hope through our Lord Jesus.

Friday soon came and with the arrival of Bro. Matthew Williams from the Harvey River Ecclesia, we made the three hour journey to May Pen for the meetings. On Friday night brethren Ray, Matthew and I stayed at the Hotel Versailles where we held the CBMJ/CBMC board meeting and enjoyed a late supper. Our two mission organizations enjoy strong bonds in the service of the brotherhood in Jamaica. Our common interests go beyond direct CBMC funding of CBMJ activities. During our meeting we explored both issues and opportunities; building on CBMC support for member welfare needs, for the supply of used eyeglasses, used books, pamphlets, Sunday school learning supplies (Christadelphian Save the Children Fund supplies), and for speakers to assist in the countrywide calendar of events for 2011. In common with our community worldwide, Jamaican brothers and sisters

experience challenges in both ecclesial and secular life: lack of employment opportunities, emigration of key members from small ecclesias, incessant bombardment of worldliness by the media and uncertainties in fellowship relationships. CBMJ also recognizes the need to involve younger members to serve on CBMJ, with the inevitable retirements of long serving board members.

Saturday took us to the May Pen hall and the CBMJ delegates meeting which commenced at 12:30pm. Brothers and sisters meet four times annually to discuss the business of the brotherhood in Jamaica. Much is on the agenda. These are extended meetings, with spirited discussion on many agenda items. CBMJ sponsored events on the all island calendar are varied — fraternal days, Bible schools, youth weekends, preaching campaigns, sister's days and brother's mutual improvement days — and are approved at this meeting. CBMC provides assistance in arranging visiting speakers for several of the programs. Before saying goodbyes a meal was enjoyed as delegates returned to their home towns.



May Pen Ecclesia following Bible class

The Sunday program at May Pen began with Sunday school lead by Sis. Gerzel Gordon followed by the Memorial meeting and Bible Class; my exhortation followed the theme “crowns”, from the crown of thorns worn willingly by Christ to the crown of glory that does not fade away and the Bible class reviewed the life of Barnabas and his contributions to the early ecclesia in Jerusalem and the ministry of the apostle Paul.

A highlight of my time in Jamaica came in the quietness of both Saturday and Sunday evenings, around the dining room table at Bro. Melvin and Sis. Gerzel Gordon's. We enjoyed a late night snack and a cool drink and they shared with me their insights into their early days in the Faith and their fond memories of spreading the Truth across the island; times of both great joy and adversity. It was humbling and uplifting to share this time with “a mother in Israel” and a “shepherd of the flock of God”. And we prayed together for the blessing of our God on the ecclesias in Jamaica.

Monday arrived all too soon! Bro. Patrick Johnson combined business stops with a trip to the Kingston airport where he dropped me in good time for my two flights back to Vancouver.

Phil Snobelen, for CBMC

Encouraging Developments in St. Lucia

There is nothing like preaching and facing challenging questions about first principles to stimulate deeper consideration of the elements of the faith!

Working in the Caribbean is very good in the sense that many people have a respect for the Word of God which is rare in developed countries. In those islands it is not difficult to have conversations with people about the Bible.

During the time that Bro. Arne and Sis. Emma Roberts (home ecclesia, Cardiff Museum Place) were in St. Lucia much preaching was done. Among other things, they started a newsletter that was mailed to about 150 contacts. The newsletters included articles about Bible topics, current events and a quiz. Those who submit answers received a Bible leaflet. During our visit to St. Lucia in January and February (2011) this good work was continued. Two editions of the newsletter were prepared and mailed and we were pleased to have some responses in relation to the quizzes

Another important result of Bro. Arne and Sis. Emma's 10-month stay in St. Lucia was the rental of a hall, a "large upper room" that is bright and cheery. The acoustics are excellent for singing and the 'joyful noise' that the small ecclesia makes to the Lord sounds lovely. The keyboard that Arne and Emma left behind when they returned home is a great asset to the singing.

One of the highlights of our stay was when Bro. Eddie Anthony brought to the hall six of his colleagues (Bro. Eddie works at the Central Library) for a lunch-time Bible class. We took some sandwiches and juice and on the first occasion after an opening prayer we asked the group what they would like to talk about. Their choice was 'the Sabbath'. We began in Genesis 2:3 and went from there. The focus was on the principles associated with the Sabbath. We had two classes with the group and to our surprise at the second class two others came who had heard of the class but did not work at the Library. There were plenty of questions, so in the course of two 45-minute discussions we covered only about half of the topic!

Seven lectures were given on a variety of topics. On each evening we began the meeting with a hymn that the visitors knew. One topic that brought comments as we handed out leaflets was "Is May 21 Judgement Day". In October 2010 a group of people from the USA came to the Caribbean islands and handed out thousands of leaflets which stated that May 21, 2011 is judgement day and that on October 21, 2011 the earth will be burned up! This was something new to us, as in Canada we had not heard of this organisation and their preaching. We did a search in Google on 'May 21, 2011' and yes; this 'judgement day' was the first item in the results listing. These dates regarding judgement and the earth being burnt up had caught the imagination of people in St. Lucia. In the lecture of course, Bro. Andre George pointed out that the coming of Christ is not something that can be known in advance. He gave a good presentation of the gospel with strong encouragement for people attending to put themselves among those who are heirs of the promises.

Bro. Eddie Anthony gave a good lecture on 'Lucifer and Satan'. He pointed out that the prophecy of Isaiah 14 is something that could not have occurred before

creation! Rather it was related to the downfall of the king of Babylon. Eddie's further exposition about 'Satan' clearly demonstrated the true Biblical teaching on this topic. After each lecture there was a time for questions and sometimes there were so many that we had to cut them off because of time!

An increasing number of people in St. Lucia have access to the internet; therefore many 'thisisyourbible.com' business cards were left in places and handed to people. Newspaper advertisements were taken out for the website.

Bro. Andre George has written two good books. The first is 'The Devil and Satan Exposed and Unmasked' and the second is 'The Trinity — Myth or Mystery'. Many copies of these books have been handed to contacts and friends of Bro. Andre and the 'Devil and Satan...' book has had a second edition. Bro. Andre has had a mixed reaction from his friends. Some express support and agree with the Biblical exposition but others express astonishment that he should have departed from the faith of his childhood. Andre was brought up as a devout Roman Catholic and learned the truth over a period of several years from brothers and sisters who did preaching work in St. Lucia. He was baptised nearly six years ago and is devoted to serving his new Master. Since his baptism he taught his mother the truth who was baptised on the day following her 90th birthday! She is now asleep in Christ.

Copies of Bro. Andre's two books are available for wider use in the preaching work of the brotherhood. Any brother or sister interested, please contact the undersigned.

The brothers and sisters of the St. Lucia Ecclesia greatly appreciate the support of overseas visitors. Assistance with exhortations and preaching is very encouraging. Brothers and sisters who are able and willing to contribute to the work of pastoral support and preaching in St. Lucia and other Caribbean locations please contact the undersigned at mjwebster@vif.com. Let us remember, visits to the mission field are typically very stimulating to our own faith and to the faith of others!

*Martin J Webster,
CBMC Linkman,
St. Lucia*



**The St. Lucia
Ecclesia and
contact**

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

AUSTIN-LEANDER, TX

We rejoice and are pleased to report the baptism of JANET BARTLESON, on January 23, 2010. She was initially studying with Bro. Fred Brinkerhoff in Denver before moving to this area. We rejoice, and welcome back into fellowship Sis. Ouida Henry, after a long absence from the household of faith. We are sorry that Sis. Stacy-Sue Wagner had to return to Oregon due to employment, but she remains an associate member.

In November we had our annual fall fraternal gathering at the HEB camp. Bro. Ron Stewart led classes on, "The Portrait of a Saint". We thank him for his classes and were pleased that Sis. Shirley was able to join him. We had a successful Youth Weekend March 11-13, 2010, and wish to thank Bro. Chris Matthiesen for his classes.

We have welcomed the following brothers and sisters from other states or countries: Robert and Alexa McAllister (Yagoona, Sydney, Aust.); Dean and Andrea Bailey (Cambridge, ON); Charles and Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON); Rose Madge (Milford Road, MI); Dennis and Tiffany Bevans, and Chris and Tina Hall (Reseda, CA); Jim and Katie Glover (Thousand Oaks, CA); Dan and Janet McDonald (Paris Ave., OH); Greg Erickson, Sandra Maggard, Fred and Ellen Brinkerhoff, and Larry and Vinca Goodridge (Denver, CO); Sharee Grazda (South Austin, TX); Mary Cheetham (Morristown, NJ); Scott Nevers (Wachussetts, MA); Ed Hawthorne (Los Angeles, CA); and Michael and Vanessa Floyd (Port Elizabeth, South Africa).

We wish to thank Bre. Dean Bailey, Scott Nevers, Fred Brinkerhoff, Michael Floyd and Dennis Bevans for their words of exhortation, and Robert McAllister for his class.

The new Recording Brother is Bro. George Brown. His address is 1201 Cherry Lane, Cedar Park, Texas 78613; and phone number is 512-986-8867. Any future correspondence should be sent to him. His email address is gwbrown8@mail.com.

George Brown

BRANTFORD, ON

On February 5, 2011, Bro. Trevor Salisbury and Sis. Heather Jennings, eldest daughter of Bro. Jim and Sis. Shirley Ann Jennings, became heirs together of the grace of life. May our heavenly Father bless their new household as they submit to one another in love, in the fear of our God.

In the loving spirit of training up our children in the way of the Lord, the Brantford Ecclesia was thankful to be able to operate two gatherings for the young people in our region during the first quarter of 2011. The Junior CYC and Little Disciple gathering held on February 12, 2011, at a wonderful new location, provided a day long spiritual environment for nearly one hundred twenty children, and almost as many brothers and sisters who supported the event. The day's focus was, "The Life of Samuel".

On March 4-5, 2011, Bro. Dan Osborn led our annual Senior CYC gathering on the theme of, "Jehoshaphat—Life Up in the Ways of the Lord". Nearly 150 young people enjoyed the weekend, which was rounded out with a floor hockey challenge.

In between these two events, on February 19, 2011, our ecclesia was blessed with the baptism of another of our Sunday school scholars. CHLOE PENNY, daughter of Bro. Brent and Sis. Jennifer Penny, after a good confession of her faith, chose to be buried with Christ in baptism and to be raised to walk in newness of life. We pray that God may bless our new sister as she becomes a servant of righteousness in His household, both now and in the age to come by His mercy.

On March 16, 2011, we let our lamp shine organizing a special public lecture on the timely topic of, "Egypt, Libya and the Middle East in the Bible". The event, which was hosted at the Best Western hotel in Brantford, attracted 12 visitors. Several stayed after the presentation, which gave many in the ecclesia a further chance to serve as evangelists. We thank our heavenly Father for the opportunity to witness in these last days, excited to testify to the nearness of our Lord's return, trusting that God will call those whom he has predestined. A further public proclamation effort is being planned for later in the year, at which time a Bible exhibition will be erected at another public venue. The aim of the exhibit will be to promote the 400th anniversary of the printing of the King James Bible, and will feature such things as: an old King James Version New Testament, a Gutenberg press model, and many other interesting artifacts and manuscripts. Look for more details about this event in future intelligence.

Mike Moore

CRANSTON, RI

The Cranston Ecclesia has been richly blessed once again with the baptism, into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ, of GLENN HAUGHTON, son of Bro. Donald Haughton on September 11, 2010.

We thank the following brothers who presented public Bible talks in our Fall series on the theme, "The Bible Speaks Today" including Jim Sullivan (Boston, MA), Jason Cicero (Meriden, CT), Jim Burns (Westerly, RI), and our own lecturing brothers.

Our CYC held a very successful fund raiser dinner and program on December 11, 2010, to benefit a particular CYC need in the brotherhood. The Evening Program was a presentation on their preaching experiences in South Africa by Sis. Katie Schlageter (Westerly, RI), Sis. Alyssa Tuck (Meriden, CT,) and Bro. Brandon Entwistle (Cranston, RI).

We rejoiced together as a family in Christ Jesus as we witnessed the marriage of our Sis. Danielle Matteson, daughter of Bro. Ricky and Sis. Nancy Matteson to Bro. Aaron King, son of Bro. David and Sis. Kathy King (Richmond Petersburg, VA) on December 18, 2010. May their life together as one in Christ be richly blessed on their journey to the kingdom. Sis. Danielle King's membership was transferred, with our love, to the love and care of the James River, VA Ecclesia where she and Bro. Aaron will make their home in the area.

Our New Year's Bible Study Weekend was led by Bro. Ryan King (Richmond Petersburg, VA) on the theme, "Psalms of Refuge".

Our "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar continues in conjunction with the Westerly Ecclesia. Though the numbers dropped off dramatically into the program, the lessons continue with the two ladies we last reported. The studies are now held in the home of one of the ladies and the good news is that two or three of their friends have joined the study.

Paul Haughton

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We thank our Bro. John Bilello for his words of exhortation and adult Bible class during the month. The ecclesia was happy to see Sis. Mary with him. We are pleased to report that having finished our current series of Learn to Read the Bible Seminars, we have begun a new series in early April "The Life Of Christ". We pray for the Lord's blessing on this new endeavor. Our fall study weekend is to take place Oct 8-9, 2011. The Theme is "Making use of the sense we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry UK.

We are pleased to welcome by transfer from the Georgetown ecclesia in Guyana our Bro. Keon Charles, who has been commended to us by the ecclesia there. We are pleased to have one more join our numbers and look forward to his help and fellowship. We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brethren and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Mary Anne Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Gaby Kilburn (South Ozone Park, NY); Paul and Dorothy Zawadski (Boston, MA); Sandy and Janice Piskura (Washington, DC); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Keon Charles (Georgetown, Guyana); John and Mary Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); RuthAnn Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Patty Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON).

Please note that our telephone number in the ALS diary is incorrect, it should be 973-402-4329 and not 973-402-4392.

Stewart Marsden

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We are pleased to welcome as members of the Hamilton Greenaway Ecclesia, Sis. Marilyn Creer, Bro. Ivan and Sis. Marsha Stonell, and Sis. Mary Bishop who come to us from the Hamilton Book Road Ecclesia, and Bro. Scott and Sis. Anita Lausch who are transferring their membership from the London, ON Ecclesia. We look forward to their company and help in proclaiming the gospel of salvation to a perishing world. We thank our heavenly Father for all His tender mercies!

Tom Thorp

KAMLOOPS, BC

We have been very blessed this past year with ministrations from visiting brethren and God has blessed our gospel proclamation efforts in our Sunday school campaign. Each September and January for the past two years we have distributed leaflets inviting children in the area of our meeting hall to attend our Sunday school. God has blessed us with five students from five to twelve years old. Three have started attending other ecclesial activities and youth programs in BC. We pray that Yahweh will continue to bless them as they continue to learn of His Word.

We thank the many brethren from near and far who have joined us in fellowship this past year and particularly Bro. Stephen Bartholomew who lead our spring fraternal on, "They Shall Be My People and I Shall Be Their God". We would also like to thank Bre. Nathan Bartholomew (North Battleford, SK); Jim Cowie (Winston, QL, Aust.); Don Zanting, Ben Cawston, and David Drysdale, (Vernon, BC); Rod Massey, and Jonathan Lawrence (Prince George, BC); Adam Jones, Graeme Osborn and Skip Bartholomew (Vernon Okanagan, BC); and Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON) for their ministrations to us in 2010.

In November we hosted our second Inter-ecclesial Gospel Proclamation Workshop. It was exciting, encouraging and spiritually uplifting to share gospel proclamation ideas,

suggestions, efforts, and experiences with ecclesial representatives from ecclesias in Washington, Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan.

We are very pleased to have our Sis. Claira Young move to our meeting from Vernon. She is a bright light and a cheerful smile at every meeting. Her enthusiasm to help in any way she is an example for us all. Bro. Chris and Sis. Naomi Winter spent nearly two years in the Victoria meeting and we are very pleased to have them back with us. They have come back with an addition to their family, thus helping us build up our Sunday school with their two boys, Marcus and Micah. We know that they will be a support to our ecclesia and all its activities adding their abilities to our ecclesial resources.

Jon Fletcher

KITCHENER WATERLOO, ON

We would like to thank the many brothers and sisters who have visited the Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesia during 2010, and those brothers who have served us in exhortations, Bible classes and lectures.

During recent years Bro. Paul Brokaw has served the ecclesia in the duty of Recording Brother and we thank him for his labour in this capacity. This task has now passed to Bro. Jack Robinson. Bro. Jack's phone number is 519-448-1696; and his email is jcrobins@worldchat.com.

Our ecclesial mailing address remains: 486 Albert Street, Box 28084, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6J8, Canada.

Martin J. Webster

LONDON, ON

Bro. Nathan and Sis. Melissa Meaker have moved to Saskatchewan and have requested a transfer to the North Battleford, SK Ecclesia. Bro. Nathan has been in our ecclesia since birth and we will certainly miss this young vibrant couple and pray that their new ecclesia shall benefit from their spiritual labours and enthusiasm. Also, Bro. Scott and Sis. Anita Lausch have requested a transfer to the Hamilton Greenaway Ecclesia along with their two children. We shall miss them and pray that they all may gain spiritual benefits from their new ecclesial surroundings.

With gladness, we receive into our ecclesia, Sis. Linda Ikle who transfers from the Edmonton, AB Ecclesia. We look forward to sharing fellowship and labours of love with our sister.

Dave Birchall

ORLANDO, FL

Beginning April 3, 2011, the Orlando Ecclesia will move to a new location. Meeting will be held at the BETA Center, 4680 Lake Underhill Road, Orlando, FL 32807. For directions and meeting times, please call Randy Davenport at 407-719-0956.

The Orlando, FL Ecclesia has welcomed the following visiting brothers and sisters: Ted and Karen Hodge and their children, Melanie and Jacob, Alan Markwith, and Allan and Sandra Walker (ON); Wilson and Betty Ross (Miami, FL); Brian and Sharon Adams and their children, Jacob, Abigail and Caleb, and Bob and Norley Kling (Washington DC); Jenny Nicholson, Julian Baseley, Sandra Baseley, Alan and Chris Mills, and Hilary Knight (UK); Philip and Laurie Sweeny (NJ); Lisa Duncan (Guyana); Len and Julie Budney and son, Joshua (Pittsburgh, PA); Mark Patterson (Los Angeles, CA); and

Grahame Grieve (Melbourne, Aust.). We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those who graciously exhorted.

Randy Davenport

SARASOTA, FL

We are pleased to welcome, by way of transfer from the Washington DC Ecclesia, Sis. Elaine David, sister in the flesh to our Bro. Ron Badlu.

James L. Wilkinson

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias. In addition, we welcomed from afar: Bro. Andrew and Sis. Pam Wallace (Boronia, Aust.); Bro. Henry and Sis. Sharon Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Bro. Dean and Sis. Jenny Brumby, and Bro. Norm and Sis. Barb Wigzel (Aberfoyle Park, Aust.); Sis. Christie Haltom (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson (Kitchener Waterloo, ON); Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald (Paris Ave., OH), Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Aust.); and Bro. Davey Morgan (Heathmont, Aust.).

Our thanks go out to Bro. John McConville and Bro. Tom Pavone (Reseda, CA), Bro. Michael Jennings (Pomona, CA), and Bro. Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes. We also thank our Bro. Gary Schmidt for his exhortation. We really appreciate our brothers speaking for us when they visit.

Our special thanks go out to Bro. Jim Cowie for leading us in our weekend around the word with studies based on the epistle of Jude.

We had transfer to our meeting during this period, Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald. They were formerly of the Paris Ave., OH Ecclesia and we certainly welcome them both to our ecclesia and look forward to working with them as we journey together to the kingdom.

We were blessed with three baptisms in the past few months. TORRIE VETKOS, daughter of our Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Jennie Vetkos was baptized into Christ on Oct. 7, 2010. JASON ROBINSON, son of Bro. Greg and Sis. Michele Robinson put on Christ on Oct. 19, 2010. Then, SETH ROBINSON, second son of Bro. Greg and Sis. Michelle, entered the waters of baptism on Jan. 7, 2011. We are very encouraged by the acceptance of the call from our heavenly Father of these three young people. We see clearly, that God is still calling out a people for His name and we look forward to their contributions to our ecclesia as we run the race to the kingdom together.

Tom Graham

WASHINGTON DC

The Washington DC Ecclesia has enjoyed the visits of many brothers and sisters over the last several months. We thank the following brothers for their words of exhortation while visiting the DC ecclesia: Bro. Paul Gaitanis (Petersburg, VA); Bro. Ryan Mutter, Bro. David Levin, and Bro. Bill Link Jr. (Baltimore, MD); and Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT). The Camp Hashawha family Bible study weekend was held on November 26–28, 2010. The Washington DC Ecclesia would like to thank Bro. Ron Leadbetter (Hamilton Book Road, ON) for his informative and uplifting studies on David.

It is with great sadness we report that on July 30, 2010 Sis. Rebecca Thomas, wife of Bro. Clarence Thomas, fell asleep in Lord. The ecclesia has suffered greatly in the loss of such a faithful servant in the Lord. Sis. Beckie will be missed by all. We look forward to the day when we will be reunited with our sister in the kingdom of God here on earth.

We also report that Sis. Elaine David has moved and transferred her membership to the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia. We shall miss Sis. Elaine and we pray that she will continue to grow in the Lord in her new ecclesia.

Our heavenly Father has blessed us with more future additions to our Sunday school. On December 10, 2010, Gunner Nikolas Kling was born to Bro. Eric and Sis. Dawn Kling. On January 27, 2011, Owen Santiago Lara was born to Bro. Roberto and Sis. Megan Lara.

We also rejoice in the long awaited arrival of Bro. Omar Arjune's family from Guyana. Bro. Omar has been patiently waiting here three years for the immigration process of his wife and children to be completed. We share in our brother's happiness for their safe arrival and welcome them to the Washington DC Ecclesia. The following have transferred their membership from the Georgetown, Guyana Ecclesia: Sis. Colleen Arjune (Bro. Omar's wife), Sis. Volda Bailey (Sis. Colleen's mother), Bro. Jamaul Husbands, and Jonathan and Joshua Arjune (sons of Bro. Omar and Sis. Colleen).

Lord willing, the bi-annual Baltimore/Washington Gathering weekend will be held on April 16-17, 2011. Bro. Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH) will be giving the classes for the weekend on, "Speaking the Language of God". The location of the classes and memorial service for the weekend will be at the DC hall.

Cory Crabill

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord and Saviour the following visitors: Sis. Sarah Newton (Los Angeles, CA); Bro. David Ishman (Austin Leander, TX); Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin (Dallas, TX); Bro. David and Sis. Erin Clubb (Simi Hills, CA); Bro. Lyn and Sis. Pat Tunnell (Denver, CO); Sis. Wendy Hicks (Abilene, TX); and Bro. Max and Sis. Linda Wickham (San Diego County, CA). We thank Bre. David and Max for their words of exhortation.

In February of this year Bro. Max Wickham lead a study weekend on "The Man Daniel". We were encouraged by the God fearing example of Daniel who lived amidst the confusion of Gentile rule. Our brother emphasized Daniel's refusal to compromise in his worship of the one true God although put through tests beyond imagination. It was a very timely message and we thank our brother for his efforts on our behalf.

We are saddened to report that our Sis. Jeannette Davis fell asleep in Christ on March 12, 2011. Our beloved sister struggled the last few months of her life but now she rests peacefully, awaiting the Lord's call to life at His return. Jeannette put on Christ's saving name over 58 years ago and diligently served in his body especially edifying the members of the Wichita Falls Ecclesia. She taught the things of the kingdom to her six children and to everyone else around her who would listen. She also lived what she taught and was a wonderful example of "agape," following the "command of Christ to "love one another as I have loved you." Our Sister will be sorely missed and we continue to pray earnestly for that glorious resurrection morn! We certainly thank all the brothers and sisters who supported us at our time of sorrow.

On March 26, 2011, we rejoiced as Bro. Ben Beutel (Wichita Falls, TX) and Sis. Sarah Newton (Los Angeles, CA) were united as one in service to our heavenly Father. We thank our heavenly Father for providing Bro. Ben a wonderful help in the truth and we pray for God's blessing on their walk together toward His kingdom. May our Savior return soon to take his bride!

John A Clubb

WORCESTER, MA

Our beloved Bro. Thomas and Sis. Linda Reding have transferred to the Mount Pleasant Balaclava, Jamaica Ecclesia, where they are working diligently in the Lord's vineyard. May God be with them until we meet again. They served in many offices over the years and were always active in the Lord's work. They will be sorely missed.

Our dear Sis. Ruth Jorgensen has transferred to the Rochester, NY Ecclesia, which is closer to her work and new residence. We will miss her loving smile and helping hands. Our dear Bro. Jason Millard has moved to Joplin, MO to be with his parents. We will miss him as he grew up here in the truth and was very active serving in many capacities.

We are also pleased to announce the marriage in the Lord of Bro. Matthew Fulmer and Sis. Chantel Rivard on January 1, 2011. They met at a summer Bible school and Sis. Chantel recently transferred to our ecclesia from the Niagara, ON Ecclesia. May the Lord bless them as they walk together toward the kingdom.

Mark Fulmer

BIBLE CAMPAIGN IN GUADALAJARA MEXICO

From July 31, 2011, to Aug 6, 2011, there will be an old fashioned Bible campaign in Guadalajara, Mexico. There will be many preaching activities, fellowship, devotionals, hymn sings, a Bible school class each night, etc. Learn a little Spanish during the week and meet and work with your brethren in a growing Hispanic ecclesia. There is no Spanish required but you need to be 18+ for this preaching effort that is sponsored by the CBMA. For more information, contact David Lloyd by phone at 818-352-6486; or by email davidrlloyd@earthlink.net.

David Lloyd

CHRISTADELPHIAN FIRST PRINCIPLE DVD'S AVAILABLE

A series of Cable TV programs have been taped over the past several years in Toronto, discussing a variety of subjects in half hour formats. These DVD programs are virtually free to anyone that wishes to have copies for passing on to interested friends, for home use, or to use in a variety of other preaching efforts. Anyone interested in obtaining copies, please contact: Bro. Peter Wisniowski, ASK Secretary (Great Lakes) by email at petersa@hotmail.com.

Peter Wisniowski

CHRISTCHURCH CHRISTADELPHIAN RELIEF FUND

A Relief Fund has been established by the ecclesias in Christchurch, New Zealand, which has been severely affected by a 6.3 magnitude earthquake, that occurred on February 22, 2011. There are four ecclesias in the city with 230 members in total, and in the mercy of God, every single member has been accounted for and is safe. A number of brethren have serious damage to their properties, and many are still without either power or water. Some properties have been condemned and will need to be rebuilt. Though, the damage to property is significant, the economic consequences are likely to

be even more serious. The Central Business District where many work, is likely to be closed for several months, and it has been estimated that possibly up to fifty percent of CBD buildings may have to be demolished. This will create a major disruption to the local economy, and the livelihoods of many brethren may be affected as a consequence.

A special relief fund has been established under the Christchurch North Christadelphian Ecclesia (CNCE), which already operates as a registered charitable trust. This specific relief fund however, will be jointly administered by representatives of all elected arranging brethren of the Christchurch ecclesias, and will help to provide assistance for any brother, sister or ecclesial family in the greater Christchurch area who are in need of support as the situation unfolds.

We are deeply thankful for the many expressions of love and support that have poured in from all parts of the worldwide community, and for offers of assistance that have been made.

We are seeking to coordinate collections via the network of Christadelphian Bible Missions, and who have kindly offered to assist. If you would like to make a donation toward this relief fund, the address for checks is below. Please contact the Bible Missions for bank account information:

FOR DONATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA (VIA CBMA):

Christadelphian Bible Mission

Checks payable to CBMA to 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065

Please indicate that your donation is for the Christchurch, NZ Relief Fund.

In the event there are unused funds, they will be allocated to other approved Christadelphian charities or funds within New Zealand. On this basis the funds will remain strictly within our community, and under properly constituted financial structures. May our Lord soon come, to vindicate his Father's name and render all such need for assistance unnecessary.

Roger Lewis

NEW NORTHERN VIRGINIA ECCLESIA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in North America and Worldwide,

The Washington DC ecclesia would like to announce that on April 3, 2011 a new Central (amended) ecclesia in Northern Virginia will have been established. Several members of the Washington DC ecclesia who live in the Virginia suburbs west of Washington DC, have for some time desired to preach the Gospel message in an area currently in darkness.

The formation of the Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia results from no turmoil or dissatisfaction with the Washington DC ecclesia. Many of these brothers and sisters have been pillars of strength in our ecclesia for many years. Though their presence with us shall be greatly missed by all remaining members of the Washington DC ecclesia, our love and fondness toward them all will continue. We thank our Heavenly Father for their many years of dedicated service in His Name. We pray God's blessing on their joyful duty of establishing a bright and shining light-stand in a new place.

The Washington DC ecclesia commends and recognizes the following brothers and sisters and their attendant families, as transfers to the Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia: Bro. David & Sis. Holly Fertig, Bro. Lee & Sis. Chris Huff;

Bro. Mike & Sis. Melissa Kemp; Bro. Jayson & Sis. Valerie Bright; Bro. Michael & Sis. Veronica Porterfield; and Sis. Monica Ferguson.

*In our Lord's saving Name,
Bro. Cory Crabill .Recording Brother, Washington DC Ecclesia*

Brethren,

In order to better provide for the spiritual needs of brothers and sisters of the Central Christadelphian Fellowship living in Northern Virginia in the USA, and to help proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God and the Name Jesus Christ, several brothers and sisters have organized into a new ecclesia which we have named "The Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia". Lord willing, the Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia will begin meeting on April 3, 2011, and everyone wishing to visit with us is encouraged to contact the undersigned.

Our initial ecclesial members have been long time members of the Washington DC ecclesia and we wish to express our love and gratitude to the brothers and sisters of the Washington DC ecclesia for their years of care and love shed upon us all. We continue to look forward to the loving relationship we have shared with our brothers and sisters in Washington DC and look forward to visitations both to and from our ecclesias.

We seek the support of our brothers and sisters worldwide as together we strive to overcome in this sinful world and to follow after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ as we await his return. Please pray for us.

On behalf of the brothers and sisters of the Northern Virginia Ecclesia,

*Bro. David Fertig, Recording Brother, Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia
9703 Schmidt Drive, Burke, VA 22015, 703-644-6311,
NVA.Ecclesia@gmail.com*

"Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13)

In the days before Connecticut became a state, an incident occurred there that has become known as "the dark day". Suddenly thick darkness, probably the result of some abnormal atmospheric condition, blotted out the sunlight. The legislature was in session at the time, and some of its members concluded that the day of judgment had come. The cry went forth, "It is the day of judgment! Let us go home and get ready!"

However, an old church elder who was in the legislature stood up and said, "Brothers, it may be the day of judgment -- I do not know. The Lord may come. But when he does, I want him to find me at my post, doing my duty up to the very last moment. Mr. Speaker, I move that candles be brought in and that we get on with our business."

Minute Meditation

What is Your Vision?

Helen Keller, who was both blind and deaf, was asked, "What would you say is worse than being blind?" She replied, "Having sight without vision."

Solomon says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Helen Keller and Solomon both recognize that we all need to have vision. What kind of vision do we have?

Is it possible to see and not recognize what we are seeing? Many of those who saw our Lord and heard his words did not realize that they were witnessing the Word of God in action right in front of their eyes. Jesus comments, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

It is possible to have the wrong kind of vision. The people Jesus speaks about may have thought their eyes were open, but they so lacked understanding that it was as if their eyes were shut. Isaiah describes those whose vision was wrong when he says, "They err in vision, they stumble in judgment." We all need vision that is true and right, and it is important that our vision is in tune with the Lord and not with the world.

Paul explains how to get the right kind of vision and what leads to the wrong kind: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile toward God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

People nowadays see the evidence but do not acknowledge God. They observe the complexities and beauty of galaxies in space, the inner workings of molecules, but they have no perception of the divine hand that created it all. Their mind is controlled by their sinful nature and they will perish. They have the wrong vision.

Most of the people who listened to the words of Jesus and saw his miracles were those who rejected him and crucified him. Their vision was wrong. They lost their opportunity to be converted and healed. We are horrified by their actions and assure ourselves that we would have reacted differently, but would we? Are our eyes open? Right now the world is in turmoil, the Middle East erupting, financial systems in dire straits, and do we perceive the hand of God preparing for the return

of his Son? Are we searching the Scriptures to remind ourselves of the prophecies being fulfilled? Are we preaching to our friends and neighbors about the coming kingdom? Or are we so involved in our personal lives and looking out for our well-being that we do not see the divine plan coming to pass?

To truly see the hand of God we need to know the Bible and keep its vision ever before us. We don't want to be dull of hearing God's Word or blind to His hand working in our lives and in our world. We want to be among those that are converted and healed by our Lord.

It is obvious that most of those living in our world are not thinking right. If they have vision, then it is vision set on what sinful nature desires. God describes the conditions on the earth at the time of Noah: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

Jesus warns us that, just prior to his return, things will be like they were in the days of Noah: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."

We need only to open the daily paper or listen to the radio or watch TV or attend a movie to see that the thoughts of the people living in our world are only evil continually.

Since we are surrounded by the evil influences of the world all around us, we must make sure that our thoughts and visions are centered on God and His purpose with us in these last days. The Phillips translation in Romans 12 gives a graphic rendition of the advice Paul gives us, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold but let God remold your minds from within." If we follow this wise advice we will gain godly vision that will transform our minds, as Paul explains to those living in Corinth, "Incredible as it may sound, we who are spiritual have the very thoughts of Christ."

Let us then voice the prayer of the Psalmist when he says, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

**(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)**

MAY 2011

6-8 Vancouver, BC Sisters' Weekend. Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, BC. Sis. Jennifer Daniel: "Compassion Fatigue". Cost \$180. Deposit no later than March 1. Send

registration to Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6277 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9V 1A8. For further information contact Sis. Shonna Malczewski at shonna.malczewski@gmail.com

20-22 Sussex, NB Youth Spring Camp. Speaker: Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON). Topic: "Landscape Parables of the Bible". For ages 12 and over. Registration: Sis. Marie Baines 506- 433-5254 sussexspringcamp@live.ca

21-22 Prince George, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper. Theme: "Meditations on Creation". Contact: Bro. Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com

JUNE 2011

3-5 Meriden, CT Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Cliff Baines (Sussex, NB). Theme: "Practical Principles in Peter". Contact Bro. Stephen Harper 203-440-0504, sharper.rrn.ocn@att.net.

4-5 NY Fraternal at the Ozone Park Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Mark Vincent: "The Books of Wisdom". Contact Bro. Ben Drepaal at yerubbaal@yahoo.com

10-12 New York Sister's Retreat. Split Rock Resort and Golf Club, PA. Speaker Sis. Letisha Blair-Lamour (Mt. Pleasant, Jamaica). Topic "Being Born of the Spirit" on Christian Living. Cost of weekend is \$286.50 per person. Please make checks payable to "NY Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat". Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden Street#5B, Bronx, New York, 10467. For information, contact Sis Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 or averilpsm23@juno.com

19-25 California Christadelphian Kids Camp for ages 9-16. Ojai, CA. Speakers Bro. Ken Styles and Bro. David Wisniewski on Elijah. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com

19-25 Rocky Mountain Bible School Glenwood Springs, CO. Speakers Bro. Mark Vincent: "The Quest for Meaning in Ecclesiastes"; Bro. Dennis Paggi: "The Miracles, Wonders, and Signs of Jesus Christ"; Bro. Simon O'Grady: "Knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles". Contact information provided at www.denverchristadelphians.org or contact Bro. Josh Livermore at 303-288-3966

30-July 5 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Bro. Jason Hensley on the topic "The One Who Made Israel to Sin". For more information, contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcdonald-printing.com

JULY 2011

1-4 North Battleford, SK Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan will be speaking on the First Epistle of John. Contact Sis. Laura Jackson at t.jackson@sasktel.net.

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" – Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". The speakers are Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens; Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens; Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens. Registration forms on website <http://www.christadelphians.net/macbs>

9-16 Fifth annual Manitoulin Family Bible Camp on Manitoulin Island. The speakers are Bro. Neville Clark (Adelaide, AUS): "Moses — The Man of God" and Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "Walk Worthy of the Calling with which You are Called." Contact www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com or Bro. Rick Sales ersales@xplornet.com or 519-925-6847

10-16 Southwest Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Revelation — Exhortations from the Apocalypse"; Teen class: "Encounters with a Risen Lord"; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales): "Ezra and Nehemiah"; Teen class: "David and Solomon"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Muscle for the Five Big Mistakes"; Teen class: "Lessons from Daniel". Registration information at www.swcbs.org or by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367

16-24 Eastern Bible School Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org

23-30 Christadelphian Bible Camp, Manitoulin Island. Theme is "Looking unto Jesus". Speakers will be Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW, AUS): "Impressions of Christ" and Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Joseph — 'God did send me before you to preserve life' ". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or phone 1-416-284-0290

23-31 Midwest Bible School. Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Ed Binch (Avon, IN): "Jehoshaphat: Being Saved by God's Grace"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "The Angels of God"; Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, N.Z.): "The Current Work and Role of Christ". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Drive, Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com

31 - Aug 6 CBMA Old fashioned Bible Campaign in Guadalajara, Mexico. Many preaching activities, fellowship, devotionals/hymn sings, a Bible School class each night etc. Learn a little Spanish during the week and meet and work with your brethren in a growing Hispanic ecclesia. No Spanish required. Ages 18 and up in this preaching effort. Contact Bro. David Lloyd at 818-352-6486 or davidrlloyd@earthlink.net

31- Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School. Speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "Waiting for the Lord", Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC): "Weapons of our Warfare" and Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Salisbury, Adelaide): "Come & See — Witnessing for Christ". rogueriverbibleschool@gmail.com or Bro. Rob Posey at 541-474-6963

AUGUST 2011

20-26 Winfield Bible School Theme: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in You." Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "The House of Prayer for All Nations"; Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Australia): "Philippians: Shine as Lights"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Hebrews: The Power of Faith in Jesus Christ". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca

27-2 September Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, 2520 West Shawnigan Lake Road, Shawnigan, BC. Our speakers are Bro. Shane Kirkwood: "Encounters with the Master"; Bro. Stan Isbell: "Godly Mariners and Ships on the Sea — Lessons from the Bible of Men, Their Ships and the Sea"; Bro. Bill Link: "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion — God's steadfast purpose in Zechariah". Contact information www.vibiblecamp.com.

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com or Sharon Enns ennsranch@telus.net or 1-250-338-4812

SEPTEMBER 2011

3 Moorestown, NJ Labor Day Study Day. Bro. Richard Palmer (UK): "Reflections on Science and the Bible". Contact Dan Langston for more information; dklangston@gmail.com

11-16 Adult Study Week, Daily Interactive Bible Study on "The Life of David", at Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. For information about the workbook, or to register please contact Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson jrobins@worldchat.com 519-448-1696 or Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell thestonells@hotmail.com 905-627-9428

OCTOBER 2011

8 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK)

8-9 Echo Lake, NJ Fall study weekend. Theme is "Making use of the sense we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry (UK).

21-23 Women At The Well Retreat. Miracle Hot Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) will be delivering the classes on "Hannah's Prayer." To register please contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org or send a non-refundable \$50 check made out to the **Simi Hills Ecclesia** to Sis. Bonnie Sommerville, 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Phone: (818) 341-3932.

NOVEMBER 2011

12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameslwilkinson@hotmail.com

DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School at the Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Speakers and subjects: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" (adults) and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" (adults) and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" (adults) and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd at Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com

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of the Kingdom of God

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Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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An Outlook for Reading the Bible

When you begin to read [the Bible], keep a careful check on your outlook. If you believe that we of the twentieth century (who have vacuum cleaners, and airplanes, and atomic bombs) are very wise, while they (with their brooms, and donkeys, and slings) were unlearned and foolish, you may be able to indulge in many a hearty laugh at their folly, and add cubits to your stature of vanity; but you will learn — nothing at all.

If, on the other hand, you are willing to admit that there is something which suction and speed and splitting of atoms does not supply — something, indeed, which more and more eludes us as inventions multiply; and, if then you will come as a little child, to ask the Book whether it has something to teach, then you may learn, and be glad, and go on your way rejoicing.

Alfred Norris, On Reading the Bible

Editorial

Going to Law

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” (1 Cor 6:1).

Introduction

In North America, and particularly in the USA, we live in an exceptionally litigious society. It is quite hard to conduct our lives without some contact with the legal system: I personally have had much involvement with Patents, with their associated legal requirements and lawyers. I have also been deposed by lawyers in connection with my profession, but fortunately never been required to testify in court.

In North America, it very unusual to come across Christadelphians employed in the legal profession. In the UK, however, I know of many Christadelphian lawyers, although whether this is due to the difference there between solicitors (who cannot in general appear in court) and barristers (who can) I do not know.

So how do the comments of Paul in 1 Corinthians affect our attitude to the law? And what is the impact of clause¹ in our commonly used Statement of Faith which says “[It is a doctrine to be rejected] that we are at liberty to... recover debts by legal coercion.”? It is a question without easy answers: it is easy to be dogmatic and say we should totally avoid all voluntary contact with the law, but this does not appear to be indicated by the context and clear teaching of either of these guiding principles.

- Paul in 1st Corinthians is addressing the particular case of a dispute between brethren, which ought to be settled within the ecclesia.
- Robert Roberts acted primarily to prevent Christadelphians suing at law to recover debts, which is an action seemingly in contradiction to the commandments of Christ, where he says *“And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also” (Luke 6:29).*

Difficult situations²

There are a large number of situations that present themselves, and in many of these the decisions we might make will undoubtedly vary. I can give my thoughts, which are based not only on the scriptures, but on the sage advice of those of our brotherhood who have been confronted with similar situations.

Are we permitted to pursue financial compensation through legal means?

Fortunately, in many cases where we are injured, or our property is damaged, the compensation process is covered by some sort of insurance. Workman’s compensation in the USA is an obligation of the employer, and the courts are rarely employed. The Law of Moses provides an example in such cases: we read

“And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keepeth his bed: If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed” (Exod 21:18-19).

The law in effect provides compensation for the loss of income and medical expenses, without appealing to the judges of the land as far as we can tell. Similarly, most home owners are covered by insurance as a requirement of obtaining a mortgage, and few would have any compunction in making a claim in the case of damage to their house, nor in the case of an automobile accident.

It must be pointed out, however, that insurance policies typically have a clause such as “a person... must cooperate and assist us in any matter concerning a claim or suit.” This could potentially require a policy holder to appear in court to help defend the insurer against a fraudulent claim. I have been subject to such a fraudulent episode myself, but fortunately it was settled out of court. It was indeed partly on the basis of such clauses as this, that some brethren have counseled against obtaining insurance. It seems a stretch to extrapolate a prohibition against taking a brother to court to defending against a fraudulent claim, or indeed to say obtaining insurance is not putting ones trust in God.

Are we permitted to take out restraining orders?

There are situations, unfortunately not uncommon, where a sister has an abusive husband (or vice versa). Our Christian response when faced with abusive insults, legal exaction, and official compulsion is to be generous and non-retaliatory. However Paul when faced with torture in Acts 22:25-27 countered with the legal defense that he was a Roman citizen. It could well be argued, I believe, that similar provisions are available under modern law to protect against illegal violence, and I know of situations where indeed such actions have been taken. Whether this is appropriate in any given case is perhaps a matter of individual judgment.

Should we take legal action to recover debts?

As we indicated above, there was a series of incidents in the late 19th century among the brotherhood, of situations where some brethren considered it quite proper to sue non-brethren to recover debts. This is, a first sight, indefensible on the grounds that when the Apostle wrote to the Corinthian brethren in 1Cor 6, he was not limiting his thoughts to the circumstances where brethren were taking each other to court, but using this as an example of how far short of Jesus' commands they had fallen. He was certainly not advocating that our treatment of the stranger from the covenants of promise should be inferior to our treatment of the brethren.

But what of the brother who finds that because he is suffering himself to be defrauded, his business is being ruined, his family is going in need, and he is unable properly to remunerate his employees? This is not the only example that might be cited, in which a categorical prohibition against any such action is inappropriate. As a general rule, as cited in our Statement of Faith, “the recovery of debts by legal coercion” should not be the practice in the situation where only yourself would profit by such action. In every situation it is of primary importance that the

principle should be upheld that we are prepared to suffer to be defrauded, and no action whatsoever should be taken that can be considered retributive.³

Sometimes, however, although you personally might be prepared to suffer yourself, the consequences and harm rendered to others is so extreme that recourse to legal action might well be the only course available.

Are we permitted to defend ourselves from legal attacks?

The scriptural answer to this seems quite clear: as Paul defended himself by appealing to the law of the land, so we should have the same privilege — but the scriptural principle of not seeking vengeance still applies. Defense seems a reasonable course of action: offence (countersuing) is not appropriate. Of course, if we are in any way guilty, we ought to remember the counsel of Jesus:

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matt 5:25-26).

In this case the believer is at fault and Jesus encourages us to pay up or face the full consequences of the law.

Conclusions

These are only some of the legal quandaries that can face us. I could add

- 1) Should we use a lawyer in refugee, immigration, and conscientious objection cases? (This is an almost universal practice as far as I can tell.)
- 2) In the case of family break-up due to divorce, are we entitled to seek the services of the court to ensure any children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?
- 3) What do we do in the case of disaffected members suing the ecclesia, or any other Christadelphian organization?

In all cases, we should prayerfully consider the way our Lord suffered himself to be abused, and consider *“vengeance is mine, saith the LORD.”* But in many cases there are others to consider, and also the fact that sometimes we are almost compelled to seek help from the law in our legalistic society. There are no easy answers.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. This clause was added around 1900, after much controversy over this topic in the pages of *The Christadelphian*. It is not in the 1883 version, nor in any of the preceding statements.
2. Some of these situations were discussed in the *Australian Lampstand*, Jan 2011, p 10 etc.
3. This situation was considered by Bro. Michael Ashton in *The Christadelphian*, 1988, p 391. His answer differs somewhat from the conclusions of Bro. Butler in “Dare any of you go to Law?” (Pamphlet c/o the Christadelphian Office).

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

The Righteousness of God

Let me put a proposition before you: **Salvation depends on doing what is right in God's eyes.** Controversial? Not really, borne out as it is by Biblical testimony from the very first chapters of Genesis.

In fact, if we were to ask: Why does salvation depend on doing what is right in God's eyes? The truth of this proposition becomes immediately evident in Genesis 3. There, all that is wrong in this world is shown to come from not doing what is right with God, from seeking to go our own way, seeking our independence from God and His wisdom. The tragic result was the introduction of death into the world. This was to cut short the evil and destructiveness of those determined to go their own way. The world of Genesis 6 is the dramatic proof of man's capacity for evil when he abandons doing what is right in God's eyes.

Clearly, salvation does depend on our willingness to listen to God and to do what He asks! But, what exactly does He want us to do?

Searching for an answer for what is "Right"

This might seem to be an easy question to answer, but it has always been a problem for religious people. The natural tendency is to look for things we must "do": A list of right things to be done that will assure us of salvation.

- In the Catholic system, salvation begins at baptism (one of the seven sacraments) by which God makes the sinner (even if an infant) righteous. Then, throughout his life, God helps the believer to maintain and increase this righteousness by good works. Ultimately, a person is accounted to have satisfied the divine law by his works done by God's help, and thus he merits eternal life.¹
- The Protestant Church, though founded on the principle of "justification by faith," in practice emphasizes good works as the essential accompaniment of faith. So, for most Christians, a great deal of spiritual satisfaction is found in the performance of good works, and there is the implicit feeling that these good works will win God's approval.
- Judaism felt their system of rules and ordinances (The Law of Moses) defined the list of things they must "do" to be acceptable to God. But it was their righteousness, what they thought was right, not what God saw as right. Paul in Romans provides the most explicit description in all Scripture of the absolute failure of a religion of rules to make us acceptable to God. "*O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death*" is Paul's final, frustrated cry (Rom 7:24²).

So, what is right in God's eyes? What does He want us to do?

This was the very question Jesus was asked: "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" He replied: "*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom He (God) sent*" (John. 6:28-29). The "work" God desires us to perform is to

“believe” in His son. Paul develops this thought further *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...”* (Rom 1:16). The power of God for salvation operates only for those who believe the Gospel. Believing another gospel, no matter how sincerely or devoutly held, will never have this power to save.

More importantly, the Gospel has no inherent, mystical power. It is mere words on a page, a voice hanging in the air. The Gospel becomes powerful, able to move us to do extraordinary things, when it is believed. This is the explanation behind the radically changed lives in Hebrews 11. But it is even more than this: Believing the Gospel is also the basis of our righteousness. *“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’ ”*(Rom 1: 17).

It is difficult to make sense of these words as normally translated, so consider this paraphrase that tries to catch the spirit of the underlying phrasing: What God has set forth as being “right” in His eyes is revealed “out of” the faith of those who have believed, and by this means is revealed “unto” those who will believe. This is as God has declared in Habakkuk that the one He sees to be righteous (“just”) is the one who lives “by faith.”

In Romans Paul further elaborates this theme: *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe”* (Rom 3: 21-22). What God deems to be “right” is not manifested by those who keep the Law, it is manifested by those who believe in Jesus Christ. Paul now leads us to his powerful, culminating exposition of what God declares to be right in His eyes: *“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’ ”* (Rom 4:1-3).

This reference by Paul to Genesis 15:6 sets before us the most powerful declaration of the “righteousness” God seeks. And yet it is the most misunderstood declaration! Time and time again we hear or read that God counted Abraham to be a righteous man because he believed God. Righteousness was something God “imputed” to Abraham because he had “faith.” Brethren pursue this thought by asking whose righteousness was imputed. Then elaborate explanations are developed about how Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us.

But this reads the statement in reverse! God didn’t say that righteousness was imputed to him who believed: God said that Abraham’s faith was counted to be his righteousness. It is vital we understand this simple, yet utterly profound equation based on the grace of God:

Our Faith = Our Righteousness

“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it (this unwavering conviction) was accounted to him for righteousness’ ” (Rom 4:20-22).

We can give God no greater honor than to believe Him, and this, says God, is our righteousness in His sight! This is why the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says “without faith it is impossible to please God” and then goes on to detail a long list of those who became “*heirs of the righteousness that is by faith*” (Heb 11:6-7).

Righteousness in Faith and Deed

Pause for a moment to truly absorb the utter wonder of this Divine declaration. God does not want us to spend our lives like His own people did, or like Catholics or Protestants do, seeking to come up with a list of things we must do to please Him for our salvation. At the very beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, God in essence proclaims, “The right thing I’m looking for is your faith, your trust in what I say.” Doesn’t this make the whole focus of our lives one of learning to believe God? Learning to trust Him steadfastly in every way, and then, living according to this faith?

“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God” (James 2:20-23).

The good works or deeds Abraham did were those actions that fulfilled his faith/trust in the word God had declared to him. These deeds completed his faith, making Abraham’s righteousness tangible and living. These are the same ‘good works’ we are called to perform.

God at work in us

This leads to a crucial observation: If God is telling us that faith is what is right in His eyes, then isn’t the most important work of God in our lives the development of such faith? And, on this foundation, the building and shaping of our character and our lives? Isn’t this the point of all our trials, our difficulties, all our experiences? It is as if God is saying to us: “Trust me, hold on to Me and I will give you life. If you yield to me, I will shape you in My hands, I will form you into that person you very much want to be before Me. Just trust Me.” Everything that God does with us is directed to this end.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope... In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 1:3-7).

And it is our faith that will bring about our salvation (v.9), not our good works, no matter how wonderful they may be.

God at work in His Son

Jesus is the supreme example of God’s mighty work in building faith in those who

love Him and seek after Him. He is the true “righteous one” who “lives by faith.” God was building Jesus’ faith throughout his life: When at 12 he was eager to be about his Father’s business, he had to learn to wait for the appointed time. When God led him into the wilderness after his baptism, the trials he faced strengthened his trust in his Father and in his Father’s purpose. The culmination of this Divine labor is seen finally in the garden, where the fullness of our Lord’s faith is forged. Linger for a few moments with our Lord in the garden. “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will*” (Mark 14:36).

And then comes a most remarkable statement by our Lord. Finding Simon weary from the high stress of this situation, Jesus gently rebukes him: “*Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Mark 14:37-38). The echo is unmistakable! These are the very words of the prayer he taught his disciples early in his ministry. “Lead me not into temptation...” Why? Because “the flesh is weak”, the strength to overcome any temptation will never be found within us, no matter how willing we are in spirit!

Even more remarkably, this is exactly what Jesus himself had just prayed when he pleaded with his Father to take the cup away. Paraphrasing: ‘Father, don’t lead me into this trial! My flesh is weak; the strength to face this is not in me... But if this is your will, please, Father, deliver me out of this evil as you have promised.’ **This is what faith is all about.** This is why the writer of Hebrews said of Jesus: “*Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save him from death*” (Heb 5:7). His cries and tears were directed to the One who alone could save him. And God heard His son because of this godly fear. He did learn obedience “by the things which He suffered.” And at last, that which was imperfect, that which was weak, was perfected and made strong forever through the mighty work of God. “*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*” (Heb 5:9).

When we look upon our Lord Jesus in the bread and the wine, we see the pattern of God’s mighty work with all His Children: The development of a powerful bond of trust between Father and child, a faith so pleasing that God marks it out as what is right in His eyes. Here, then, is where we will find the explanation for all our struggles, all our difficulties. Here is where our faith will be nourished and strengthened. And, here, is where we will find the courage to say to our Father, “I do trust you.”

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. “It is a universally accepted dogma of the Catholic Church that man, in union with the grace of the Holy Spirit must merit heaven by his good works.” Dogmatic Theology for the Laity, 1977.
2. All Quotations are from the NKJV

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (6)

In this article we transition from studying the patterns of Leviticus and the Tabernacle to explore their fulfillment in the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The first five articles of this series have reviewed:

- the layout of the Tabernacle, which is repeated seven times in the book of Exodus;
- the analogies between the awesome theophany on Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle, which represents a portable continuation of the LORD's presence with the children of Israel;
- the parallels between Creation and the building of the Tabernacle, both of which are manifestations of God dwelling in the earth;
- and the alignment of the literary structure of the book of Leviticus and the Tabernacle, which provides a spatial mnemonic to help us remember the principles of God's law.

A shadow of future realities

These wonderful concepts are an important part of our training in the ways of our heavenly Father, but they are merely a shadow of good things that were and are to come, the things that belong to Christ. That this should be the case is implicit in the law itself:

*“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, **after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof**, even so shall ye make it... And look that thou make them **after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount**” (Exod 25:8-9, 40; see also Exod 26:30; 27:8; Num 8:4).*

The LORD wanted us to know that the Tabernacle and its rituals were a mere reflection of what He had shown Moses on the mount.

Hebrews emphasizes the implications of this inference, arguing that the Tabernacle and its rituals were but a shadow of true heavenly realities and the good things to come:

*“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of **the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man**. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto **the example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things **according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount**” (Heb 8:1-5).*

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Heb 10:1).

The same idea occurs in Galatians and Colossians. “Wherefore the **law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ**, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal 3:24-25). “Schoolmaster” is from a Greek word that gives us the English word “pedagogue”. Thayer’s Lexicon describes this role: “a tutor... a guide and guardian of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood... The name carries with it an idea of severity (as of a stern censor and enforcer of morals)” (p. 472).

*“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: **Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ**” (Col 2:16-17).* Here the word “body” means “substance” or “reality”, in contrast to its shadow. The Amplified Bible paraphrases: “the reality (the substance, the solid fact of what was foreshadowed, the body of it)”¹

A picture language

Robert Roberts summarizes the situation:

“On the first day of the first month of the second year after Israel’s departure out of Egypt was the Tabernacle set up and furnished with all its appurtenances... They show the terrible majesty and holiness of God, and the impossibility of man saving himself except by strict and reverential and loving conformity to His appointments. These things are revealed in the Gospel; but they become more striking when contemplated over again in **the pictures and symbols of the Mosaic example and shadow of heavenly things**... God proclaims to us by **the Mosaic parable** that He should be first in our knowledge, in our love, in our service, in prayer and hope and continual confidence” (*The Law of Moses*, 1979, pp. 96-97, 108; emphasis added).

John Carter explains:

“In describing this forgiveness and the means whereby it had become possible, Paul and the other apostles use **a wide range of terms and employ a variety of figures of speech**. This **variety of expression** was made possible by the preparatory work of the law of God as a code of instruction to Israel. The ritual law used **a wide vocabulary** in describing various offerings and enjoined **quite a range of words** in the confessions that were required... The ritual, being typical and part of the preparation for Christ’s coming, inevitably gave **the form of the vocabulary** by which the offering of Christ was described. In recognizing this we must guard against the thought that since **the language** was borrowed from the types, it does not describe real facts when used of Jesus. The work of Jesus is explained

in the terms of the law because the law was given to instruct the people of God concerning the principles which govern man's relationship to God — principles which must be recognized as the condition of man's return to God's favour" (*The Letter to Galatians: An Exposition*, 1965, pp. 23-24, on Gal 1:4, emphasis added).

Another writer captures the idea in thought-provoking terms:

"The Old Testament cultus [rituals], we are told, had 'but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities' ([Heb] 10:1). The priesthood had all the outward trappings of true priesthood, but not the essential quality of enabling men to draw near to God. The sacrifices had the appearance of true sacrifice, but not the power to purify the conscience from dead works. What then is the permanent significance of these outworn institutions? 'Hebrews describes the sacrifice of Christ in **language** borrowed from Levitical use... They were **shadows** which pass away and leave nothing but a **picturesque language** behind then.' **A picturesque language! A picture** of an unknown fruit resembles **the real thing** in all except **reality**: it will not satisfy your hunger, but it may help you to recognize the **real** fruit if you should come across it. Similarly, the Old Testament priesthood and sacrifices were only **shadow pictures of reality**, but they prepared men to appreciate **the reality** when it appeared in Jesus Christ. God spoke to the fathers in the cultus in order that they might become familiar with a **picture language** without which they could neither apprehend nor convey the full scope of his later word of salvation."²

To this end, we now turn our attention to the substance behind the shadows we have been studying. Having a strong foundation in the language and principles of Leviticus and the Tabernacle will help us to recognize the truth in Christ.

The Courtyard (Leviticus 1-17)

We start in the Courtyard of the Tabernacle, with lessons from the altar offerings.

Without blemish or spot. The altar offerings were "without blemish" and "without spot"³ which foreshadow the sinlessness of our Lord Jesus Christ:

*"How much more shall the blood of Christ, **who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot** to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:14).*

*"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, **as of a lamb without blemish and without spot**" (1Pet 1:18-19).*

In particular, "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; **but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin**" (Heb 4:15).*

In Christ, the saints will also be presented without spot:

*“That he [Christ] might present it [the church] to himself **a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish**” (Eph 5:27).*

*“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, **to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable** in his sight” (Col 1:21-22).*

*“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, **without spot, and blameless**” (2Pet 3:14).*

*“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and **to present you faultless** before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25; we sing this prayer in Hymn 106).*

Put your hand upon its head. For the burnt offering (1:4), the peace offering (3:2, 8, 13), and the sin offering (4:4, 24, 29, 33), you put your hand on the head of the animal as you killed it, indicating a strong identification between you and the sacrifice that represents you. This lesson is fulfilled by Christ who identified himself with sinners. Throughout his ministry, Jesus is willing to be seen with sinners and to touch those who were unclean (e.g., the leper, the woman with an issue of blood, and the multiple dead folks who he raised up). He has compassion on those who were suffering (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:31; 5:19; etc.). Hebrews describes Jesus as our representative, sharing our nature and tasting death for us:

*“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; **that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.** For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: **for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren...** Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:9-11, 14; cf. 5:1-9).*

Similarly, we identify ourselves with Christ through baptism (Rom 6:1-14) and the breaking of bread (1Cor 10:16-17; 11:26). We are supposed to further reflect Jesus in our lives, sharing in the fellowship of his suffering (1Pet 4:13). Paul speaks for each of us:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Christ a sacrifice for us. Christ gave himself as an offering for us:

*“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: **Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to***

give his life a ransom for many” (Matt 20:27-28 || Mark 10:44-45).

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2; 5:25).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1Tim 2:5-6).

The language of sacrifice in Leviticus includes “blood” (78, 9, 0)⁴ and ideas related to the “death” and “body” of the offering. This picture prepares us to recognize Jesus as our true sacrifice; the Spirit makes it hard to miss the connection:

- his “blood” (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; John 6:53-56; Acts 20:28; Rom 3:25; 5:9; 1Cor 10:16; 11:25, 27; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:14, 20; Heb 9:12, 14; 10:19; 13:12; 1Pet 1:2, 19; 1John 1:7; Rev 1:5; 7:14; 12:11);
- his “death” (Matt 20:18; Mark 10:33; Rom 5:10; 6:3, 5; 1Cor 11:26; Phil 3:10; 2:8; Heb 2:9, 14; 9:15-17);
- his “body” (Rom 7:4; 1Cor 10:16; 11:24, 27, 29; 12:27; Eph 2:16; 4:12, 16; Col 1:22, Heb 10:5, 10; 1Pet 2:24).

Present your bodies a living sacrifice. The disciples of Jesus Christ are exhorted to follow the example of their Lord:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:1-2; cf. Heb 13:15-16; 1Pet 2:4-5).

Christ is our sin offering. The sin and trespass offerings were to make atonement for sins and provided forgiveness (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; 6:8). This foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of our sins. Isaiah uses the language of Leviticus to describe Christ’s offering for sin:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all... Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the

transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:4-6, 10-12).

This principle — that Jesus is a sin offering for us — is found throughout the New Testament. When the fullness of time was come, the angel says to Mary’s husband Joseph: “**And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins**” (Matt 1:21). Seeing Jesus coming to him, John the Baptist says: “**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**” (John 1:29). Jesus explains that the wine represents the sacrificial blood of the new covenant, which is shed for the forgiveness of sins: “**And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins**” (Matt 26:28; cf. Jer 31:31-34; Heb 10:14-18). Beyond the gospels, this first principle is a common theme of the letters:

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom 5:6-11; cf. 1Cor 15:3).

“In whom [Jesus Christ, the beloved] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7; cf. Col 1:14).

“God... Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high... now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself... But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb 1:1-3; 9:26; 10:12).

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. English translations of the Greek word <4983 soma> here in Colossians 2:17 reflect the same point: “body” (KJV, RV, YLT, Jewish NT); “substance” (NKJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, ESV, Message); “reality” (JBPhillips, TEV, REB, NIV, Jerusalem Bible).
2. George B. Caird, “The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. V, 1959, No. 1, pp. 49-50, which cites A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 181; emphasis added.
3. “without blemish” (Exod 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3, 23, 28, 32; 5:15, 18; 6:6; 9:2, 3; 14:10; 22:19; 23:12, 18; Num 6:13(3); 19:3; 28:19, 31; 29:2, 8, 13, 20, 23, 29, 32, 36; Ezek 43:22, 23(2), 25; 45:18, 23; 46:4(2), 6, 13); “without spot” (Num 19:2; 28:3, 9, 11; 29:17, 26).
4. As defined in the previous articles, the notation (x, y, z) indicates that a word or phrase occurs x times in Leviticus 1-17, y times in Leviticus 18-24, and z times in Leviticus 25-27.

What, then, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews is the permanent contribution of the Old Testament to Christian faith and worship? I have been suggesting that the contribution is fourfold.

(a) Firstly, the Old Testament provides aspirations to which only Christ supplies the fulfillment, questions to which only Christ furnishes the answers. It offers a vision of man's perfection as the wielder of supreme authority under God, a dream of the day when man will cease from his labours and enter God's own rest, a longing for free access into the divine presence, a fervent desire to be free of sin's slow stain.

(b) Secondly, it provides picture language for the preaching of the gospel...

(c) Thirdly, the Old Testament provides partial anticipations of the realities which are fully present in Jesus.

(d) Finally, the Old Testament provides, as we see in the eleventh chapter, models of faith, men and women whose lives were securely grounded in a confidence in the future manifestation of God's redeeming power.

George B. Caird

Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah” (5) “Every living thing of all flesh”

Introduction

In the previous article in this series, we began to consider some of the lessons we can learn from the Bible's record of the ark's construction. One of the details worth noting is that God told Noah to make “rooms” in the ark. The Hebrew word translated “rooms” is *kane*, and it means “nests.” In fact, that is how that word is translated every other time that it appears in the Bible. So, God commanded Noah to build “nests” in the ark. That is, He told him to create homes that were suitable for the animals. This command offers wonderful insight into the kindness and compassion of God. He knows the needs of all of His creatures and makes provision for them. And if He takes such good care of mice, doves, and other animals that have no awareness of His existence, imagine how gracious He will be to us if we put our trust in Him.

The dimensions of the ark are given in Genesis 6:15. It was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. Lots of suggestions could be made about the spiritual significance of these numbers. I think it is interesting to note that they are all divisible by five. Five represents grace, so it could be said that there was grace all over the ark.

A cubit was about 18 inches. So, the ark was around 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It consisted of three stories (Gen 6: 16). Therefore, it had over 100,000 square feet of floor area. It was huge. It has been estimated that its carrying capacity was greater than 500 railroad cars.

As a symbol of salvation in Christ, it is fitting that the ark had one door. The Lord Jesus identifies himself as the door: *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:9).

And the ark also had only one window (Gen 6: 16). It seems unlikely that it was in the side of the ark. Then Noah could have looked out and seen the Flood waters receding. But subsequent chapters indicate that he was not able to do that. After the Flood, he had to send birds out of the ark to get a sense of what was happening outside. So, the window was probably in the roof of the ark. It was more like a skylight. If that was the case, then Noah and his family would only have been able to look up to the heavens from inside the ark. That certainly seems fitting as far as the symbol is concerned. As believers, we are supposed to lift up our eyes, as it were, instead of focusing our attention on the world around us: *“Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens”* (Psa 123:1).

So, the ark had one source of light, one way in, and plenty of room for all who wished to avail themselves of the safety that it afforded. It is a wonderful depiction of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Flood waters came, it lifted righteous Noah and his family above the tumult and destruction that engulfed the world around them.

“With thee will I establish my covenant”

There are times when disregard for God seems to be everywhere. That was the way it was in Noah’s day. People acted without care for what God thought. The same thing is increasingly true today. But God did not allow people’s attitude towards Him to defeat His purpose in Noah’s day, and He certainly will not allow that to happen now.

God created the world to fill it with His glory. When the antediluvians became corrupt, God did not destroy them all and start over. Then His original plan would have failed. Instead, God saved Noah and his family so that His purpose would be achieved through them. They would live, and many righteous men and women would descend from them as a result.

Perhaps that is why the word “covenant” appears in this context: *“But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee”* (Gen 6:18). This passage is the first place where the word “covenant” is used in the Bible. And there is probably a reason for that.

Before the Flood took place, God told Noah that He was going to make a covenant with him. But He did not actually make that covenant with him until after the Flood occurred (Gen 9: 9). Therefore, God’s statement in Genesis 6: 18 amounted to an assurance to Noah that he was going to live through the Flood. And through Noah’s survival, God was going to preserve His plan to fill the earth with His glory.

The promise of a covenant also gave Noah hope in a dark and challenging time. It would have made it easier for him to stand out by building the ark, and to endure the discouragement of preaching to a people whose hearts were callous towards spiritual things.

We should likewise look to the hope that has been offered to us in the Bible, and we can rest assured that the promises God has made will be fulfilled. So, when we see wickedness all around us, we should not lose heart. When temptations seem to press upon us, we must not give into them. We must be steadfast in our commitment to God, knowing that His purpose will prevail, and He will reward those who have been faithful, just as He always has.

“Every living thing of all flesh”

When God made His covenant with Noah after the Flood, He included the animals in it as well: *“And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth”* (Gen 9:9-10). Those animals had also been preserved by being brought into the ark: *“Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female”* (Gen 7:2).

It is interesting to note that there was a distinction between clean and unclean animals in Noah’s day, even though the Law of Moses was not in effect at that time. (The Law of Moses later made distinguishing between clean and unclean animals a significant part of the religious life for the children of Israel.) God must have told Noah which animals He regarded as clean and which were unclean, and He probably did so as a way of reinforcing the spiritual lessons that were conveyed by grouping the animals that way.

Leviticus 11 gives the characteristics of clean animals: *“Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat”* (Lev 11:3). Clean animals had a cloven foot, which is a hoof divided into two parts. That made them sure-footed in their walk, which is a characteristic that God wants to see in us. *“He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places... Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip”* (Psa 18:33,36). Clean animals also “chewed the cud.” Animals that chew the cud are called “ruminants.” They chew their food, swallow it, and it is partially digested in their first stomach. Then they regurgitate it into their mouths where they chew it a second time before swallowing it again. The image of animals chewing the cud reminded people of the process of thinking something over. In fact, the English word “ruminant,” which means “to think,” is derived from the word “ruminant” that characterizes these animals. The importance of ruminating on spiritual things is the lesson that is conveyed by the clean, cud-chewing animals. God does not merely want us to run our eyes over the words in the Bible. He wants us to actively think about them, chew on them, and ponder their meaning: *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts”* (Jer 15:16).

It is interesting to note where the Bible puts the emphasis in its discussion of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11. The section on clean and unclean beasts runs from verse 2 to verse 8. Only one verse in that section (verse 3) is dedicated to describing the characteristics of clean and unclean animals. Most of the text —

verses 4 to 7 — is dedicated to identifying the imposters, which are those animals that had one of the two characteristics of clean animals, but not both. God gave the laws concerning clean and unclean animals so that the people could learn to distinguish between the holy and the profane: “*Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine*” (Lev 20:25-26).

The most important lesson for us in this section — at least as far as emphasis in the text is concerned — is that we need to make sure our close associates are going to be good spiritual influences on us. We need them to be mindful of the Word of God and also to reflect its requirements in their walk. God warns us about contact with individuals who only have one of those traits. (Notice how contact with the imposters is explicitly warned against: “*Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you*”(Lev 11:8).)

We also need to make sure that we are not taking on the characteristics of the imposters by either

- devoting time to the Word of God but not living as it commands or
- by trying to lead generous and kind lives without the guidance of our Heavenly Father’s counsel.

Noah was to take a male and female of each kind of unclean animal and fourteen of each kind of clean animal into the ark. The margin of the King James Version correctly notes that the Hebrew for “by sevens” in the passage about the clean animals in Genesis 7: 2 literally means “seven seven.” That means that there were to be seven male-female pairs of each of the clean animals brought into the ark. More clean animals were saved because they would later be used for food and for sacrifice. In the next article in the series, God willing, we will consider some of the objections that have been raised by skeptics concerning the Bible’s record of the animals being brought into the ark.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our communities, we print this invitation:

You, your family and friends are invited to the

*36th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2011.*

*Main Speakers: Bro. Ted Sleeper — “Meditations on Creation”
Bro. Tim Galbraith — “The Tabernacle: A Magic Mirror for Disciples”*

Bro. Ed Carpenter — “The Light of the Gospel”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com

Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

What's the Goal? Part 3 – Effective Thinking

Over the years I have heard some pretty good rules that brethren follow for making decisions. One of them goes like this: *When you have a decision to make, decide what it is that you want to do; then do the exact opposite!*

It is not hard to understand why this is a good rule. If there is anything about ourselves that we can rely on, it is that human nature will impel us in the wrong direction. When we follow the dictates of our hearts — that is, when we give free reign to self-will — we will find ourselves at cross-purposes with God. To do the opposite thing is to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.

Simple, isn't it? Yet it is incredibly challenging.

There is another rule that is just as simple and just as challenging: *When faced with two or more choices, always make the choice that requires the greatest faith.* Because faith comes so unnaturally to us, the choice that requires the greatest faith is the one that promises the greatest spiritual benefit. It is the one that will bring us closest to God.

If only we would follow these rules. But it takes real discipline, to say nothing of ardent prayer.

Practice it in Sunday school

If, as adults, we need discipline to make good decisions, what about our children? Do they even know how to begin? Are we taking full advantage of Sunday school to train them in the basics of good — *Godly!* — decision making? If this is not a clearly articulated goal for our Sunday school instruction, we can be almost certain that it is not getting the attention it requires.

Several teaching strategies can be used to help our children learn how to make good decisions. Here are a few of them:

- 1) Take a fresh look at familiar Bible stories from the standpoint of the decisions that were made. The Bible is full of good and bad decision-making models.
- 2) Use case studies. Real life situations not only capture the children's imaginations, they can be used to give them practice in identifying and evaluating the kinds of decisions that people make.
- 3) Use decision making activities. These often start with a basic problem and then explore different approaches, faithful and unfaithful, for solving the problem. Activities of this kind can also be used to show that decisions come with consequences.
- 4) Give the children straight forward "What would you do if ...?" problems to solve.

All of these kinds of activities require the children to do some thinking, and they

change the children from passive listeners into mentally active learners. The rest of this article takes a closer look at these strategies.

Decision making in the Bible

The possibilities here are endless. Every story of human enterprise in the Bible involves some kind of decision making process. For example, think of the options open to the woman when she first encountered the serpent in the Garden. She could have refused to listen to the serpent. She could have decided to talk matters over with her husband. Perhaps they could have appealed to the angels for guidance if they were still uncertain about the serpent's message. Instead we have the first bad decisions in history, leaving us with a lot of consequences to talk about with our Sunday school children.

What were Noah's options when God commanded him to build the ark? What did Noah do, and what was the outcome for him and his family? We read: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Heb 11:7). This makes it clear. It is easy to take for granted the fact that Noah did the right thing. It is all too easy to forget that he was a real human being who had to make a very important choice and then act on it. What options did the rest of mankind have while the ark was being built? What decisions did they make and what were the consequences for them? We read of the days of Noah in Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27, which is very helpful.

Another example: the Parable of The Prodigal Son is packed with good and bad decisions. It also offers hope. As human beings we can change from making bad decisions to making good ones. This parable has a lot to teach us about conversion.

Many Sunday school students will be able to identify the decisions that are involved in Bible stories like these. They will also be able to recognize the outcomes that resulted. Consequently, there is plenty of room in almost any Bible story to talk about the relationship that exists between the decisions people made and the consequences that followed. Decisions have consequences.

Beyond this, there is room in many Bible stories to talk about the reasons why people made the decisions that they did. There is also room to identify the characteristics of good decisions and contrast these with the characteristics of bad ones. These are all things that the children need to think through with our guidance.

It is useful at this point to remind ourselves what this kind of instruction accomplishes in terms of addressing Sunday school goals.¹

| Educational Goals | | TRANSFORMATION | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Knowledge | Attitudes | Effective thinking | Relationship to God, Christ | Relationship to others |
| Bible contents | The Bible story | | Identifying the choices, decisions, outcomes involved | | | Faithful decision making |

By looking at the decisions involved in Bible stories, our Sunday school lessons have a new dimension. No longer is factual knowledge the only goal of the lesson. At the very least we have added training in effective thinking to the scope of our instruction.

Case studies

Case studies present real-life situations for our children to think about in terms of the biblical principles that are involved. The range of possibilities is endless here, too. The titles of some of the case studies I have used over the years give a hint of this:

- “A Matter of Life or Debt” (Society’s value system vs. God’s value system);
- “Getting Ahead!” (On-the-job challenges);
- “Gimme, Gimme, Gimme” (Selfishness);
- “International Barriers” (Christ transcends every human boundary);
- “Prison Break” (Facing life-threatening danger);
- “Rough Characters at Philippi” (The human realities of Acts 16:16-24);
- “Scrambled Eggs and Ecclesial Life” (A “my way or the highway” story);
- “Voyage of the Marquis of Wellesley” (Attitudes evident in the story of Dr. Thomas’ emigration to America).

I find it helpful to prepare a few pointed questions to use with case studies. These give focus to class discussion. Discussion of real-life issues tells us a lot about our children and the grasp that they have of biblical principles. It can easily show us where there is need for further biblical instruction.

More decision making activities

I also like “Options & Outcomes” activities. These pose a basic problem for the children to consider. Then several options are explored for dealing with the problem. As each option is explored, attention is given to the outcomes that result. Decisions have consequences.

When I design an activity of this kind, I often try to focus on a basic set of options and outcomes that are true to life:

- Option 1 = make a faithful decision; get a “good” outcome.
- Option 2 = make a faithful decision; get a “bad” outcome.
- Option 3 = make an unfaithful decision; get a “good” outcome.
- Option 4 = make an unfaithful decision; get a “bad” outcome.

The terms “good” and “bad” are used here from man’s perspective, not necessarily from God’s perspective. This allows us to recognize, for example, that a faithful decision with an apparently “bad” outcome (e.g., Christ’s death) may, in fact, be very good!

A fifth option also presents itself. This is to make no decision at all; to ignore the problem and just keep going. Our children need to explore this possibility as well. This can be a faithful decision when we know in our heart of hearts that there is absolutely nothing we can do about the problem. We have to leave the matter

entirely in God's hands. However, this can also be an unfaithful decision if we know that there is something we can and should do about the problem, but we do not want to be bothered. Conscience!

May God help us, dear Sunday schoolers! This is true to life.

Something else is evident in this kind of activity. We choose our options; and we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. But we cannot necessarily control the outcomes that occur. This underscores the importance of making faithful decisions and trusting that God will bring good out of our efforts to please Him.

What would you do if ...?

Finally, "What would you do if ...?" problems provide a simple strategy for teaching biblical principles of decision making. These can be thought up practically on the spot and can be tailored to almost any class and any Sunday school lesson. Just remember to give your students a little time to think about a problem before asking them to tell you "what they would do."

So go ahead and make good use of decision making activities. Make it a Sunday school goal to nurture your children in the principles of faithful, godly thinking.

Perhaps you already do this or have done it in the past. If so, I would like to hear from you. If you have decision-making / problem-solving activities that you have used and are willing to share, I would be delighted to receive copies of them. The Tidings Committee is in the process of creating a Sunday school link on its website (<http://www.tidings.org/>) as a place where teachers and CYC leaders can access all kinds of ready-to-use materials. Case Studies and Decision Making Activities are two of the kinds of teaching resources that will be available on the new Sunday School link.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)
sundayschool@tidings.org

Notes:

1. See the complete Sunday school goal grid diagram in *The Tidings*, "What's the Goal? – Part 1", February, 2011, and "What's the Goal – Part 2", March/April, 2011.

Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.

Gratitude

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.

Melody Beattie

Music in Worship

What's in our Hymn Book? Part 2

The Hymns in the Christadelphian Hymn Book are rich in their direct and indirect allusions to Scripture. This should not be surprising as each hymn was selected because of its Biblical expressions and ideas. When combined with beautiful music these ideas become a wonderful prompt to help us to recall the people, events and God's teaching found throughout Scripture.

Hymns are not composed or authored in a few moments of quiet reflection. It requires prayerful and thoughtful concentration to write a hymn. Very often the music is composed and then words are written that fit the music. Occasionally this sequence is reversed and music is written to fit the words. However pleasing the hymn music may be, it is the words that give substance and meaning to a hymn.

Many of the hymns we use are rich in concept and draw deeply from God's Word. Following is an example of one such hymn (357) which was studied and analyzed at a sisters' class. The four verses in this hymn have each been considered in detail. It is immediately apparent that each phrase in this hymn has many Scriptural connections and allusions. As we come to appreciate the richness of our hymns, our life in Christ can be encouraged and strengthened in a variety of circumstances and needs.

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

A Consideration and Study of Hymn 357 "Take courage, my brother"

| | |
|--|---|
| Written by Bro. James Stott (1922-91) Music by Bro. Andrew Johnson | |
| Verse 1 | |
| 1. Take courage, my brother | <i>"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psa 27:14). "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD" (Psa 31:24).</i> |
| And be not faint hearted | <i>"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid'" (Matt 14:27). "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you" (Isa 35:4).</i> |
| Let none of your sorrows | <i>"For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed" (Psa 31:10).</i> |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Nor trials impede, | <i>“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4)¹.</i> |
| But reach forth your hand and | <i>“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs” (Deut 15:7-8). “But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong” (Acts 3:6-7).</i> |
| Remember your brother | <i>“The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’” (Matt 25:40).</i> |
| Forget all your troubles | <i>“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5). “So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My eyes” (Isa 65:16).</i> |
| In meeting his need | <i>“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?” (James 2:15-16).</i> |
| Verse 2 | |
| 2. Be thankful, my brother, | <i>“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful” (Col 3:15). “In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1Thess 5:18).</i> Other verses: Col 1:12; Psa 103:1-2; 1Cor. 15:57; Psa. 92:1; Psa 104 |
| For God has provided | <i>“Because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). “The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Deut 28:8). Other verses: Job 38:41.</i> |

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| <p>Much more than you need from</p> | <p><i>“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him... Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:5,17).</i></p> |
| <p>His bountiful store;</p> | <p><i>“ ‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this’, says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it’ ” (Mal 3:10). “Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed” (1Tim 6:19).</i></p> |
| <p>For God’s hand is open,</p> | <p><i>“What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good” (Psa 104:28). “You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psa 145:16). Other verses: Neh 2:8.</i></p> |
| <p>His love is unbounding,</p> | <p><i>“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1John 4:16). “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1John 4:9). “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1John 3:1). “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,” (Eph 3:20). Other verses: Jer 31:3.</i></p> |
| <p>And, should you require it,</p> | <p><i>“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matt 7:7-8). “For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things” (Luke 12:30).</i></p> |
| <p>There soon will be more.</p> | <p><i>“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’ ” (1Cor 2:9). “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Eph 3:20–21). Other verses: Rom 8:32.</i></p> |

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| Verse 3 | |
| 3. Be prayerful, my brother | <i>“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). “Pray without ceasing;” (1Thess 5:17). Other verses: 1Tim 2:1; Acts 10:4; Col 4:3.</i> |
| And look to your Maker, | <i>“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psa 95:6). “In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 17:7). “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name’ ” (Matt 6:9). Other verses: Psa 121:1-2; Isa 8:17.</i> |
| He’s promised to help you | <i>“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, And in His excellency on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;” (Deut 33:26-27). Other verses: Matt 11:29-30; Isa 50:7.</i> |
| And waits for your call; | <i>“Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him” (Isa 30:18). “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth” (Psa 145:18). “I sought the Lord, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears” (Psa 34:4). Other verses: Matt 7:7; Psa 55:16.</i> |
| Just tell Him your trouble, | <i>“It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear” (Isa 65:24). “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me” (Psa 50:15). “In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You, For You will answer me” (Psa 86:7). Other verses: Psa 55:22; 34:17.</i> |
| He is the Almighty, | <i>“Thus says the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, says the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isa 66:1-2). “If you would seek God And implore the compassion of the Almighty,” (Job 8:5). “The Mighty One, God, the Lord, has spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting” (Psa 50:1). Other verses: Gen. 17:1; Psa 89:8.</i> |
| There’s nothing too big and | <i>“The earth quaked; The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel” (Psa 68:8). Other verses: 1Pet 5:7; Luke 18:27.</i> |

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| There's nothing too small. | <i>"But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7). "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" (Matt 6:25). Other verses: Luke 1:37.</i> |
| Verse 4 | |
| 4. Be joyful, my brother | <i>"But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee" (Psa 5:11). "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds" (Psa 149:5) "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. . ." (Psa 100:1-5). Other verses: Rom 12:12; 1Thess 5:16-18.</i> |
| A new day is dawning, | <i>"And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun" (Mark 16:2). "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day" (Prov 4:18). Other verses: Job 3:9.</i> |
| And brighter and fairer | <i>"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan 12:3). Other verses: Prov 4:18; 2Cor. 4:16.</i> |
| That morning will be; | <i>"So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2Pet 1:19). Other verses: Psa 30:5.</i> |
| So join with all voices | <i>"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;" (Eph 5:19-20). Other verses: Psa 19:4; Rev 19:5-7.</i> |
| And sing loud hosannas, | <i>"As soon as he was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, shouting: 'Blessed Is The King Who Comes In The Name Of The Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'" (Luke 19:37-38). "And I saw as it were... them that had gotten the victory over the beast,... And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev 15:2-3). Other verses: John 12:13; Matt 21:9.</i> |

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| The Savior is coming | <i>“You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near” (James 5:8). “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;” (Phil 3:20). Other verses: Luke 21:27.</i> |
| To make us all free | <i>“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin” (Rom 7:24 -25). Other verses: John 8:36.</i> |

Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. References are (mostly) either from the KJV or the NASV.

Bible Topics Referenced in Hymns

A chart has recently been prepared that lists hymns from the Christadelphian Hymn Book and shows Bible verses related to that hymn. This is a very useful chart for presiding Brethren or anyone interested in finding hymns that relate to a particular Bible chapter.

This chart can be found on the Tidings Magazine website: www.tidings.org. Alternatively, a paper copy of this chart will be sent to anyone requesting a copy. Write to Hymn Chart at P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696 or E-mail editor.

Peter Hemingray

Articles, questions, and letters may be submitted to Section Editors

Ken & Joan Curry krcurry@sympatico.ca

6 Alpacá Drive, Toronto ON Canada, M1J 2Z7 (New Address)

“If the LORD delight in us, then...” (Numbers 14:8)... These men saw what all the others saw, and more. They had clear apprehension of the goodness of the land; they were by no means blind to the formidable nature of the difficulties that stood between them and possession. But they saw God. They started with that vision, and saw everything else in its light. ...Yet these men also saw that there was a condition and they named it in the words: “If Jehovah delight in us...” In these words there was surely the recognition of a fact, and the statement of a responsibility. The fact was patent. Jehovah did delight in them. He had ransomed them from slavery, brought them to Himself, provided for all their need, promised them this very land. What further proofs could they have of His delight in them? Nevertheless, they were in danger of placing themselves outside the benefits of that delight, by their rebellion and their unworthy fear. These things were surely written for our learning. Every call of God to His people is a call to those in whom He delights. Therefore they should know that no difficulties need daunt them. They are not called to meet them in their own strength. He will be with them in the path of obedience.

G. Campbell Morgan

Signs of the Times

Signs that Jesus' Return is Approaching

Islam

The developing situation in the earth at the moment is indicative that God's program of preparation for Jesus' return is well under way. For those watching and waiting for his return, there are several exciting signs which could be significant. If these signs are what they seem to be, the return of Jesus could be perhaps only a few short years away.

Throughout the past 2,000 years, the followers of our Lord Jesus have felt sure that he would come in their lifetime. Like those who have gone before us, we have this same hope. But in our case, if our view of prophecy is correct, there are specific signs occurring that we usually link with latter-day developments immediately before his return.

Central and pivotal in these latter days is the growth and influence of Islam. Islam is growing fast throughout the world. Islamic philosophy and beliefs stunningly resemble the characteristics of the Beast described in Revelation 13 and elsewhere.

Islam is a direct and growing threat to God's people — both Jews and Christians. It is strongly expected that the prophesied attack against Jerusalem (Zech 14) will be by Arab Islamic nations who will be joined by non-Arab Islamic nations such as Iran, Turkey and maybe others.

Islam, and in particular Iran, which has in recent times become the voice of Islam, is strong in its hatred of Israel and in its determination to wipe Israel off the map. Islam is also violently against Christianity, and many Christians have already suffered and been killed by Islamic forces.

The growth, influence and objectives of Islam are a distinct latter-day phenomenon. The writer has believed for years that the Beast of Revelation is likely to be Islamic. As each day passes, the likelihood of this becomes more compelling, as Islam becomes more and more dominant and demanding all over the world. The threat of Islam against Israel is also very significant.

How does this fit with Daniel's prophecies about a latter day evil power which is the final evil power in the image of Nebuchadnezzar? Daniel makes it clear that this power will be cruel and vicious. Daniel gives us a glimpse of this terrible final power:

"I saw in the night visions and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceeding strong. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet" (Dan 7:7-8).¹

It was different from all the Beasts before it, and it had ten horns. *"I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before*

which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Dan 7:8).

The description of the Beast in Revelation is remarkably similar to Daniel’s description of this fourth Beast. The Beast of Revelation will be “allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them, and authority was given to it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it . . .” (Rev 13:7-8).

Compare these words with

“As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them . . . As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down and break it to pieces” (Daniel 7:21, 23-25).

“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:24).

Further, Daniel’s little horn will have “eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things”, and the Beast of Revelation will also have “a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words”.

The three horns

If this interpretation is correct, Daniel’s fourth Beast is Islam, and the little horn will grow out of Islam and will therefore be Islamic.

Daniel states that the little horn will destroy three of the ten horns. This indicates that there are nations in these last days which will have Islamic influence within them, but which do not sufficiently reflect Islamic aims and philosophies in the eyes of fundamental Islamism. These nations are likely to be pro-western and therefore unacceptable to fundamental Islam.

Three of these nations will be overthrown (plucked up) “by the roots”. Their un-Islamic governments will be overthrown and replaced by an Islamic government.

Who are these three nations?

There are current developments in the Middle-East which could indicate that the three nations (three horns) may be Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

The Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, has now been toppled. There is a widespread belief that once elections are held in Egypt (later this year) an Islamic government will be voted into power. The next few months will determine whether this is the case. If so, we may have seen the first of the horns of Daniel “*plucked up by the roots*”.

Lebanon’s government is also currently in danger of being overthrown by Hezbollah, an Islamic regime backed strongly by Iran and Syria.

In past weeks, Jordan's King Abdullah has sacked his government in response to Islamic demands. Will it, too, be replaced with an Islamic government? Jordan is already feeling the strain of Islamic demands upon it.

All of these three nations are pro-western. If their governments are replaced by Islamic governments, Israel will be surrounded by Islamic governments in the north, east and south. The Mediterranean Sea is to the west. Israel would be completely ringed about by its Islamic enemies.

If the next few weeks or months bring about Islamic governments in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, it is suggested that we will be witnessing the overthrow of the three horns in Daniel 7 by the little horn (Islam). If so, we are very close to the time of great tribulation spoken of by Jesus and by Daniel (chapter 12), and therefore very close to the time when the Beast will begin to rule for the 3½ years prophesied by Jesus in Revelation 13.

Israel's isolation

Students of Bible prophecy are well aware that Israel must eventually stand alone in isolation from all other nations. Already, most countries of the world are anti-Israel. Up to now, Israel could count on its main allies as being America, Jordan and Egypt. If Egypt and Jordan are overthrown by Islam, and if Lebanon is governed by the Islamic Hezbollah, this will have the effect of isolating Israel even more.

There are two factors that could result in Israel losing America as an ally:

- 1) President Obama is already showing real signs of being somewhat pro-Islam and pro-Arab in his political philosophy. Israel no longer enjoys 100% support from America's government.
- 2) America's economy is weakening. It has massive institutional debt — most of it with oil-rich Arab nations and China. This is a decidedly insecure and shaky situation for America. If its economy "falls over", it will no longer be able to support Israel or anyone else. There will also be major implications for all world economies.

Israel is therefore facing a potentially dangerous situation. Once it stands alone, without allies such as America or Egypt and perhaps Jordan, it will be vulnerable to the long-expected attack against Jerusalem.

The current Islamic activity in the Middle-East could all contribute to a situation where Islamic nations would attack Jerusalem, knowing that Israel will have no one to come to its aid.

The attack on Jerusalem

The Scriptures make it clear that the expected attack on Jerusalem will leave it in ruins, with its people taken into exile. Here are three powerful prophecies expounding this:

"I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses plundered and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into exile . . ." (Zech 14:2).

“O God, the heathen have come into Thy inheritance. They have defiled Thy holy Temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins . . . Let the groans of the prisoners come before Thee. According to Thy great power, preserve those doomed to die! Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbours the taunts with which they have taunted Thee, O LORD” (Psa 79:1, 11-12).

“. . . For it (Jerusalem) is given over to the nations and they will trample over the holy city for 42 months” (Revelation 11:2).

Revelation 13:5 tells us that the Beast will rule for 42 months (3½ years). Daniel 7:25 says that the little horn will rule for “*a time, two times and half a time*” (3½ times).

Once Jerusalem is attacked, the time period of 3½ years is given on several occasions in scripture. We therefore know that the attack on Jerusalem will signal:

- The beginning of the rule of the Beast, and a time of great tribulation for Jews and Christians.
- The trampling down of Jerusalem which will be left in ruins.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to events happening right now in the world. Prophecy warns that these things could well occur just prior to the return of Jesus.

If current political happenings in the Middle-East and the natural disasters which are taking place at the moment are reflective of latter-day prophecy, then it is highly likely that Jesus’ return is imminent.

It is always unwise to try and put a time on the return of Jesus, but in view of what is taking place in the world, we are probably looking at a few short years before he returns, rather than decades.

“Lift up your heads”, for we can expect to shortly see our Lord returning in power and great glory to gather his elect, and begin the great work of establishing God’s world-wide Kingdom.

Ian Hyndman (Beechworth, Victoria, Australia)

Notes:

1. All quotes are from the RSV.

An Opposing View

In fairness, the following critique is contributed by another brother to point out that there are disparate views within the brotherhood of the significance of the events we see unfolding in the Middle East. This is not done, however, in an effort to undermine the fact that we all expect the soon return of our Lord.

The Foundation thesis of the article is that Islam = Beast

Problems with the thesis:

- 1) The Beast of Revelation 12, then 13 is undoubtedly linked to the Daniel’s 4th Beast in chapter 7.

- a) It is impossible for Islam to fit this link historically since it had no ties to Rome or the Roman empire at the time the 4th Beast came into power.
 - b) Further, the latter day portion of Daniel 7 must be compatible with the latter day portion of the Beast in Revelation — again, Islam does not fit this compatibility test.
 - c) The author jumps in at Dan 7:7-8 and applies this to Islam, but where is the link to the 3rd Beast and to the 4th section of the image in Daniel 2? Daniel 2 and 7 must be seen together.
- 2) Islam does not fit the geographical or historical identification of the Gogian host in Ezekiel 38.
 - 3) While it is true some Islamic nations will be involved in the attack against Israel and Jerusalem, this does not warrant the conclusion that Islam must therefore be the Beast.
 - 4) The Beast is linked to the Great Harlot/Babylon (Rome) in Revelation 17 and ridden by Babylon, the city which not only had dominion over the kings of the earth in John's day, but also holds a dominant position in the last days. The thesis would require Islam and Catholicism not only to join forces, but for the Vatican to play a governing role over Islam in the last days — does the author really believe such to be a sign of the times that we should look for?
 - 5) The Catholics would welcome this interpretation because it eliminates any involvement of the Papacy with the prophecies in Daniel 7 in which the Papacy is condemned by God for having made war on the saints for 1260 years; the author rightly links the prophecies of Daniel 7 regarding the 4th Beast and the little horn with the corresponding prophecies in Revelation 13, but then applies all to Islam.
 - 6) If the 4th Beast is Islam as well as the little horn, who were the first three Beasts? Who were the first three metals of the image in Daniel 2? All the parts of prophecy must hang together. The author has sectioned out just the 4th Beast and attempted to apply an interpretation that leaves the 4th Beast completely disconnected from Beasts 1-3.
 - 7) Of great concern is that the author has adopted Christianity's mistaken view that there is a 3½ year period at the time of the end for the Beast to rule. This aligns closely with the teaching of a future antichrist and again removes all responsibility from the Church; this interpretation will encourage Christadelphians to look for a future Beast and fail to recognize the false system that Paul in 2 Thessalonians and John in Revelation state has plagued the world since the first century.
 - 8) The author's views on future events in Revelation is also evidenced in his application of Revelation 8,9 and 16 to judgments Jesus will bring upon his return as well as his application of Rev 11:2 and 13:5 to future events. Many would apply all these to events already fulfilled.

Finally: All the pieces must tie together. Without this, we have no clear and consistent view, only a series of jigsaw pieces.

A Concerned Brother

Response to critique

First, my article was not intended to be a treatise on all the beasts mentioned in Daniel. It was only meant to deal with the rise of Islam and possible developments concerning the destruction of the three horns (nations) mentioned in Daniel 7.

However, I can understand the concern of the brother who prepared the critique who obviously feels that the other beasts should be considered if the context of the Daniel's fourth beast is to be understood. It may be helpful, therefore, if I explain where I am coming from.

There are three basic premises underlying my thoughts on the rise of Islam, and the matter of the three horns which I have suggested are part of the rise of Islam:

- a) I believe that Revelation is primarily a view of the future, not an historic view of world events, and particularly concerns events in Israel and the Middle-East.
 - 1) This view may have the immediate effect of "turning off" the brother in question, as it was the view of Bro. Thomas and many other Bible commentators of his time, and also today, that Revelation should be seen in an historic context.
 - 2) Nonetheless, it is my view that Revelation can be viewed from a future perspective, not solely an historic one. There are scriptural reasons for this, and I would be happy to present them further if necessary.
- b) I believe all prophecy about the latter days is Israel/Jerusalem centered.
- c) The visions of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and the beast of Revelation are all descriptions of the powers which have persecuted and oppressed Israel over the centuries (3,500 years).

The base scriptural passage about these persecuting powers is found in Revelation:

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition" (Rev 17:8-11, RSV).

It is suggested that the seven kings mentioned here are the seven powers that have persecuted Israel since their time in Egypt: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam.

The beast that was and is not (the eighth) belongs to Islam (the seventh), and is likely to be the long awaited Mahdi of the Islamic world. When Nebuchadnezzar had his dream, two of those powers had already passed — Egypt and Assyria, so the vision commences with Babylon.

Similarly, Daniel's vision of chapter 7 (the four beasts) was given right at the end of the Babylonian oppression, and just before Babylon was taken over by the Medo-

Persians. Therefore, the first beast is Medo-Persia, not Babylon:

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| Lion | — Medo-Persia |
| Bear | — Greece |
| Leopard | — Rome |
| 4th beast | — Islam |

The Roman Empire was the oppressing power when John wrote Revelation (as instructed by Jesus). Thus, John wrote that “five kings have fallen” (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece), “one is” (Rome), “and the other has not yet come” (Islam).

The woman who sits on the beast

There is little doubt that the woman is the Roman Catholic Church, or the Roman Catholic Church and Europe acting together. It is not inconceivable that The Roman Catholic Church will work with Islam. In fact, the Church has already set up a dialogue with Islam to see how they can best work together.

Revelation 17:16 tells us that the beast will destroy the woman. (i.e. Islam will destroy the Roman Catholic Church and perhaps Europe as well). This suggests that Islam will use the Roman Catholic Church in achieving its aim of dominant rule in Europe, and when it no longer needs the church, it will destroy it.

Judgments on the nations

If the futurist approach to Revelation is correct, then the judgements on the nations described in Revelation 8, 9 and 16 will be carried out by Jesus immediately on his return.

The beast is future: For the beast to make war on the Lamb, the beast (Islam) has to be in existence when Jesus returns.

Closing comment

I appreciate that the views expressed above (albeit briefly) are not our traditional views on prophetic interpretation of latter day events. However, I believe them to be soundly based on scripture. My views on Revelation are contained in a book available online at bibleprophecy.bigpondhosting.com/rev/index

Whatever interpretive view we take on latter day events, it does not diminish or change our strongly held fundamental belief in the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ian Hyndman

Editors Note: *this article, with its critique and response, is presented in order to stimulate a discussion of the relevance and meaning of the current events in the Middle East. It is not intended to minimize the value of the work of the pioneers in discovering the meaning of the prophecies, particularly in Daniel and Revelation.*

Reflections

Where is the Middle East Heading?

We are not the only people looking at the current turmoil in the Middle East, and considering how it might impact Israel. I was amazed to hear Richard Engel, the experienced Chief Foreign Correspondent of NBC news, make the following comment. He did so on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, while discussing the events of the day in Libya.

“This whole movement in the Middle East, I’m worried about it because while people in the region deserve more rights and they want more rights and they’re embracing more of the will of the Arab street, well, the will of the Arab street is also ferociously anti-Israel, against Israel.

And there’s many people who believe that if you empower the Arab street and the Arab street wants to see a war or wants to see more justice for the Palestinians, that, down the road three to five years, this could lead to a major war with Israel. It could also force a negotiated settlement. But I think, over time, this thing ends in Jerusalem”.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)

“Do not be alarmed”

In the Olivet prophecy, Jesus saw troubles coming upon the world, both in the immediate future and perhaps also in our own day. He intended his words to relieve the fears that God’s people might experience as those times of trouble drew near:

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come” (Matt 24:6; cf Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9).¹

“Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken... When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away” (Luke 21:26, 9).

God’s people, if they listen to Jesus today, understand that there is no cause for fear, or “losing heart”, because of all the rumors swirling around. In the ultimate sense, none of these temporary troubles make any difference, because the one absolute certainty in the situation is this: The Lord God of Israel is in control, of all nations and all rulers, as well as of His own people.

For us, this exhortation can be very helpful. Because we have an intense interest in the Bible and the fulfillment of its prophecies, we may get caught up in short-term political observations. We may be led to make predictions about national and world affairs, with a feeling of certainty far beyond our capacity to know. Or

we may be easily led here or there by others who make such predictions. Some brothers, by speaking or writing, develop reputations as political-Biblical prophecy ‘experts’, trying to outguess all others as to the next big events that are coming on the world stage.

In such an environment, we may become addicted to the ‘guessing game’, and to the ‘experts’ who act as though they know for certain what the future holds. We call it ‘being interested in the signs of the times’.

Around us today, there may be rumors in the land, about violence that may occur, natural disasters that may prove calamitous, would-be rulers warning about the dire consequences of what other would-be rulers may bring down upon us all. These threats often prove to be unfounded in the long run. Many such threats in the past seemed real enough when first suggested, but never came to pass. Nevertheless, these dire predictions, even if they never materialize, can pose very real threats of their own for us all.

The danger is two-fold:

- 1) We may find it impossible to consider such ideas without falling into the same trap against which Jesus warns: We may lose heart, grow alarmed, and be filled with dread at what may be coming in the world. Such feelings are counterproductive of the simple faith and childlike trust which Jesus exhorts us to develop.
- 2) The second danger is that we may believe every political prediction we hear — especially the ones which come from other believers. If we put too much stock in ‘the next big thing’ that this one or that one tells us is sure to happen, only to find next month or next year that in fact it hasn’t happened as expected, then we may find ourselves disappointed, or even disillusioned. In such a state we may move to the other side of the spectrum, telling ourselves, or others: ‘How can we believe anything that anyone says about coming events?’ Or even worse, we may think, or say: ‘Since many predictions haven’t come to pass, and so many things continue on more or less the same year after year, how can we even believe the Bible anymore?’

A much better course is this:

- a) Don’t get carried away with every ‘*wind of teaching, or doctrine*’ (Eph 4:14), especially when it is stirred up by speculative prophetic interpretations. Keep in mind that many faithful believers lived and died without ever knowing what some Bible student at the present time may think is terribly important to understand.
- b) Keep everything in perspective. When someone says, ‘Here’s what’s going to happen next’, don’t get agitated. Take a deep breath, and wait a while to consider how much sense this new idea makes. Study to see how it fits alongside the basic truths of the Bible.
- c) Remember: Many righteous people in the past have been surprised by how and when Bible prophecies came to be fulfilled in their day. It is not a sin to understand prophecy only after it has been fulfilled. By the time we all stand before Jesus Christ, it will make no difference whether we got all our details

right as to how and when Bible prophecy was to be fulfilled.

- d) Above all else: Don't worry! If the best way to avoid worry is not to think about the latest rumor, fear, or perceived threat to the world that some brother tells you about, then by all means don't feel guilty. Just smile and ignore what he has to say.

The great scientist and Bible scholar Isaac Newton wrote: "The folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things by this prophecy [the Book of Revelation], as if God designed it to make them prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event; and His own providence, not the interpreter's wisdom, might be then manifested thereby to the world."

Again, concerning the book of Revelation, its objective can be stated quite succinctly: "The theme of the Book of Revelation is simple enough. Regardless of disasters, despite sufferings, in spite of the seeming victories of the gross and the wicked, there is a power in righteousness that will ultimately prevail. It is a frivolity to scan through the pages of the Apocalypse for hints and clues as to the likely date of doomsday, when the real point of the Book is not the date itself, but the urgent need to straighten up while there is still time!"

Finally, we would also do well to remember Paul's great words of assurance:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... I am convinced that neither death nor life... neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"
(Rom 8:35,38,39).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. All references are from the NIV.

Eliza



One afternoon, Eliza found herself walking down one of the many dirt tracks connecting the rural communities scattered throughout Kenya. She was carrying nothing, just the clothes she was wearing. Much worse, however, was the fact that she had nowhere to go. She was one of the unwanted girls of Kenya. Wandering not knowing where she was going, or what the future might hold. There was no one to care for her. No one to show her love. No one to tell her things would be okay. No mother. No father. No grandparents. No friends. No mentors. No brothers. No sisters. Absolutely alone. Little did she know, her journey that afternoon would change her life.

Sometime earlier Eliza's mother had died and her father was unable to provide for her. She moved to live with her grandmother, but with time she too was unable to provide for Eliza. So she moved on to a relative, but was considered a burden, an unwelcome guest. There she was made to work fermenting alcohol from early in the morning to late in the night. All she did was work, day in and day out. Her dreams of going to school faded away. Finally, she had had enough. So she left — with nothing, just the clothes on her back. A young, beautiful, teenage girl — unwanted and alone. And so she wandered.

As she was walking along that dirt track she spotted a white man in someone's home. She was intrigued and wondered if maybe he was a missionary who could help her. She decided to stay close by as she was too shy and afraid to approach the home. After a few days staying nearby, she mustered the courage to enter the home where she had seen the white man. She had found her new home. The home was that of Bro. Justus and Sis. Annette, a local Christadelphian couple that for over a decade has been transforming the lives of hundreds of children in the area. And so, Eliza was added to their family.

Agape in Action has been supporting the children under Justus and Annette's care since 2007. Initially through the Child Sponsorship program and now through the Lela Home, the younger of these children are being cared for. The older young people, including Eliza, are residing in Kimbilio (Swahili for 'refuge'), which is an 'extension' to the home of Justus and Annette that was completed by Agape in Action in 2009.

There are over 35 young people in Kimbilio; many have similar stories to that of Eliza. From troubled and tragic backgrounds, they have found new lives in this place of refuge. From being unwanted and unloved, they have found a family that truly cares. They are all in school or pursuing trades. Eliza has just completed her tailoring trade. These young people are connected to a wide network of Christadelphian youth in the area that form a vibrant part of the Kamakuywa ecclesia. In January 2010, eight of the young people in Kimbilio were baptized, including Eliza. Others continue to study and we pray that they too may also decide to become part of a very special family with a Father that will never abandon them.

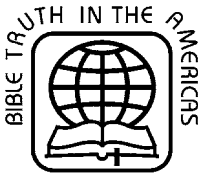
Bro. Justus and Sis. Annette encapsulate the very spirit of Agape in Action. For the past decade, this couple has put their love into action on a daily basis by taking in over 100 orphaned and unwanted children and young people. They have given these young people much more than life and opportunity. They have given them a hope.

From the Agape in Action Annual Report 2010

**In the U.S., donations to Agape in Action may be sent to:
521 Valmont Drive, Monrovia, CA 91016**

**In Australia, donations to Agape in Action may be sent to:
14 Windemere Road, Albany Creek, QLD 4035**

**In Canada, U.K., N.Z., and elsewhere, donations may be sent to:
39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON N1G 1A2, Canada**



Bible Mission News

Guadalajara – An Ecclesia on the Move!

Warm greetings from the Ecclesia in Guadalajara.

This first quarter we have been blessed with many visiting brethren willing to help out our effort here in Guadalajara. We are very grateful for the blessings of the time, expense and ministrations given by all these loving brethren. In January we had Bro. Michael Conner from California give us a Bible study and exhortation on Sunday, then Bro. Gordon Dangerfield from Victoria, BC, Canada, for a week in which he gave four classes on the First letter from the Apostle John and an exhortation. For two weeks, we enjoyed the company and service of Sis. Malu Farias from Veracruz during her school break. The second half of February, we enjoyed the classes on the Holy Spirit given by Bro. Bill Rawson. Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson worked daily in our Bible Center which allowed us to have some time to prepare the new location.

We were compelled to move by the presence of a new neighbouring business which constantly played loud and offensive music. The move seems to be a blessing as we have found a place that is cheaper and about the same square footage. We moved March first and have already acquired some new contacts from the new neighbourhood and don't seem to have lost any of our regular attendees. March 13th we had a potluck to say welcome to all in our new hall.

Bro. Dennis Paggi from California was just here this second weekend in April and gave three classes on the Apostle John... the man and his background, and an



New Hall in Guadalajara has an inviting appearance, with pamphlet display, and a place to sit and read with a coffee. This works well, since someone is there most of the day.

exhortation. This complemented well the study we had with Bro. Gordon and one of our regular Bible classes in which we were studying the Signs in the gospel of John. Our other classes right now include the study of Abraham by Harry Whitaker, Called to be of Jesus Christ (Romans) and “If we live by the Spirit...” both by Bro Bill Rawson. Our Bible Center is open daily and gives three public classes a week and various personal classes. We have about 25 regular contacts who visit us to study the Word of God.

Please note we are planning a campaign in the first week of August. Please contact Bro. David Lloyd, davidlloyd@earthlink.net, if you are interested in helping out with the campaign. If these dates don't work for you but you would like to come help at another time, please let him know that as well. Guadalajara is busy daily and could especially use the help of some sisters who are good at preparing lessons for very young children. Spanish is not necessarily required to be able to help. Keep our effort in your prayers and please contribute what you can to CBMA... it looks like we are very close to our Masters return and there is much work to be done.

*Much love in our Masters Name, Your sister by grace,
Cynthia Paiva*

Baptisms in Brazil — no Ecclesia yet . . .

It doesn't necessarily take an ecclesia for baptisms, and that's certainly the case in Brazil. Faithful sending of correspondence courses, and Skype baptismal instruction and personal visits are just another way to preach the Truth.



On Bro. Jim Hunter's latest trip to Latin America he was able to baptize Sis. Geselia Maria de Oliveira in Recife and Bro. Pedro Galeano in Mossoró. Sis. Geselia was baptized in the Atlantic Ocean on March 31, and that was followed with the Breaking of Bread and giving the right hand of fellowship back at the hotel. Our new sister (on the right) was accompanied by one of her friends.

On April 4, after a couple of flights from Recife, Bro. Jim was able to spend some time reviewing, interviewing and baptizing our new Bro. Pedro. Bro. Pedro first came in touch with us in June 2003, and this was followed with correspondence course lessons. Fortunately





he is Paraguayan and speaks Spanish, so we can communicate well. The baptism came off very nicely in the ocean about 35 minutes east of Mossoró. The Breaking of Bread and receiving into fellowship were done at Bro. Pedro and his wife's house in the city.

This was a busy but very rewarding trip to Brazil, since Bro. Jim ended off his travels visiting Bro. Emerson Acosta and his family in

Porto Alegre for a number of days for studies, and a Breaking of Bread with Bro. Emerson. We pray that God will help these three members of the brotherhood in Brazil remain steadfast, in isolation. Thankful with today's inexpensive communication methods, the Hunters can keep in contact with them on a regular basis.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,
Publicity
Christadelphian Bible Mission
of the Americas*

**Bro. Emerson Acosta
and his family**



Baptism in Puerto Rico — the first one in 25 years!

After many years of no activity with regard to baptisms in Puerto Rico, we are very happy to report the baptism of Roberto Perez Martinez. He is a 69 year old retired university professor with 35 years experience in a chemistry lab. He lives in the neighborhood of Bro. Miguel and Sis. Aida Robles in Ponce, Puerto Rico — who were both baptized in the mid-80's — the only active Christadelphians on this Island.



Bro. Miguel and Roberto have known each other for years, but late last year Bro. Miguel noticed Roberto starting to walk in his neighbourhood on a regular basis, but with a very sad countenance. After enquiring, Bro. Miguel found out that Roberto's wife of 43 years had passed away, which left him a very lonely and sad man. Subsequently, Bro. Miguel started conversations and then study with Roberto once or twice a day ever

since. Roberto started studying via **labiblia.com**, our Spanish language website which has correspondence courses that are mailed to the student by Sis. Jean Hunter.

Bro. Miguel baptized Roberto Friday morning, March 18th in the presence of Sis. Aida and Bro. Miguel's oldest son Miguelito (about 40). A lifeguard was present and assisted in a neighborhood pool. Bro. Miguel, Sis. Aida and Bro. Roberto shared their first Breaking of Bread the next Sunday morning at Bro. Roberto's place.

Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter have said for several years that some of their best response has been from Puerto Rico, and Sis. Jean has close connections with many in this country. We are reviewing appropriate follow-up for Bro. Roberto and the other contacts for 2011.



*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/C Publicity*

**Bro. Miguel Robles Lugo,
Bro. Roberto Perez Martin
and Sis. Aida Robles**

Reintroducing the CBMA

On April 9 and 10, the Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) met with the members of the Moorestown and Washington, DC Ecclesias to discuss the work of the CBMA as well as the many volunteer opportunities available to members.

The Lord has greatly blessed us by providing a window of opportunity to preach widely across the Americas. Currently, there are 45 overseas ecclesias in the Americas, with nearly 1,000 brothers, sisters and Sunday School members. The work has historically been built by the efforts of mission workers who have dedicated, in some cases, decades of their lives to working in Latin America and the Caribbean. This work has slowly spread the Truth into areas where new ecclesias have been established over time.

However, the "model" for CBMA Mission work is changing. New technologies, such as the Internet, have accelerated the penetration of the Truth in the Americas. While we will always consider our "on-the-ground" mission workers the backbone of CBMA work, there are now many opportunities for brothers and sisters to make substantial contributions to the work in shorter time spans and in some cases from their own homes. The "reintroduction" of the CBMA was designed to inform the brothers and sisters of Moorestown and Washington, DC

of the new volunteering model and some of the exciting work that currently exists. There are four separate categories of volunteer opportunities that the CBMA presented.

Introductory mission trips — These trips are scheduled to be conducted in a number of areas in 2011-2012 (Lord Willing). These trips are led by CBMA representatives that have familiarity with each country and the ecclesias to be visited. The tour guide will provide a taste of Mission work and introduce participants to our wonderful brothers and sisters in these countries. If you are considering Mission work in the future, an introductory trip is a good investment of your time and money.

Participation in Mission Work — The CBMA introduced several immediate opportunities to be part of planned campaigns or ongoing outreach in the Caribbean. These volunteer opportunities are appropriate for all willing workers and prior experience and Spanish language skills are not required.

Individual Volunteer Opportunities — These are important contributions each brother or sister can make right from their own home. Examples include on-line tutoring, writing on-line articles and Works of Faith financial contributions.

Ecclesial Volunteer Opportunities — A number of Works of Faith opportunities represent good matches for ecclesias and/or Sunday Schools. It involves collecting materials and resources needed in Latin and Caribbean ecclesias as well as raising funds to improve halls or repair the homes of members in Mission areas.

As you can see, there is something for all! We encourage you to volunteer today for one or more of these exciting opportunities and make a difference in the Americas.

For questions or to get information on volunteer work, please contact Bro. Dave Jennings at djennings@cox.net. To see a full list of current Works of Faith opportunities please look at the **CBMA.net** website or contact Sis. Jan Berneau at jberneau@earthlink.net.



*Submitted by Sis. Jan
Berneau
CBMA Publicity*

**Presentation to the
Moorestown and
Washington, DC
Ecclesias**

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

Our Sis. Margo Maier has transferred her membership to the Niagara Falls, ON Ecclesia. We pray for the Father's blessing to be on her in her new ecclesial home.

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Ron Frisbie (Echo Lake, NJ) visited us on April 24, 2011, to share our meeting and Bible study. We are glad to welcome all brothers, sisters, and friends to our meeting. Our Memorial meeting is at 10:00 am followed by Bible school at 11:00 am every Sunday, God willing. Bro. Walter and Sis. Nancy Garing are the proud new grandparents of a baby boy, Tyler Shawn Garing. Congratulations!

There is a new recording brother at the Honesdale, PA Ecclesia. It is Bro. Stephen Demarco. His email address is stephendemarco@verizon.net, and his telephone number is 607-797-7991.

Stephen J. DeMarco

VICTORIA, BC

We rejoiced in the recent baptism of MEGAN MCSTRAVICK on February 26, 2011, in a lake. Sis. Megan is the daughter of Bro. Mike and Sis. Sandra McStravick, and the granddaughter of Bro. Horace and Sis. Sylvia Macpherson.

We received by transfer from the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia, Sis. Ann Sandoval. Our sister is a welcome addition to our local fellowship. Bro. Chris and Sis. Naomi Winter have been transferred back to the Kamloops, BC Ecclesia. Bro. Thomas and Sis. Esther Cawston have been transferred to the New Westminster, BC Ecclesia. We wish our departing members God's richest blessing in their new ecclesias.

We enjoyed the presence of Bro. John and Sis. Angela Hellowell for our Study weekend on March 5, 2011. Bro. John also provided exhortations, lectures and a Bible class while they were here. Bro. Simon Snobelen led the classes at our recent Annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference at Shawinigan Lake. We welcomed many brothers and sisters over the past six months including Bro. Joel and Sis. Amy Thorpe from Mississauga West, ON. Bro. Joel gave the words of exhortation.

On Saturday, February 5, 2011, we held a Bible Mission Fundraiser that included an evening meal and an auction. We were pleased to be able to raise about \$10,000.00 for CBMC.

Our semi-annual Joint Arranging Meeting will be held on May 7, 2011. We welcomed brethren from the four Island ecclesias for these valuable events. Bro. Shane Kirkwood will provide our classes for the Annual Fraternal Gathering to be held on September 2-4, 2011. His theme will be, "Psalms for the Journey." For further information please contact the undersigned at csnobelen@csll.ca.

Clyde Snobelen

Minute Meditation

Gold is tried in the fire

Roy Posner wrote, “The greater the opposition, the greater the opportunity.”

We feel seriously tested when we face opposition, especially relating to our religious convictions. God sends us these trials as opportunities for us to more vigorously examine the scriptures and to proclaim its principles. If we are defending the principles of the Truth against a hostile world, we know we must stand fast against error, hoping to convert those in darkness to the hope of life eternal. When we debate doctrinal points with our brethren, we feel equally impelled to defend what we see as scriptural truth. However, it is important to remember that we must exemplify a Christ-like spirit while speaking up. It is possible to be in the right and still sin in defending what is right. The end does not justify the means.

Unfortunately, it is a human characteristic to think that because we believe that our cause is right we can run rough-shod over those who are standing in our way. In our zeal we can sin grievously against those who oppose us. History is full of examples of religious persecution, when one group, convinced of the righteousness of their cause, forcibly attempts to convert others, with the lofty goal of bringing more sinners to repentance. Sadly, it is the true followers of Christ who often are the ones persecuted because no true follower of Christ would use those tactics. Jesus taught us by example how to respond to those who oppose us. Peter tells us that the Lord, “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:”

Paul tells us that we should follow the Lord’s example and “being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:” Paul is not suggesting that we should compromise our beliefs, but that we must defend the truth in a Christ like manner. Paul tells us how, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;”

Of course, most people do not think that they are opposing themselves, for as Solomon tells us, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.” It is important for each of us to examine ourselves and to search the scriptures, as those in Berea did, to make sure that our understanding is correct. We may be trying to serve our Lord but be doing it in the wrong way, as David discovered when Uzzah was killed in David’s first attempt to bring back the ark. We may assume that we have God on our side when actually we do not. We humbly need to seek to align our thinking with godly ideals, as Joshua discovered when he asked the man with the sword, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” The answer was “No,” to both. The man was the captain of the Lord’s armies, an angel. Even though Joshua was Moses’ successor, he could not assume God was on his side. Joshua learned to rethink his position, that he must diligently seek to know the will of God and do it, to be an effective leader of God’s people.

It requires great patience on our part to defend the truth and do so in meekness as Paul admonishes us to do. The one thing we should be doing is praying for those who are opposing us. This command comes from our Lord who said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”

Jesus not only told us to pray for those that oppose us, he showed us how to do it. On the cross he prayed for those who were crucifying him: “Then said Jesus, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’” God’s answer to that prayer possibly began immediately, for as Jesus fell asleep we read that “Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God.’” Who was that centurion? We do not know for certain, but we wonder if the prayer was specifically answered when a little later Peter is sent to Caesarea to baptize Cornelius the Centurion.

Prayer is powerful. Prayer changes us, and when we pray for those who are opposing us, it will help us deal with them in a Christ-like way. We are promised that we will be tested and we will be tried, which means that we must not be surprised when we face opposition. We are given these opportunities to defend our faith and learn to endure trial with patience. Paul had many enemies in and out of the Truth, so we should not expect less. God is a righteous judge who will do right. Isaiah tells us, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.’” If we truly tremble at the word of God, we may suffer persecution for our beliefs, but Isaiah’s words give us comfort that though we may be persecuted now, in the end faithful service will be rewarded.

It is how we respond to our trials when we are being tested that is important. We are to actually rejoice when we are tried. Peter tells us, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

JUNE 2011

3-5 Meriden, CT, Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Cliff Baines (Sussex, NB). Theme: “Practical Principles in Peter”. Contact Bro. Stephen Harper 203-440-0504, sharper.rn.ocn@att.net.

4-5 NY Fraternal at the Ozone Park Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Mark Vincent: “The Books of Wisdom”. Contact Bro. Ben Drepaal at yerubbaal@yahoo.com.

4 Simi Hills, CA Study Day with Bro. Peter King speaking on the subject, "Isaiah: Prince of Prophets". Classes begin at 9:00am.

10-12 New York Sister's Retreat. Split Rock Resort and Golf Club, PA. Speaker Sis. Letisha Blair-Lamour (Mt. Pleasant, Jamaica). Topic "Being Born of the Spirit" on Christian Living. Cost of weekend is \$286.50 per person. Please make checks payable to "NY Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat". Mail to Sis. Averil Ferguson, 814A Tilden Street#5B, Bronx, New York, 10467. For information, contact Sis Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 or averilpsm23@juno.com.

19-25 California Christadelphian Kids Camp for ages 9-16. Ojai, CA. Speakers Bro. Ken Styles and Bro. David Wisniewski on Elijah. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.

19-25 Rocky Mountain Bible School, Glenwood Springs, CO. Speakers Bro. Mark Vincent: "The Quest for Meaning in Ecclesiastes"; Bro. Dennis Paggi: "The Miracles, Wonders, and Signs of Jesus Christ"; Bro. Simon O'Grady: "Knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles". Contact information provided at www.denverchristadelphians.org or contact Bro. Josh Livermore at 303-288-3966.

30-July 5 Calaveras Family Bible Camp, Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Bro. Jason Hensley on the topic "The One Who Made Israel to Sin". For more information, contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcdonald-printing.com.

JULY 2011

1-4 North Battleford, SK Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan will be speaking on the First Epistle of John. Contact Sis. Laura Jackson at t.jackson@sasktel.net.

1-7 Terra Nova Christadelphian Bible School will be held in Terra Nova Park, Newfoundland. Speakers and subjects are Bro. Joni Mannel (Walsall, UK): "At the breaking of bread " and Bro. Frank Abel (ON): "Wait on the Lord". For complete information and registration please visit our website terranovabibleschool.com. Contact Bro. Gary Hynes, 32 First Street, Mount Pearl, NL, Canada A1N 1X8 (709-747-2750); contact@terranovabibleschool.com.

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School, Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" – Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". The speakers are Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens; Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens; Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens. Registration forms on website <http://www.christadelphians.net/macbs>.

9-16 Fifth annual Manitoulin Family Bible Camp on Manitoulin Island. The speakers are Bro. Neville Clark (Adelaide, AUS): "Moses — The Man of God" and Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "Walk Worthy of the Calling with which You are Called." Contact www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com or Bro. Rick Sales ersales@explornet.com or 519-925-6847.

10-16 Southwest Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Revelation — Exhortations from the Apocalypse", Teen class: "Encounters with a Risen Lord"; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales): "Ezra and Nehemiah"; Teen class: "David and Solomon"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Muscle for the Five Big Mistakes"; Teen class: "Lessons from Daniel".

Registration information at www.swcbs.org or by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367.

16-24 Eastern Bible School, Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org.

23-30 Christadelphian Bible Camp, Manitoulin Island. Theme is "Looking unto Jesus". Speakers will be Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW, AUS): "Impressions of Christ" and Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Joseph – 'God did send me before you to preserve life' ". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or phone 1-416-284-0290.

23-31 Midwest Bible School. Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Ed Binch (Avon, IN): "Jehoshaphat: Being Saved by God's Grace"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "The Angels of God"; Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, N.Z.): "The Current Work and Role of Christ". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Drive, Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

24-30 Pacific Coast Bible School Idyllwild, CA. Speakers are Bro. Craig Blewett (South Africa): "The Message we have heard"; Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "To Speak Well of God"; Bro. Steve Hornhardt (AUS): "Come and See — A Consideration of Revelation 3, 6 & 12". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 9306, mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

31 - Aug 6 CBMA Old fashioned Bible Campaign in Guadalajara, Mexico. Many preaching activities, fellowship, devotionals/hymn sings, a Bible School class each night etc. Learn a little Spanish during the week and meet and work with your brethren in a growing Hispanic ecclesia. No Spanish required. Ages 18 and up in this preaching effort. Contact Bro. David Lloyd at 818-352-6486 or davidrlloyd@earthlink.net.

31- Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School. Speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "Waiting for the Lord", Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC): "Weapons of our Warfare" and Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Salisbury, Adelaide): "Come & See — Witnessing for Christ". rogueriverbibleschool@gmail.com or Bro. Rob Posey at 541-474-6963.

AUGUST 2011

20-26 Winfield Bible School. Theme: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in You." Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "The House of Prayer for All Nations"; Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Australia): "Philippians: Shine as Lights"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Hebrews: The Power of Faith in Jesus Christ". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca.

27-2 September Vancouver Island Bible Camp, Camp Pringle, 2520 West Shawnigan Lake Road, Shawnigan, BC. Our speakers are Bro. Shane Kirkwood: "Encounters with the Master"; Bro. Stan Isbell: "Godly Mariners and Ships on the Sea – Lessons from the Bible of Men, Their Ships and the Sea"; Bro. Bill Link: "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort

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Zion — God's steadfast purpose in Zechariah'. Contact information www.vibiblecamp.com or Sharon Enns ennsranch@telus.net or 1-250-338-4812.

SEPTEMBER 2011

3 Moorestown, NJ, Labor Day Study Day. Bro. Richard Palmer (UK): "Reflections on Science and the Bible". Contact Dan Langston for more information; dklangston@gmail.com.

11-16 Adult Study Week, Daily Interactive Bible Study on "The Life of David", at Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. For information about the workbook, or to register please contact Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson jrobins@worldchat.com 519-448-1696 or Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell thestonells@hotmail.com 905-627-9428.

OCTOBER 2011

8 Brantford, ON, Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK).

8-9 Echo Lake, NJ, Fall study weekend. Theme is "Making use of the senses we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry (UK).

21-23 Women At The Well Retreat. Miracle Hot Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) on "Hannah's Prayer." Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org or send a non-refundable \$50 check made out to Sis. Bonnie Sommerville, 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Phone: (818) 341-3932.

NOVEMBER 2011

12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL, Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameslwilkinson@hotmail.com.

DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com); or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com.

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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The Sluggard

"The sluggard craves and gets nothing" (Proverbs 13:4).

The sloth lives in an inverted world hanging from the upper branches of trees by long hooked claws. It moves slowly hand over hand but spends most of its day asleep. Its head is the same diameter as its neck and, lacking obvious ears, seems to emerge directly from its powerful shoulders. At the other end there is no visible tail. It is often difficult to tell the sloth's front end from its rear. Unless molested, this upside-down animal seldom moves during the day...

The sloth is such a masterpiece of immobility that during the rainy season tiny plants grow on its coarse hair. Caterpillars feed on the plants, and moths nest in them. The sloth's immobility is its chief safeguard against enemies. Seen motionless high among the dense foliage, it most resembles a mass of dead leaves, a termite nest, or a lump of moldy fungus. Even when killed a sloth continues to cling to his branch with his curved claws. No one, perhaps not even the sloth, knows whether he is dead or alive. No other warm-blooded mammal is so languid and lethargic.

Barry Bowen

Editorial

Marriage Problems

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt 19:4-6).

Introduction

An enormous amount has been written in our community about the topics of marriage and divorce, and a somewhat lesser amount has been written about such topics as pre-marital sex. But in all this, there has been comparatively little emphasis placed on the real purpose of sex, which is to provide two devoted partners with a sensuous, deeply personal opportunity to glimpse the love and delight of God in them. And we all admit that once this union is established in the sight of man and God *“let not man put asunder.”* But sometimes things go deeply awry in such a union: what should be our reaction? Should we absolutely refuse to recognize that a marriage can be terminated while both members are alive? Should we allow for Scripturally based exceptions?

I would like to consider both these areas, recognizing that, although much discussed, the area of marital problems results in situations where there is little total agreement among us, and I am unlikely to change this fact. It is not my purpose to delve in exactly what “fornication” means in Matthew 19:19, or the subtleties of Paul’s exposition in 1 Corinthians 7. Rather, I would like to consider both the beauty and pleasures in the marriage state, and also the compassion that Jesus and the apostles showed when dealing with moral problems in their day.

Marriage and Sex

The coming together of man and woman does indeed make “one flesh” — for when a child comes of this union, the baby is a single individual, made from both parents. All who have witnessed the birth of their child can remember what, in most cases, is the almost indescribable joy and happiness that a healthy baby brings. *“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:21).*

And this joy is only a small part of the happiness that marriage and sex brings. However we might (quite appropriately) spiritualize the Song of Solomon, it does help us realize that the often erotic images that are used help us to appreciate that the book is indeed an allegorical picture of the union between God and His people. The yearnings that the young couple experience for each other, for both physical and emotional intimacy, for the desire to be close, for the contentment in each other, are but a shadow of the yearning of God for us — and we for Him.

Childbirth can be one outcome of such intimacy, but at its best marital sex is a foretaste of the glories of the future Kingdom, when true union between God and his people will be achieved.

Unfortunately, sex does not always take place in situations that lead to such an image of God and his purpose. But this should be the message we give to our young. Marriage is intended to perform other functions than to propagate the species. Paul in Ephesians 5 likens the love of a husband for his wife to the love of Christ for his ecclesia — his called out one. That the Greek used is “agape” does not mean that physical love is not involved in the case of a man and a woman. Indeed, Paul goes on to quote the seminal passage in Genesis 2:24, after saying “*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself*” (Eph 5:26). Clearly the relationship of a man and his wife are a shadow of the relationship we have with Christ, if we only believe. But this relationship, like that of marriage, is not one to be trifled with. It needs to be protected, shielded, nurtured, and given room to grow. We think of the law which says “*When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken*” (Deut 24:5). The first year of marriage is a time for bonding, to learn to share, to compromise, to begin at acceptance of each other’s little habits and foibles. This is in the glow and warmth of physical love, but this marriage also needs to have the recognition of society that this relationship is permanent until severed by death.

Sex outside Marriage

So what is the relationship of sex outside the marriage bond to this vision? I would argue that the purpose of sex, as God intended, is to give the partners a foreshadowing of the love of Christ for them and a pale preview of the future delight in store for believers. To seek one with whom to share this vision requires a fidelity and commitment that is not an optional feature of a healthy sexual life. Healthy sex requires the soundness of the marriage.

So it is with this vision that we derive the insistence that sex truly belongs in marriage. The crux of the reason is that the realization of the love of God and Christ are only truly available in a true marriage. Sex belongs only within a life long partnership, not for abstract moral reasons but because only through marriage can we glimpse the relationship between the love of man and woman and the love of Christ for his ecclesia.

Neither sex nor marriage is for everyone, as Paul says:

“I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed” (1Cor 7:26-27).

Marriage requires a willingness to serve, to subjugate oneself to another person’s needs and desires, to commit to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But for those who are able, marriage can and should enable us to properly understand the love of Christ for his ecclesia.

Problems in Marriage

Not always is this view of marriage reflected in the realities of the actual relationship of husband and wife. With the frailties we are all subject to, all marriages undergo periods of stress, tension and difficulties. For many these stresses are handled without overwhelming the integrity of their marriage, but sometimes for one or many reasons situations arise that cause problems so major that the relationship disintegrates.

No one will disagree that marriage in the Lord is intended to be permanent. Whether are not the exceptive clause in Matthew 19 refers to premarital affairs or any illicit activities is somewhat irrelevant. Marriage is intended to be permanent and indissoluble. Every step should be taken to prevent breakup. Transgressions sometimes arise, but the first reaction should always to accept repentance and attempt to reconcile. However, not all situations are capable of resolution. Anyone who has knowledge and experience of such problems will surely recognize that there is very rarely an “innocent” or a “guilty” party in marital dissolutions. However not infrequently we have such situations as:

- a partner becomes mentally ill or an alcoholic and violence ensues;
- one of the pair leaves the relationship without any obvious reason and refuses all attempts at reconciliation;
- one of the two is so involved in their own affairs or work that no true sexual or spiritual relationship is possible.

Ecclesias vary as to handle such problems. Some ecclesias are legalistic, some even having constitutions that prohibit either divorce, or remarriage after divorce. Such is apparently an easy way out of the dilemma: but is it reflective of the compassion and mercy exhibited in the New Testament by Christ? Paul himself was forgiven for his murderous assault on the early ecclesias, which clearly was a sin against the household much worse than that of any likely marital problems.

The New Testament establishes at once the highest possible moral principles and also shows the greatest examples of forgiveness possible. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”* (Rom 3:23). Paul lists those transgressions that inhibit the future hope *“Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1Cor 6:9-10). Sexual sins predominate in the list: but then Paul goes on to say *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (vs 11).

It is hard indeed to say that sexual transgressions, accompanied by genuine contrition, prevent any future hope of sharing in a Christ-like marriage. We have to leave all to the judgment and mercy of the Almighty God.

Peter Hemingray

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

Love in 1 John

*“A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded
which he cannot do, never does all he can”*

John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill began learning Greek at the age of three, Latin at the age of eight, and had read through most of the Greek and Roman classics on politics and philosophy (as well as history — Gibbons ‘Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ being his favorite at 13). When I was still getting in trouble for pulling chairs out from people in Elementary School, John Stuart Mill’s father had made this child write dissertations and précis on most of these classical works, to make sure that the child developed his mind. His father was demanding, often to the limit of impossible, pushing the limits of John Stuart Mill to unheard of discipline and understanding in such a young boy. This is like the Bible and in particular, the first epistle of John and the concept of love.

Brief overview and analysis of 1 John

The book is full of “If” and “Then” statements — very logical and simple. These simple statements are indicators with which we can examine ourselves to see whether we are walking in the light. They are small but profound statements that reach deep into our minds and cut open our hearts, and lay them out in full view of the light that comes from God’s Word. For example:

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”(1John1:6-9).

1 John is all about ideals, like Jesus was. It reaches for the unreachable. It tells us what to reach for, and how to grasp perfection, how to love perfectly, how to live perfectly, how to not sin, how to obtain perfection. And, without faith, we would read 1 John with despair and frustration. How can I possibly carry out 1 John 3:6? And in 1 John 5:14, why would I even pray if all that will be accomplished is God’s will anyways? How can I even come close to the impossible standard of 1 John 3:24? Well, the answer to these questions is answered by John in 1 John 5:3-6. THAT’S US! We have to reach for the impossible in order to do our best! Then 1 John 2:1 tells us that when we reach for this standard, God will take care of the rest.

Introduction to Love

Love (#25, 26 — agape, agapeo) is used intensely in this short epistle — #25 is used 17 times, and #26 is used 14 times for a total of 31. This is more intense than

anywhere else in the Bible! John is obviously making a point that we are meant to take notice of! So, spare me some time that I may do this.

“... it is remarkable that there have been only three supposed instances of its use in ‘profane’ Greek, two of which are now read otherwise and the third is doubtful... The fact that its use was very restricted made it easier to annex for a special purpose...” [James Hope Moulton, George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. (USA: Eerdmens Publishing Company, 1980), pg.2.]

Agape love is full, total, no-compromise love. It is the kind of love that we are to have in Mark 12:33 — it’s all encompassing. In fact, Jesus tells us this —

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love <25> one another; as I have loved <25> you, that ye also love <25> one another” (John 13:34).

What’s so new about this commandment of Jesus? Well, I can assure you that the first part certainly isn’t new. (Leviticus 19:18[*your neighbor*], 34[*strangers and one another*]). But the second part makes all the difference in the world. In fact a two letter word (in English) makes all the difference — ‘AS’... as Jesus loved us. What does ‘as’ mean? The word is ‘kathos’ #2531 and is translated ‘as’, ‘even as’, ‘according as’, ‘according to’. It gives the idea in our language of ‘equal to’, ‘in proportion to’, ‘in the degree that’... Let’s take a look at a few other passages where this word is used:

John 15:9 — “As <2531> the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”

2 Cor. 9:7 — “Every man according as <2531> he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Eph. 5:25 — “Husbands, love your wives, even as <2531> Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”

This ‘equal to’ love is the most fulfilling, perfect form possible. And it is this love that John, in his first epistle is capitalizing on. He tells us what this love is all about.

Agape stands in contrast to ‘eros’ (fleshly, erotic love) which is never mentioned in the New Testament, and ‘phileo’, which is affection, friendship (the word for friend in the Greek is *philos*), attraction, based on something that you like in the object towards which you feel *phileo*. But how can you possibly *phileo* your enemies? They do not attract you! It is based on emotion and therefore it is impossible to *phileo* them. Agape is not based on emotions but on a firm foundation of spiritual enlightenment through God’s Word and looking to Jesus. Then and ONLY THEN can we love God and then naturally love one another, whether it’s our brothers and sisters, our friends, our enemies, etc. (Matt. 5:44-48).

Love — the look from 1 John

Agape love is the glue that sticks together EVERYTHING! Our faith, our confidence, our relationships with others, our attitude, our knowledge, our actions, etc.

| Verse | Quote | Generalization |
|-------|---|---|
| 2:5 | <i>“whoso keepeth his word, in him is the love of God perfected...”</i> | There is a close connection between God’s Word and the love we have for Him and His son. |
| 2:15 | <i>“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”</i> | The love we need to have for God cannot coexist with loving this world — they are at opposing ends. |
| 3:1 | <i>“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God”</i> | God has shown us his love by adopting us as his children! US! That is love, since we have not deserved it. The word ‘manner’ is #4217 and means ‘from what nation, tribe or country’. |
| 3:16 | <i>“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because [Jesus] laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”</i> | Here is where we understand how our love is supposed to be equal with Jesus’ and God’s — no holds barred! It is all or nothing |
| 4:7 | <i>“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God”</i> | The love that we have must be founded in God. We are loving people because God loved us, and we are trying to return it perfectly. The word “Beloved” is #27, agapetos, and means ‘you who practice agape love’. See John 13:25 for what Jesus said about love. |
| 4:8 | <i>“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”</i> | God and Love are synonymous. Love is of God (v.7) therefore God is Love. That is simple but profound. Are we love? |
| 4:9 | <i>“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him”</i> | The love of God was demonstrated by Jesus living his life, dying for us, and then being resurrected. God’s love was made manifest by works. His love for us is on SOLID ground. |
| 4:12 | <i>“No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”</i> | This is the logical conclusion from the preceding verses... if God is love, and we love one another (as Jesus loved us by giving us life by his death and resurrection) then God is in us! There is the fulfillment of real love, that we manifest God in our heart and in our actions! |

| | | |
|----------------|--|---|
| <p>4:17-18</p> | <p><i>“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”</i></p> | <p>Here is the ultimate test of our love: if we have shown agape love NOW in this world, as Jesus did up until his last breath, then we will have confidence at the judgment. And not ‘phobos’ or judgment-phobia. If we are doing the best we can to love God, will we have need to fear at the judgment? This is not to say that we don’t rely on God’s grace, since we don’t deserve to be in the kingdom, no matter how close we get to perfection, but it’s like the analogy of getting your homework done and handing it in on time as opposed to it being late, and you fear like the dickens when the teacher comes to collect it! It says ‘fear hath torment’, torment meaning penalty or punishment.. If we fear at the judgment, it is for a good reason! “Casteth out” is a neat phrase — #906 — Matt. 5:13; Matt. 13:48; John 15:6</p> |
| <p>5:3</p> | <p><i>“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”</i></p> | <p>This is where we started! (2:5) However it has the addition of ‘his commandments are not grievous’ or burdensome. Why are they not burdensome? Well if we are loving one another as Jesus did, we can share the burdens, and we can look ahead with faith (v.4)</p> |

Summary

We cannot understand agape or practice agapeo without reading and knowing our Bibles. This love that we have to God cannot live in us alongside our love for the world — one of them must go. This love, which is from another country (this world does not understand or care to understand this kind of love that compels you to love those who don’t attract you) is manifested by God making us his adopted children, his sons and daughters. God’s love is not only manifested in calling us his children, but in purposing his only Son to be killed and raised again to atone for our sins that must be blotted out. The logical conclusion? We must do the same — lay down our lives for each other — CONSTANTLY! Not just to die for someone, but to do something simple like v.17. We must love one another or else our love cannot possibly be agape! It is of necessity brimming with ACTION — God’s was, Jesus’ was, and so should ours. Are we synonymous with love? Are we walking manifestations of God’s most amazing character? No one will know

unless we act! God's love is SOLIDLY founded on what he did for us, helping us out by putting away our sins so that we could be close to him. What's our driving force for loving? The logical conclusion to us having and DOING agape love is that God dwells in us, just as he did PERFECTLY in Jesus. Finally, agape is what will sustain us at the judgement. We throw out fear, we fill our hearts with agape, and then when Christ returns, we will have confidence.

Conclusion

Love is the driving force in our lives. It is the ability to drop what we are doing and help someone, to listen to problems in someone's life, to clean our rooms when our mothers tell us to (ahem...), to not care if we miss lunch because we are talking to a co-worker about the Bible and God's plan, to exert ourself past our perceived limits... to reach perfection by God's grace.

In our lives, our busy priorities have a way of getting out of hand... pick up the kids at this time, got test at this time, must be home for supper at this time... where does love fit into all this? IT DOESN'T... it is above it... LOVE IS OUR PRIORITY! It is what defines our priorities. It certainly defined God's.

Mike Robinson (Echo Lake, NJ)

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our communities, we print this invitation:

You, your family and friends are invited to the

*36th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2011.*

Main Speakers: Bro. Ted Sleeper — "Meditations on Creation"

Bro. Tim Galbraith — "The Tabernacle: A Magic Mirror for Disciples"

Bro. Ed Carpenter — "The Light of the Gospel"

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com

Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>

*To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way.
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low:
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.*

*But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.*

John Oxenham

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (7)

This article continues our study of the realities in the gospel foreshadowed in the Tabernacle and the laws in Leviticus. We are still “in the Outer Court”, looking at the altar offerings and the laver. The last article showed that Christ is our sin offering.

Without the camp. Sin offerings were carried without the camp and burned:

*“And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth **without the camp** unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt... And he shall carry forth the bullock **without the camp**, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it is a sin offering for the congregation” (Lev 4:11-12, 21; cf. 6:11; 8:17; Exod 29:14; Lev 9:11; 16:27).*

Hebrews explicitly connects Jesus’ sacrifice with this ritual:

*“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned **without the camp**. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered **without the gate**. Let us go forth therefore unto him **without the camp**, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb 13:10-14).*

The exhortation for us is clear: we must go unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach, for there is nothing permanent in our present lives, so we seek the coming of the everlasting city, the new Jerusalem, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Voluntary, freewill offerings. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were voluntary, freewill offerings:

*“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: **he shall offer it of his own voluntary will** at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD” (Lev 1:3; cf. 22:18).*

*“And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, **ye shall offer it at your own will**... And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, **offer it at your own will**” (Lev 19:5; 22:29; cf. 22:21, 23).*

The substance behind this shadow is Christ’s willing offering of himself:

*“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life** for the sheep... Therefore doth my Father love me, because **I lay down my life**, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it***

again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:15, 17-18).

Jesus gave up his own will that God’s will might be done. He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless **not as I will, but as thou wilt**” (Matt 26:39). Following this pattern, he taught his disciples to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven**” (Matt 6:9b-10). So we sing, “Take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine” (Hymn 163).

Whole burnt offering. All of the burnt offering was turned to smoke on the altar, representing complete dedication to the LORD:

*“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd... the priest shall burn **all** on the altar to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD... And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice... the priest shall bring it **all**, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD” (Lev 1:3, 9, 10, 13).*

The reality behind this pattern is the essence of the first and greatest commandment: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with **all** thine heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy might” (Deut 6:4-5).

In full obedience Jesus dedicated himself entirely to his Father: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, **thy law is within my heart**” (Psa 40:8; cf. Heb 10:5-10). “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and **to give his life a ransom for many**” (Mark 10:45). “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, **though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor**, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2Cor 8:9). “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But **made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Phil 2:6-8).

Jesus exhorts his disciples to following his example:

*“And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but **whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.** For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:34-37).*

Similarly, Paul echoes the language of the burnt offering: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and **hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour**” (Eph 5:1-2).

We commit ourselves to reflect these realities through the hymns we sing:

“When my love for man grows weak, When for stronger faith I seek, Hill of Calvary! I go To thy scenes of pain and woe. There behold his agony Suffered on the bitter tree; See his anguish, see his faith, Love triumphant still in death! Then to life I turn again, Learning all the worth of pain, Learning all the might that lies In a **full** self-sacrifice” (Hymn 222).

“Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, **all** for Thee” (Hymn 163).

Peace offering. The peace offering was the only sacrifice that could be eaten by the offerer (Lev 7:11-21; Deut 27:7). Meal and drink offerings were also part of this meal of fellowship, which was a wonderful harbinger of the memorial of our Lord:

*“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me**” (John 6:53-57).*

*“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, **Take, eat; this is my body.** And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, **Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins**” (Matt 26:26-28).*

Paul and Luke draw out the connection to the peace offering: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1Cor 10:16; cf. Luke 22:17, 19).* Here they are following the pattern of the peace offering: first the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled and then the flesh was eaten.

Sacrifice of thanksgiving. Peace offerings were a gesture of thanksgiving:

*“If he offer it for a **thanksgiving**, then he shall offer with **the sacrifice of thanksgiving** unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried... Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with **the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings**... And the flesh of **the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving** shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning” (Lev 7:12-13, 15; cf. 22:29).*

*“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee **the sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD” (Psa 116:12-19).*

“And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD” (Amos 4:5).

When Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper, he gave thanks for the cup and for the bread:

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks <2168 eucharistio>, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves... And he took bread, and gave thanks <2168>, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me: (Luke 22:17, 19).

Consequently, the memorial service is sometimes called “the eucharist”, that is, “the giving of thanks”:

“Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks <2169 eucharistia>, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks <2168 eucharisteo> well, but the other is not edified” (1Cor 14:16-17).

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks <2168> always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:19-21; cf. Col 1:12-14; 3:12-17).

The laver. The washings in the laver foreshadow our baptism into Christ for the remission of sins. Ananias exhorts Saul, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16; cf. 2:38).* This echoes David’s prayer: *“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow” (Psa 51:2, 7).*

In this way, we have our consciences cleansed: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14; cf. 9:9).* *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22; cf. 10:2).*

The laws of purification. Leviticus 11-17 was part of the Outer Court section of Leviticus. Lessons based on these laws are developed throughout the New Testament, as the following examples indicate:

- Food (Lev 11; Mark 7:18-23; Acts 10-11; Col 2:16; 1Tim 4:3-4).
- Childbirth (Lev 12; Luke 2:21-24; Gal 4:4-5).
- Leprosy (Lev 13-14; Mark 1:40-45 || Matt 8:1-4 || Luke 5:12-16).
- Issue of blood (Lev 15; Mark 5:25-34 || Matt 9:20-22 || Luke 8:43-50).
- Day of Atonement (Lev 16; Heb 9).

The tent of the Tabernacle: Jesus and his body

Now we enter into the tent of the Tabernacle, to see the reality behind the sanctuary where God dwelt, filled with His glory (Exod 25:8; 29:45-46; 40:34-38). The

gospel of John testifies that Jesus was the reality behind the shadow:

*“And the Word was made flesh, and **dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:14, 17-18; cf. Exod 34:6-7; 33:20).*

*“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy **this temple**, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of **the temple of his body**. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said” (John 2:18-22).*

This claim of Jesus to be a temple was twisted by the false witnesses at his trial (Matt 26:60-61; Mark 14:57-59) and by his revilers at the cross (Matt 27:39-40; Mark 15:29-30).

That the LORD would seek out people to dwell in was foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

“Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:1-2).

The reference to “this man” points to Jesus himself and those who make up his body.

Believers, individually and collectively, are the temple of God:

*“Know ye not that **ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?** If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, **which temple ye are**” (1Cor 3:16-17).*

*“What? know ye not that **your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?** For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1Cor 6:19-20).*

*“And what agreement hath **the temple of God** with idols? for **ye are the temple of the living God;** as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them;** and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2Cor 6:16-18; cf. Lev 26:11-12).*

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the founda-

tion of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:19-22).

These exhortations are powerful. We as individuals are to live holy lives because God is dwelling in us, and we as the collective body of Christ are to behave ourselves appropriately, because we are built up together as a holy temple, a habitation of God.

The Holy Place (Leviticus 18-24)

The first part of the Tabernacle was the Holy Place, which was restricted to the priests. It contained the Seven-branched Lampstand, the Table of Shewbread, and the Altar Incense. The Holy Place section of Leviticus contains the second greatest commandment: “*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev 19:18; cf. Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31).*

The truth casting these shadows is centered on the saints. Believers are made to be a royal priesthood:

*“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ... But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1Pet 2:5, 9a; cf. Exod 19:6).*

*“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father**; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6; cf. Rev 5:9-10 RV; 7:15; 20:6; Isa 61:6).*

We willingly take on this responsibility when we sing of our consecration:

“Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee; Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move At the impulse of thy love; Take my feet, and let them be Swift and beautiful for thee. Take my voice, and let me sing Always, only, for my King; Take my lips, and let them be Filled with messages from Thee. Take my silver and my gold; Not a might would I withhold; Take my intellect, and use Every power as Thou shalt chose. Take my will and make it thine; It shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is Thine own; It shall be Thy royal throne. Take my love; my Lord, I pour At thy feet its treasure store: Take myself, and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee” (Hymn 163).

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Devotion is neither private nor public prayer, but a life given to God. He is the devout man, therefore, who considers and serves God in everything and who makes all of his life an act of devotion by doing everything in the name of God and under such rules as are conformable to His glory. (William Law)

Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah” (6) Objections Considered

Introduction

In the previous article, we considered the section on the animals in the ark. It is one of the most scrutinized parts of Scripture. People wonder whether the things the Bible describes could actually have happened. There are three questions, in particular, that are often raised about the plausibility of the account. First, what about the dinosaurs? Were they in the ark? Second, how did Noah get all of the animals, especially those from faraway places, like Australia, and bring them into the ark? Third, how did all of the animals fit into the ark?

There are no definitive answers to any of these questions. But they are valid and worthy of thoughtful consideration. It is a good idea to think them over and to have a ready answer for an interested friend who might pose them to you. I am going to suggest some possible answers for you to ruminate upon. We will consider each of the three questions in turn.

What about the dinosaurs?

The Bible indicates that the world was a very different place before the Flood. People lived a really long time. There were giant humans. There were probably giant lizards too. Perhaps they got to be big because they also lived a long time.

The environment may have been an important contributing factor to the size and longevity of the animals. There is an interesting, and somewhat challenging, passage in the Creation account that may offer some important insight into what the antediluvian world was like: *“Then God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day”* (Gen 1:6-8, NKJV).

It has been suggested that on the second day of Creation God took the waters that covered the earth and divided them into the waters that comprise the seas (i.e., *“the waters which were under the firmament”*) and a water-vapor canopy in the atmosphere (i.e., *“the waters which were above the firmament”*). That canopy could have protected the planet from harmful radiation, which would have allowed the inhabitants of the earth to live a lot longer. Plus, it could have resulted in a greenhouse effect that would have made the world a warmer place. Plants and trees could have been larger. (Perhaps that is where Noah got the wood to make the giant ark.) More abundant vegetation would have supported larger animals, such as dinosaurs.

So, were dinosaurs brought into the ark? It seems like they would have been if they were alive at that time. Of course, it would have made sense to bring smaller, younger members of the species into the ark instead of full-grown adults. That was probably the practice for all of the larger animals.

But then what happened to the dinosaurs? Well, one theory of the Flood is that the forty days and forty nights of rain were caused by the collapse of the water-vapor canopy. Indeed, Genesis 7: 11 states that *“the windows of heaven were opened”* during the Flood. That certainly sounds like a unique event in history, and the text supports that idea. The margin of the King James Version, and a number of other translations, render “windows” as “floodgates.” Once a floodgate is opened, the water that it restrains rushes out, and then it is gone. Once the canopy disappeared, the world would have become a colder place, and the food on which the largest animals relied would have become scarcer. Perhaps the dinosaurs died off as a result.

Bringing the animals into the ark

So, how were all the animals collected and loaded into the ark? The account indicates that God directed them to come to Noah. God tells Noah that the animals *“shall come unto thee”* (Gen 6:20).

For many of these animals, their journey would have begun many months before the Flood came. But that is not unheard of in the Bible. There are other instances where God intervened in the animal kingdom to set the stage for an event many months before it actually took place. For example, the plague of locusts in Exodus 10 had its origins in unusually heavy rainfall that would have occurred in the Arabian Peninsula several months before the locusts arrived in Egypt. Female locusts lay their eggs in wet sand, and heavy rains in Arabia result in vegetation growth that protects the young locusts. It allows more of them to survive to adulthood. Modern locust swarms in the Middle East journey east at the speed of the wind. And Exodus 10: 13 records that God caused an *“east wind”* to blow that brought the locusts upon the Egyptians. That type of plague continues to happen to this day.

God’s workings in the animal kingdom to bring about His will are an important reminder that He sets the stage for events to happen in the earth long before they actually occur. Even as we wait for Christ’s return, God is active among the nations.¹ Right now, He is laying the foundations for the events that will result in the return of Christ to the earth and the establishment of the Kingdom.

Returning to the subject of God causing the animals to come to the ark, some of them would have had to travel great distances. It is certainly possible that God created circumstances that would have permitted that to happen. It is also possible that the continents of the earth were a lot closer back then than they are today. So, for example, the distance between Australia and the Middle East back might not have been as far as it is now. And there might not have been as much water to cross. We know that plate tectonic activity causes the continents to move. Large movements are accompanied by earthquakes, mountain building, and volcanoes. It is possible that there were dramatic movements in the plates at the time of the

Flood. These movements might have caused the continents to change from where they were in Noah's day and to take something like the shape they have today. Those continental shifts would have been associated with earthquakes, and earthquakes can cause massive flooding due to tsunamis. (A "tsunami" is a series of water waves that result from the displacement of water from an earthquake or other source.) Indeed, on December 26, 2004, a tremendous undersea earthquake off the coast of Indonesia resulted in massive flooding throughout East Asia and beyond due to tsunamis. Almost without warning, communities were buried beneath waves over 100 feet high. Over 250,000 people died from the tsunamis that resulted from that earthquake, and lives were lost over 5,000 miles from its epicenter. (That is the distance between Detroit and Moscow.)

The effects of just that one undersea earthquake were staggering. Multiple, massive earthquakes throughout the earth could certainly have resulted in worldwide flooding. In fact, the Bible indicates that tsunamis might have contributed to the Flood. According to Genesis 7: 11, not only were "*the windows of heaven*" opened, but also "*the fountains of the great deep*" were "*broken up*" at the time of the Flood. That latter phrase sounds like it could be a description of earthquakes and ensuing tidal waves. Plate tectonic activity at the time of the Flood could also have led to the creation of the fossil record as we know it. Animals caught up in the cataclysm could have been swept by torrents of water into fissures that had opened in the earth. They then would have been sealed inside as seismic activity continued to convulse the crust of the earth. Some fossil beds have the appearance of having been created under such circumstances. But assigning their origin to the Flood remains contentious, even among scientists who believe in the Genesis record.

Regardless of how exactly it happened, the Flood destroyed life on the face of the earth. Only those with Noah in the ark survived. But did the ark have sufficient capacity to hold all of the animals that it would have needed to carry? It certainly seems reasonable to answer "yes" to that question.

Was there sufficient space in the ark for the animals?

People have tried to estimate the number of land animals that God commanded to be brought into the ark. The numbers generally range between 25,000 and 40,000.² (The estimates vary based on assumptions about the variety of animals that exist and whether some of those varieties could have re-emerged through breeding without explicitly being preserved in the ark.) It has also been assumed that the average animal in the ark was the size of a small sheep. Well, the average stock car can hold 120 sheep.³ So, if there were 35,000 animals in the ark that were, on average, the size of a sheep, it would have taken 292 stock-cars worth of space to hold them. But the ark had over 500 stock-cars worth of space in it. So, the animals probably occupied around 60 percent of the ark's space. Some of the remaining space would have been used for food storage. But much of it was probably reserved for the people of the antediluvian world that God hoped to save.

So, space was not a problem for the ark. It was definitely big enough to do its job. And, in the end, the ark was not as full as God, or Noah, would have wanted. It was such a tragedy that so many people turned down God's offer of salvation. In

the next article in the series, we will consider the day when that offer was no longer available and God shut Noah and his family inside the ark.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. It is interesting to note that God frequently represents nations by animals in prophecy.
2. John Whitcomb and Henry Morris. *The Genesis Flood, the Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1998). and John Woodmorappe. *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study*, (Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1996).
3. John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *Op Cit*.

Youth Speaks

The Parable of the Two Builders (1)

The Parable of the two builders highlights the absolute necessity of being doers of the Word and not hearers only, by building our lives and ecclesias upon the one solid foundation of the Truth. Within this parable believers are called to examine and strengthen their foundations so that they will be able to withstand the storms of life and ultimately the judgment to come.

The background

We can picture the large crowds following Christ, listening to his teachings, seeing the miracles he performed, asking questions of him, and intently listening to the answers he provided. In those crowds were two types of people, and in Luke 6:46, Christ seizes the opportunity to ask a question to make them ponder their true motives for following him — a question which provides the background to the parable of the two builders. “*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). The problem was simple: many of those following Christ addressed him as ‘Lord,’ but they weren’t acting upon the things he was teaching them. They addressed him as their Lord, but did they truly believe it?

Christ now proceeds to relate to them the parable of two builders in which he divides his followers into one of two categories — those who hear his words and act upon them, seen in the man who builds his house on a rock; and those who hear his words but don’t act upon them, seen in the man who builds his house on the sand (or earth). While we may think these two types of followers would be complete opposites, the parable — as presented in Luke’s gospel — instructs us otherwise.

Luke’s account

Comparing Luke’s account of this parable to Matthew’s, a number of differences become apparent — each holding significance for us to consider.

First, Luke’s account places particular emphasis upon the foundation, and draws our attention to how that foundation is obtained:

“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock...it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and

doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth...” Luke 6:48-49

Secondly, Luke does not say that the foolish man built his house on the sand, but rather on the earth — a small change in word, but one with great significance, as we’ll examine in the next article.

Finally, Luke does not say that one of these men was wise and the other foolish — he simply refers to them as two men. This may seem unusual, for the titles “wise” and “foolish” bring to mind a number of Old Testament echoes particularly relevant to these two individuals, thus making their omission even more significant. For what other reason would they be omitted, if not to draw our attention to the similarity between these two men? In fact, only one difference between the men is noted in Luke’s account: one man digs to get to the foundation, while the other man just starts building on the earth beneath his feet, without making any effort to remove the earth to build on a solid foundation (note that in Luke’s account, even the location where the two are building is identical). We thus learn that in order to be a doer of the word, effort is involved, and a solid foundation is required.

Removing the earth

What then is the “earth” which must be removed away? In 1Cor 15:47, Paul describes man’s fleshly, sinful state as, “the first man is of the earth, earthy”. In Col 3:2,5, Paul uses the word again in relating the “earth” to worldly/fleshly things: “set your affection on things above, not on the things on the earth... mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the patriarchs of Israel were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth”; and here the word “earth” stands for the physical earth, but again holds the idea of not being people of the earth. The “earth” therefore stands for the things of this world, and a way of thinking and reasoning that is natural to our flesh nature. It’s this mindset which must be removed out of the way: “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom.6:11); “Mortify therefore your members...” (Col. 3:5); “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

On a practical level, this means going above and beyond the natural levels of human kindness, as is pointed out in Christ’s discourse leading up to the parable:

“If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same... But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again” (Luke 6:31, 35).

But is simply being a “good Christian” or an exceptionally “good person” all that is required to be a doer of the Word? The parable indicates otherwise. There is still the aspect of finding the rock and building upon it.

Building on the rock

The symbol of the rock and a foundation comes up elsewhere in the New Testament: In Romans 9:33, 1 Corinthians 10:4, and 1 Peter 2:8, the rock is used to symbolize Christ. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 Christ is described as the foundation. In Ephesians 2:20 the foundation of the ecclesia is said to be the apostles and

prophets, and Jesus Christ the chief corner stone. In Hebrews 6:1 the *“principles of the doctrine of Christ”* are described as the foundation. The rock foundation which we must build our lives upon is therefore the first principles of the Truth as taught and practiced by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, a person can be described as a “good Christian”, or as an exceptionally “good person”, but if they do not have a proper understanding of who Christ is and what he taught, their “good works” will get them nowhere. They have not built their house upon the foundation. Part of that teaching involves an acceptance that in our flesh dwells no good thing, that it’s only by God’s grace and mercy we are saved, and that we must be baptized into Christ to be found acceptable before God. Without this understanding, no matter how “good” or “charitable” a person we may be, we cannot have hope of being in God’s Kingdom.

The first principles of our faith are the foundation upon which we build our lives, and the importance of correct doctrine cannot be diminished. When the first century ecclesia was established we are told that they *“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42). In Hebrews we learn, *“without faith it is impossible to please Him (God): for he that cometh to God must believe...”* (Heb. 11:6). In order to believe in something, of necessity we must understand it. How do we get this understanding? *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). It is ironic that so many “Christians” today claim to believe and have faith in God, and yet never open their Bibles and study their Scriptures! Just as the man had to dig to find the foundation, so must we put in the effort to know our Scriptures and have confidence in what we believe: *“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honour of kings is to search out a matter”* (Prov. 25:2).

It is that understanding that must form the basis of our actions. Notice in the parable that both men were building — both had actions; but only the man who’s actions were based on the rock — on a correct understanding — were able to have any lasting benefit. The man who built on the earth built merely for the present, while the man who digged could see by the eye of faith that the storm that was approaching, and built his house accordingly. His actions were in accordance with his convictions, just as Noah’s were in the days when he built the ark.

Through our understanding of the Scriptures, and by the eye of faith, we believe that the Lord Jesus is coming and that *“the Kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever”* (Rev. 11:15). Do our actions show to those around us our absolute conviction in this fact? The way we live our lives must of necessity be in accordance with what we believe and understand. *“Faith without works is dead”* said James (James 2:26); and Christ instructs us to *“let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matt.5:16).

The lesson of this parable is that not only must we listen to Christ’s words, but we must put them into practice, that our lives may be an example and testament to all around of what we believe and in what we have our faith.

Darryl Rose; (Toronto West Ecclesia, ON)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

What's the Goal? Part 4 — Personal Life Practices

Faith works. Faith moves people to do Godly things that they would not otherwise do; often things they could not do without it.

“By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. ... By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. ... By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance” (Heb 11:4, 7, 8). (All references are from the ESV)

Faith also keeps people from doing things that ought not to be done.

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (Heb 11:24-25)

Hebrews 11 is a testimony to the fact that faith works.

Of course, there is another side to this story. Unbelief has its works, too. It leaves people vulnerable to doing things that they ought not to do, and it keeps them from doing things that ought to be done. Unbelief keeps men and women from living up to their potential as beings created in the image of God.

Our children need to begin finding their way through this world of faith and unbelief, and Sunday school provides some wonderful opportunities for us to help them do it. The Bible stories that we tell the children often revolve around the lives of people; good, bad, faithful and unfaithful. The details are presented as God knows them, so there is plenty in these stories for us to learn from — and teach — about life.

Lessons of life

People have not changed since Bible times, and the needs of people have not changed. People still need to grow spiritually and they still need salvation. The Bible shows how God meets these needs in the lives of responsive individuals. The process is a dynamic one and it involves the participation of those who are being saved.

When we read about men, women, and children in the Bible, it is not difficult to see how God wanted them to live. We can take the details of their lives, learn from them, and create lessons of life for our Sunday school children. Just as we all participate in the process of living, the lessons of life that we create for our children need to involve their participation. Lessons of life are active lessons, not passive ones.

Consider, for example, a few details in the life of the apostle Paul. Then begin thinking about the life lessons you might build around these for your children.

- “*Lord, what do you want me to do?*” (Acts 9:6). This is a timeless question! What *did* the Lord want Saul to do? How did Saul respond? What compelled Saul to change his entire outlook on life? How does Saul apply to us today?
- “*Saul ... attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him. ... But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles*” (Acts 9:26-28). Thank God for Barnabas! He was willing to stick his neck out and give a questionable man a chance. What lessons are here for us and our children? Do the children know anyone who needs a friend to come along side and help him or her become accepted?
- “*So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren*” (Acts 11:29). This hardly needs comment. What do our children know about the needs of brothers and sisters and young people in other parts of the world? And once they know some of these needs, what do *they* think they can do to help?
- “*Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off*” (Acts 13:3). Thus Paul’s missionary journeys began. What do our children know about the journeys of Christadelphian Bible missionaries? What kinds of life practices are implied in “fasting and praying” for our missionaries?
- “*Sergius Paulus, a prudent man ... called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God*” (Acts 13:7). What is God’s definition of a prudent man? It is not difficult to figure out, so let’s get prudent! How do we start?
- “*But Elymas the sorcerer withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. ...*” *And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time*” (Acts 13:8-11). Who or what are the modern-day sorcerers that our children face in the world of unbelief? Let them provide the answers to this question. How can they render blind these enemies of the truth?
- “*But they ... went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 13:51-52). What joy can our Sunday school children bring to other believers or to other Christadelphian Sunday school children? Let them come up with the answers ... and then do something.
- “*The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men ... and (they) would have done sacrifice*” (Acts 14:11-13). What honors does the modern world render to superstition? Is there a reason why newspapers publish daily horoscopes but not daily Bible passages? What signs can our children see that the world still worships other gods? Where do believers stand in regard to these things?
- “*They rehearsed all that God had done with them*” (Acts 14:27). Brothers and sisters, the world over, still do this kind of thing when they come back from the mission field. The *Bible Missionary* magazine is full of their reports. What do our Sunday school children know about the Christadelphian Bible Mission? Are they aware that God is still at work with those who venture to serve Him?
- “*... no small dissension and disputation ... much disputing ... the contention was so sharp between them*” (Acts 15:2, 7, 39). And this amongst brethren! Do our children know any Biblical principles of conflict resolution? How can they apply these principles to their own quarrels? This would be a great place

to introduce a case study on conflict resolution, one that speaks directly to the age level of the children.

We could keep going. The Bible is packed with details like these that pertain to life and human conduct. The scope that it gives us for creating lessons of life for our children has almost no bounds.

Life Application activities on the web

The Tidings Committee is in the process of creating a Sunday school link on its website (<http://www.tidings.org/>). Life application activities will be posted there for anyone to read, download, use or adapt. As with all the Sunday school resources we plan to post, God willing, life application activities will be organized and accessible by Scripture, Subject, and Learning Level.

Life application activities will also be referenced to the life goals – the Transformation Goals – that have been proposed in this series on “What’s the Goal?” We hope that this will be helpful for Sunday school teachers.

Let’s conclude by looking at two of the many life application activities being prepared for posting on the Tidings website. The first example will be accessed from a menu entry that reads: Scripture — Acts 9:6; Subject — Conversion; Learning Level — Preteens, Teens.

Acts 9:6 “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

Class activity: Invite a brother or sister to tell your Sunday school class how he or she came into the Truth. This will be especially relevant if the brother or sister was opposed to the Truth before accepting it.

Life Goals

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Knowledge: | <i>of the conversion process</i> |
| Attitudes: | <i>willingness to change</i> |
| Effective thinking: | <i>deciding to be baptized</i> |
| Relationship to God, Christ: | <i>obedience, accepting grace</i> |
| Relationship to others: | <i>getting to know an ecclesial member</i> |
| Personal life practices: | <i>submitting to God</i> |

The second example will be accessed from a menu entry that reads: Scripture — Acts 9:26-28; Subject — Fellowship, Friendship; Learning Level — All levels.

Acts 9:26-28 “Saul... attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him ... But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.”

Class activity: Identify a child who could use a friend or special encouragement (someone in Sunday school or in the community near your meeting place). Plan something that you can do as a Sunday school class to reach out to this child. Do it.

Life Goals

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Knowledge: | <i>of the needs of others</i> |
| Attitudes: | <i>concern for others, loving</i> |
| Effective thinking: | |

Relationship to God, Christ:

Relationship to others:

reaching out, building bridges

Personal life practices:

kindness

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) sundayschool@tidings.org

Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.

Reflections

Overcoming the Dens and Caves of Life (1)

Have you ever felt like you were living your life in a cave? Perhaps emotionally, or even spiritually? At times, we may feel quite dark, lonely, depressed, or spiritually deflated. Personal weaknesses can bury us in guilt, and illness or bereavement can leave us feeling isolated. Relationships, family, finances, jobs and ecclesial challenges can overwhelm us.

At times, the cave has been ‘home’ to the writer. Times when we want to curl up in a dark corner, retract from those around us, and shut down. Times when the future becomes bleak, and we feel like giving up. Times when we may question how, or if, God is working in our life. While in the cave, we may conclude that we are alone in our circumstances, nobody cares, and no one can relate.

During these miserable periods, it is encouraging to contemplate the experiences of the faithful in Hebrews 11. Men and women, young and old, they all experienced highs and lows throughout their spiritual journeys. We are inspired when we recall their moments of victory, when they “*stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens*” (Heb 11:33-34).

Yet, we often forget, “*others were tortured... had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*” (Heb 11:35-37).

Verse 38 concludes their struggles with an intriguing statement: “*they wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth*”. Many of God’s faithful also endured the darkness of caves — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If life’s challenges engulf us, we are not alone. Rather, we can take heart that we are in the best of company and “*surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses*” (Heb 12:1), many of whom also survived overwhelming challenges in a cave.

In dens and caves of the Earth

This short phrase begs the reader to thumb the pages of Scripture for individuals who spent time in a cave. When we do, a sizeable list emerges: Lot and his two

daughters lived in a cave after fleeing Sodom (Gen 19:30) and many of the patriarchs were buried in the Cave of Machpelah including Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah and Jacob (Gen 49:30-31). The Israelites hid in caves and dens to escape the Midianites (Jdgs 6:2) and Philistines (1Sam 13:6); Obadiah hid 100 faithful prophets from Jezebel in a cave (1Kgs 18:4); and Elijah sought refuge in a cave at Sinai while he battled fear, depression and loneliness amidst a period of intense apostasy (1Kgs 19:9-10).

We could certainly add those who spent time in ‘pseudo-caves’ such as Joseph in the dungeon, Daniel in the lion’s den, Jeremiah in the miry cistern, Legion who abode in the tombs, Lazarus in a sepulchre, and even Paul and Silas in the Philippian prison.

Desperate, life threatening, circumstances drove many of these individuals to the cave. Others sought the cave on their own volition. In each case, however, it is encouraging to recognize that the cave became a temporary source of refuge and respite, followed eventually by God’s rescue and deliverance. Thus, Scripture highlights many faithful who “wandered in dens and caves of the earth”, but also demonstrates how these faithful ultimately ‘rejoiced in God’s salvation’ (Psa 20:5).

Psalms from the cave

Our list of examples omits another individual who spent significant time in a cave. We know this from Psalm 57, which begins: “To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave”. Further research reveals that David also wrote Psalm 142 while he was in the cave. It commences: “A Maschil of David; A prayer when he was in the cave”. In both Psalms, the Spirit conveys David’s feelings and experiences while enduring time in a cave. It is upon these two magnificent Psalms that our studies are focussed. When explored, they furnish the reader with a rich reward of instruction and comfort for dealing with our personal caves.

Initially, we might ask, “When did David spend time in a cave”? ‘The cave’ proves to be a historical key by which the details of Psalm 57 and 142 can be unlocked. For almost five years, David and his men scuttled over the terrain of southern Israel. During this flight, David sought refuge with his troops in two caves: the first was the Cave of Adullam (1Sam 22:1), while the second was the Cave of En-gedi (1Sam 24:1-3). Both are located in Judah, south of Jerusalem. The fertile land surrounding Adullam, on the western flanks of the Judean Hills, is pierced with numerous limestone caverns, some of which are interconnected and large enough to hold 200 or 300 men. En-gedi (Hb. spring of the goat-kid) is situated on the eastern edge of the Judean Hills, in close proximity to a refreshing spring, amidst the scorched wasteland of the Dead Sea valley.

In both instances, David is desperate to escape the relentless pursuit and fiery violence of Saul. Although the caves provided asylum, the distress and anxiety that David suffered are evident when he laments “*my spirit was overwhelmed within me*” (Psa 142:3). In the Hebrew, ‘overwhelmed’ means to shroud or clothe with darkness and languishing. Numbing despair completely engulfed David. He had

no permanent place to live; he struggled for food and water, and felt rejected by an entire nation.

David equates the experiences in the cave to being trapped in a dungeon, and pleads: *“Bring my soul out of prison”* (Psa 142:7). Elsewhere, he mourns *“there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul”* (Psa 142:4 ESV). Though Psalm 57 contains a level of confidence and hope exceeding that of Psalm 142, David’s despondency is still evident when he complains *“my soul is in the midst of lions”*, and *“my soul was bowed down”* (Psa 57:4,6 ESV).

At times, David’s misery may parallel our own. We may find ourselves in desperate circumstances, trapped in an emotional and spiritual prison, where no one seems to notice or care about us.

How did David deal with the cave experiences of his life? Psalm 57 and 142 serve more purpose than to simply validate or characterize the dark challenges he wrestled. Instead, the Spirit seeks to share solutions that David used to extract himself from these dark moments. It is uplifting to meditate on these and realize there is a way through our trials.

We will consider seven solutions in total. Though none may be considered mind-bending or revolutionary, ultimately, they are means and methods that God has set before us to help illuminate the darkness. They are critical if we are to survive the cave and understand, from God’s perspective, the meaning of their troubles. When our world collapses around us, they are easily forgotten or casually dismissed.

1) Prayer and praise

When we experience stress or distress, we often keep things to ourselves and independently try to solve our troubles. Amidst the inky blackness of the cave, we forget that God can help us and cares about us. David recognized this potential pitfall and instead exclaims, *“I poured out my complaint before Him; I shewed before Him my trouble”* (Psa 142:2).

David used prayer as a means of communicating his trouble to God. He poured out his feelings to the Father, and through humble supplication requested grace and mercy to help in his time of need (Heb 4:16). Prayer was also recognition of the reliance he placed on the Father to dispel his emotional turmoil and rescue him from his enemies.

In **Teenagers of the Bible**, Shane Kingsbury stresses the importance of prayer, particularly during our youth:

“In times of adversity and trouble, it is not unusual to try all kinds of ‘solutions’ and ‘cures,’ only to find that we have ignored the greatest cure of all time: Prayer. This is particularly true of the teenage years when we have plenty of energy, and pride ourselves in achievements, frequently taking matters into our own hands – only to find ourselves more deeply mired into the problem. Then, as a last resort, we turn to prayer!”¹

In Psalm 142, David appeals to God to *“attend unto my cry”* (Psa 142:6). The Hebrew word ‘attend’ means to prick up the ears. God gives ear to our own prayers

and we are assured like David: *“In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me”* (Psa 86:7). Prayer is powerful, and yet, it is not an age of prayer. David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Paul and many other faithful made maximum use of prayer. It behooves us to follow their example and ensure prayer is not a sporadic communication with God. Our daily spiritual habits must be rooted in prayer — particularly so when we encounter troublesome times.

Perhaps music is a salve for our troubled times. Beyond prayer, David expresses the sentiments of his soul through song and praise. In Psalm 57:7 he reveals, *“My heart is fixed, O God, ... I will sing and give praise”*. To this, he adds in verse 8-9 *“Awake, psaltery and harp ... I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations”*. David’s musical skills were calming to Saul, while he stewed amidst the mental mayhem of his cave. He now uses them to lift his own spirits by expressing his love, confidence and gratitude to the Father. It was his greatest desire to pronounce the Father’s mercy and glory *“among the nations”*. In a uniquely similar circumstance deep in the chambers of the Philippian jail, Paul and Silas *“prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them”* (Acts 16:25).

While wrestling with our own dungeons, prayer, song and instrument are powerful ways to communicate with the Father and to *“pour out our heart before Him”* (Psa 62:8).

2) Crying

Society teaches us that ‘big boys don’t cry’. Nothing could be farther from the truth in David’s life. David did not ‘bottle up’ his emotions but poured them out unashamedly. In Psalm 142 David *“cried unto the Lord”*, and further requests that God *“attend unto my cry”* (Psa 142:1,6). The Hebrew word ‘cry’ means a shrieking or creaking from anguish or danger. It is used of Israel when they wept because of the bondage in Egypt (Exo 2:23-24) and describes a mixture of tears and desperate pleas for God’s help.

There are additional occasions when David shed tears to deal with his grief. As he and Jonathan part ways in the field, *“they kissed each other and wept together - but David wept the most”* (1Sam 20:41 NIV). Later, when David and his men return to Ziklag and find it destroyed with their families taken captive, *“David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep”* (1Sam 30:4). Twice David weeps over the loss of his children (2Sam 12:22, 18:33). Overwhelming circumstances also cause David to plead: *“Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping”* (Psa 39:12 NIV).

David was the king of Israel, a leader, and a mighty man of war, but he still embraced his grief and turned it loose through tears. He poured out the pain and the loss, the anger and the hurt, no matter who else heard or saw, or what they said or thought. Crying is therapeutic and is one of the emotions God has given to us to bear the pain of the cave experiences. We should not bottle up our grief and hold it inside where it will corrode our heart and soul. Unashamedly, we can relieve our feelings through tears.

Psalm 56 was penned by David to recount his capture by the Philistines in Gath (Psa 56:1; 1Sam 21), just prior to his flight to the Cave of Adullam. Here, he makes a curious request of the Father: “*Thou tellest [numberest] my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?*” (Psa 56:8). What does David mean by this curious phrase ‘put my tears into your bottle’? When have we ever seen someone hunched over a bottle, attempting to capture their tears? In ancient times, however, ‘lachrimony’ was common-practice. Tears were collected in small, sealed bottles to commemorate events of particularly deep emotion. The bottle, along with its tears, acted as a record and reminder of the grief.²

A deep sensitivity of spirit was one of the characteristics God desired when He “*sought Him a man after His own heart*” (1Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). Like David, we should not be afraid to shed our grief and have assurance that God is intimately aware of all our tears and wanderings.

(To be continued...)

Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON)

Notes:

1. Shane Kingsbury, *Teenagers of the Bible*, Logos Publications, p. 141.
2. Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old and New Testaments*, eSword, Psalm 56:8.

Spiritual but Not Religious

Introduction

The Christadelphian community rightly believes in being both spiritual and religious. The Greek word for “spiritual” is “pneumatikos” and conveys a meaning according to Strong’s of “non-carnal”¹ while the Greek word for “religious” is “threskeia” and conveys a meaning of per Strong’s as “ceremonial observance, worshipping”.² We are told in the Bible to encourage each other by assembling ourselves together (Heb 10:25; Matt 18:20), to use the Bible as our sole spiritual guide (2Pet 1:20-21; Rev 22:18-19; 2Tim 3:15-17; Acts 17:11), to properly worship God in the way commanded (John 4:24; 1Cor 11:23-26, Eph 4:2-6, 12-16; James 1:27), and to strive to be spiritual reflections of Christ (Gal 5:16-26; 6:1; 1Pet 2:2-11; Rom 7:12-25; Rom 8:1; Phil 2:1-5; 2Cor 5:20).

According to a 2009 Newsweek poll 30% of Americans consider themselves “spiritual but not religious”³ which is an increase from 24% in 2005. People between the ages of 19 and 30 are increasingly likely to move away from the faiths they grew up in, and blend multiple faiths and spiritual practices as they go through college.⁴

Spiritual but not religious

What does it mean to be “Spiritual but Not Religious” (SBNR)? Practitioners have widely varying personal concepts of “God” or some higher power. There is the increasing prestige and influence of the sciences, the evolving views of modern theologians, and the greater acceptance of cultural relativism. These have all made it more difficult, especially for the more educated in American society, to maintain a loyalty to traditional religious institutions. Accordingly, the meaning of the word

“spiritual” for SBNR individuals has become associated with the private personal experience as opposed to the word “religious” which they associate with formal religious institutional memberships and adherence to orthodox doctrines.⁵ To one who is SBNR, religion is about being outwardly guided by a church, religion or book, while spirituality is about inwardly guiding one’s self.⁶ Sanders points out SBNR is a spiritual life often exclusive of a church, mosque or synagogue.

Janis, in observing the reasoning of those who are SBNR, states, “Your experience of God doesn’t have to be the same as the experience of everybody or anybody else. One sign of spiritual awakening is an increased respect for all people, all religions, and all forms of God.” There are wide variations of beliefs for those who are SBNR. Common is the acceptance of many valid different “spiritual paths” with the individual choosing the path that seems best for him or her. An example would be the singer Madonna believing in Kabbalah.

Even some atheists consider themselves SBNR. While the atheist would be most skeptical of a higher power or “spirit”, he might embrace “spiritual” as being nurturing thoughts, emotions, a belief in the connectedness of the universe even if its only harmony is a mysterious flow of cause and effect.⁷

Fuller observes that Eastern religions and philosophies such as Transcendental Meditation (TM), Buddhism, reincarnation, and the law of karma, have made inroads in the West. There has been a revival of Neo-Paganism, witchcraft and various nature-oriented belief systems. A sizeable segment of the population is searching for “new” sources of spiritual understanding. Many of these people are skeptical of claims of absolute truth, don’t interpret the Bible literally, and may gravitate toward exotic religious philosophies. These include astrology, fortune-telling, tarot cards, Ouija boards, the I Ching, trance channeling, and various metaphysical beliefs collectively referred to as the “New Age” movement. Themes of holistic healing are present in the New Age movement, which includes crystal healing. Deepak Chopra is a prominent advocate for New Age medicine. The New Age movement is characterized by an interest in Eastern philosophy, a belief that subtle energies connect the human body with higher planes, and a faith in the mind’s power to influence external reality.

Some of the SBNR conceptualize God as a power within us rather than a power over us. Others who are SBNR try to unite science and religion.

Talking to those who are spiritual but not religious

In discussions with people who are SBNR, some feel there are excluded books that should be included and included books (writings of Paul, etc.) that should be excluded from the New Testament. They regard the way the New Testament books entered the canon as a corrupt process. They often don’t take the Bible literally, which allows them “liberty” to do as they please. The individual, the individual’s ideas, the individual’s desires, the individual’s universal construct may become the new object of worship. Agnostic “theologian” Bart Ehrman, who wrote “Jesus Interrupted” and other works, is popular in SBNR circles. Ehrman sheds doubt on God’s Word by pointing to alleged contradictions in the Bible, and refers to

supposed missing New Testament Scriptures. He also notes that millennialists have been expecting Christ's soon return since the first century, and also argues that a loving God would not allow suffering. The SBNR tend to view the concept of "One Truth" from the Bible as narrow minded, judgmental, ignorant and intolerant. SBNR beliefs may be a construction or collection of ideas, philosophies, ideals, that which is admired, assimilations, and various bits of beliefs eclectically selected by the individual. Some have simplified their belief system to merely "the golden rule".

An example of SBNR philosophies in a church is Unitarian Universalism (UU) which claims to be a "caring, open-minded religion that encourages seekers to follow their own spiritual paths. Our faith draws on many religious sources, welcoming people with different beliefs. We are united by shared values, not by creed or dogma." It was founded in 1961.⁸

The rise of spiritual but not religious

There are many reasons for the rising popularity of the SBNR movement. Fuller notes that many have had negative experiences with traditional churches. They may also view church leadership as more concerned with building an organization than promoting spirituality, as hypocritical, or as narrow minded. Some may have experienced emotional or even sexual abuse. Forsaking formal religious organizations, these people have turned to embracing an individualized spirituality that includes picking and choosing from a wide range of alternative religious philosophies. They may reject the construct of an all-powerful benevolent God as we understand Him. Perceived improbable events in the Bible, such as miracles, may contribute to the embracing of a different spirituality. They often view spirituality as a journey intimately linked with the pursuit of personal growth or development. Some are so turned off by institutional religion that their only perceived viable choice is between the alternative spiritual philosophies and nothing.

Near death experiences resonate with some, where they claim some have perceived a long tunnel with a bright light at the end. Feminist influences also resonate with some. Judaism and Christianity are perceived as patriarchal religions. God is a male and the authors of the Biblical books were ancient men, not women. Many women feel they are second class citizens within churches and want a feminist friendly spirituality more in line with 21st century "values". The traditional spirituality of worshipping in a denominational "one size fits all" church to worship an absolute truth is yielding ground to those who rarely expect to find absolute truths, but instead seek truths that are practical in the sense of meeting their personal everyday needs and interests. They may view church goers as blind to the realities of science, logic and associate the religious with a lack of education or intelligence. Bookstores, coffee shops, and the Internet have become the new churches and synagogues.

Perceived freedom also resonates with the unchurched spiritual. Churches promote loyalty to specific doctrines. Not everyone is comfortable with a spiritual style that limits his or her freedom to choose. Some consider a wholesale acceptance of a church's doctrine as lacking the integrity of "owning" one's own faith. They may also resent the authoritarian structure of a church pushing a specific faith

when there are 38,000 Christian denominations,⁹ almost all claiming to be the one true church. Some may feel bored, restless or otherwise spiritually unfulfilled in church. Many don't like church restrictions placed on their personal lifestyles and may feel marriage is no more sacred than a piece of paper. They may seek a belief system that validates whatever it is they want to do.

Some point to a traditional mean spiritedness of churches and the church that stands in stark contrast to the example of Christ. From the Spanish Inquisition, to the Crusades, to those on both sides of the Civil War who claimed God was on their side as they killed their brethren, to those who are against abortion but first in line to support capital punishment, to gossipy unloving behaviors, to selfishness, to being harsh and judgmental, to church leaders fleecing their flock, to various other abuses — all these potentially contribute to a disconnect with traditional Bible based religions.

Some question why a loving God would require animal and human sacrifice. Some look at the billions of people not exposed to the Bible, much less one specific true faith, and reason there must be many acceptable paths else God is unfair. Others question why a God would give a person an alternative sex drive if he or she is not expected to act on it. Others question how a loving God could allow a human baby or puppy to drown, etc. These and other questions can drive people from traditional churches. Some who are SBNR would be atheists if it were not for relatively recent scientific discoveries such as the complexity of DNA.

Our guidance

We have in God's Word examples and guidance involving reaching out to those of very different beliefs:

In Acts we read : *“Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you”(Acts 17: 22-23).*¹⁰

Paul refers to the wisdom of the Greeks:

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate. Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1Cor 1:18-25).

Paul writes of the spiritual conditions in the last days:

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (2Tim 3:1-7).

He also wrote *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1Cor 3:11).*

Timothy was told to preach the Word in and out of season for a time would come when people would not be receptive to sound doctrine:

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2Tim 4:2-5).

We are encouraged by the words of Jesus: *“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matt 9:37-38).*

In discussing God’s Word with a person who is SBNR, the Christadelphian has an opportunity to listen, assess the situation, establish the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, point out its true teachings, and then question the source and rationale of any belief not built on the rock of the Bible. By living a Christ-like example, we can hope to make a positive impression on those who are truly seeking, as opposed to reinforcing negative stereotypes. Most important is that we ask for God’s help and blessing in all our efforts.

Charles Link, Jr (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. Strong’s <4152>. Non-carnal has come to relate to sexual matters: a more suitable term might be non-physical – the spiritual body is not a regular body.
2. Strong’s <2356>. Alternate terms might be either religious zeal (Acts 26:5, James 1:26) or religious excess (Col 2:18).
3. Stone, D., One Nation Under God?, “Newsweek”, (April 07, 2009)
4. Sanders, J., ‘Spiritual but not religious’ becoming more common self-identification, “American Statesman”, (May 31, 2010).
5. Fuller, R. C., “Spiritual but not Religious”, Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, (2001), p.5-167.
6. Janis, S., “Spirituality For Dummies”, 2nd edition, Wiley Publishing, Inc., Hoboken, (2008),

p.29-30.

7. "The Center for Spiritual Atheism", (2008).
8. "Unitarian Universalist Assoc. of Congregations", (2011), <http://www.uua.org>.
9. Fairchild, M., Christianity Today – General Statistics and Facts of Christianity Today, from about.com, (2011).
10. All Biblical references are from the NIV.

Wesley and the Free Cheese

*"But not as the offence, so also is the **free gift**. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the **free gift** is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the **free gift** came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom 5:15-18, KJV).*

*"For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).*

Who wouldn't want a gift? Especially a "free" gift? And that's what salvation is, isn't it? The free gift of God, given, like all free gifts, with no strings attached?

Well, let me tell you about "free gifts". Or, rather, let my brother Wesley (natural and spiritual) tell us about free gifts.

You see, Wesley was a school teacher, a group that hasn't exactly taken a vow of poverty, but they've come close. And it certainly was close enough some years ago, when Wesley discovered that, according to a special set of federal guidelines, his beginning teacher's salary qualified him for a particular government give-away program.

It seems that the federal government, through one of those high-level bureaucratic management decisions, had somehow financed a vast nationwide overproduction of cheese. Millions of pounds of the stuff was stacked up in warehouses around the country, where even with all the proper refrigeration and other precautions it could only be stored for so long.

So what to do? After some consideration, the federal government let it be known that individuals and families falling below certain levels of annual income would be eligible for free cheese. And sure enough, Wesley's full-time teacher salary qualified for this special benefit. Ten pounds of free cheese! What could be better?

Now comes the interesting part.

All you have to do, it turns out, is show up at a certain government building at a certain time, with all the proper paperwork (pay stubs, past years' tax returns, two photo identifications, etc.), wait in line for what seems an interminable time,

answer a number of questions satisfactorily... and then the “free cheese” can be yours... if you have met all the qualifications.

In due course Wesley finally returned home with the free cheese and, as he told us, a valuable lesson: Very few things in life, certainly very few things of any value, come with no price tag. Even things that are “free” cost something!

So it is on the infinitely grander scale of human interactions with the Almighty. And so it is with what Paul called the “free gift” of justification, or righteousness, or salvation.

What does this “free gift” really cost?

- 1) First, we need to know that we qualify for the “free gift”. So many actually qualify, who never know about it. They perish for lack of knowledge. How terribly sad!
- 2) Secondly, we need to know where the “free gift” will be dispensed. They don’t just give it away anywhere: you have to know the location. In this case, the “location” is Christ, the mercy-seat of God: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, NIV).*
- 3) Then, of course, we need to know when the “free gift” will be dispensed. Furthermore, we need to be in the right place at the right time to receive it. Fortunately, there are many “right places” to receive this gift, that is, wherever other believers are gathered together, raising their petitions to heaven, through the one mediator. Or even if the single believer is all alone, on a mountaintop or in a closet, he or she can still find the way to the throne of God: *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:19-22).*
- 4) And we must not forget our proper support documents — not, in this case, pay stubs and tax returns, but rather our names, through confession and repentance and baptism, properly inscribed on heavenly “documents”: *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).* *“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God... to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven” (Heb 12:22,23).*
- 5) Finally, if we are willing to be patient and wait, and wait, and wait some more... then, at last, we will receive our “free gift”: *“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom 12:12).* *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm” (James 5:7,8).*

Now here’s the marvelous thing. Despite the “price” that must be paid — despite the knowledge, the time, the place, the credentials, the waiting — despite all these “qualifications”, the gift when it finally comes will still be a “free gift”. No amount

of knowledge, no amount of “good works”, no amount of patient waiting, will ever be enough to “earn” such a gift!

When it comes, it comes from the blessed hand of a loving Father, who desires that we share all His bounty. But it does not come to those who do not know, it does not come to those who do not act on their knowledge, and it does not come to those who do not wait, patiently and prayerfully, for it. In that sense, it has a real “price tag”! In that sense the “free gift” of eternal life will cost us our whole life:

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? Or what can a man give in exchange for his life?” (Mark 8:35-37).

But who would not gladly pay over his whole life to “buy” such a “free gift”?

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

I Would Be True

*I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.*

*I would be friend of all — the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.*

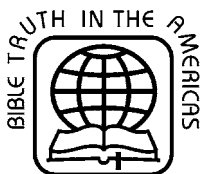
*I would be faithful through each passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be strong to follow where He leads me;
I would have faith to keep the path Christ trod.*

*Who is so low that I am not his brother?
Who is so high that I've no path to him?
Who is so poor I may not feel his hunger?
Who is so rich I may not pity him?*

*May none, then, call on me for understanding,
May none, then, turn to me for help in pain,
And drain alone his bitter cup of sorrow,
Or find he knocks upon my heart in vain.*

Howard A. Walter, and Samuel R. Harlow

(These words may be sung to the tune Londonderry Air, also known as Danny Boy.)



Bible Mission News

Two new brethren in Puerto Rico — and meeting again after 60 years!



Left to right: Bro. Edgardo, Bro. Miguel and Bro. Roberto, with Sis. Aída in front

It hardly seemed possible that the last time we visited Puerto Rico was in 2004. We were in Puerto Rico once again during early May this year and our main goal was to visit with Bro. Miguel and Sis. Aída Robles who have long lived in isolation on the south coast of this island in the city of Ponce. We also wanted to meet our new brother, Roberto Pérez Martínez, who was baptized on March 18th by Bro. Miguel. Sis. Aída and Bro. Roberto went to the same primary school together about 60 years ago in a town about 30 minutes west of Ponce. They were unaware of the fact that both their families had moved to Ponce when they were young, and that they had both married over 40 years ago. And on top of this, the two couples had lived about a five minute walk from each other — and they had never met in all that time! Roberto's wife passed away last October and while he was walking past the Robles' house one day late last year, Bro. Miguel

noticed Roberto's sad countenance and started to talk with him. In conversation with Roberto, Bro. Miguel discovered the past connection between Sis. Aída and Roberto — coincidence or providence? Bro. Miguel talked to Roberto about the Truth daily for the subsequent months, introducing him to the joy and hope of the Gospel, and this resulted in Roberto's baptism!

Another Puerto Rican had been studying by phone and correspondence with Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter (in California) for about three years — Edgardo Saldaña Morales. Due to his keen interest in the Truth, Edgardo flew to Los Angeles twice — once in November of 2010, and again in 2011 when he was interviewed and baptized on Saturday, April 30th. He returned to Puerto Rico the following Monday, and on Thursday, May 5th he drove from San Juan on the north coast of the island, south to Ponce. The five of us spent about five hours together. We enjoyed a delicious hot noon meal prepared by Sis. Aída; shared fellowship dur-

ing a Breaking of Bread Service; and reviewed several difficult passages like the Satan in Job and Paul's reference to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians! We will say that the hospitality extended by Bro. Miguel, Sis. Aída and Bro. Roberto in their homes was exceptional (there was a bed ready in both places!) — we had a very enjoyable visit with all four of them!

Bro. Donald Luff, CBMA Linkman for Puerto Rico

Campeche, Mexico

Greetings to my brothers and sisters



Sis. Damaris and Bro. Jorge

My name is Dámaris and I live with my family in Campeche, Mexico. I have been interested in the Scriptures for almost 30 years and I have visited various churches of different denominations, but I never found any of them aligned with the Scriptures in such a way as I found on the website www.labiblia.com.

It has been a great joy for me to find a group of brothers and sisters like yourselves, members of Christadelphian ecclesias. I like your organization, discipline, motivation,

literature, methods of study, the publicity that you prepare, the Bible courses and all the rest that is done to enable the Bible to be understood in depth, seriousness and devotion.

Many years ago my husband, Jorge, began to come to a correct understanding of certain doctrines, such as: the truth about tithing, hell is not eternal torment, the earth for the just, only God has immortality, and many others.

We couldn't find anyone that taught these doctrines. We saw that they had no place in any other religious group. This caused us to worry and for me personally, a little sadness and the feeling of distance from everyone else.

I used to read the Bible at home, make notes and pray, but my desire for many years was to share with other people what I had learned about God. I asked myself: How? Most people believed contrary to what I had found in the Bible! I never imagined that a group such as the Christadelphians existed, a group that embraced these teachings which are so fundamental for a true believer. Now I see that my dream is becoming a reality: to teach others about the promises of our heavenly Father. My husband and I were baptized in 2009 in the Gulf of Mexico.

Now we have the spiritual and material help we need from the brothers and sisters of the CBMA. This consists of the necessary tools such as Bible courses, studies, literature, leaflets to distribute, exhortations by Internet, news from other ecclesias and the newsletter sent every month. But our most important help comes from the blessings of our Creator — His mercy, love, strength and health.

What do we lack now? We need to organize ourselves to make time in our daily routines to attend to the preaching of the word. As Jesus said in Matthew 9:38: *“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest.”*

We also remember the words that the Lord spoke to Joshua after the death of Moses, as the Israelites were about to enter the Promised land: *“Be strong and courageous....do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Josh 1:9).*

*Sister Dámaris Abigail Cuevas
Campeche, Mexico*

An Unforgettable Vacation in the Caribbean

Canada is nicknamed the “Great White North” and not without good reason. When the temperature drops below freezing in November and it is not likely to rise to above freezing for several months during the winter season, we northerners welcome a break from the snow, ice and frigid weather. This past winter Sis. Ruth and I escaped the northern clime for a few weeks during February to seek the warm breezes of a gentler climate. And we found those soothing breezes on board a ship that traveled among the Windward and Leeward Islands in the Caribbean; the islands of pirates and sugar cane in days of yore.

The ship traveled from island to island at night. During the daytime the ship docked at one pretty island after another, each island surrounded by the warm, azure colored Caribbean sea. God’s handiwork in creation is wonderful to behold. This truth is no more evident than in the Caribbean. However, as enjoyable as this experience was for the two of us, we enjoyed a series of experiences that exceeded the beauty of this tropical paradise — we visited brethren and sisters on three Caribbean islands.

We had prearranged to visit Sis. Iris Shaw when our ship docked at St. John, Antigua. What a joy it was to see her smiling face and give her a hug after so many years apart! Years before, Ruth and I, together with Bro. Russ and Sis. Muriel Dawes, had done missionary work on the island and had met Sis. Iris. It was good to see her again and to know that her faith is strong despite her comparatively isolated location. We enjoyed lunch, a visit to her home overlooking the sea and then a drive around the island together, chatting up a storm all the while. And then back to the ship before it cast off to travel to the next island.

Later in our voyage we docked for the day at Castries, St. Lucia. Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines (CBMC fieldworkers) together with Bro. Andre George, recently converted from Catholicism, met us at the wharf. They had arranged for a mission friend to transport the five of us around this small but beautiful and mountainous island. It is noted for its pitons, two magnificent volcanic peaks that thrust up out of the sea. During our sightseeing trip we stopped in a small village to chat with several individuals who have expressed interest in Bible teaching. Sis. Julia had the foresight to prepare a very welcome lunch that we enjoyed in the shade of a banana tree.

On one of the Sundays our ship tied up at Bridgetown, Barbados, and, as had previously been arranged, the Recording Brother, Sasenarine Ramlochan, was there to take us to meeting. And what a lovely day followed!

This was indeed a trip down memory lane for Ruth and me. In the previous twenty years we visited Barbados annually and had come to know our brethren and sisters of the two island ecclesias quite well and had developed a deep and abiding love for our Bajan brethren.

The Bank Hall Ecclesia, Bridgetown, dates back to the 1890s! The Barbados South Ecclesia is a more recently formed ecclesia serving a different area of the island. Each ecclesia is keeping the light of the Truth shining brightly. We were very glad to learn that the two ecclesias had planned a joint Memorial Meeting and lunch to follow. This thoughtful arrangement gave us the opportunity to worship together with all the brethren and sisters we have known for so many years. And, as you can imagine, there was no shortage of conversation... nor of excellent Bajan food!



Although we saw many wonderful sights during our voyage, our most memorable moments were spent with dearly loved brethren and sisters in the Caribbean. We hope that we gave their spirits a lift. Certainly, they gave us a real boost as we wait for our Lord's return. Although the weather back in Canada was cold there was no shortage of warmth and hospitality extended to us by our spiritual family in the tropics.

We highly recommend to all brethren and sisters taking a midwinter break to find out where fellow disciples are located and then, if at all possible, visit them. Those visited and those doing the visiting will be greatly profited. As the world becomes smaller and travel is still possible, we have the delightful opportunity to visit and encourage one another.

Bro. George and Sis. Ruth Jackson (Mississauga West, ON)

Dreams do Come True!

Here in the United States, there are countless marriages where a friendship began at a Bible School or CYC activity. What if there was only one Bible School a year you could attend and that was held in another country where you don't even live?



Sis. Zuelan Cascante (21) from Costa Rica and Bro. Neftali Espinoza (23) from El Salvador met during the year-end Bible Schools in Costa Rica and El Salvador, and were engaged to be married.

Attached is a photo of their marriage in the Santa Barbara, Costa Rican Hall on April 23rd. The hall looks very presentable, since about two years ago they repainted and installed new lighting.

We pray for God's richest blessings on their married life in the Truth. This is a good example of even closer relations and fellowship for the Central American Ecclesias.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/C Publicity

Overcoming Termites in Trinidad

Termites may be found in many parts of the world, particularly in warm or temperate climates. They cause great damage and can be very troublesome to eliminate.

During a brief trip to Trinidad in 2009, I came across the termite infested home of Bro. Abiathar and Sis. Neesha Edoos. It was a wood structure built up on stilts so there was plenty of fuel for these tiny, but voracious insects. The damage was so bad that the front bedroom was separating from the rest of the house! The wooden posts had been supported by metal sleeves on several occasions, but were now giving way to the weight of the structure. It was a very unsafe situation indeed.

But over the last few years, Abi and Neesha have been able to rebuild their home, so now it is both safe and comfortable. The new structure is built out of steel tubing, tile building blocks, and sheet metal — all termite proof! Now, the only thing that is still under attack is the wood furniture in some of the homes belonging to our brethren. You can see little piles of saw dust on the floor beside and under their dressers. These little creatures are relentless, as any of you who have had termites in your home can verify.

The Edoos feel quite blessed and grateful for the help they received for this project. They now have a safe dwelling for their family and a place where they can host their spiritual family, the ecclesia, for Bible Class and other activities.

Bro. Brad Butts, CBMC Linkman for Trinidad and Tobago



Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

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christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BALTIMORE, MD

The Baltimore, MD Ecclesia rejoices to announce the baptism of JOSHUA HEWITSON, son of Bro. Mark and Sis. Jane Hewitson, grandson of Sis. Lois Hulbert, on December 29, 2010. It is a privilege to watch our young people grow up to embrace the truth and this was the feeling on the occasion of Josh's baptism. This year we were also blessed to have Sis. Larynette Ndah join our ecclesial family. Larynette came to the United States last year from Cameroon. As a young person there, she learned of the hope of Israel through her uncle, Bro. Fedelis Fang of the Douala Ecclesia. We are blessed by the fruit of his efforts and give thanks to God for His providential care.

On April 8, 2010, our much loved Sis. Janet Ribaud of the Finger Lakes, NY Ecclesia, fell asleep in Christ. Sis. Janet grew up and was baptized in the Baltimore Ecclesia. She is the daughter of our Sis. Dorothy and the late Bro. Bill Link, and wife of Bro. John Ribaud. Janet was so faithful, from a child right until the end of her life. She "loved his appearing" and fell asleep in hope of that coming day. Our hearts go out to the Link and Ribaud families who have lost such a daughter, wife, sister, mother and friend.

With gladness we announce the birth of Victoria Ivy, on November 18, 2010 to Bro. Josiah and Sis. Jenny Hewitson, and the birth of Noah Jeremy, on February 19, 2011 to Bro. Allen and Sis. Tara Laben. May these little ones grow up playing in the streets of Jerusalem, for we know the time is near for our Lord to appear!

Over the past year we have hosted a rigorous preaching effort and we are grateful to a number of brethren for their supporting presentations on many first principle and current event topics. The year began with an open house to introduce ourselves in the neighborhood of the hall with the theme, "Keep Your Resolution; Make This a Bible Reading Year." Other public presentation topics included: "The Bible: Is It Inspired? Israel in Bible Prophecy" by Bro. Jim McKelvie (Moorestown, NJ); "What Can Christians Learn from the Old Testament?" by Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ); "Why Does God Allow Suffering?" by Bro. Grant Anderson (Milford Road, MI); "God's Future Kingdom on Earth: The Solution to Today's Problems" by Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Sutherland, Aust.); "Christ's Coming: Will It Happen?" by Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON); and "Fulfilled Prophecies of the Bible: Evidence of the Hand of God" by Bro. Ryan King (Petersburg, VA).

We thank Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA) and Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON) for their efforts in leading our study weekends. Our ecclesia benefits from the continued support of the Washington DC and Richmond-Petersburg, VA ecclesias in exchanging speakers.

Andy Bilello

BEDFORD, NS

There is much to report since our last communication. First, we held our Annual Study Day on September 25, 2010. We are grateful to Bro. Wayne Coutu (Hamilton Book Road, ON) for leading the study on the theme of the women in the genealogy

of Christ. Bro. Wayne was joined by his wife, Sis. Kelly, and daughters, Sis. Kessia and Mikayla. We were also delighted to welcome brothers and sisters from the Sussex, NB Ecclesia during the study day.

Lord willing, our study day will be held this year on September 17, 2011, with Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) giving the talks on the theme "Pentecost Revisited". All are welcome. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Sis. Julie Snobelen at thesnobelens@hotmail.com.

Since our last communication we have welcomed a number of brothers and sisters from the following ecclesias: Sussex, NB; St. Johns, NF; Toronto East, ON; Hamilton Book Road, ON; Hamilton Greenaway, ON; Cambridge, ON; Shelburne, ON; Moorpeth, England; Teinmouth, England; and Newquay, England. We thank Bre. Derek Booth (Moorpeth, England), Frank Abel (Hamilton, Book Road, ON), and Paul Baines (Sussex, NB) for their words of exhortation.

Finally, our ecclesia was blessed to witness in Halifax with brothers and sisters and friends from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and England, the wedding of Bro. John Ching, originally from Christchurch, NZ, and Sis. Sair Hilton (Newquay, England) on April 16, 2011. We pray that God will bless this new couple as they walk together toward the kingdom.

Stephen D. Snobelen

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We thank our Bro. David Birchall (London, ON) for his words of exhortation. The ecclesia was happy to see Sis. Louise with him.

We rejoiced with the angels in heaven as we witnessed the baptism of ORVILLE EARLE, husband of our own Sis. Lolurie Earle, on Sunday May 8, 2011. Our prayers are with Bro. Orville as he begins his walk toward the kingdom.

We are pleased to welcome by transfer from the South Ozone Park, NY Ecclesia, our Sis. Gabriela Kilburn, who has been commended to us by the ecclesia there. We are pleased to have one more join our numbers and look forward to her help and fellowship.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen, and Mabel Knapp (Union, NJ); Margaret Cummings (Moorestown NJ); Jamaul Husbands (Georgetown, Guyana); Cornelius Kellet (Washington DC); Phil Taylor (Singapore); and Tony Isaacs (Atlanta, GA).

Stewart Marsden

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

We will miss the fellowship and service of Sis. Shonna Malczewski, and commend her to the love and fellowship of the Vancouver, BC Ecclesia. We welcome back Bro. Thomas and Sis. Esther Cawston after their stay in Victoria, BC.

We thank Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby) for his spiritually energizing talks at our fraternal on "Events at the time of the End", and an opportunity for the local ecclesias to cooperate in the public effort at the Surrey hall.

There are two changes in our Sunday morning meetings. We are now meeting at the Liverpool Room, 528 Liverpool Street in New Westminster. But there is no change in

our postal address. Also, meeting time has been changed to 11:00 am.

Art Bull

PETERBOROUGH, ON

The brothers and sisters of the Peterborough, ON Ecclesia would like to share some of our recent news. We meet every week at 11:00 am from May 1st until November 1st at St Joseph at Fleming nursing home, 659 Brealey Dr., Peterborough, ON. From November 1st to May 1st we meet every other week. We continue to enjoy the fellowship of visiting brothers who bring their families and give us words of exhortation.

We recently held our annual meeting where Bro. Bryan Rose retired as Recording Brother after doing a great job for many years. Bro. Percy Gwilliam has taken on the recording brother position. Please address ecclesial correspondence by email to percygwilliam@hotmail.com, call: 705-748-2357, or address mail to 465 Cordach Cres, Peterborough, ON, Canada K9H 3A4. We welcome any brothers and sisters visiting in the area to join us around the table of the Lord.

Percy Gwilliam

SPRINGFIELD, MA

The Springfield, MA Ecclesia is sad to inform the brotherhood that the following brother and sisters have resigned their fellowship: Bro. Bill Flagg, and Sis' Anna Bauver, Jan Bauver and Katharine Flagg.

We are further saddened to report the falling asleep of our Sis. Ruth Smith on Wednesday, March 23, 2011. Ruth was a hard working, loving mother who dedicated her life to her family. She was a long time member of the Springfield, MA Ecclesia and with her husband, Stan, raised their five children here. She was a quiet, humble and caring sister. I never knew her to be pretentious or arrogant, and she was always willing to help with ecclesial activities.

We are very pleased to report that JUDY PIXLEY was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on June 27, 2010. She became aware of our seminar follow up Bible classes and joined at the invitation of a friend. Not too long afterward, he dropped out and she continued her burning desire to learn the Scriptures. God does work in unexpected and marvelous ways.

Lloyd Long

SUSSEX, NB

We have been blessed to have the following visitors recently: Bro. John and Sis. Rachel Perks (Ottawa, ON); Bro. Dale and Sis. Carol Crawford, Bro. Mike and Sis. Ruth Carr, Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson, Bro. Steve and Sis. Julie Snobelen, Sis. Jerusha Snobelen, and Bro. Nathan and Sis. Sarah Crawford (Bedford, NS); Bro. Peter and Sis. Ruth Edwards (Derby, UK); Sis. Hannah Abel (Barrie, ON); Bro. Jay and Sis. Rebekah Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Sis. Brietta Harper (Meriden, CT); and Bro. Tim and Sis. Kim Weir (Mississauga West, ON). Bro. John lead an interesting study on First Thessalonians and Bro. Jay led the young people's camp. We thank Bre. Edwards and Weir for their exhortations and Bible Class, and Bre. Perks and Mayock for their studies.

We are looking forward to the visit of Bro. Steve Davis (Stoughton, MA) for our Annual Thanksgiving Study weekend October 8-9, 2011.

Cliff Baines

Minute Meditation

All things work together for good

Nido Qubein once observed, “You can’t think your way into acting positively, but you can act your way into thinking positively.” George W. Crane has advice based on this observation: “Act the way you’d like to be and soon you’ll be the way you act.” These men believe that if we begin to act in a good way that soon our thinking will be affected to feel positively about our good acts. It works the other way as well; if we start behaving badly our thinking will change for the worse.

In Scriptures this principle is taught by example. For instance, the first commandment is to love God. We find it difficult to love someone who cannot be seen. However, we read over and over in the Psalms and elsewhere to praise our God. “O praise the Lord all ye nations, praise him all ye people, for his merciful kindness is great towards us.” David writes, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.” By praying to our heavenly Father and praising Him for all He has done for us, we appreciate His goodness to us and grow in thankfulness and love for Him. Our thinking changes because we are speaking the words of praise that we are commanded to speak. Our thoughts become full of gratitude for the many blessings we have been given, and we love our God for it. Our action of mouthing the words of praise to our God will change our thinking and the words will become real to us.

Another example comes from Proverbs where we are advised to train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. By forcing children to obey, to perform their duties, to go to school, to learn about God, we are training their thinking. We teach them not to be greedy by forcing them to share their toys or cookies with other children. They learn from their actions many lessons, such as the satisfaction of a job well done and to consider the needs of others, all positive thought processes. Their actions change their thinking, even though they act in that way because their parents tell them.

A negative example is Pharaoh in Egypt whose actions to oppose the God of Israel so hardened his thinking that even after the firstborn were slain and Israel had left, he reconsidered and decided to chase them down and forcibly return them. He acted negatively, his thinking aligned with his actions, and at the last his decisions would be considered irrational, with Egypt in ruins as he headed off in his chariot to his doom in the waters of the Red Sea.

It is much easier to think negatively, and negative thoughts tend to produce negative results. As Henry Ford said, “If you think you can do it, or you think you can’t do it, you are right.” If we focus on the hurdles in our way and we do not take the actions that will bring success, essentially we defeat ourselves. There is a story about a little league coach who was trying to inspire his team to think more positively. One day after they arrive at the field for a game, one of his players comes running up to him and says, “Do you see how big the fellows are on the other team? I think

we are going to lose.” The coach realizes that his lessons on thinking positively are not sinking in. He says to the youngster, “Don’t you remember me telling you that you should think positively? Now, rephrase your statement for me.” The little boy says, “Okay coach, I know we are going to lose.”

If we begin to act as if everything is going to get better, it will help us to change our negative attitude, and soon we will be thinking in a more positive way. When Joshua and Caleb returned with the spies, they ignored the giant warriors and strongly fortified cities they had seen and focused on moving forward to take the land with God’s help. Unfortunately the other 10 spies thought only about the obstacles and convinced the rest of the people that the task of conquering the land was impossible. The people made plans to return to Egypt because they thought that they would never be able to take over the Promised Land. As a result, that generation was not permitted to enter the land. Their negative action reinforced their negative thinking, and they reaped the unfortunate consequences.

In contrast, Caleb was so confident in God’s help that he specifically requested Hebron for his inheritance, the area where the giants in the land lived. Joshua, who had feelings of total inadequacy when he stepped into the shoes of Moses as the leader of Israel, was very careful to obey God and to act the part of a leader of the people of God. Joshua’s success in acting the role assigned to him changed his attitude and he truly became the faithful leader who captained the people in their conquest of the land. Joshua and Caleb are examples of George Crane’s words of wisdom; their actions caused them to become the men they wanted to be.

Paul teaches us this lesson when he says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” What we may consider to be obstacles to our progress may in fact be part of God’s purpose for our life. In Paul’s life, all things on the surface did not seem to be working together for his good, but he explained that even though he had been arrested and charged falsely and was in prison though innocent, that he actually believed that it was all working out for good. When Paul was in prison in Rome and chained to Roman soldiers, he wrote a letter to those who lived in Philippi and said to them, “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.” Paul recognized that what seemed like a terrible thing was actually an advantage for the truth. His actions, preaching and writing letters in spite of his chains, gave him a reason to think positively about his situation because he saw how the message of the gospel spread because of it.

While Paul was in prison he wrote a number of what we call prison letters. Had he not been in prison he could simply have visited these ecclesias and told them face to face what he wanted them to know. John, on the other hand, was not in prison, so when he wrote two very short letters, he said to a sister in 2 John, “I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope

to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” To Brother Gaius in 3 John he wrote, “I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.”

We can see the truth of Paul’s teaching that all things work together for good, for all things really did work out for his ultimate good and for the good of all who received his letters. We are thankful for Paul’s prison letters since we in our time now benefit from the wise inspired counsel he wrote to those ecclesias. We need to learn this lesson well and put it into action in our lives by acting in a positive way even when we do not feel like it. We will surprise ourselves when we discover that even in times of great hardship, acting positively will affect our feelings and we will begin to think more optimistically.

We can take comfort in the fact that the Lord is in control of our lives. We are the sheep of his pasture, and he is taking care of us to bring us through the trials of this life to the glorious life to come in the kingdom. We are thankful to know, as Paul did, that “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Robert J. Lloyd

SPECIAL ISSUE — Preaching in the Americas

For the August issue of the *Tidings*, we intend to deliver a special issue packed with articles from a wide number of contributors, covering a range of topics related to this overall message. All are designed to help us focus on the imperative we all have in delivering the Unique Hope we all possess.

The issue is designed as a resource for all those who are interested in preaching — which should be all of us.

An outline of the areas that will be covered (God Willing) is listed below,

- First century and early Christadelphian preaching precedents;
- Preaching by campaigns, radio, television, Internet, seminars, Sunday school, etc.;
- Individual preaching initiatives and collaborative preaching initiatives;
- Domestic missionary programs and overseas mission programs;
- Preaching: past, present, and a glimpse into the future.

Additional copies will be available at \$2:50 each (\$3 Canadian).

For the additional copies you can

- Email to the editor@tidings.org. You will be billed along with the copies
- Make Checks payable to The Tidings and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, with a note as to the address to send copies to
- On-line via the website www.tidings.org

David Jennings, Jim Harper

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

JULY 2011

- 1-4 North Battleford, SK**, Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan will be speaking on the First Epistle of John. Contact Sis. Laura Jackson at t.jackson@sasktel.net.
- 1-7 Terra Nova Christadelphian Bible School** will be held in Terra Nova Park, Newfoundland. Speakers and subjects are Bro. Joni Mannel (Walsall, UK): "At the breaking of bread " and Bro. Frank Abel (ON): "Wait on the Lord". For complete information and registration please visit our website terranovabibleschool.com. Contact Bro. Gary Hynes, 32 First Street, Mount Pearl, NL, Canada A1N 1X8 (709-747-2750); contact@terranovabibleschool.com.
- 2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School**, Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is "O Taste and See that the Lord is Good" – Psalm 34:8. The Youth Program theme will be "Occupations in Scripture". The speakers are Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "The Gospel in the Law and Prophets" to the adults and "The Truth Affirmed" to the teens; Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand): "Knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ, His Name and Titles" to the adults and "Daniel and His Story" to the teens; Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Christ-Centered Families in the 21st Century" to the adults and "Finding the Joy of the Truth" to the teens. Registration forms on website <http://www.christadelphians.net/macbs>.
- 9-16 Fifth annual Manitoulin Family Bible Camp** on Manitoulin Island. The speakers are Bro. Neville Clark (Adelaide, AUS): "Moses — The Man of God" and Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "Walk Worthy of the Calling with which You are Called." Contact www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com or Bro. Rick Sales ersales@explornet.com or 519-925-6847.
- 10-16 Southwest Bible School** will be held at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Revelation — Exhortations from the Apocalypse", Teen class: "Encounters with a Risen Lord"; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales): "Ezra and Nehemiah"; Teen class: "David and Solomon"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Muscle for the Five Big Mistakes", Teen class: "Lessons from Daniel". Registration information at www.swcbs.org or by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367.
- 16-24 Eastern Bible School**, Connecticut College, New London, CT. Theme: "Set Your Minds on Things Above". Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Idolatry in the 21st Century"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "The Re-Creation of Zion". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501, or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org.
- 23-30 Christadelphian Bible Camp**, Manitoulin Island. Theme is "Looking unto Jesus". Speakers will be Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW, AUS): "Impressions of Christ" and Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ): "Joseph – 'God did send me before you to preserve life' ". More details on website www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Alex Browning at jabrowning@rogers.com or phone 1-416-284-0290.

23-31 Midwest Bible School. Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Ed Binch (Avon, IN): "Jehoshaphat: Being Saved by God's Grace"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "The Angels of God"; Bro. Roger Gore (Adelaide Enfield, AUS): "Paul's Letter to the Colossians". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Drive, Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248-462-5740, mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

24-30 Pacific Coast Bible School Idyllwild, CA. Speakers are Bro. Craig Blewett (South Africa): "The Message we have heard"; Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "To Speak Well of God"; Bro. Steve Hornhardt (AUS): "Come and See — A Consideration of Revelation 3, 6 & 12". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 9306, mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

31 - Aug 6 CBMA Old fashioned Bible Campaign in Guadalajara, Mexico. Many preaching activities, fellowship, devotionals/hymn sings, a Bible School class each night etc. Learn a little Spanish during the week and meet and work with your brethren in a growing Hispanic ecclesia. No Spanish required. Ages 18 and up in this preaching effort. Contact Bro. David Lloyd at 818-352-6486 or davidrlloyd@earthlink.net.

31- Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School. Speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): "Waiting for the Lord", Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC): "Weapons of our Warfare" and Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Salisbury, Adelaide): "Come & See — Witnessing for Christ". rogueverbibleschool@gmail.com or Bro. Rob Posey at 541-474-6963.

AUGUST 2011

20-26 Winfield Bible School. Theme: "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in You." Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "The House of Prayer for All Nations"; Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Australia): "Philippians: Shine as Lights"; Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Hebrews: The Power of Faith in Jesus Christ". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-478-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca.

27-2 September Vancouver Island Bible Camp, Camp Pringle, 2520 West Shawnigan Lake Road, Shawnigan, BC. Our speakers are Bro. Shane Kirkwood: "Encounters with the Master"; Bro. Stan Isbell: "Godly Mariners and Ships on the Sea – Lessons from the Bible of Men, Their Ships and the Sea"; Bro. Bill Link: "The Lord Shall Yet Comfort Zion — God's steadfast purpose in Zechariah". Contact information www.vibiblecamp.com or Sharon Enns ennsranch@telus.net or 1-250-338-4812.

SEPTEMBER 2011

3 Moorestown, NJ, Labor Day Study Day. Bro. Richard Palmer (UK): "Reflections on Science and the Bible". Contact Bro. Dan Langston for more information; dklangston@gmail.com.

11-16 Adult Study Week, Daily Interactive Bible Study on "The Life of David", at Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. For information about the workbook, or to register please contact Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson jrobbins@worldchat.com 519-448-1696 or Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell thestonells@hotmail.com 905-627-9428.

17 Bedford, NS, Study day. Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) will be giving talks on "Pentecost Revisited". Contact Sis. Julie Snobelen thesnobelens@hotmail.com.

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17 London, ON, Study day. Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will speak on "The prayer of Jabez — According to His will". Children's class for ages 5-11. Register for the children's class with Sis. Louis Birchall 519-688-7081 or dalefinancial@rogers.com.

OCTOBER 2011

8 Brantford, ON, Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK).

8-9 Echo Lake, NJ, Fall study weekend. Theme is "Making use of the senses we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry (UK).

8-9 Sussex, NB, Thanksgiving study weekend. Speaker Bro. Steve Davis (Stoughton, MA).

21-23 Women At The Well Retreat. Miracle Hot Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) on "Hannah's Prayer." Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org or send a non-refundable \$50 check made out to Sis. Bonnie Sommerville, 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Phone: (818) 341-3932.

NOVEMBER 2011

12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL, Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameswilkinson@hotmail.com.

DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com.

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON). Please note the year **2012**.

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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August, 2011

No. 7

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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Preaching in the Americas

Introduction

Over the century and a half that has elapsed since the pioneering work of Bro. John Thomas, Christadelphians have carried on the commission of preaching the Truth to the communities we work and live in. In many ways, preaching has shaped our ecclesial culture. We are people who love the Word and it is not sufficient for us to keep it to ourselves. We are a body that seeks for others to embrace the Truth and to participate with us in the worship of the Almighty Father.

Preaching has provided an important platform for individuals and ecclesias to grow our faith. We've all experienced disappointing times where there has been little to no response, but also the exhilaration when someone understands and accepts the Truth. By the Lord's grace, it leads us to men and women that embrace the faith we share and they and their families become precious additions to our fellowship.

This special issue attempts to capture a few snapshots of preaching work by North Americans. In no way is it intended to be exhaustive. There are countless stories and resources that we were unable to capture in these few short pages. We are all aware of individuals that influenced us, that inspired us by their commitment to proclamation. Some were bold expounders of the Truth. Others were especially adept at speaking to friends, co-workers and neighbors.

While we make no attempt to cover all these wonderful stories, we do hope to "jumpstart" an ongoing forum for sharing information and resources about preaching. Following this special issue, the *Tidings Magazine* will be dedicating a special "**Preaching in North America**" section for future editions. Lord Willing, it will become a unique way to share information and resources on individual and ecclesial preaching work. We encourage our readers to write short articles that describe preaching work that you or your ecclesia are involved with that you feel could be of value for others to learn about.

We hope that you will enjoy this collection of articles. Perhaps you will be moved to try some of the ideas your brothers and sisters have employed. Whilst the Lord remains away, may each of us be lights that are brightly shining. May we "redeem the time" that remains to share this unparalleled message of hope with all who would hear. We all hope this special issue will not only inform us as to what has been done, but motivate us all to become even more personally involved in the vital work of preaching the Truth.

We would like to thank all our contributors, who gave of their time to tell some of the inspiring accounts of the many ways preaching has been accomplished by and for those on this continent.

*David Jennings and Jim Harper
Section Editors, Special Issue*

Historical Introduction

Preaching in the First Century

Having inherited a name above every name, Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach and teach in all the world,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28:18-20).

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The practice

This last verse, Acts 1:8, foreshadows the fourfold structure of the book of Acts:

- 1) Acts 1-5: The twelve apostles, led by Peter and John, preach to Jews in Jerusalem.
- 2) Acts 6:1-9:31: The seven deacons (table servants), led by Stephen and Philip, preach to Jews, including those in Samaria.
- 3) Acts 9:32-12:24: Peter, now without the other apostles, preaches to Jews and the Gentile Cornelius and his household, all in Judaea.
- 4) Paul’s Mission to the Gentiles (Acts 12:25-28:31), which also has a fourfold structure:
 - a) Acts 12:25-15:25: First Missionary Journey, to Asia Minor with Barnabas.
 - b) Acts 15:36-18:22: Second Missionary Journey, to Greece with Silas.
 - c) Acts 18:23-26:32: Third Missionary Journey, to Ephesus, etc., and trials after arriving back in Jerusalem.
 - d) Acts 27-28: To Rome, “the uttermost parts of the earth”.

Paul explains the division of labor between himself and Peter,

“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles... when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of

fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal 2:2, 7-9).

Following the pattern set by Jesus, preachers in the first century were sent out “two by two” (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2-4; 15:39-40; cf. Eccl 4:9-12).¹

The Message

The message was simple; they preached the gospel, “*the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*” (Acts 8:12; 28:30-31). Depending on circumstances, the emphasis might be on one or the other of these essential topics: for example, during his ministry, Jesus “*preached the gospel of the kingdom*” (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 11:5; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:16-21); and when discussing the resurrection, Paul reminded the Corinthians that he had preached to them the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, according to the scriptures (1Cor 15:1-4).

Their preaching was based on the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. During the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus instructed the apostles:

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:44-49).

Fundamental ideas were foretold in the law (Acts 3:22-26; 7:2-44; etc.), the prophets (Acts 2:16-21; 7:48-50; 8:26-40; 13:34; etc.; cf. Luke 7:22-23), and the Psalms (Acts 2:25-28, 34-35; 4:25-28; 13:33, 35; etc.).

The Audience

They tailored the message to their audiences. Peter’s Pentecost speech was directed precisely at his Jewish hearers (Acts 2:14-36); as a result, “*they were pricked in their hearts... then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day were added unto them about 3,000 souls*” (Acts 2:37-41). In Athens, Paul’s approach was ideal for the philosophizing Greek idolaters he was addressing (Acts 17:14-31). The reaction: some mocked, others wanted to hear more, and some believed (Acts 17:32-34). Paul summarizes his practice of adapting, of becoming all things to all people, in order to make the gospel most suitable to each, most likely to win them over:

“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might

gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Cor 9:19-23).

The results

Throughout the book of Acts, we are told that some people believed the gospel message and were baptized, becoming members of the fast-growing first century ecclesia. Others, on the other hand, rejected the message, mocked the preachers, and persecuted the ecclesias. Ironically, this persecution enabled the gospel to spread ever further throughout the rest of the world.

At the end of the first century, John recaps the success of the Jewish and Gentile missions. Concerning Jewish believers, he writes:

*"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of **all the tribes of the children of Israel**... [twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes]" (Rev 7:4-8; cf. 14:1-5).*

And concerning Gentile believers, he writes:

*"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of **all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues**, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands... And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to **every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people**, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev 7:9; 14:6-7; cf. Psa 96-98).*

The lessons for us

These first century practices provide a model for our preaching today:

- We are commissioned to preach the gospel, as a community and as individuals. We are called to shine as lights in the world.
- We must preach to everyone everywhere, sowing the seed on all types of soil.
- Our message must focus on the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.
- We must be instructed in the Scriptures, prepared with a ready answer.
- We must adapt to the varying situations that arise, tailoring the message to our audience to maximize the possibility of winning them over, for the gospel's sake.
- We must take advantage of whatever circumstances we find ourselves in to preach to those around us.
- We must diligently plant and water; God will give the increase.

As we eagerly await our Lord's return from Heaven to bring the promised blessings of God's rule to the earth, we must continue in the work assigned to us, to love our

neighbors by preaching the gospel, that at least some of them may be saved. As long as Christ remains away, we must redeem the time, for “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us—ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2Pet 3:9).

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. For more details on the importance of this practice, see “‘Two by Two’—‘Missionaries,’ money, and morality: Why Jesus sent out preachers two by two,” by George Booker, *Tidings*, December, 2008, pp. 549-558.

The Preaching Methods of Our Early Brethren

The earliest years

Before the advent of mechanized transport, and before the days of rapid communication, preaching was carried out in large part by travelling on horseback to the remote locations of potential converts. Thus was the early work of John Thomas, as he traveled around the Eastern Seaboard in the years 1835-1848. In these thirteen years, he must have given hundreds of lectures, many undoubtedly along the lines of one of the first¹, which was published in 1833 and focused on the necessity and purpose of baptism. Of course, at this time he was a follower of Alexander Campbell, but he soon began developing his unique beliefs. He delivered this message, at least initially, from the pulpits of the congregations he lead in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Richmond, as well as from other pulpits all over the mid-Atlantic states.

Soon his major method of spreading the gospel was his series of magazines: his first one, the *Apostolic Advocate*, was a Campbellite house organ for Virginia, but others followed with a more distinctive message, albeit a reduced circulation.

It was not until he went to the UK in 1848 that his methods extended much beyond church pulpits. Particularly in Glasgow, but in many other halls up and down England and Scotland, his lectures were widely advertised to the public, and drew large crowds to hear his message. This almost exclusively addressed the concerns of the day. The popular revolutions in France and across the continent dominated the headlines, and his lectures covered how they tied in to Bible prophecy. (Interesting how the revolutions in the Middle East are similarly dominating our headlines in 2011.) Newspaper accounts of his lectures survive, and although some elements of the gospel can be seen, the success of the lectures was undoubtedly the way they appealed to the concerns of the day.

One result of these lectures was the book *Elpis Israel*, which received a somewhat mixed reception at the time, probably because it included the kernel of his distinctive doctrinal message as well as the prophetic sections that were expected. But out of this work emerged the beginnings of the truth, particularly in Scotland and the British Midlands. One can demonstrate the vast majority of these early followers were either Campbellites, as above, or the remnants of the British followers of one William Miller. (Miller’s claim to fame — or was it notoriety — was his failed prediction of the return of Jesus in 1844.)

So the methods of John Thomas were

- Appeal to groups with some common grounds by visiting them
- Lecture at well publicized meetings
- Communicate to his followers and others through his magazines
- Write and lecture copiously on prophetic matters
- Debates were few, and almost non-existent after 1840

After John Thomas' return to the USA in 1850, he slowly developed a group of followers, largely by the method of reaching out to audiences in large meeting halls as a visiting lecturer. Such lectures were often well attended, as they formed a major source of "entertainment" in those days. By the time he died in 1871, his group of Christadelphians in North America probably numbered around 1,000, with many more in the UK — and that area was dominated by Robert Roberts.

As to other preaching methods, many were in use very early. In 1855, it was reported that "The Halifax brethren [in England] attached great importance to house and open air preaching" — and this was three years before Robert Roberts joined with them.

The preaching of Robert Roberts' time.

A sample of the efforts of Robert Roberts seems appropriate. As recorded in his autobiography²

"About this time, there was a great stir in Birmingham, caused by an Irvingite³ propagandist effort in the Town Hall, a large building capable of containing several thousands of people... The night was fine, and the crowd hanging about outside was large, and it was suggested the opportunity might be turned to account by holding an out-of-door meeting. A chair was fetched and placed in the square behind the hall, and one or two brethren went round among the crowd to tell them an overflow meeting would be held out there. The people accordingly repaired thither, and I mounted the chair and harangued them for the best part of an hour on the subject that was being spoken of inside. I received a fairly attentive hearing till I came to speak of the Pope, when the Roman Catholic element of the crowd became uncontrollably turbulent, and made a rush towards the speaker which was resisted for a time by the peaceably disposed of the people, but at last carried all before it, and compelled me to dismount. There might have been serious work but for two policemen who marched me off between them to the protection of a neighboring hotel, followed by a large crowd. The crowd stayed in front of the hotel and I escaped behind, and got quickly home."

One result of this was a second town Hall meeting, attended by almost 2,000, but which required a great deal of concern and struggle over its cost. But the Birmingham ecclesia was significantly increased by this one effort.

It was with the passing of John Thomas, and perhaps indeed before, that the organization and leadership had devolved upon Robert Roberts. Although largely

self-taught, he had a great command of the Bible and was very impressive in debate. He was for the next 30 years the primary public face of the growing Christadelphian movement, which grew rapidly under his guidance. So how was this accomplished? His methods of major outreach were quite simple: advertise a public address as widely as possible, and the public would normally attend in large numbers. We read very commonly of hundreds and sometimes thousands turning out for such topics as “The truth about Satan”, “Prophecies about the Middle East”, and “What the Bible says about baptism”. Roberts also set up the practice of Sunday evening lectures, which is still the way the majority of the ecclesias in the UK carry on their public proclamation. Roberts also engaged in major debates with such luminaries as Charles Bradlaugh, a prominent atheist. I believe, however, these latter activities contributed little to the growth of the ecclesias.

Much of the literature from the earliest days of Robert Roberts is still in print, but how much of it can be used in a public outreach today is debatable. In their day such pamphlets as “The Declaration” and others were circulated in large numbers. For example, from 1881 to 1921 at least 5,000 “Declarations” were published per year, with 116,000 being produced prior to the death of Roberts in 1898. I would note, however, that even in these times I know of several who have been convinced of the Truth of our message after reading *Christendom Astray*.

As the nature of the witness changed, so did both the type and variety of subjects. Of the 25 titles available in 1872, the majority were clearly designed for external use. By 1893, of the 50 available, only half were intended for internal use.

The growth of the Christadelphians in the UK was most impressive over the years 1864 to 1885, when around 5,000 new members were baptized, representing an annual growth of around 10%. The members were representative, at least by trade, of the population as a whole. The appeal appears to have been mainly to those individuals who, although lacking formal education, had a great thirst for knowledge. Thus they turned out in large numbers for the special lectures put on by the Christadelphians, and many were so convinced.

The mission field

In those days, there was no Christadelphian Bible Mission (CBM) in any form, so spreading the gospel was strictly the result of personal initiative. Bro. Stanley Owen has summarized many of these efforts⁴, which were confined mainly to the period of 1870 to 1900. In that time, the gospel message flourished in many remote corners of the world, but in only a few cases did this last. In the Americas, you can find records of work in Peru as early as 1879, and an ecclesia in Argentina soon after, but only in Jamaica and British Guiana, now Guyana, did the Truth take hold and maintain the faith for the next half century or so. In both countries, when the CBM sent missionaries in the 1950’s, the ecclesias there had both dropped out of the knowledge of the rest of the brotherhood. Very little direct overseas mission work was recorded in the first half of the 20th century, although occasionally individuals emigrated to areas remote from other ecclesias, with no support, no literature other than in English, and no encouragement. It is not surprising there was little if any spread of the gospel overseas in this period.

Much has changed: there are now more Christadelphians in Malawi than in the Americas, and more on the African continent than in the UK, Australia, and North America combined.

CC Walker



Charles Curwin Walker died in 1940. He was editor of the *Christadelphian* from 1898 to 1937. During his time the Christadelphians movement experienced slow growth, if any. Much effort was expended in coping with the divisions in the brotherhood. By the close of his editorship, the “Central” Fellowship was undoubtedly in the majority in the UK, but became the minority in both Australia and North America. The success of the public addresses appear to have declined, and there is no evidence of any significant efforts to change the normal mode of outreach. This was largely confined to evening lectures and leaflet distribution.

The only widely circulated magazine from those days that was used for public distribution (apart from the short lived *Good Company*) was the *Glad Tidings*. First issued in 1883, it was produced by what became known as the Suffolk Street movement, which limited its subscriptions.

Many will be aware of the CALS (Christadelphian Auxiliary Lecturing Society). You might be surprised to know it was officially started in 1903 in England. It was designed to supply speakers and funds to enable the gospel to be spread in areas where there were few, if any, Christadelphians, a function it still performs today. I can find no record of such an effort in North America until 1935, when a branch was formed in Hamilton, ON.⁵

In conclusion, the period of major outreach and growth of the Christadelphian movement was in the late nineteenth Century. This was primarily under the leadership of Robert Roberts until his death in 1898. Towards the end of his editorship, major doctrinal controversies caused internal turmoil, and much less growth. The preaching methods used remained essentially unchanged until around the appointment of John Carter as the new editor of *The Christadelphian*. Much changed during the period around WW2 — but that is another story.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)

Notes:

1. *The Evangelist* by Walter Scott, Nov 1833, p 263.
2. *My Days and Ways*, p 161
3. Edward Irving (1879-1834) founded this movement, which became a Pentecostal denomination called the Catholic Apostolic Church
4. *Into All the World*, published 1999.
5. *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 72,1935, p 383

A History of Door-to-Door Gospel Campaigns

From the 1920s through the 1940s, many eastern U.S. ecclesias distributed leaflets in their neighborhoods advertising lectures. But it was not until the weekend of May 30, 1954, that the first planned inter-ecclesial door-to-door campaign was held in the eastern United States.

Bro. John Carter, Editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine, came to North America from Great Britain in the early 1950s to help promote reunion between the Central and Berean ecclesias. During his visits, Bro. Carter encouraged a group of us to organize teams of workers to go door to door with thousands of leaflets. He compared the work to the biological growth of a single cell: from one nucleus to two, from two to four, and so on until a colony of cells is created. He asked us to think of our work as “cells of truth”, multiplying and propagating Christadelphian Bible teaching.

At that time there was no organizing committee for this work. We had to find ecclesias that would host campaigners, pay for the printing of thousands of leaflets, and conduct the public lectures. Bro. Ernest Hardy had recently been transferred by his company from Springfield, Massachusetts, to Baltimore, Maryland. He was in virtual isolation, except for brother Andrew Eliason and some young members of the Link family. Bro. Hardy responded to our appeal, and we arranged for a small number of campaigners to work in the Baltimore area on the three-day, Memorial Day weekend of May 30, 1954.

Although we do not have a precise record of all who took part in the campaign, some of the workers were Bro. John and Sis. Mary Sommerville, Bre. Ernest Hardy, Bill Link, Sr., Wilbur and Al Brittle, and Sis. Edith Bailey.

In the years between 1954 and 1960, additional door-to-door campaigns were held in Moorestown, New Jersey; Meriden, Connecticut; Canton, Ohio, and again in Baltimore. For these efforts we welcomed more workers: Bro. Gene and Sis. Gertrude Turner, Bro. Don Lipfert, Sis. Marie and Sis. Ellen Forsythe, Bro. Doug Egles, Bro. Don Styles, as well as other local brothers and sisters.

Bro. Dennis and Sis. Faye Ford joined us at the Canton, Ohio, campaign. Bro. Ford's relentless zeal for preaching impressed all of us. Shortly after that, in the late 1950s, he went to work in Pittsburgh and continued to join us on campaigns in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. Frequently, Bro. Ford would take business trips from Pittsburgh to New York City, not far from where we lived. After each day's work he would come to our house for dinner, and many evenings were spent discussing future preaching activities. He would then catch a 10:30 P.M. flight back to Pittsburgh, ready for work the next day.

Besides door-to-door campaigning, Bro. Ford came up with the idea of placing Christadelphian ads in every county newspaper in the United States. The first ads were placed in newspapers in Ohio, and a good response was received from the Piketon area. In 1960, Bro. Gar Cooper, Jr. moved to Pittsburgh and joined Bro. Ford in the follow up work in Piketon. The effort involved weekend trips to Ohio

for several years. However, due to local church opposition and a locally oriented provincial outlook, no baptisms resulted.

On a rainy October day in 1961, Bro. Dennis and Sis. Faye were killed in a collision with a huge commercial truck. By God's blessing the lives of their two young children were spared. Their deaths and funeral were one of the saddest moments in the lives of many of us. We questioned why God had taken away from us the most zealous leader of our Gospel campaigns.

A period of less activity followed the loss of Bro. and Sis. Ford. Then we learned about the start of Truth Corps in California. Truth Corps offered to send teams of young people who were on summer vacation to work and stay in our ecclesias for weeks at a time. The teams were willing to do the same door-to-door campaigning work that had lapsed after the Fords' deaths. This faithful work has continued year after year, and a multitude of ecclesias have benefitted from these efforts. The pioneer work of Bro. Dennis and Sis. Faye Ford has been faithfully carried on by the Truth Corps. May it continue to prosper until the day of the Lord's return.

Our brief history may have some omissions, but God has an accurate record of all the Gospel campaigners that have served Him down through the years.

W. Alvan Brittle (Washington, DC)

Report of an Early U.S.A. Campaign¹

In the February [1956] issue an announcement was made of the first U.S. campaign held at Halethorpe, Maryland. Although results from our efforts were scanty, the spiritual benefits derived by these pioneer campaigners were of inestimable worth, in campaign experience as well as in establishing a further unity among the brethren.

Subsequently, two more campaigns have materialized, one at Moorestown, New Jersey, in November, 1955, where nine campaigners distributed over 2,000 leaflets, and the other at Orange, New Jersey, in March, 1956, when 16 campaigners combined efforts to distribute 3,000 pamphlets. The Moorestown campaign drew seven visitors to the evening lectures, but at Orange, one visitor came to hear.

Although our results have been meager, we are not deterred from trying again and again. Our aim is to spread the Truth so that many may have the opportunity to hear our message and see our glorious Light. Our greatest need now is for campaigners!

This undertaking is in its infancy, but a Gospel Campaign Committee has been organized, and we are anxious for all brethren to become aware of its existence and to offer their services as campaigners whenever possible to do so.

The Gospel Campaign Committee

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian* : Volume 93, 1956, page 352

The ASK Movement

The Advancement of Scripture Knowledge movement that began in the 1960s marked a major step forward in inter-ecclesial outreach work in North America. Starting in New England, ASK rallied the local ecclesias for the purpose of preaching Bible truth, sometimes in new ways and often in new places.

Two factors have contributed significantly to ASK success when preaching has gone forward in new places. One has been the close proximity of an established ecclesia to carry on vital follow up work. The other has been the willingness of missionary minded brothers and sisters to move to new places and establish a Christadelphian presence on which to build.

The Beginning of ASK

In April, 1961, *The Christadelphian* magazine carried this news item:

Perhaps the most significant news out of New England for 1960 and for many previous years, is the formation of a joint committee by the ecclesias here, named A.S.K. for the Advancement of Scripture Knowledge. The purpose of this committee is to expand the work of the ecclesias here into all of New England. ... We hope that others will be encouraged by the formation of this group to press their efforts into the great voids of the U.S.A.¹

The ASK name was quickly embraced by the brotherhood, and it came to be associated with a wide range of preaching initiatives, and additional “ASK Committees” appeared in several parts of North America. Some of the committees remain active and continue to carry out major preaching efforts in their respective areas.

While the ASK movement has not filled much of the ecclesial voids of New England or anywhere else in the past 50 years, it has produced some lasting results and it has fired much enthusiasm for preaching. The latter has been one of its strong points. One brother² put his finger on a vital reason for ASK’s success: The emphasis is in personal preaching, co-operation between workers in all stages of the scheme and the contagious enthusiasm of each individual.³

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 98, 1961, p.181.
2. Charles F. Samain, of the London, U.K., Streatham Ecclesia writing in 1967.
3. *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 104, 1967, p.278.

A Procedure for Teaching the Truth. The 20-Lesson ASK Course

As the ASK movement grew in New England in the late 1960s, a steady stream of interested Bible students was generated. Many brothers and sisters wanted to teach the new contacts but were not sure how to go about it.

A Procedure for Teaching the Truth grew out of Bro. Albert Pride's desire to equip these brothers and sisters with the teaching tools that they needed. Capably assisted by Bro. Cyril Webb, Bro. Pride spent long hours working out the details of a 20-lesson course. What our brethren produced was both a course and a strategy for teaching the truth.

The 20-Lesson ASK Course covered first principles of Bible truth, starting in the Old Testament and proceeding into the New Testament. It was designed to prepare learners for a baptismal interview. The course also provided teachers with Bible marking notes that equipped them to teach the first principles to their students.

The first lesson was a well-designed ground breaker. It introduced God's purpose for creating man on earth and developed the theme of Numbers 14:21 — *"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."* At the end of the lesson, the teacher introduced a chart depicting God's 7,000-year plan for mankind and asked permission to come again to elaborate the details of God's plan. The chart gave the student an incentive to continue his or her studies.

The procedure booklet for the ASK Course was prepared at Pride Offset Color Service in Rhode Island and printed by Wilson Graphics in Massachusetts, owned and operated by Bro. Donald Wilson. The finished product was widely distributed throughout the brotherhood in the United States and Canada.

Many brothers and sisters learned the truth through the ASK Course in the 1960s and 70s. The impact on the Cranston, RI, Ecclesia was dramatic. The ecclesia quickly doubled in size! Several contacts during those years were from the Westerly, Rhode Island, area, about 45 miles from Cranston. After baptism, the Westerly brothers and sisters became active members of the Cranston Ecclesia. It was their introduction to ecclesial life. Then, in 1973, they formed the nucleus of what is now the well-established Westerly, RI, Ecclesia. One of the original ASK goals of seeing ecclesias established in new places became a reality.

The ASK Course continues to be used in Cranston. It is also effectively used as a program of study in the Cranston CYC.

David Pride (Cranston, RI)

Great Lakes ASK

Great Lakes ASK grew out of an existing branch of the Auxiliary Lecturing Society, centered in Brantford, Ontario, and representing ecclesias in southern Ontario and Detroit. The ASK name and logo were adopted in the late 1960s for their advertising value and as a method of ecclesial cooperation with New England.

Early on, Great Lakes ASK became a registered company in order to acquire property. Shortly afterward a pickup truck and exhibition trailer were purchased for preaching purposes. The trailer became widely known at the ASK Trailer. Promoting "God and His World", as a counterbalance to the 1968 World's Fair theme, "Man and His World", the ASK Trailer was used at fairs¹ and exhibitions across the continent for many years, well into the 1970s. The trailer featured a Christadelphian-guided visual tour of the Bible. Beautiful, back-lighted pictures

took the visitor from Creation to the Kingdom. The tour ended with an offer of a free correspondence course to anyone who wished to learn more about the Bible.

Eventually the focus shifted, and large campaigns were held in cities such as Windsor and Sudbury. Initially these campaigns had limited success. Because the nearest ecclesia was often far away, it was difficult to provide adequate follow up. The Ottawa campaign changed the way these campaigns were carried out. With ASK support, a missionary couple moved to Ottawa, and the campaign became a sustained effort. Helped by regular visits from other brethren as well, the Ottawa ecclesia has grown and continues to preach with ASK support.

Every year Great Lakes ASK sponsors a booth at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. The CNE runs for 18 days in the summer and attracts well over a million visitors. Bro. Peter Wisniowski is always looking for volunteers to help with this large project. Beyond our local area, we support preaching efforts from Winnipeg in the west to the Atlantic Provinces in the east. ASK also stocks a large selection of literature which is available for any ecclesia to use.

The mission of Great Lakes ASK is threefold: first, to preach where no ecclesias exist; second, to help smaller ecclesias carry out gospel proclamation work, and, third, to provide a uniform banner under which any of our ecclesias can carry out the advancement of Scripture knowledge. We pray that our Heavenly Father will continue to bless us in this work of preaching the Gospel message.

Grant Abel (Barrie, ON)

Notes:

1. The New England ASK used the same ASK trailer from 1970 on at the "Big E", the regional exposition in Massachusetts. This later evolved into a booth, which continued for many years, but was terminated around 1990 due to cost and staffing problems.

Mid-Atlantic ASK

The Mid-Atlantic ASK Committee formed in 1983, representing ecclesias from the greater New York City area, New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington, DC.¹ Mid-Atlantic ASK quickly developed its own outreach programs. These initially included a Bible Message Telephone Service that was used by several ecclesias, the coordination of preaching themes throughout the region, and the use of newspaper advertising, mass mailings, and mall displays as ways of advertising Bible truth to the public.

More recently, Mid-Atlantic ASK has sponsored Bible seminars, a Bible Quiz program, and experimented with cable television broadcasting in areas where there are no local ecclesias. A contact base of 2,400 people has been generated from these outreach efforts. Mid-Atlantic ASK is currently focused on effective follow up work with the contacts while also seeking to interact with other ASK Committees for the purpose of sharing and developing effective preaching ideas. Mid-Atlantic ASK can be contacted at bibleask@verizon.net.

Eloise Browder (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 120, 1983, p.228; Vol.122, 1985, p.310.

Preaching through Radio and Television

The 20th Century brought about significant changes to the way many North Americans spent their discretionary time. Radio became an important source of information and entertainment in homes, offices and automobiles. Information that might have taken days or weeks to find its way into our homes, now became available in hours or minutes. In a very real way, it transformed the sharing of information and ideas — in both healthy and sometimes injurious ways!

When television began sweeping across the continent, the way many people spent their discretionary time again changed radically. The television generation of the 50's and 60's had far different expectations about accessing information and entertainment than prior generations. Through television, sometimes the news broke right before our eyes.

While Christadelphians were faced with how to deal with this intrusion into their own homes, it was clear that radio and television were here to stay. The people that were spending their discretionary time listening to the radio or watching their television were the same audience that we wanted to interest in the Truth.

Brethren looked carefully at these new “technologies” and realized that there might be a great opportunity to preach the word through them. The stories collected here are about some of the pioneering work that was done in radio and television by Christadelphians. While often they are stories from the past, they may provide important insights for preaching as new technologies for communications and entertainment continue to be developed.

Radio Outreach Starts

The Apostle Paul took every opportunity to preach. No doubt if he were alive today he would use all the modern technology available to spread the good news of the coming Kingdom to others.

Back when radio was coming into its own, the brotherhood in Southern California decided to use this medium to reach out to others with the saving message of the Bible. Bro. Edgar Round began giving regular radio addresses around 1930. A local station at the time wanted \$35.00 for a 15 minute program and \$65.00 for a 30 minute program. So we see that over eighty years ago our brethren were using radio to spread the gospel message.

Moving forward to our time, we remember the ecclesias in Southern California were all pooling their resources to buy time on the local stations. Back in the 1950s, these resources were used to buy radio time to spread the word. The ecclesias asked for suggestions for a catchy title to attract attention and Bro Leslie Clarke came up with the phrase “This is your Bible” which caught on and has been used ever since. It has since also become the name of the Internet work that began in 2006.



In the early days Bro Maurice Stewart was an active supporter of this good work and he wrote and delivered many hundreds of talks about the Scriptures on local radio stations. One such station had the call letters of KWKW and was located in a small building on the outskirts of Pasadena, California. On many occasions he would ask me to go to the station and fill in for him when he was unable to deliver the talk on the radio. Back then the broadcasts were always live since recording

them for later use had not yet evolved.

The local ecclesias used to send representatives to meet at the home of Bro. Howard Brinkerhoff, who lived in Los Angeles, to plan and develop the programs and the follow up that was necessary to take care of those who would respond to our offers. Back in 1959 an ex-pastor of a church responded to the appeal and requested literature. Bro. John McConville called on him and he became very excited to find people who believed so much like he did. He had lost his job as a pastor because he no longer believed that the Bible taught heaven-going or the Trinity. He was so excited when he met Bro. McConville that he called his eldest son living in Sacramento, to tell him that he had found some who believed as he did. As a result of the “This is your Bible” broadcast and the follow-up work done, in due time the entire family was baptized into the saving name of the Lord. Their name is deCaussin and for many years after that the father used to come faithfully to the Howard Brinkerhoff home for meetings planning the work of “This is your Bible.”

“This is your Bible” radio broadcasts continued for many years and then moved to television: it had been preceded during the campaign of 1961 by a broadcast interview of Bro. H.P. Mansfield by Bro. Richard Stone. Once again, Bro Maurice Stewart was involved in the work on TV. Bro Stewart had a regular program out of Santa Maria in Central California for many years, starting in the mid-1960’s, and many brothers drove north to help him make tapes. Some of these were aired in Santa Maria and on many cable stations throughout California and eventually all across the nation.

Certainly the Lord has blessed the work of those who have labored so tirelessly to bring the Bible to life through the medium of radio and television using the theme of “This is Your Bible.” Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless the efforts of “This is your Bible” to take the saving message of the Gospel to a perishing world.

Robert Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA)

“This is Your Bible” in California

Originating as a regular radio broadcast on Sunday mornings in Southern California in the mid-1930’s, the broadcast became known as the “This Is Your Bible” program in the 1950’s. In the 1970’s it was transitioned into a half hour TV program

on Sunday afternoons. Through the support of the Southern California ecclesias, the TV programs were produced, filmed and broadcast through an expensive process that involved renting a studio, hiring a director and professional staff.

With the advent of cable networks in the 1980's, the Radio-TV Committee of Southern California found a new and low cost way to carry on with television broadcasting by taking advantage of the Public Access channels and producing their own programs. After renting a TV studio for the day, a set was built, and a professional director led the five speakers through their sessions. The Public Access station enabled the committee to use free air time, but still the production costs were considerable for the studio equipment and hired staff.

Partnering with Bro. Jeff Wallace of the Boston ecclesia in the 1990's, a new approach was put together and taping sessions were set up to produce 26 programs each over a long weekend. The process was repeated in Houston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Toronto, Boston and Los Angeles. By purchasing advanced editing equipment, now the programs could be assembled and edited at home instead of hiring an expensive studio to do it.

A few years later the Radio-TV Committee of Southern California changed its name to *the Christadelphian Preaching Committee of Southern California*. In the interest of cutting television production costs even further and yet retaining control over the finished product, the committee began using a studio at Rio Hondo College. By staffing the entire crew with Christadelphians, and utilizing Bro. Fred Reister as director, costs were dropped to the bare minimum. Bro. Fred has extensive experience working as the director for the Los Angeles ABC Eyewitness News team, and was able to train the crew to produce a very professional series of programs. Donations from the Southern California Ecclesias enabled the Committee to purchase a high quality editing system, studio camera, and other systems to minimize the costs associated with renting equipment and studios.

The Public Access cable channels are available for broadcasting "This Is Your Bible" programs throughout the United States. Please contact Bro. Bruce Andrews at PapaAndy@juno.com for details to enable you to participate.

These last days call for more effort on our part to interest our friends and neighbors into heeding Christ's call for repentance and salvation.

Doug Hawthorne (Simi Hills, CA)

Christadelphian Outreach on the East Coast

Like a lot of preaching initiatives in the brotherhood, television broadcasting on the east coast became a reality through a combination of circumstances and willing brothers and sisters. The pioneering work of Bro. Maurice Stewart on the West Coast was ever an inspiration for us to make use of television as a way to preach the gospel. The expansion of cable television into urban areas and the resulting laws that made broadcasting rights free to the public removed a huge financial barrier that stood in our way.

And the right people came together to make it work. Brethren with a specific preaching project in mind; brethren with the ability to carry it out; brethren with the technical expertise to produce the programs; some private capital and some additional seed money from ASK; and a willing spirit: "Let's do this!" Half-hour interview programs were proposed; a room in a private home became the television studio; a few brethren were assembled, and two years' worth of videotaped programs were produced. It was in the 1980s, and the project that would become Christadelphian Outreach was under way.

The interview model for the programs required two brethren, a program host and a guest teacher, to converse with each other, Bible in hand, on a prearranged subject. The circle of brethren who became guest teachers quickly widened. Brethren began flying in from far and wide to spend long weekends in the homespun television studio, producing half-hour Bible programs. A weekend of work would produce as many as 26 programs, and the brethren involved went home with an enthusiasm for this kind of preaching. "This Is Your Bible" television programs began appearing on cable stations across North America. In due course, it became more practical to take the recording work to the participating brethren than it was to fly them all to one east coast location. Regional recording sessions began to take place across the United States and Canada. Brethren converged on nearby ecclesial centers for working weekends, and the local ecclesias rallied their resources to accommodate the work. The fellowship of a common preaching cause was invigorating for everybody. The activity continued until the late-1990s.

And then technology changed. Video tapes became obsolete. Some of the old equipment that was used for recording, editing, and duplicating the tapes broke down. New equipment was needed, not to replace the old but to support entirely new ways of producing and transmitting programs. Cost factors again became an issue, at least for those involved in the Christadelphian Outreach project.

Television viewing has also changed. The Internet and handheld mobile devices are quickly becoming the more popular way for people to access information. Does this mean that the time is now over for us to use television in our preaching work? Certainly not. Television remains a viable way for us to put the Christadelphian name and Bible message before the public, and there is every reason to think that it will continue to serve this purpose for some time to come. In addition, there is always a use for well produced programs in the internal preaching and Bible class programs of many ecclesias. It would be helpful if there were an organized source of such video programs, similar to the way audio programs are available on the Internet.

While some of us no longer have the means to produce television programs, thankfully, other brethren in other parts of the country are going forward with newer technologies. The brethren in southern California produce half-hour "This Is Your Bible" television programs in a DVD format. This format is very acceptable right now to many cable access providers. The brethren in New York City have also started their own television project, as seen below.

Jeff and Ethel Wallace (Boston, MA)

“This Is Your Bible” in New York City

Encouraged by a cable television project run by Mid-Atlantic ASK, the New York City Preaching Committee decided in late 2000 to launch its own local television outreach program. The project has grown ever since.

Application was made for time on a free public access channel in Queens, NY (QPTV); half-hour videotaped programs were acquired from Christadelphian Outreach in New England, and “This Is Your Bible” was soon on the air. Public response was encouraging and the project expanded into Brooklyn and the Bronx.



At the end of 2001, QPTV announced that it would no longer accept videotapes. DVCAM cassettes would be required. With help from the Simi Hills Preaching Fund, a used DVCAM recorder was purchased and the necessary conversion of video programs began. Shortly afterward, two brothers from the South Ozone

Park Ecclesia pursued a 10-week video editing course at the Queens public access station. This qualified the brethren to use station equipment for recording and editing their own programs. Local production of TIYB programs began. The first 10 to 12-minutes are given over to a straight forward presentation of a Bible subject. One brother does the presenting work. The last 13 to 15-minutes follow an interview format in which the presenter and a moderator discuss the Bible subject under consideration. The rest of the half-hour time is used to promote local Bible classes, advertise the website (www.thisisyourbible.info), and offer free literature to the viewers. A 1-800 number with voice-mail messaging is provided for viewer response.

Local production has grown in sophistication. A permanent recording studio is now set up at the South Ozone Park ecclesial hall, and recording work has gone to three-camera production using video mixing techniques. A monthly production schedule is rigorously followed by the New York brethren and the television crew includes several dedicated CYC members.

The New York City TIYB programs can be viewed live stream on the Internet, Sundays at 11:30 PM, Eastern Time, on the BCAT website: www.bricartsmedia.org/community-media/bcat-tv-network. A PowerPoint presentation of the NYC TIYB Video Studio is also available.

Joe Badlu (South Ozone Park, NY)

Sunday School Work

Christadelphian Sunday schools go back to the earliest days of the brotherhood. Sunday schooling is preaching. It is the sharing of God's message of salvation with the children in our midst. And Sunday school teachers are preachers of the gospel. By 1868, The Ambassador magazine (forerunner of The Christadelphian) was reporting the names of Sunday school students who were obeying the gospel and being baptized into Christ.

Most of our Sunday school children come from our own Christadelphian families, and across the brotherhood they represent thousands of lives – we would call them 'contacts' in almost any other setting! – ready and needing to be saved. Sunday school membership is their training ground for ecclesial membership as baptized brothers and sisters in Christ. The article on "The Preaching Role of Our Sunday Schools" draws attention to important aspects of this work.

As light-stands in the world, we can also reach out to children that live near our meeting places. The article on "Vacation Bible School" represents a splendid example, a very successful model, of this kind of outreach. One comes away with the realization that God does wonderful things through sisters and brothers who are dedicated to working with children. The opportunities are there for us.

The Preaching Role of Our Sunday Schools

Several years ago at a CYC weekend, the following question was put to a large group of young people: *What single thing has had the greatest spiritual influence in your life?*

Twenty-eight of the attendees said "Bible school". Six more named specific Bible school teachers. Of these thirty-four young people, half of them indicated that the Bible school experience had a bearing on their decision to be baptized. Nineteen other CYCers named a relative or ecclesial member as having the greatest spiritual influence in their lives. Ten of the 19 indicated that this personal relationship had a bearing on their decision to be baptized.

Sunday school hardly got a mention from the CYC members. This probably should not surprise us. It is the special events and the unique relationships in life rather than the routine ones that often make the biggest impression on us. And Sunday school can seem pretty routine. But please read on.

Some things to consider

At the end of last year a ten-point survey was sent out to nearly 100 ecclesias in the United States and Canada. Its purpose was to gather data on the preaching role of our Christadelphian Sunday schools in North America. Response to the survey was gratifying.¹ The ecclesias that responded represent a total membership of 1,600 brothers and sisters, with more than 500 unbaptized Sunday school children presently under their care and tutelage.

Here are a few results of the survey.

It is conservative to say that over half the current members of the ecclesias in the United States and Canada have come from a Christadelphian Sunday school background. This is not to suggest that there is a predictable cause and effect relationship here. In many cases other factors probably played a role as well. For example, many of these brothers and sisters would have grown up in Christadelphian homes. But the connection between Sunday school *membership* and eventual ecclesial *membership*, by baptism into Christ, is too strong to ignore.

When asked what source or sources² ecclesial baptisms have come from in the past ten years, the following responses were given:

- 11 ecclesias said from Bible seminars;
- 36 ecclesias said from personal witnessing, and
- 33 ecclesias said from the Sunday school.

Under the “Other” category, respondents also identified the *This Is Your Bible* website (thisisyourbible.com), the use of a Bible correspondence course, and an English Bible reading course for immigrants as ways that new members came to know the Truth and be baptized into Christ.

On one survey that came back, personal witnessing and Sunday school were mentioned in a way that drew attention to a couple of important points. First, Sunday school teachers are personal witnesses to the Truth. Their influence on young people should not be underestimated. And second, when a Sunday school student begins to show spiritual promise, the teacher or someone else who is close to the student needs to be ready to step in and provide personalized instruction — further personal witnessing — that helps turn promise into reality.

Well over 90% of our Sunday school children come from Christadelphian homes. Clearly, the Sunday school tradition is strong amongst us. At the same time, it is instructive to know how children become members of the Sunday school when they *do not* come from Christadelphian homes.

The survey responses presented recurring themes. The child of a coworker-cum-Bible seminar participant now attends a Christadelphian Sunday school. The child of a neighbor that is taking personal Bible classes does likewise. Aunts, uncles, grandmas and grandpas bring young relations with them on Sunday morning. Kids bring other kids to Sunday school; boyfriends bring girlfriends and girlfriends bring boyfriends.

Our children can be missionaries to their friends and neighbors more than they might imagine: “I go to Sunday school every week. How would you like to come with me?” or “We’ve got this neat thing going on at Sunday school next Sunday. I’d like you to come with me.” There are brothers and sisters in our ecclesias today who can thank a once-upon-a-time young person for introducing them to Sunday school or CYC.

Supporting the Sunday school

Whether we think of it this way or not, the Sunday school may be the biggest

ongoing preaching program that some ecclesias have. For this reason alone, ecclesial support of Sunday school should have a high priority. It is a manifestation of the missionary spirit that becomes part of us when we know and love the gospel of salvation.

Most ecclesias with school-age children provide the basic things necessary to run a Sunday school: a place to hold it, the funding to equip it, and the volunteers to staff it. These are essential givens. Ecclesias will do even more than this when they view Sunday school as a mission in their midst. The survey responses identified several additional ways that ecclesias support their Sunday schools and invest in the spiritual welfare of their children.

Adult Sunday school classes are well attended. The clear message to the children is that learning the ways of God is a lifelong process to be taken seriously. All the children's activities are well supported by the ecclesia. Interest is shown in the children, and their efforts are encouraged, aided, and rewarded.

Other services are provided for the children:

- Learning activities are provided for children during midweek Bible class time. In principle this is not unlike the adult Sunday school class. Sunday school is not just for children and Bible class is not just for adults.
- Whole-group learning projects are carried out during the summer. These involve adults and children working together on special projects that go beyond the regular Sunday school curriculum.
- Junior CYC programs complement Senior CYC programs. Ecclesias also host CYC events and make sure their children get to CYC events.
- Supplemental funding is provided to send Sunday school children to Bible school. The opening paragraphs of this article speak to the wisdom of this.

Forging relationships in the Truth

The Truth that we teach our children is not just doctrinal. It is also relational. For our children to become effective members of the ecclesia, they need to grow in interdependence with others who value the Truth. The forging of strong spiritual relationships among the children and between the children and the rest of the ecclesia needs to be part of the Sunday school vision.

To this end, Sunday schools across the brotherhood carry out a lot of extra-curricular activities for their children. The surveys showed that the best of these have important characteristics:

- Children and adults work together on a Truth-related project or activity.
- The children are involved in serving others, not just being served or being entertained.
- Entertainment and recreational activities have a spiritual side to them.

The world offers all kinds of fun and games for children to enjoy, but only in a Christadelphian setting will our children find these united with the daily Bible readings or spiritual songs or prayer. Well planned extra-curricular activities honor the biblical foundations on which our relationships are built. They declare

to everyone, including any friends that our children may bring along, that our priorities are different and nobler than those of the rest of the world.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Notes:

1. Thanks to the many brothers and sisters that took time and effort to respond to the Sunday school survey.
2. In this context the term source means the educational setting in which new believers learn the Truth.

Vacation Bible School

When I was a young girl, I remember going with my Dad to the Pomona Hall on a Monday morning during the summer to help with Vacation Bible School (VBS). My excitement grew the closer we got to the Hall. Who was going to be there from the neighborhood or our Sunday school? Would they want to learn more about God and choose to seek Him?

As I look back on that experience I don't remember who came, but it made an enormous impression on me. That seed stayed dormant within me for over 30 years, but in 1998 Sis. Kristy Robinson and I started talking and praying about having a VBS at the Simi Hills Ecclesia. As an ecclesia we had decided to have the Truth Corps come and help with the preaching in our community. Having the Truth Corps was a perfect opportunity to start having VBS. Kristy and I put together a proposal and presented it to the arranging brethren to have a VBS during the time Truth Corps was with us. They gave us the green light and we haven't looked back since. Since 1998, we have conducted VBS each summer in our ecclesia.



The two main objectives of VBS were both to expose the local community (both children and adults) to the teachings of God and also explain who the Christians are. We would not measure success by “numbers” but by whether these two objectives were met. This proved to be critical as we developed the

program over the years. We would work at sowing as much seed as we could and allow God to grant the increase.

Taking on such a project requires us to use all the various talents we possess within an ecclesia. Whether your talent is in advertising, telling stories, carpentry/painting, coloring, cooking, computer, graphic arts, listening, phones, photography, photo copying, singing, sewing, teaching the adult class, or even wiping away a tear or giving a hug there — there is a place for all willing workers. Some would

be greeters, teachers, crafters and “foodies.” The CYC also made an important hands-on contribution with the school

The first year we had 35 kids — 34 from our own Sunday School and 1 from the community. We were so excited! By 2010, two-thirds of our attendees were from the community. We now teach an average of 80 children and have over 60 adult and CYC volunteers from two different ecclesias. Some volunteers help prior to the week of VBS, others during the week and then another group of individuals do post VBS communication. Annual planning of VBS has become easier due to a consistent format and an experienced ecclesia.

Our philosophy for teaching has developed throughout the years. Since everyone learns differently, we make sure we use as many different styles of learning as we can. Our program allows the children not only to listen to stories, but to act them out. We provide crafts which allow them to touch and feel. We sing, dance, play games, read, write and memorize — all in a span of three hours. Some have asked if we have a discipline problem — the answer is no. They’re too busy “doing”. We reward good behavior and ignore the bad.

In 2010 our theme was “Let’s Build an Ark” so we covered all the walls of the main hall with brown butcher paper and made it look like wood planks. It was soon transformed to look like the inside of Noah’s ark. We enlisted the help of a bearded brother who was willing to dress up. He became “Noah” and every morning came to visit the kids telling them the story of faith from his life.



Since the first year we have developed the program to provide a week of learning, focused on God’s people and how their character was developed through their daily lives. For example: Daniel helped us learn how to pray, Ruth and Naomi taught us how to love and have faith in God, Paul and Silas encouraged us to preach, Nicodemus demonstrated the courage to believe and Saul showed us we can turn our lives around to serve Him.

Our Friday night BBQ provides an opportunity for the kids to showcase the songs and the lessons they have learned throughout the week. The families of all the kids are encouraged to come for dinner and see their kids perform and listen to a short bible talk. A 15-20 minute talk reviews the lessons the kids have learned and relates it to God’s plan of salvation. Friday night’s BBQ has now grown into an evening of more than 200 people attending from the community and our ecclesia. It’s nice to see families returning year after year.

It is important to have a post-VBS plan of action as well. The Simi Hills and Verdugo Hills Ecclesias are active in a number of community service activities and outreach events. These include collection of items for community food banks and clothing for shelters, and renting booths at the local Farmers Market or Street Fair to pass out Bible Companions or advertise the upcoming seminars. We are also finding it is invaluable for preaching to have an active email address list. About half of our communication is done via the Internet.

Because numbers and percentages are not part of our measurement, we have been able to look more clearly at the bigger picture for the impact of VBS. VBS has introduced kids and adults to the Bible and has provided a forum to help our CYC members learn how to teach and pray. Then the next step for them is to become teachers and leaders. It has been a fantastic journey to watch our young mature into leaders within our ecclesia. Although we have not had anyone from the community come on a regular basis, we do have a community who knows who the Christadelphians are. But, who is to say the seeds sown are only for the community? It's been a safe place for our own members to bring a family member or friend participate in the ecclesia. Vacation Bible School has been a priceless opportunity to minister to inside and out of our ecclesia.

If you would like more information about VBS or are interested in getting information on teaching materials and resources, please feel free to contact Sis. Sandy at sandramcleod@gmail.com.

Sandy McLeod (Simi Hills, CA)

Multiple Methods: A Preaching Case Study

The half-hour television program, "This Is Your Bible", aired every Friday evening on a local cable television station. At the end of each program, viewers were given a 1-800 number to call for free related Bible literature. One viewer was a man who was looking for a church that was biblically sound. He was interested and called in for the free literature. Prompt action on the part of local brethren put the literature into his hands the next week, along with a brochure advertising the imminent start-up of a *Learn to Read the Bible Effectively* seminar. There wasn't time to preregister for the seminar. Our television viewer walked in on the opening night with the brochure in his hand. Today he is our brother in Christ.

Our new brother — to say nothing of us! — benefited from a multifaceted preaching program. No single preaching strategy produced his baptism. Television got our Bible message out and made the Christadelphian name known to him. It provided an initial means of contact and a way for him to follow up on his interest. The literature offer and Bible seminar played vital parts. He attended the seminar and continued to attend follow-up Bible studies at the ecclesial hall; strong personal ties were forged with the ecclesia, and he began attending adult Sunday school and Memorial Service — all of these were parts of a multifaceted teaching and learning process. In the end God blessed an entire work, and the man who discovered us on television one Friday evening became a fellow heir of eternal life.

A New England ecclesia

Bible Seminars

One would be hard-pressed to find a single development in the past 25 years that has had more impact on ecclesial outreach than the Bible seminar programs. Initiated in 1992 in the North Industry Ecclesia (now Paris Avenue) in Ohio, the seminars have largely changed the frame of reference for many ecclesias about outreach possibilities in their communities.

During the years after 1992, with no real organization or formal structure, the concept of Bible seminars swept rapidly across North America. Ecclesias who found public lectures poorly attended despite persistent and faithful efforts, were looking for ways to connect with the general public. For many of us, the reception by the public of the "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar was incredible. Some ecclesias reported more than one hundred registrations for a single seminar offering. Follow-on classes were provided and our community has been greatly blessed by numerous baptisms directly from this work.

Over time, the seminar has been adapted and new courses developed to meet the interest of students. Many ecclesias have made the seminar an annual part of their preaching program, supplemented with a number of other important outreach activities. In a few cases, ecclesias have moved from the "special effort" concept to an ongoing, systematic process for teaching the Truth.

In the following two articles, you'll read of two ecclesial stories. Doubtless, there are many other ecclesias that have equally exciting results to share. In both cases, you'll read of how these ecclesias benefitted from the fruit of the seminars — to include new members and an exciting new focus on the First Principle Truths that we hold dear.

Reseda Ecclesia Seminar Process

In the Ecclesial Guide we are counseled that the objects of ecclesial operations are two-fold:

- 1) The edification of its individual constituents in the faith;
- 2) The exhibition of the light of Truth to 'those that are without'.

In keeping with this balance, it is suggested as we teach the Truth to keep in mind the long term effect: those who come to accept God's invitation and be baptized will become those who need to be edified as part of the ecclesial body.

The seminars are a great vehicle for us to spread the Good News in such a way that the world will actually listen. Years ago the world could be 'lectured' about the Word, but now they want to 'learn' about it. Although in the big picture these may mean the same, we are in different times which call for different measures to effectively communicate God's message "to make thee wise unto salvation".

Our ecclesia has been blessed with many baptisms from the seminars over the past 16 years. This has come from teaching that began with materials that were fuzzy, slanted on the page, and were a copy of a copy of a copy and no one knew where

the original was. This didn't seem to matter because the world was listening. This has progressed over the years to become PowerPoint high-tech colorful and appealing slides that are pleasing to look at. But with all this the consistent piece is brethren who understand their Bible, encourage questions from the students, and are enthusiastic about the message and of the great Hope they have. In addition, the seminar students come to understand that this message is something shared around the world by one community that has the same belief and conviction about it.

Our seminars start with an advertising effort sent out multiple times (usually four) prior to the seminar. This can be by leaflets in the newspaper, mailed flyers to specific zip codes or via public television, which is our latest means of advertising. The advertisement indicates the seminar is free for anyone who wants to "Learn To Read The Bible Effectively" and covers 12 weeks at the same time and place each week. It also includes a map, phone number to a real live person (one brother takes all the calls) and a registration form to mail in if they prefer not to call. Our location is our ecclesial hall, held on a consistent weeknight from 7:30 pm-9 pm.

Beginning Seminar.



This starts with two instructors who are dressed to teach. One will cover 30 minutes of Bible background, history, reading tips, examples of what to look for, and tools available to help understand what the Bible is saying. The other instructor spends 60 minutes taking the class through one chapter per week from Genesis 1-12. This is almost verse by verse explaining what the Bible is saying and can include a

series of questions at the end of each chapter. This portion encourages comments and questions during the class. However, students are asked to keep only to the part of the Bible we have covered to that point and not to look ahead (they will have that opportunity in the future). At this point the instructor can show the gems hidden to the uninformed listener and his excitement for its message. After 12 weeks (give or take a week), we have now covered Creation, promises of the seed from Eden to Abraham and the hope that it comes with.

At the end of the 12 weeks we roll directly into the next section. In the past, however, we made the mistake of telling the students that this concludes the first portion and that we are moving to the next part and welcome them to stay. Having lost students from that approach (because they think it's finished), we now move seamlessly into the next phase without a break.

Intermediate Seminar.



Using the foundation of Genesis already laid, we discuss the promises to David, the Devil, Satan, Baptism, Resurrection, One God, The Son, The Holy Spirit and explain all the first principal doctrines of God's Truth. The approach avoids "the Bible does not teach that..." but rather focuses on allowing the

Bible to speak for itself as the authority doing the instructing. This often causes comments and questions because of the student(s) who have a preconceived idea of each doctrine. This portion of the seminar is an opportunity for the instructor to take the students on a journey through other areas of the Bible to support the doctrines and principles they are learning. It is vitally important that the brother leading the seminar is sensitive to the fact that the students have other ideas and have not learned the Truth... yet. It is a process and patience (within reason) is key. It is also important that ecclesial members in the audience keep quiet and let the instructor teach! This intermediate portion can last 12 to 26 weeks depending on the instructor and the engagement of the students.

Advanced Seminar.

Having the first principles now taught, this portion takes them through the baptismal questions. At our ecclesia we have approximately 250 questions with scriptural support for each question covered in detail. This portion may take 12-18 weeks, again depending on how engaged the students are in each class.

One-On-One

At the conclusion of the advanced portion, we tell the students they need to decide if they want to be in God's kingdom and we set up a one-on-one class for those who are interested. This provides a venue for them to ask personal or "dumb" questions and voice their concerns about this new walk of life and what it entails.

We have ecclesial members who help with handouts, refreshments, recording and assisting students to "find that verse". We encourage our members to attend. The seminars are also a great way to help the young people as they prepare for baptism and for the members to refresh themselves on our first principle doctrines.

Another blessing of the seminars is that each instructor comes with his own personality, style and excitement to teach the Truth. Our seminar has developed by God's blessing with much prayer, just 'doing it', lessons learned, trial and error, sharing our experiences with each other and an enthusiasm to "*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the Hope that is in you*"

(1Pet 3:15). It is always good to periodically measure the seminar with your own gauge to be sure it doesn't become the same old thing. Several years of this can create stagnation and some tend to lose the new excitement they once had. If this appears to be happening it might be time to consider changing it a bit.

Over the past 16 years of seminar work, our ecclesia has come from a six week "here's the Truth" approach to what is shown above, that can take more than one year. We have been blessed with 34 baptisms (that we can count) of which three have fallen upon stony ground or allowed the weeds to choke the Word. One has fallen asleep in Christ at the age of 101 just a few short years after baptism, truly an example of one invited to work in the vineyard in the last hour of the day.

As we rejoice with our members and their new found hope and embrace them as part of our family, they sometimes bring with them a culture of 'the old man' not easily left behind. In this situation, most of us find ourselves in uncharted territory as an ecclesia. At first glance this appears to be a negative thing but in the long run it is no different from long term members who struggle with the flesh. Whether new or existing, young or old, Jew or Greek, they should be approached with love and compassion but ultimately with God's Word doing the instructing. It is important to not ignore problems if they arise and to prevent groups to form within. We are all One Family in the Lord. The blood of Christ is thicker than ours and has called all of us out of this world to "be ye separate" which is easy to teach but not always easy to live.



With this transformation can be a change for the better. New members bring with them a perspective that can invigorate our ecclesia with different ideas, an excitement that is sometimes forgotten and a spirit of willingness. They also question some old traditions that may not be the best fit anymore (can be a good thing) and

overall they provide an objective eye like a child asking their parents... "why?"

Based on my experiences with the seminars, we should view the changes that come as a blessing that brings with it responsibility for us to nurture and admonish, edify and exhort, but most importantly to be an example to one another.

Carl Newth (Reseda, CA)

Bible Seminars: The Brampton Experience

On September 19, 1995, the Brampton Ecclesia in Ontario began our first Seminar on *“Learn to Read the Bible Effectively.”* Through the grace of our Lord, a wonderful and exciting new experience in presenting the Word of God was suddenly opened up to us. From that point forward, we have been generously blessed by our Heavenly Father, not only in the opportunity to proclaim His Word, but in the Spiritual well-being, vitality, and fellowship it has engendered within our Ecclesia.

You might imagine our reaction when 128 individuals registered for the original seminar! Of those registered, 86 attended the first evening and 69 received graduation certificates on the sixth evening. Many of these were eager to gain further insight into God’s Word.

The Seminar is Over: What’s Next?



It was obvious that something more must be done to accommodate the needs of these seminar students. As “babes” in their understanding of God’s true plan of hope, they were not yet ready for direct confrontation with the traditional doctrines which had been instilled in most of them. It was determined that another seminar was the most viable method of developing further association and encouraging growth in the Truth.

Ultimately, our Ecclesia was privileged to present to this group a series of four seminars. The initial 6 week course was followed by:

- The Book of Genesis (six week course),
- The Life of Christ (eight week course), and
- The Acts of the Apostles (eight week course).

There were 27 students who received graduation certificates from the 4th seminar. These graduates had been involved in 28 weeks of exposure to God’s Word and had been introduced to every one of our first principles. These principles were all presented in a positive manner, in Biblical terms, never as unsupported doctrine. Conversely, we never presented any negative concepts, such as, “we do not believe in the Trinity”, “there is no immortal soul”, etc. We simply encouraged them to form their own conclusions based on the Bible statements that were discussed. All of this was apart from home study discussions in which some participated, as the series developed, and which carried on at the conclusion of the seminars.

In September of 1996, this process was repeated with similar results. This time there were 147 registrations received, with 92 attending the first session. There were 28 students receiving certificates on the final evening of the 28th week. Many of these expressed interest in proceeding to home classes. Inasmuch as the group

from the first year was further along in their studies, this necessitated initiating a second evening each week.

We were blessed with 12 baptisms directly attributable to these first two seminars. Other participants in the home study classes expressed an interest in possibly following this lead. The two home classes from years one and two were then combined into one evening. Members of the 3rd year seminars were invited to join these classes. When we ran the seminar again the third year, we received another 105 registrations.

The pattern was established which we have followed for 15 years, during which approximately 1,200 respondents have expressed an interest in learning to “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively”.

Is Small Better?

Due to the number of registrations in 1995 and 1996, we had broken up the first course into three separate classes, feeling that 30 to 40 members constituted the ideal class size. We ran three simultaneous classes utilizing three teams of two presenters each.

The third year, we kept the whole group in one large room. Two teams of presenters were involved, alternating each week. This appeared to be more effective than breaking them up into smaller groups. There were more audience responses to questions during the early sessions than occurred in the two previous years. More participants stayed after the close of each evening to offer comments and ask questions. They broke into spontaneous applause at the end of the session. That was a first for us!

No one in our ecclesial experience had ever enjoyed such response or reactions in our years of public lectures and campaigns, which essentially produced zero response. Upon completion of the three years, a total of 249 neighbors in our local community, seeking understanding in God’s word, had been exposed to some degree of Christadelphian outreach efforts.

A transition from seminars to home study with a very involved group of students was accomplished. There were no confrontations. They listened to us as trusted friends.

We tried some things that worked. We made some mistakes. In summarizing our experiences there are several points that should be emphasized.

Important Reminders

Finally, apart from any other considerations, we emphasize three elements that we found to be essential to the presentation of these seminars. They are mutually-supportive in developing a bond with the students and the resulting spiritual excitement in the Ecclesia.

- 1) **Be true to your word.** The most singular common comment made by those who now freely discuss first principles with us, is that we gained their respect by staying true to our promise that we would not overtly attempt to convert

them. We never told them that their current beliefs were wrong, or that their Churches were wrong. We made no direct attack on their inherent belief in traditional false doctrine. Awareness of error developed of its own accord as true knowledge of the Word was established. By simply dwelling on what the Bible states, without presenting it as our doctrine, we were not engaged in argumentative confrontation. Those who were truly seeking God's will and word, began telling us where they had been wrong. Their Priests and Ministers did the arguing, and were shown as lacking in understanding in the light of God's Word. As respect grows, so grows trust. Among those who attend, we now discuss first principles of doctrine and truth as friends. Every brother and sister in our meeting is familiar with the advertisement through which the students were invited to attend. The promises made in this invitation are respected.

- 2) **Involvement.** We keep all the brethren and sisters of the Ecclesia informed and involved as the seminars progress. Weekly progress in our seminars is included in our Sunday morning announcements, coupled with a request for continuing prayer. Some of our members attend the classes as observers, with the understanding that they do not initiate confrontation or preach doctrine. As they see the students' eagerness and friendliness grow, such awareness generates: —
- 3) **Spiritual excitement.** As this infectious enthusiasm grows, so does the intensity of prayer for our Heavenly Father's support. Without His blessing, we accomplish nothing.

Why Not a Fifth Seminar?

Initially, as the participants in these classes approached the conclusion of the 4th seminar in the series, we pondered this question. It was our opinion that prolonged formal class structure might simply lead to the concept of perpetual students. As eager as they were to absorb information, we feared the possibility of lulling them into a pattern of academic study. This could lead to a position of, in Paul's words, *"always learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the Truth"* (2Tim 3:7).

The "building blocks" were all in place. It was time to guide them toward commitment, and a sense of urgency in seeking a personal relationship with God through Christ.

We had gradually introduced an increasing emphasis on such commitment as the seminars progressed. By this time, the realization of Christ's return and a Kingdom on earth were established. By allowing the Bible to speak for itself, this had been revealed throughout the classes, without any confrontations on immortal souls, heavenly reward, punishment in hell, etc. The theme "Be Ready for Christ's return" was stressed in the presenter's dialogue throughout the "Acts" seminar, the final in these series.

About the seventh night of this seminar, we introduced the possibility of holding "Be Ready" classes in the home. These are dedicated to discussion of what is personally involved, based on Scripture, in being prepared for Christ's return. In subsequent years, not every student who completed all four seminars attended

these classes which began three weeks later. Those who did attend had reached a level of association with us that they were prepared to listen and discuss first principles as friends.

Discussions with friends have always been a productive means of presenting the first principles of the Gospel. It is, indeed, a thrilling experience to have such conversations with a whole group. It is exciting to witness the pleasure of these students when one of their number makes the decision to be baptized, even if they themselves have not yet reached such understanding and commitment.

These classes have been maintained consistently over the years. It is essentially from this group that baptisms develop. Many of those who have been baptized as a result of this effort continue to attend these weekly in-home classes, providing support and encouragement to those who have not yet reached this decision.

During this past summer an average of 10-12 students were attending these open discussions on First Principles, two of whom have expressed interest in private and personal classes in preparation for baptism. To date, 24 searching hearts have been baptized as a direct result of contact through these 14 years of Seminars. At the present time, brethren and sisters who came to an understanding in God's Word through the Seminars constitute 42% of our membership. They come from a variety of backgrounds and denominations. Two had been in the Salvation Army. One was a Buddhist who, initially, simply wanted to learn more about Jesus Christ, who from what she had heard must have been "a really good man." One woman left the Seminars, but returned when she thought about the fact that her Anglican Church extended the Memorials to children who had no understanding of God's Word. Another questioned her Priest about what the Bible said. His directive to ignore the Bible and listen to him motivated her decision to baptism.

At present we have begun our 15th consecutive year of Seminars. Recently, 89 registrants responded to the two ads we placed in the local community newspaper. As long as the Lord continues to bless our ecclesia with such exciting response and experience, we would be delinquent in discontinuing this form of presenting His Word and His Hope to an increasingly unsettled and uncertain world.

Has the Seminar approach run its course?

As a footnote, we must acknowledge the positive effect that these Seminars, and the resulting baptisms, have had upon our Ecclesial family. The enthusiasm of our new members provides an infectious hunger for fellowship and the desire to share this "new and wondrous treasure" with families, working associates, and neighbors. Their intense appreciation of the wonder of the Gospel, formerly unknown to them, provokes us to the excitement of sharing in the joy of Angels over sinners who repent. This joy is infectious. May God Bless us all in our efforts to plant the seed of His Word.

We do not believe the Seminar approach is becoming obsolete in any way. As the continuing results show, sessions continue to draw much interest, some by God's grace result in new and vibrant members.

Dave and Marlene McKay (Brampton, ON)

“Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” Video Seminars

In 2009, working together with Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas [CBMA], an ambitious project was put together to professionally produce a 16 session series of ‘*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminars*’. A studio set was built inside the hall of the Los Angeles ecclesia using commercial lighting, audio, five cameras, and even a fully functional director’s Control Room. After a training shoot was launched and completed, 50 volunteers were brought in to serve as a live audience and 16 sessions were recorded in two days. The director and the four engineers in the Control Room directed the various cameramen, inserted Power Point slides to be shown on stage on a wall mounted LCD television, controlled the audio, and inserted prepared video shots to blend it all together and enhance the quality of the programs.

Once the final editing was completed last year, the series was made available on DVDs to enable those brethren and sisters in smaller ecclesias to participate in their own ‘*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively*’ Seminars. This exciting series can be presented on a laptop computer that is connected to a projector for a large audience presentation, or connected to a large screen TV for a smaller audience, or shown on the laptop for a one-on-one class. The DVD set comes with a series of questions for the guests to retain more of the presented information.

If this ‘*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively*’ seminar DVD series can be of help to you, please e-mail Cindy.and.Doug@Juno.com for details, with a suggested donation of \$17.50 USD for each set.

The CBMA plans to present this series on its website www.ThisIsYourBible.com and use it to interact with web viewers to engage them with questions on the presentations. What a marvelous opportunity this will be for brethren and sisters wherever in the world they are to participate in the preaching efforts that can now be undertaken with these wonderful new tools.

Doug Hawthorne (Simi Hills, CA)

Origin of Bible Seminars

In the fall of 1992, 10,000 attractive 4-page folders were mailed directly to homes in an area of Canton, Ohio. Recipients were invited to attend a free seminar in a local community center where, during six weekly 1½ hour sessions, they would learn to read the Bible more effectively. By our standards, the response was overwhelming; 120 people responded, 105 of whom registered for the seminar. Bro. Randall Coy and Bro. Dave Noble of the North Industry, OH Ecclesia were presented with an unusual problem. The rented facility could hold only 40 people, much too small for the number of interested friends. The solution was to run two seminars in the fall and one in the winter with each being attended by about 35 people. Each person received, free of charge, a three-ring binder containing 160-pages of easy-to-read, professional-quality study notes, copies of about 20 charts and diagrams and two full-color historical charts. In addition, many overheads were used.

From The Tidings, July 1973, p 291

The Mission Experience

While the Bible Mission story told here is primarily about work in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, there can be no doubt that Mission work has had a significant impact on the North American brotherhood. Bible Mission has changed many lives in North America. While programs such as Truth Corps and Domestic Mission are primarily programs that have been on North American soil, they have provided an invaluable platform of spiritual development for our young people. Bible Mission work has encouraged us to think bigger, to view our "community" for preaching as much larger than our own neighborhood.

The Tidings Magazine regularly includes a section on "Bible Mission News" which highlights a few of the exciting developments of Bible Mission work. The following articles provide a summary of some of this work. The Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA/CBMC) encourages you to become more aware of Bible Mission programs and to get personally involved in one of the multitude of ways that serve this invaluable work.

Looking Forward: The CBMA

What will the future work of the Christadelphian Bible Mission (CBMA) be like? And how will our past and our present affect our future? We all pray that our Lord will return and we will be able to preach under the conditions described in the Bible: a period when everyone will know the Lord and sin will be held in check. But until that time we need to press on from where we are today.

First, why is it that so many people don't enjoy history? It explains so much about the present and can spare us from repeating many of our past mistakes in our future. It explains why we are, who we are, why we are where we are, when we came to be where we are. In large measure it accurately defines what we are about. So, how do we see mission work changing in the near future?

Rather than assume anyone is interested we will seek to establish the need for our Bible missions. We will try and make digesting some facts about our past and present a little more palatable by framing the information in a Q & A format.

WHY the Two Organizations (CBMA and CBMC)?

The Christadelphian Bible Mission of America (CBMA) and the Christadelphian Bible Mission of Canada (CBMC) are the two committees responsible to the brethren in North America. They work in tandem to provide the guidance, continuity and resources necessary to enable preaching, pastoral and welfare work to be done in Latin America and the Caribbean. Both organizations are approved to receive donations that are tax deductible to the donors. They meet frequently via conference calls and periodically in person to discuss bible mission needs and opportunities.

Christadelphian ecclesial activities are predominantly internal in nature, not external. Most ecclesial duties are primarily directed toward serving our own ecclesia's

needs. Our work in preaching to the public, our community services and welfare needs, are all probably less than 10% of our efforts for the Truth.

There are many legitimate reasons for this. Today Christadelphians are the product of the few individuals who responded 150 years ago (pardon the history) to the Scripturally-based call of one man to come out from the rest of apostate Christianity. We were called to separate ourselves from the institutions that make up this world. We were to do this without any professional, formally educated, full-time help. Therefore, it is totally reasonable to expect that, given those parameters, the vast majority of our volunteer efforts and our donations are going to be spent maintaining our basic ecclesial functions. This does not leave much time for preaching to the public. It leaves almost no time and resources to commit the ecclesia to mission work outside our immediate areas.

In addition to this, mission work relies on a number of external factors. The region cannot be at war. Transportation and communication must be safe and affordable. Language differences must be accommodated. We have to be able to pool together sufficient resources to enable volunteers to go and do the work. Most importantly, a few brethren and sisters have to feel that there is an imperative to preach the gospel to those who are strangers to the covenants and aliens from the commonwealth of God.

That is why we have the CBMA and CBMC organizations. We need them. It requires a long-term, concentrated effort for an internally-oriented culture to begin to be more externally focused.

It also takes a long term commitment to bring the Truth to a new area and start up a functioning ecclesia. Unlike a short-term campaign, which can be put on for a weekend or a week by an established ecclesia, when we are in the mission field we are starting from scratch in a foreign location. It is important that we be committed for the long haul.

WHEN did the CBMA begin?

Our brethren in England (CBMUK) had been actively involved in overseas preaching work since shortly after WWII. International travel had again become possible. They set up a formal organization sponsored by the brotherhood in the U.K. They began placing advertisements offering correspondence courses in newspapers in various parts of the world and sending volunteer brethren to follow up with interested contacts. The world is a big place and the more workers the better. They saw in Southern California a cluster of ecclesias that might supply the nucleus of a Bible Mission organization to further the work. When they made their suggestion, a number of brethren agreed to form a committee, draw up a constitution, and submit it to the brethren in the West for their response. The ecclesias enthusiastically approved this project on May 4, 1968, and dedicated Bible mission work began in the Americas.

Originally the organization was called the Pacific Coast Christadelphian Bible Mission and it envisioned drawing on the brethren west of the Mississippi River for support and providing preaching work in Central America. South America

and the Caribbean would continue to be overseen by the CBMUK for preaching work and the eastern part of North America would continue to support those areas through the CBMUK.

There was one ecclesia in Colon, Panama at that time that had been started by Bro. Noel and Sis. Trudy Gibson who lived and worked in the Panama Canal Zone with their six children. The annual budget of the CBMUK for this work was \$3,000 and we had no idea initially if we would be able to raise that amount of money.

WHERE did outreach begin with the CBMA?

Initially, our first work naturally was in Colon, Panama. Soon afterwards, an ecclesia was formed in Panama City, Panama. From there the work moved north and an ecclesia was formed in Costa Rica. Later, ecclesias were established in El Salvador, Guatemala and Guadalajara, Mexico. The CBMUK then asked us to take over responsibility for South America. There are now ecclesias in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and baptized brethren in many other countries where no formal ecclesias have been set up as yet.

In 1999 CBMUK asked us to take responsibility for helping the Caribbean ecclesias and to represent all of the brethren in North America. Brethren in our eastern ecclesias had a long history of assisting the Caribbean brotherhood and the region readily agreed to continue to serve in these areas. In the Caribbean, there are 28 ecclesias and a total of 405 brethren on the various islands.

Therefore, our North American brotherhood is currently assisting 45 ecclesias, 685 brothers and sisters, with 385 Sunday School students in Latin America and the Caribbean.

WHAT do Bible mission workers actually do?

Here are a few descriptions of various aspects of current Bible mission work.

Correspondence tutors: This is how one can become a missionary and never leave your own home. Correspondence course tutors serve students around the world by providing tutoring and coaching as they work through correspondence courses. Once a strong relationship is formed, many tutors will connect the student with Christadelphians near the student's home. This has resulted in many baptisms over the recent years. Additionally, tutors who become linked to outreach in specific countries may place advertisements, correspond with students, make phone calls and coordinate with visits by missionaries and link brethren.

Missionaries in residence: These brethren and sisters move to a country, find a place to live, learn the language, hold meetings in hotels, teach the truth, baptize new brethren, rent a meeting room, organize an ecclesia, teach Sunday School and generally perform all the jobs usual to a Christadelphian ecclesia.

Link brethren: Assist established ecclesias via regular visits, correspondence and phone calls. Arrange for speakers for Bible gatherings. They may exhort, teach classes, visit the homes of members and act as interface between the brotherhood in North America and the mission ecclesia.

Speakers: They often teach at Bible schools and other gatherings overseas, in many ways similar to what would be done in North America.

Short term volunteers: Assist with special preaching efforts, campaigns etc.

CBMA/CMBC Councils

As far as the CBMA/CMBC Councils are concerned, we all wear at least two hats. One role we all have is to give advice and consent via participation in the regular meetings.

Each member usually has one or more specific responsibilities as well, such as:

- Chairman: Organize the meetings and follow up as required.
- Secretary: Maintain official records. Process elections. Minutes.
- Finance: Deposit donations, disburse as required to missionaries.
- Coordinate Latin America activities
- Coordinate Caribbean activities
- Truth Corps program
- “This is Your Bible” website project
- Publicity: Newsletters, Magazine articles, Annual report to brotherhood, special presentations.

HOW will mission work be done In the future?

While we do not know exactly how things will change, we know that change will occur. The Apostle Paul preached in synagogues and on Mars Hill. He traveled under extreme conditions of hardship and peril. Today we fly in ease and comfort. Paul adapted his presentation of the gospel to the times and conditions in which he found himself: *“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22).*

We have seen huge changes during the last 40 years. Today hand billing, newspaper advertisements and hard copy correspondence are being supplemented by Internet contacts, e-mail tutoring, intercontinental telephone baptismal instruction via Skype, and frequent phone calls. Some of these methods were simply not in existence or were cost prohibitive a few years ago.

CBMA/CMBC are making concentrated efforts during 2011 and 2012 to explore new avenues of communication and to make mission work available to many more brethren. While continuing the methods that have worked in the past, we want to initiate projects that can profitably utilize short term volunteers by having follow up visits overseas on a regular basis. The website “This Is Your Bible” is introducing the truth via pamphlets and correspondence courses that provide opportunities for brethren and sisters to teach the Truth from home. We look forward to having “Tutor Tours”. Imagine going on a one or two week visit to mission areas with an experienced missionary and having the opportunity to meet some of your correspondence students who will be attending a lecture!

We are determined to be as open-minded towards the future as we can be. We need to review techniques and methodology while conserving and teaching the

fundamental principles of our faith. At the end of the day, it will still almost always come down to two people talking one-on-one about the gospel.

Whether we are on the front line or serving at home to make all this possible, it is wonderful to think that in the soon coming Kingdom of God there will be men and women who will live forever and we were part of it all. We cannot cure all the ills of the world, but we have not been asked to do that. We've been challenged to just do what we can to preach the Word.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

Preaching in the Canadian Maritimes

The Christadelphian population in the Maritimes after the Second World War was very scattered. In Nova Scotia there were a few in the Halifax, Stewiacke, and Sydney areas. New Brunswick had ecclesias in both Moncton and Saint John, with a small group in the Fredericton and Hatfield's Point areas. Later there was one brother on Prince Edward Island, and a few years after that his wife became a sister. Sadly there are no longer any brethren and sisters on PEI.

One thousand miles to the east, St. John's, Newfoundland, was expanding. There were two campaigns in the area, assisted by brethren and sisters from Ontario, the Atlantic Provinces and the United Kingdom.

As a result of attending a Christadelphian Bible Mission Conference in Nottingham, England, in the early 1970's, and hearing uplifting reports of the work in Africa, Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines responded to an appeal for assistance from the three sisters that were left in Moncton. Cliff and Julia committed initially to two years, to help with the preaching in the Moncton area. They soon found that it is mainly personal contact that produces results.

Slowly a central core was formed in the mid-1970's, in Sussex, New Brunswick, equidistant from Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton. A monthly gathering of the brethren and sisters in New Brunswick was instituted in June, 1975, and has continued from that date. This augments the various activities in and around Sussex. For many years, the Canadian Thanksgiving, in October, has been the time for annual fellowship with brethren and sisters from the Maritime Provinces. It now often includes brethren and sisters from Ontario, the New England States and the UK, for which we are very thankful. This is a real treat for us, as we are isolated from each other by many miles.

We have been helped by the ASK Great Lakes which has provided a speaker from Ontario once a year, usually for our Bible Study weekend in April/May. This has always been a springtime "pick-us-up" after the long hard winters of Eastern Canada.

Gradually changes have taken place in the Maritimes, with brethren and sisters from Ontario and further West relocating to the Sussex area. This has also happened in the Halifax, Nova Scotia, area. Recently retired brethren and sisters as well as younger families have moved east to help with the work.

Having seen the successes of ASK Great Lakes in Ontario, it was felt that an Atlantic ASK would be of help here, improving communications among the isolated ecclesias in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The ASKA was formed in May, 2006, with “the intention of coordinating the activities of and assisting the local ecclesias with the resources needed to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God in the Atlantic Provinces, and to support ecclesias and isolated brethren and sisters by promoting or coordinating activities for fellowship, edification and learning in the Word of God.”

In the short time that ASKA has been in existence, the Halifax brethren and sisters have benefited from a campaign in their area; Sussex has been helped with financing seminars, the latest being the “Give Your Life a New Perspective” seminar from Britain; and Halifax is producing a new seminar series which is based on the premise, “we need to simplify our approach, many people don’t even know what a Bible is”. The new series is entitled, “Keys to Success: Helping You to Understand the Bible”. It is a 38-week program, consisting of five modular series of sequential courses designed to incorporate adult learning principles. To date, the first six-week series, focusing on the inspiration of the Bible, has been delivered in Bedford, Nova Scotia, and has been very well received.

ASKA presently conducts two annual meetings via the “Elluminate” conferencing system, where ideas, news and plans are exchanged among its three member ecclesias. Some exploratory work is presently being done on PEI with newspaper advertisements promoting the “This is Your Bible” website (*thisisyourbible.com*), and further work is also being planned for one of the major cities in the New Brunswick area. In addition to the positive fellowship benefits from our meetings, ASKA has brought together the combined financial resources of its members to greatly assist each other in the costs associated with our outreach programs.

The seminar approach certainly seems to be working well. Halifax has been blessed with a baptism as a result, and St John’s, Newfoundland, also continues to run seminars. It is anticipated that the seminars will be taken to some of the adjacent towns now that there is more support for such activities.

Cliff Baines (Sussex, NB)

Domestic Missionary Work

I took an early retirement in 2003, from a career of teaching in the public school system. By the following year, I was ready to volunteer my time to doing some kind of domestic preaching work. When checking into how to go about doing this by talking to members of the CBMA, they directed me to get in touch with brethren on the east coast of the U.S. who had many names and addresses of contacts through the A.S.K. (Advancement of Scriptural Knowledge) program. I got started by driving to Washington, D.C. and then spent the next four months going to various ecclesias on the east coast (I was at Echo Lake, N.J., on two different occasions). I stayed with a Christadelphian family each time and basically went out twice a day to look up contacts with the intent of talking to them and inviting them to a Bible class at the local ecclesia. Around half of the time there

was a brother or sister who volunteered to go with me and direct me as to how to get to our destination — as well as assisting me in the preaching part. When that happened — for obvious reasons — it was a much better method than my “going it alone” (without GPS!). It was a wonderful experience to meet so many brothers and sisters and to view their willingness to provide for my needs as I tried to help their ecclesia. I never sensed any feeling of intrusion — although I must have interrupted plenty of schedules!



During a portion of my travels, I ended up traveling throughout West Virginia where Sis. Jean Cheetham of Moorestown, N.J. (the secretary of the Atlantic Coast A.S.K. Program) had corresponded with a number of contacts. There was one contact in the central part — Montgomery — that was so interested that I ended up going back to see her on several occasions. She was

eventually baptized into Christ about a year later. That was, one could say, the tangible success story. But there was always a very good and satisfying feeling of “planting and watering” while knowing that it was God’s work to “give the increase”.

Before arriving at my first stop in Washington, D.C., I had gone from my home in Austin to northwest Alabama to meet with a very small group of brethren (three sisters in Christ and one man, the husband of one of the sisters, who was shortly thereafter baptized) at the request of a Christadelphian sister from Detroit who was related to all. I had gotten reacquainted with her at a Bible School earlier that year. On my way back to Texas at the completion of my Northern tour, I went to Alabama again and met with a brother from Detroit (Livonia) whose ecclesia supported the Alabama brethren and a brother from the CBMA to work out the details of my moving there. Soon after I got home and worked out some things there, I moved to Alabama in January 2005 and stayed through June 2007. It was a very rewarding experience since the “running” of the ecclesia was basically my responsibility. We did have four baptisms during the time I was there — all members of the original family by blood or by marriage. We tried any number of preaching activities during that time including two occasions — in different towns — of sponsoring the “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar and two consecutive summers where Truth Corps came and stayed for around two weeks. We did much door-to-door work to invite people to various Bible talks by visiting brethren. I finally left to return to Austin only when a married Christadelphian couple from Michigan agreed to come and take my place.

What did I learn from these experiences? Though it may sound like a cliché, it really isn’t — I learned to put my trust in God and to truly believe that He was

with me and my brothers and sisters in Christ and would, in whatever was He saw fit, bless our efforts. Through both positive and negative experiences, I saw the benefit of what Jesus did in sending out his apostles two by two. In every way imaginable, going with a partner beats going alone. I also tried very hard to not impose my views on the local ecclesia but to listen to what they had to say and go about this work in the way that they wanted. The majority of the time, they were very open and willing to go about things in the way I suggested, but if they had other ideas, I was fine in doing it their way.

I believe it should be possible to enlist a couple of young brothers to do a similar thing to what I did. They would need to find a geographical area willing to sponsor them — say California or Ontario or Florida — where there were a number of ecclesias not too far from each other. They would need a car of their own (as I had); a goal — to look up contacts (e.g., from www.thisisyourbible.com), try to talk to them (using the Truth Corps flip-chart presentation would be one way) and invite them to a local Bible class, seminar, etc.; and a group of ecclesias who were willing to house them and take care of their needs and help in any way they needed. As Jesus told his disciples, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”* (Luke 10:2 ESV).

Wes Booker (Austin South, TX)

History of Spanish Language Preaching in Los Angeles

The Beginning

On arriving in Los Angeles in the spring of 1998 the first thing we did was to begin placing advertisements in the Spanish-language daily newspaper *La Opinión*, offering the Bible course by correspondence. Several small weekly papers were also tried, but they produced little response. Subsequently we discovered a Spanish-language PennySaver-type magazine which gave cost-effective results, and for years we used it almost exclusively. But since the beginning of 2010 most advertising has been done using Google ads placed by the CBMA's guru in this field, Bro. Robert Alderson. At present this appears to be the most economical means of reaching people interested in studying the Bible.

Going back to 1998, the next step was to begin producing postal courses and Bible literature. Most material is produced using a leased photocopier and manually folding and stapling, on an as-needed basis. This work could have been contracted out to a commercial printer, but it would have had a much higher initial cost and would present problems of storage and spoilage. We do use a commercial printer for a small number of high-demand titles.

By September 1998 there were about 300 people receiving the postal course — a reasonable number to begin inviting out to talks. One of the problems in LA is the size of the city and the limitations of public transport. We were unsure where to establish a meeting place, and so for the first six months we hung up a map of greater LA and put pins in all the places where the contacts lived. Unfortunately

that didn't resolve the problem — the whole area had pins in it! It had been suggested that the greatest density of Hispanics was in East LA and that we should set up there, but strangely enough, little interest has ever come from that area. In the end we concluded that the Koreatown, west of downtown, was the approximate “centre of gravity,” so to speak, of the areas where most contacts lived.

We sent out invitations to a series of six talks in a modest hotel and were encouraged by the 20 or so visitors who came out. Several of them were subsequently baptized. Sis. Vera Ifill, who lives in the area, began looking for rental premises and found a very nice storefront with ample parking and good bus service. Once the hall was ready we began to offer regular Bible classes and lectures there. At the time we were still members of the Los Angeles Ecclesia, so we attended that ecclesia on Sunday mornings and offered Spanish-language Bible talks in Koreatown at 3 PM. Sis. Vera always went with us and gave a Sunday School class (in English) to the smallest children who came — Vera being 85 at the time!

We have always encouraged people to bring their children to all the meetings and, except for the breaking of bread, the children have their own classes at the same time as the adults. This is important in developing a habit of attendance as well as allowing both parents to attend classes undisturbed.

A weekly Bible class was scheduled on Thursday evenings and shortly afterwards a Saturday-afternoon class was also instituted to attract some of our contacts who were Seventh-Day Adventists. A good number of these, members of an extended family, were later baptized. Both Bible classes continue to the present day. For a while we offered a Tuesday-night class at the LA Ecclesial hall in Santa Fe Springs, but it was suspended after a few weeks for lack of attendance, even though many contacts lived in the area. Attendance was initially quite small at the weekday classes in Koreatown, but Sundays usually brought a nice turnout — 10 to 15 adult visitors. Within about a year two contacts began studying for baptism.

One thing to be conscious of is that taking people out of the world or another church means completely changing their way of thinking. Most have little understanding of the Bible even if they have been attending a church. This means that preparation for baptism must be very thorough; trying to rush things will only mean problems further down the road. (We usually take about a year to do baptismal classes, unless the person has already been attending for a long time.) Another caution: the fact that a contact has done all the Bible courses and answered well is no indication that he has understood or embraced the teaching. Contacts who have completed all the postal courses — which are very clear about basic teachings — often admit that they don't really believe what they have studied even if they have understood it. Some people like to do courses and will put down the answer expected of them just to get a good grade on their questionnaires.

First Results

The first two baptisms took place in the spring of 2000, and so a breaking of bread was added to the Sunday-afternoon schedule. But after a few more baptisms the LA Hispanic members requested that Sunday meetings be held in the morning,

and so the breaking of bread was rescheduled for 10:00 AM, followed by the public lecture at 11:30. Sunday school is held at the same time as the lecture, so visitors can bring their children. During the Thursday-night Bible class we offer two concurrent classes, one for teenagers and another for younger children, while on Saturday afternoons there is just one class for kids of all ages. There is also CYC class on Monday evenings. Usually there are weekly personal baptismal classes as well. Adult classes are given in Spanish; those for young people and children are usually in English since the children are being schooled in English even though they speak Spanish at home. But the teachers sometimes switch to Spanish if there is a new student who has recently arrived in the country and hasn't yet picked up English.

Years ago a couple of billing efforts were carried out in the area of the LA Hispanic hall with the welcome help of young people from nearby ecclesias. This produced two baptisms. But the main preaching method has always been the same: advertising the Bible course and inviting the postal contacts out to meetings. The best way to identify a serious contact is to see if he is willing to show up to a meeting. We discovered that even when we did look people up and even gave them classes in their homes, this rarely translated into their making the effort to come out to meetings (remembering that our focus is on building ecclesias).



Present Day

There have now been 29 baptisms into the LA Hispanic Ecclesia. Three members have since fallen asleep, four have moved out of the area but keep in touch and one no longer attends. So including ourselves there are 23 active members in the local meeting, a harmonious little congregation.

More than 760 different people (including children — some of whom have now been baptized) have attended meetings since the beginning. Because of our favourable location there have been lots of walk-ins, and in fact four of our members are the result of coming in off the street. About 4,500 people have received the Bible course in the greater LA area.

We have a very nice storefront on a busy street. The main room is furnished with a whiteboard and tables to help create a learning environment. Coffee and light refreshments are set out at the beginning of every class. After the Sunday lecture we serve a light lunch, which encourages the visitors to stay around chatting. The sisters take turns bringing the food, and we get an amazing variety of menus —

often including hot peppers for the Mexican members! Baptismal classes are often held after the Sunday lunch or before the Thursday or Saturday Bible classes. To promote fellowship we have family days several times a year. For example, on Thanksgiving we have a brunch together or even a full turkey dinner. On July 4th we either go to the home of Bro. Manny and Sis. Celina Cervantes for swimming and a barbecue or use the LA ecclesial hall for games and a barbecue. Since we are intended to be a family, we celebrate together as a family. Every month there is a cake at the meeting for everyone celebrating a birthday that month (though I think we once offended a JW contact who came and saw the cake!). The sisters occasionally get together to have lunch at a nice restaurant, which is fun.

Factors to consider for Spanish-language outreach

1. Distance

In any big American city the Hispanic population will probably tend to be widely dispersed. Here in Los Angeles they are spread all over the downtown area and the suburbs. Since many do not have their own vehicle, public transportation is an issue. For example, we have many contacts in Anaheim and Santa Ana (30 to 40 miles from our hall), but we have never had a visitor from those areas.

In an effort to try to reach other areas of greater LA we once held a lecture series at the Reseda ecclesial hall but got no visitors from the area. The same thing was tried using the LA ecclesial hall, but again, no-one from the area showed up. This has not been done recently.

2. Advertising

For years newspaper ads were the main form of advertising in most countries of Latin America and here in LA as well, but rising costs combined with restricted budgets have become a deterring factor. Since 2009 targeted Google ads have been used in many areas of Latin America, but we are still trying to assess the quality of the contacts. In Los Angeles 190 contacts have come in from Google ads, but very few of these students have actually answered the course and only four of them have come out to a meeting. Since coming out to meetings is the bottom-line definition of what makes a “good” contact, we are still trying to work out the pros and cons of Internet advertising. It produces new contacts much more inexpensively than print advertising, but it is hard to know how serious they are. It is easier to click on a link and type a few words than to make a telephone call or fill out a coupon and mail it in.

3. The importance of stable leadership for a reasonably long time

Having a missionary brother or couple on the ground for several years has played an important role in the success of CBMA outreach in Latin America. In the early years in El Salvador, an Evangelical pastor told us, “The lovely sisters are great, but until you convert a capable young man who can teach and lead, you will not have an independent church.” That has certainly been our experience. Just baptising a brother doesn’t mean that he is capable of giving classes or mature enough to be an ecclesial leader. A lecturing brother must be able not only to present our teach-

ings clearly but also answer difficult questions from visitors. Even in the best-case scenario, that of baptizing a capable young man early on in the effort, it can take years for these skills to develop enough for the ecclesia to become independent.

4. Immigrant contacts

Most Hispanic members and contacts in the US are fairly recent immigrants. They have come to this country to improve their economic situation and provide better opportunities for their children, and so the struggle to achieve these aims is an important factor in their lives. In addition, many are sending money back to their home countries to support family members there. They often work long hours for low wages. Work schedules that include changing shifts and weekends can be challenging to regular ecclesial attendance.

5. Language

Of the older members in our ecclesia only two speak English well, even though some have lived here for many years. Their work schedules and family duties have left them little time to attend English classes. Some of our members work in Korean businesses and end up speaking more Korean than English!

It is impractical to expect older Latinos to learn English. Few of our converts that began attending as adults will learn the language well. So if we begin preaching in Spanish in an area we must continue to provide a Spanish-speaking ecclesial environment; in the main it will be difficult to successfully incorporate Hispanic contacts into English-speaking ecclesias.

On the other hand, their children all speak English and prefer it to Spanish. It is uncertain at this stage how this will work out in the future of the LA Hispanic Ecclesia. The kids tend to zone-out during the breaking of bread (maybe kids do that anyways!), closing their ears to the Spanish. On the other hand, we encourage our young people to take part in regional CYC activities and Bible schools in the hope that they will become integrated into the wider ecclesial world.

Jim and Jean Hunter (LA Hispanic, CA)

Truth Corps

Truth Corps began in 1970 when a four person team went to Panama and has continued to be a moving experience for many brothers and sisters ever since. My first experience was with a visit of team of five much younger brothers and sisters to Panama. I was involved with Truth Corps for the next twenty years. Since that time, Truth Corps teams have visited ecclesias in Canada and the US as well as Panama, Jamaica and Mexico. I don't know how many ecclesias have hosted Truth Corps since 1970, but without doubt they have benefitted from their experience. Of the hundreds of brothers and sisters who have gone on Truth Corps, many have had their lives greatly impacted from their experience. Truth Corps continues to benefit ecclesias and Christadelphian youth to this day.

Truth Corps began as a program to support ecclesias in their preaching efforts

and it has done that. But it helped more than in the immediate preaching support; it increased the focus of the ecclesia on preaching and reaching out to their local communities. In addition, an unexpected benefit of Truth Corps has been in the spiritual growth of the team members. A brother mentioned to me, that after observing a Truth Corps team member upon his return, it seemed to cause five years of spiritual growth in him during that summer. When the members returned from their Truth Corps experience, they were different. They had spent a summer living in close contact with others, sharing in the household duties and putting up with inconveniences in a crowded house, and spending a good part of each day in generating and visiting contacts with the standard Truth Corps flip-chart presentation and other kinds of preaching activities. Add to this the close and intimate discussion of their experiences together as a team. While this was a new experience for them, it motivated them to undertake new and different activities when they returned to their home ecclesias. This is the long term effect of Truth Corps. Local CYC's began to take on new dimensions, new leadership emerged, more young teachers began to shine, and prayers became more focused and meaningful. Preaching activities became a bigger part of ecclesial life. Many former Truth Corps team members have become more involved in ecclesial work. More than a few have become recording brothers of their ecclesia. It is not unusual for former Truth Corps members to be teachers at Bible Schools.

In my sixty plus years in the Truth, I have seen two events that have profoundly affected the brotherhood. One is the establishment of Bible Schools and the other is the Truth Corps. I have been richly blessed to be a part of the latter.

Russ Patterson (Verdugo Hills, CA)



Below:
Truth Corps 1972, Panama
First row: Peggy Lloyd,
Mark Patterson, Jane
Samuel
Back row: Bob Lloyd, Betty
Patterson, Russell Patter-
son, Brian McLeod, Ernie
Hoare, Stan Wilkinson,
Linda Wilkinson

Above:
Truth Corps 2006,
Victoria, BC



Personal Preaching

There is almost no limit to the number of ways we can become missionaries as individual brothers and sisters in Christ. The story is told of a sister who, some 55 years ago, regularly left pamphlets on the seat of her commuter bus when she went to work. God saw to it that one of her pamphlets fell into the right hands and the direction of literally thousands of lives was changed as a result.¹ Any of us can do little things like this almost anytime and anywhere!

Some brothers and sisters have a wonderful knack for talking with friends or coworkers. Looking back over the history of many ecclesias, this brother or that sister came into the truth because a Christadelphian shared his or her faith with them at home or in school or in the work place.

Still others have taken hold of unique opportunities to reach out to people in need of new lives. In the articles that follow we have three diverse and impressive stories of ways that brothers and sisters have let their light shine forth in a personal way, and brought glory to God in the process.

Bible in a Brown Bag

Introducing and teaching the True Gospel to others in the workplace has enabled me to garner a number of ideas over thirty-three and a half years of employment at two different jobs. Everybody considers lunchtime to be “their own time”. I discovered that showing God’s love for my fellow employees was a big factor in getting them to give up this time and respond to my invitations to study the Bible together. It was important for me to give them due respect, regardless of the amount of Bible understanding they had. It was also important for me to help them gain an image of the person they could become in the future, both in terms of their faith and their walk before God.

In the process I have had the wonderful privilege of seeing God’s hand at work, not only on the hearts of my fellow employees but also upon those of my superiors, outside vendors, service people, and the spouses and families of those in my lunchtime classes. This has bolstered my own personal faith and encouraged me to continue to speak of these things to almost everyone I meet.

Some of us are indeed more extroverted in our personalities than others. Let me just say that having the Truth will enable anyone who really wants to share their faith with others to grow and develop the ability to do so. Prayer, preparation, practice and preaching are four pillars which will hold up even the most frightened individual.

I began by asking God to bring me to cross the paths of others who would be interested in learning the Truth. I tried to assure Him that I was willing to give up my lunch hours at work as well as evenings away from home and family, but to balance this with the needs of my wife and four young children.

The first fellow employee I presented the Truth to was never baptized. But his questions enabled me to develop my presentation of first principles. I marked up a small pocket-size Bible with verses from Index Rerum² and used these in my first attempts to teach. I met many others on and off the job during those initial years and recall the baptism of the first person whom I tutored completely through the first principles. I was so excited the night he was immersed that I thought my heart would explode! You will miss this thrill if you decide to leave the preaching of the Gospel to others.

And why do we do it? It is for God's glory. It is for the salvation of others. It is to express our personal thankfulness to Jesus. There is a vacuum in the lives of others, longing to be filled. We have what they want and what they need to become truly living beings.

I changed jobs in June of 1977. I took a new job as a geology draftsman in Houston, Texas. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to build on what I had learned and to introduce the Truth to others in a new environment. I decided to take my time, be prayerful, and start by being more of a listener. I would not charge in with trumpets sounding, drums rattling and saber drawn. I proceeded to take the first three months to get to know everyone on a personal basis. I went into their offices in an unobtrusive way and deliberately avoided getting drawn into conversation about the Bible. I listened to what they wanted to talk about, and I got to know them and what they felt was important in life.

At the end of those three months, I planned my first lunch hour presentation. Let me add that it is important to secure a supervisor's or manager's approval before attempting to use company resources. I found management to be very supportive.

I placed a big chart of "God's 7,000 Year Plan for the Earth"³ on the wall of a large light-table room at the back of our drafting department. Then I went around and invited everybody in the drafting department to a presentation of "The Plan." To my surprise everyone, including my supervisor, showed up and seemed to enjoy it. We hardly had enough room for everyone! Over the next couple years we regularly had four or five people in first principles classes that were held at least three times a week. People from other departments would hear of the class and ask if they could join us. They were always welcome.

On one occasion Bro. Charles and Sis. Edna Scott of the Richmond, VA, Ecclesia were visiting us with their son, Bro. Isaac, now of the Orlando, FL, Ecclesia. Bro. and Sis. Scott loved teaching the Truth to others as much as Sis. Windy and I did. I asked Bro. Charles if he would like to come and teach the class at my workplace. He got so excited! I went to my Division Manager — four levels up the administration pyramid! — and asked if we could use his conference room for the lunch hour presentation. He was happy to oblige us. Imagine everyone walking into a room with a beautiful, twenty-foot conference table and high-backed, rocking, leather chairs. It had overhead projector, automatic screen, and all the amenities of a corporate meeting place. But all of this paled to insignificance against the splendor of the Kingdom vision that dear Bro. Charles presented to us that day.

As technology went digital so did our presentations, and we were always afforded the use of conference room equipment. This had an exceptional impact on one occasion when we had scheduled a special “Prophecy Day” presentation. As we were setting up the equipment, the President of the United States announced the invasion of Kuwait. It was the start of the Gulf War. Imagine it again. At one end of the conference room was a dual, floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall projection screen. On the right screen we projected our PowerPoint presentation, while the left screen was displaying live CNN video of “Desert Storm”. What a memory for those of us who were privileged to be part of God’s greater work of manifesting Himself to men and women in the workplace!

Over the course of one’s career, opportunities present themselves for promotion into managerial positions. A brother or sister in Christ, who has become established in the ranks of a company as a “teacher of the Gospel” needs to stop and weigh these opportunities carefully and prayerfully. I received two such offers over a period of thirty years. I felt, however, that I was already employed in the greatest work any man or woman could ever hope to be engaged in. No amount of salary increase, prestige, or added authority could enhance the position I already had. In fact, the possibility existed that such advancements could interfere with the wonderful work that was being done, not just through me but now also through those who had become my brethren in the Lord and fellow laborers in the “Corporate Vineyard”. I decided to decline both offers of promotion.

There is no way in this brief article that I can share with you all the important ideas I have come to recognize over the years, so feel free to contact me. My e-mail address is stanisbell@gmail.com.

Finally, may we all recognize our position in the Body of Christ as Bro. Thomas states it in *Elpis Israel*:

“To this ‘one body’, energized by the ‘one spirit’, and ‘perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’, and styled ‘THE BRIDE’ — is committed the work of making known ‘the manifold wisdom of God’, as contained in the word; and of inviting the world to be reconciled to God. No member of this body is exempt from the obligation of co-operating in this work. It is the duty and privilege of every one in his own sphere to endeavor to turn men to righteousness; for there is no distinction of ‘clergy’ and ‘laity’ in the family of God.”⁴

Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX)

Notes:

1. See *Into all the World*, by Bro. Stanley Owen, p.222ff.
2. R. C. Bingley, *Index Rerum – A Ready Reference on Biblical Subjects*.
3. “God’s 7,000 Year Plan” adapted by Bro. Howard Phillips from the ASK 20-lesson teaching procedure.
4. John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, Fourteenth Edition – Revised, 1958, pp.159-60.

An Appeal to College Students

“Make sure they know who you are! Put your Bible books on your bookshelf. And don’t forget to read your Bible regularly!” I did as Bro. Harry Whittaker instructed, and never regretted it. Yes, my college roommate thought I was a bit weird, but my bookshelf now provided a constant reminder about what was important in my life. The habit of daily Bible reading I determined to put into practice paid handsome dividends.



It is interesting how making such a simple statement can set the course of one’s life. When I suggested having a Bible class with some who were attracted to my interest in the Bible, there was a ready response. This first attempt at a Bible class didn’t last long, but my

love for reading and talking about the Bible did become known by many. I was affectionately called the “Bible Thumper” by one student. (Disclaimer: This name really arose because of my habit of taking several steps at a time up the wooden stairs to my dorm room.)

It is strange how things worked out. The student who gave me my ‘handle’, also was friends with a Catholic named Paul in another part of the dorm. He told him that he ought to come talk with me about the Bible. And that was the beginning of an incredible experience watching God at work!

Paul, it turns out, had come to the university from a seminary where he had been training to be a priest. He had one unique conviction that set him apart from most Catholics: he strongly believed the Bible was the final source of belief, not the Pope. As we talked about Bible teaching, Paul began to see for himself what was written. It took a summer of contemplation and soul-searching, but his heart was convinced. With real joy at the amazing, transforming work of God, I was privileged to witness Paul’s baptism the following spring.

Paul and I started doing the Bible readings together each night in his dorm room. What started out with just the two of us began to spread. With absolute amazement I watched others begin to fill his room, and later the room of my future wife, night after night just to read and discuss God’s Word. Didn’t they have homework? And in all of this, while I commented about what we read, it was God who really did the talking. It was truly a humbling experience to watch Him at work.

As interest in the message of the Bible grew among some of these students, a weekly Bible class was set up to teach the Gospel in a systematic and compelling way. I grew personally from this effort, always thankful for the written works of other brethren who helped me in this process. Bro. Harry was also a constant source of encouragement. I mention this that older brethren might realize just how important they can be in the life of a young person seeking to share the Bible with others in a university environment. Harry's understanding and support carried me through many times of discouragement.

By the grace of God I was able to continue this preaching work immediately after graduating from the university by obtaining employment in the same area (my alternative service as a conscientious objector). In all, I was privileged to witness over 11 young people decide to follow the Lord Jesus through the waters of baptism. Over the intervening years, I have been privileged to see the Faith grow and mature in some of these, and now in their children, zealous and eager for the ways of God like their parents.

I learned an important lesson from this experience: God doesn't need great people with fantastic preaching or teaching abilities (which I definitely did not have); He needs ordinary people, ones who are willing to give themselves to Him in whatever capacity or service they can. God can fill in all that we know is missing in ourselves to accomplish wonderful things!

You do need courage, though, as you need to mark out from the very beginning what you believe to be most important in your life. This means facing possible embarrassment, being identified as one of those "religious" types, and perhaps finding that some may not consider your company very interesting. But on the other side, those who do have a religious bent or curiosity will be drawn by God in your direction. That is how God works.

My advice to young people going to college or embarking on a career: Don't forget Bro. Harry's advice. Unashamedly, let the people around you know who you *really* are in your love and devotion to God, His Son, and His precious Words of Life. You will never regret it.

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Prison Preaching

Prisons are among the darkest places on earth, spiritually speaking. Inmates are held without most of the basic amenities and freedoms most people take for granted: they wear what the prison tells them to wear, eat what the prison serves, associate with whom the prison permits and at times the prison allows. They are often subject to indignities by the guards and other inmates, and cannot object without fear of further punishment. For the most part there is good reason for the restrictions. Inmates are in prison because of murder, other violent crimes, theft, fraud or various drug offenses. And of course the neighbors and companions of each felon are other felons. It is a very dark place.

Nevertheless, into such darkness the light of the Gospel can and does shine. As Paul reminded the Corinthians, “*such were some of you.*” That is, even people who have done terrible things can respond to the Gospel, repent and obey Christ.

Prison authorities generally encourage inmates to take courses as an aid to rehabilitation. We know that God’s Word is a living message that can change people’s lives. We know all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for many things: this can help with the rehabilitation of prisoners too.

If you know of someone in prison, it is good to invite them to learn of God’s Word. To do this you will need a plan. Preaching to prisoners is not something you take lightly. Some of these people are truly seeking God. When the inmate goes to the Chapel and listens to the Chaplain he or she will not hear the Truth. The inmate truly sits in darkness unless he or she receives the light of the Gospel message. We know that only God knows the hearts and minds of man. He sends His angels forth to do His will and call those who will respond. Some inmates take many Bible courses and some have never owned a Bible in their life. Many come to realize that they do need God in their life as they see how wicked the prison is (without God) and want out.

When writing to an inmate have a good Bible study plan ready to use. Inmates do not have access to the Internet or e-mail, so all correspondence is done through the mail. Do NOT use a residential address, but use a P. O. Box. When you write to an inmate remember you are an ambassador to Christ and so you are writing in the capacity of him for their rehabilitation. You are not to be just a pen pal, so every letter you write will contain some references to the Gospel message. Sure, you can get to know the inmate because one day you hope to have him/her as a brother/sister in Christ. You have to gain their trust and confidence. The inmates do receive other Bible courses, but the Christadelphians are people who love God’s Word and are able to give Scriptural references to back up what we say and believe. Many inmates like this. We find that when an inmate focuses on God’s Word, it uplifts and elevates him or her out of the depression of the prison. It does change their life when they read God’s Word and apply it in their lives.

An example is Isiah, in the Correctional Training Facility at Soledad. Eight years ago, when he was in the County Jail, he completed a Bible course, but didn’t really take it to heart. Then he was sent to the San Quentin State Prison in California and the shock of prison life set in. He did another Bible course and this time took it very seriously. Now Isiah is sending in 13 to 23 Bible questions from the daily Bible readings with each letter. He also shares the Scriptures with another inmate when he can meet with him.

We are pleased to report that this work has led to several baptisms. Bro. Kenneth, who remains an inmate at Soledad, as well as Sis. Deanna and Bros. Julio and William who have since been released.

For more information about prison preaching and the precautions to take, contact the author at Sunshine95051@comcast.net.

Marilyn Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

The Internet

We have discussed above¹ some of the pioneering work in radio and television that used emerging technologies of their day. The Internet, in many ways, has transformed the access of information far beyond radio and television. Information is available in an instant. Communities of people participate “virtually,” often transcending geographic, cultural and language barriers that would have previously limited interaction.

Indeed, while the Internet, like radio and television, can represent a significant danger spiritually, it is also progressively the place where people are spending their discretionary time. Just as the Apostle Paul travelled the Roman roads of commerce to preach the gospel, so the Internet is a commercial tool that can facilitate the effective dissemination of the Truth. Indeed, Internet preaching is a huge global opportunity for Christadelphians. While the web takes the Truth into the communities we live and work in, it also goes to places around the world we could otherwise have never reached.

The two following articles summarize the preaching work being done through ThisisYourBible.com — a preaching website that is dedicated to teaching first principle truths. Since January 2006, this North-American developed website has remarkably connected with students in all part so the world. Today, it is in a partnership with other regional Bible Mission groups that provides an improved method for attracting and following up with students around the world. Indeed, many baptisms have occurred when students work with a tutor and are later connected with a Christadelphian in their area.

The second article is about the experience of one of the more experienced tutors, Sis. Joy Jennings. She will describe the work she does and the enjoyment she has experienced by doing it. We would like to encourage you to consider being a tutor for ThisisYourBible.com. It is a wonderful way to work with men and women that have a sincere desire to learn the Truth and need someone who will guide and coach them with their studies.

Notes:

1. “This is Your Bible” in California

This is Your Bible.com

Think back to the year 2006. From January 2006 until now, how many people has your ecclesia’s preaching efforts been able to reach? Include in your calculations special efforts, lectures, seminars, county fairs, etc. Of all these people, how many have signed

your guest book and given you their personal contact information? Compare that number, whatever it might be, with the results obtained by preaching on the Internet through www.thisisyourbible.com (TIYB).



To date, over 18,000 men and women have registered with us since January of 2006. Of these, over 3,000 are currently active on the site. Since 2006, the site has been visited over 500,000 times. About 60% of these visits originate in North America and the Caribbean, although we have many students in Europe, Africa, and Asia/Pacific as well.

The backbone of TIYB is the 716 brothers and sisters from around the world who are actively engaged in the work of corresponding with these students. Some tutors have chosen to make this a major part of their personal outreach work. For example, Sis. Joy Jennings of the Greenaway Ecclesia in Hamilton, Ontario, has currently over 300 students on her list. Only a relatively small percentage of her students are active, but it is enough to keep her busy! Sis. Dolores Fisher, of the Pomona, California meeting, has persevered as a self-described computer illiterate to become a diligent and effective tutor on the system. As she told me once, "If I can do it, anyone can do it!" Both sisters have experienced the wonderful blessing of students with whom they have worked and encouraged in their lessons being baptized. Indeed, baptisms associated with the website have taken place in such diverse locations as Russia, Malta, South Africa, Texas, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Thailand and the Philippines! We are aware of over 30 baptisms which can be directly related to the *thisisyourbible.com* website. There are almost certainly many more in which the website played a supportive role.

We must emphasize that we are not playing a numbers game with baptisms. While we are greatly encouraged by news of baptisms, our mandate is to preach the Truth, plant the seed and leave the increase to our Heavenly Father. When good and honest hearts respond in faith, we rejoice with the angels in heaven. Having said that, we must be clear that our primary objective is to link students with tutors and through tutors to ecclesias. As the momentum of the site builds, through the blessing of our Lord, we can expect more baptisms to follow.

The charter for TIYB is primarily focused on teaching first principle Truths. The content on the site is multi-faceted. We offer Bible courses online and by regular mail. We have a literature library consisting of most of our best known booklets. Many of the booklets in the website's library section have been accessed over 10,000 times each. Topics that fall into this category are not surprising: the Trinity, Sabbath, Politics, Angels, Inspiration, the Devil and Demons, the Kingdom, Prayer, Israel, Life after Death and the list goes on. The top two pieces of literature accessed since 2008? "One Bible Many Churches, Why?" and "Heaven and Hell," each being accessed more than 13,000 times! To those of us familiar with more traditional methods of preaching, these numbers are staggering. However, according to Bro. Duncan Kenzie, the Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas leader of the website, in the near future, when we implement more advanced techniques to attract visitors, we expect these numbers will increase many times over!

Besides courses and literature, visitors to the site may:

- Order a free DVD (thousands of which have been distributed).
- Access other video and audio content online including "Introducing Jesus",

- Hear “Minute Meditations” read by brothers and sisters, and hymns and songs produced by Christadelphian choirs.
- Have their questions about the Bible answered within 24 hours of submitting them.

To date, close to 15,000 questions about the Bible have been asked and answered since TIYB first started in 2006. Many of these questions are saved for visitor reference in the site’s “Answers from the Question Box” feature. Since the site’s inception in 2006, this feature has been accessed more than 60,000 times! One of our most popular features is the monthly survey question. So far there have been 6,151 responses to this month’s question, “Is correct doctrine important?” Respondents are directed to an appropriate piece of literature; in this case, “One Bible Many Churches, Why?” Visitors may use a “Contact Us” feature to find an ecclesia near them — almost every ecclesia in the world is listed there.

An ecclesia may also create, or have created for it, an ecclesial webpage which will be visible on the site. This will be helpful for posting details of location – including an interactive Google Map – times of meetings and advertising for special events complete with graphics. Here is a link to a sample page for the Toronto West Ecclesia: www.thisisyourbible.com/toronto_west. Someone from your meeting may be given authority on the site to update your ecclesia’s webpage or you can send an email to me as the site administrator and I will be happy to update it for you. You can also use the direct link to your ecclesia’s webpage in your advertising. So Toronto West could advertise their webpage, instead of generically advertising the website itself.

Another major benefit of the site enjoyed by many ecclesias is that of the “Ecclesial Manager” function. This resource may be set-up to receive all students from a specified area and either manually transfer them to team members or have the transfer take place automatically. The Manager may check the progress of local students and the status of team tutors to ensure that no promising students are being overlooked or neglected.

There is a key communications benefit with this feature. All students or tutors in the zone of control of an Ecclesial Manager may be notified of upcoming events, literally at the touch of a button. No laborious entry of IDs required. This is all made possible by the Student Management System through which every Tutor has a detailed record of every activity on the website of each student in his or her care. Some of these records can be quite long as enthusiastic students read our material, order DVDs, and complete lessons!

We have plans for some radically-new developments on the site which we plan to implement, God willing, before the end of 2011. There will be much more emphasis on audio/video presentations, a new, more thought-provoking follow-up course to our current basic courseware, a multi-media correspondence course designed around “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively”, and a brand new look and feel to the site itself, which will raise its profile on the Internet and attract a much larger audience. As these new plans unfold by God’s grace, we are going to need more help! We need more tutors, Ecclesial Managers, webpage reps and perhaps some

roles we haven't thought of yet. How can you help and where can you go for more information? Call or Email me: yourbible@gto.net or (519.574.6014).

My role is to provide daily support to users of the system, be they individual Tutors, Ecclesial Managers, or ecclesial webpage reps. I will be more than happy to give or arrange for presentations to Ecclesias, provide training documentation, advertising templates, and *thisisyourbible.com* business cards for distribution. I am also available to consult with you regarding the use of the system in personal and ecclesial witness. There are plenty of resources to answer questions and help you with difficult students and assist with technical issues.

To join the TIYB family, it is a simple matter of going to the website, clicking on the "Tutors" tab at the left of the screen and registering. All potential tutors are checked to ensure that they are members in good standing of a recognized ecclesia. If you are young in the Truth and are keen to witness but unsure of your ability, this is the perfect method for you to build your confidence with lots of backup and support. If you are retired, what a wonderful way of using your free time! If you are leading busy lives already but still feel the need to witness, this is the perfect method for you — you set the pace and can limit your number of students to that which you are comfortable with.

What other medium can allow us to bring the Truth to a world in darkness? We have individuals visiting the site from over 140 different countries. Paul's words in Romans are being fulfilled in new ways through this exciting technology.

"So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for 'Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world' "
(Rom 10:17-18 RSV).

Will you and your ecclesia join with us in this great work?

Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo,ON)

A Tutor's Reflections

I began my work as a tutor on the TIYB web site in 2006. As a senior sister with many years of experience teaching Sunday school, Isolation League Sunday School, and as part of the CBM Zimbabwe team, I saw tutoring on the web as an opportunity to contribute to the work of preaching. What an experience it has been!

Five years and 800 plus contacts and students since then, from up and down the east coast of the United States and across Canada, I have been humbled by the messages from those who without exception want "to know their Bible better". These messages from a small percentage of my long list are what keep me going to my computer every day to check on new students and respond to submitted questions from established students. The Internet can be a very impersonal medium for sharing God's Word, but once in a while there will be an emotional connection with a student who is hungry to learn. Like my student, Helen, in Minnesota, who got up at 4:30 AM every morning, before going to work, to read and submit her

next lesson and then send a message — “I love you, Joy!” — when she had completed the final lesson. This student was connected with the brothers and sisters in Minnesota. Or the postal student who sent a letter and her picture with thanks for “opening the Bible” for her; and the mother who read her daughter’s postal lessons and sent a note asking for lessons, too. The eager few keep me from being discouraged by the many that register and then never continue, or the countless postal students who never respond to lessons coming to them by mail.

My routine is simple. Each student is sent a WELCOME email letter when they register on the site. The letter encourages them to explore the web site, and briefly reviews all the interesting options available to them. I conclude the letter by introducing myself as their contact and Bible study partner. For the online students, each time a lesson is submitted a personal letter is sent commenting on their answers. The Online Bible¹ and my husband, Bro. Bob, have helped me handle the tricky and challenging questions. Reading the Bible daily, looking up references, and reading the chapters for each lesson are always emphasized. Postal students receive a cover letter with their first set of three lessons, again encouraging them to read their Bibles. For those few who complete the course, either online or by mail, a letter is sent outlining options for continuing their studies. Options include: contact with the nearest Christadelphians, a review of other available Christadelphian web sites, or the 40 lesson CBM postal course and a copy of Bro. Maher’s book *Understand the Bible: Work it Out for Yourself*.

I tell myself that in a very small way I am “sowing the seed”. I am thankful that God has given me the experience and spiritual training to do this work. I pray for His blessing.

Joy Jennings (Hamilton Greenaway, ON)

Notes:

1. See www.onlinebible.net for this free Bible software program

Preaching the Word in the Future

Every Disciple is a Missionary

When Jesus was in the country of the Gadarenes, he encountered a man with an unclean spirit whose name was Legion (Mark 5:1-20). Legion lived among tombs in a graveyard and was feared by all who knew him. He could not be restrained by chains because of his great strength. In desperation he cried and hollered throughout day and night and sometimes cut his own skin with stones. Legion’s *human situation* was horrific.

Jesus takes pity

It was this man that Jesus chose to heal with the dramatic words, “*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.*” There follows an astounding statement describing the outcome of the miracle. People who knew Legion came “*and saw him that was*

possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind: and they were afraid.” Their fear is not a surprising response, for Legion was a man they knew to be dangerous. To now find him in a state of normalcy would immediately raise questions about his behavior and whether his healing was real and permanent. Related to this was the fact that 2,000 swine had run headlong down a steep place into the sea and drowned. The whole situation was shocking and unprecedented to all who witnessed the events.

Legion wants the company of Jesus

Not unexpectedly, Legion requested that he might stay with Jesus. His thankfulness and gratitude led to a devotion that made him want to remain in the company of the man who demonstrated such power, compassion, and personal healing. Jesus’s response is surprising. He said to Legion, *“Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee”* (Mark 5:19). This task was not as easy as it might at first seem. Legion was well known and feared by all who were familiar with his condition. There would be those who would still be afraid of him. Many who knew his past would want to distance themselves from him. Children would be taken from his company, and he would generally be unwelcome because of his previous unpredictable and violent behavior.

Legion becomes a missionary

However, Legion did exactly what the Lord commanded him to do. *“And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel”* (Mark 5:20). After his miraculous healing, Legion went back to his home, to the people who knew him well and to his friends. He declared what Jesus had done to change him from a man with serious mental instability to a calm, rational, stable individual. This would not have been easy to do, nor would it have been easy for his family and friends to hear. It took courage and persistence which sprang from Legion’s conviction in *“Jesus, Son of the most high God”* and in the God-given healing power of Jesus.

Legion became a missionary — a missionary to his own family and friends. He was not trained or unusually skilled for the task, yet he was very effective at it. *“All men did marvel”* at his exciting report. Through his convincing words and by the witness of his restored physical and mental abilities, Legion accomplished exactly what Jesus intended when he sent him back to his home and friends. His message and changed life demonstrated that Jesus was a man sent from God.

We are all missionaries

It is in this sense that we are all missionaries, even when we stay at home. We may never go to a distant land, but we all have a similar responsibility to *“go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”* God’s saving truth has touched our hearts and we have become new men and women, spared from a desperate and hopeless situation, now with new purpose, having experienced the compassion of the Lord. It is not always easy for us to go back to those we know best and who have known us in

the past, to declare to them that we are a new person — that we are the Lord's disciple. It takes courage and conviction as it did for Legion.

Preaching locally

The concept of preaching within our local circumstances is stated by Jesus in the simple declaration, *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt 6:14-16). What Jesus expresses here, in principle, was demonstrated in the actions of Legion.

So every disciple is a missionary. Some travel great distances to other countries. Some learn a new language to enable them to communicate with people in another tongue. Most of us need go no further than the house next door or the people living upstairs. Darkness is everywhere, and disciples have the opportunity and responsibility to share the light and love of the Lord. *"The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Rev 22:17).

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

The Future of Our Preaching

We'd like to begin by thanking all of the contributors to this special issue. It is apparent that the Lord has greatly blessed our household, providing an open window for us to share the Living Word. The enthusiasm and "vision" of our brothers and sisters have assisted countless men and women to the Truth and changed their lives forever. For all those who tirelessly knocked on doors, who provided public talks when there was little support or interest, who led exciting Bible seminars and provided radio and television messages — we say thank you! Many thanks to those who spoke a "word in season" to the neighbor across the fence or over a supper table. Some of us reading these articles are here because you cared.

New Methods

Our personal experience has been that Christadelphians are not the first to change methods of preaching. We are not the first to be on the radio or to offer public Bible seminars. But, what has been seen is that there is great value in trying new and different approaches — to listening to ideas from our brothers and sisters and young people. In our own ecclesia, for many years, there was a lament that nobody in our community was interested in the Bible. We often felt that we live in a "dark and degenerate age" and our preaching is primarily a witness to a world that seems to have no time for God. I felt this way myself after countless "public lectures" that resulted in few, if any visitors. But, when a new method was introduced (Bible seminars), suddenly we found that our view had been more influenced by our own ineffective presentation of the Truth. Seminars have changed my expectations and have brought about more baptisms than any other outreach I am aware of. But,

seminars are not the end all. There will be new frontiers, new presentation and communications forums yet to come. The Internet has opened our eyes to a world with few limits. Thirty years ago, our brethren would never have dreamed that the Truth could be made available in every major city and small hamlet and tribal village in the world. With all the difficulties and unfortunate pollution technology has produced in our world, one can also be thankful that we also live in an age where we can preach the Gospel to literally billions of people.

While it is clear from the Word that in the Last Days there will be scoffing about the claims of the Bible and many who will abandon their faith, we also see around us today a world looking for answers. They are not finding them in the institutions they are turning to. Our view is that there has never been a more fertile time to preach. People are hearing “comic book” interpretations of prophecy. They are fed illogical and unsound sermons from their church leaders. They are beginning to read their own Bibles and are frankly quite confused as they try to make sense of what they should believe. They lack the necessary foundational platforms that the Truth requires. When they are exposed to Truth and that platform and structure exists, things fit together and make sense. These men and women are in need of “some man to guide” them.

The Future

So, what might we predict about the “**future of preaching?**” As we in the world are surrounded by threats and violence, the upheaval of the nations, many are wondering where this is all headed. Bible prophecy, grounded in the promises to Abraham, but relevant to today’s headlines, will remain attractive. Bible prophecy is not our fundamental message — the message of salvation and the Kingdom is. But, we must speak to the area of interest first. Use Bible Prophecy as a means to set down the fundamental teachings they must first know. It is the context, the foundation of all Bible Prophecy.

We are seeing major shifts in media and communications. Newspaper advertising will likely not remain the faithful friend of past campaigns. We will need to harness new methods of reaching out to people, to participate in new networks where people are spending discretionary time. The focus for Christadelphians will need to be how we can use these technologies without compromising who we are or what we teach. Our focus must change from being “speakers” to leading “learning.” How can I use the briefest of time to best help this person learn the importance of the Scriptural fundamental? We are blessed with many great “lecturers” in Christadelphia. In the future, lecturing opportunities will be few, but teaching opportunities will abound.

Our Ecclesias

The future of preaching is tightly connected to the very future of our ecclesias. Bro. Roberts’ words about the purpose for our ecclesias, more than a hundred years ago, still is completely valid. Ecclesias exist to provide edification of members AND outreach to our communities. When these two are imbalanced, the health of the ecclesia is impacted. Ecclesias that have strong efforts in both areas see growth of

their members, but are constantly reminded of the beauty and excitement of the first principles. Such ecclesias are often blessed with new members, new Sunday school and CYC members. These center and ground ecclesias and the enthusiasm this creates is contagious. With the diversity of preaching opportunities available today, each ecclesia must be able to find outreach that fits their resources and capabilities. The Lord will bless our work!

So, this final article assumes that there will continue to be a willing spirit among our ecclesias. It assumes that we will remain as thirsty for the Lord's return and excited about the Kingdom as our forefathers have been. We believe that new ideas will surface and new ways to connect with hearers will be found. Clearly the question before us is whether we are prepared now? Are we preparing our youth for the work before us? Are we properly including young brothers and sisters in outreach work? Are we listening to new ideas? Are we fundamentally sound regarding the first principles and the frequent wrested Scriptures? Is Bible study and preparation core to our ecclesias and embraced in our personal lives? In the last days, will there be a faithful witness of the Truth in our communities?

The key to preaching in the future is NOT going to be technology. It will be our willingness to be beacons of truth, to provide sound Bible instruction and insight. As we've seen, brothers and sisters have been resilient innovators, laboring because they believed in what they were doing. We do not receive our ideas or direction from a central body. Rather, each of us, and our ecclesias, are fully empowered to be creative and have a sincere passion for our local communities. It fundamentally is our **message** that is important. May God be praised that He has presented us with this "*pearl of great price.*" May the Lord bless you and future generations of workers until the glorious day of his coming!

Dave Jennings (Pomona, CA)

Preaching Resources and Contact Information

Internet

"This Is Your Bible" website, ecclesial webpage, and Google ad inquiries: Bro. Mike LeDuke, *yourbible@gt.net*. "This Is Your Bible", CBMA/CBMC preaching website: *www.thisisyourbible.com*.

Literature

Great Lakes ASK literature agent: Bro. Bob Davies, 289 E. 31st St, Hamilton, ON, L8V 3P9, Tel. 905-385-7339.

A Procedure for Teaching the Truth: Bro. Stan Isbell, *stanisbell@gmail.com*.

Mission Work

CBMA Chairman: Bro. Phil Snobelen, *philsnobelen@shaw.ca*.

CBMC Chairman: Bro. Don Luff, *luffs@sympatico.ca*.

Domestic missionary inquiries: Bro. Dave Jennings at *djennings@cox.net*.

Truth Corps inquiries: Bro. Brad Butts, *wbutts@comcast.net*.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

Personal Preaching

Preaching in the workplace inquiries and PowerPoint presentations: Bro. Stan Isbell, *stanisbell@gmail.com*.

Prison ministry inquiries: Sis. Marilyn Seago, *Sunshine95051@comcast.net*.

Seminars

General inquiries: Bro. David McKay, *davemarlene@rogers.com*; Bro. Carl Newth, *crn2008@hotmail.com*.

“Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar, 16-session DVD series, \$17.50 (U.S.): Bro. Doug Hawthorne, *Cindy.and.Doug@Juno.com*.

Sunday School

General inquiries: Bro. Jim Harper, *sundayschool@tidings.org*.

Vacation Bible School inquiries: Sis. *Sandy McLeod*, *sandramcleod@gmail.com*.

Television

“This Is Your Bible”, half-hour programs for public access broadcasting, DVD format: Bro. Bruce Andrews, *papaandy@juno.com*.

“This Is Your Bible” NYC television project: Bro. Joe Badlu, *jbadlu@aol.com*.

Other Contact Brethren

Canadian National Exhibition: Bro. Peter Wisniowski, *peteresa@hotmail.com*.

Great Lakes ASK: Bro. Grant Abel, *ghabel@rogers.com*.

Mid-Atlantic ASK: E-mail *bibleask@verizon.net*.

Simi Hills Fund: Bro. Ken Sommerville, *ksommerville@unitedagencies.com*.

Preaching Resource Websites

Adelphosweb, *www.adelphosweb.com*.

Christadelphian Preaching Resource Center: *www.cprc.info*.

ALS Preaching Website – *www.christadelphianals.org* (login: see ALS diary).

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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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“Do not judge”

Do not judge. Rather, try to understand, and make an effort to help. Most people need your patience more than your criticism. Leave the judging to God, unless absolutely necessary in faithfulness to the Truth. He has guaranteed He will take care of all the judging that is necessary, at the proper time. If someone annoys or offends us, the trouble is most likely in our own pride and vanity or small-mindedness or touchiness. Thin skin is a miserable disease. If we were large-minded enough, or less self-centered, we would feel sympathy and compassion, rather than offense.

The command not to judge is a broad Scriptural principle. It is not, however, to be wrongly used to undermine the specific (and equally important) command to keep Faith and Fellowship sound. When we face a required decision, then we must judge and act — very carefully and prayerfully: very gently if it means censure of others, very sorrowfully if it means separation, but always firmly and faithfully. There is a time when it is a sin, and dereliction of duty, not to “judge righteous judgment”. But let us cure ourselves of judging and criticizing as a habit and a hobby. This is purely of the flesh.

G.V. Growcott

Editorial

Pride

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov 6:16-19).

Introduction

This is the Biblical list of the seven deadly sins. In this, it differs from the seven deadly sins as commonly used, which are anger, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. Of the two sets, pride (“a proud look”) is the only common factor. In the gospels we find a longer list: *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).* But again, here pride is prominent among the evil things that defile a man. This was reflected in the old belief that pride was the ultimate sin, which was true for many centuries after the death of Christ. But what of today?

- Pride is considered one of the most important elements to instill into our youth by the educational system.
- The society around us considers one’s school, sports team, achievements in work or school, or the achievements of your children all to be something we can be proud of, and discuss freely with our friends and neighbors.
- Pride in your country seems to be part of the culture in most countries, and the teaching of patriotism is again part of our school system.
- There seems no concept that to be proud is any sort of sin, or is anything to be discouraged.

In this, society today seems to be going back to the mindset of the Greeks, who in the centuries before Christ regarded pride as a cardinal virtue, not a sin. This is directly opposed to the consistent treatment of pride in the Bible. Even the dictionary confirms this: of the eleven relevant definitions in on-line Webster’s, most can be considered virtues, with the primary being “A feeling of self-respect and personal worth.” It is indeed this idea of self-respect that is so strongly promoted in our society: it is being inculcated in our youth, and this attitude is taking a hold throughout society.

Pride in the Old Testament

Although not described as such, pride was at the root of the sin of Adam and Eve, for they desired to be as gods (Gen 3:5). And this pattern continued, with the tower of Babel erected by those who desired to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:4). Many different Hebrew words are used for pride and its cognate proud, but

all are almost universally condemned. Even David was accused of pride by his brother (1Sam 17:28), and Proverbs is replete with such warnings. One interesting example is Nebuchadnezzar:

“The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:30-32).

Despite being forewarned by Daniel, the King boasted of his achievements — and was mad for seven years. As so was penned one of the most amazing paens of praise to the one True God, as written by Nebuchadnezzar in that chapter.

In the New Testament

We have already seen that in the list of the human sins given by Jesus, pride has a prominent place (Mark 7:21-22). In addition, in a statement reminiscent of the fate of Nebuchadnezzar, Mary said before the birth of her son:

“He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree” (Luke 1:51-52).

The concept that self-conceit, being proud, is alien to the pursuit of the ways of Jesus is made clear by the apostle John:

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1John 2:16).

The universal counsel of the New Testament, like that of the Old, is that self-righteousness, self-pride, is **the** major stumbling block on the path to salvation. The Jews essentially were convinced that the path to the kingdom was paved by their works: that adherence to the letter of the law, and boasting of it, was all that was required. But Jesus proclaimed *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt 23:12).*

In the “Commandments of Christ” clause 40 echoes this thought: “‘Be clothed with humility: be patient toward all’ (Col 3:12; Rom 12:12).”

Conclusion

But why is this? Why are we so strongly advised against being excited by what we have done, and quite naturally want to share this with others? Why is a “feeling of personal worth” so bad? It seems to be simply this: if we regard any great personal achievement as ours alone, we have neglected to include God in the equation. We sing “all good gifts around us are sent from Heaven above” (Hymn 426), and are happy to apply it to the abundance of nature. However, this is true of our “natu-

ral” talents as well as material gifts. Most are all too well aware that, despite the egalitarian trend in our educational system, individuals are highly unequal in their innate abilities, both physical and intellectual. The fact that we, as an individual, excel is primarily because of the gifts God has given to us. So self-pride ignores the primary source of whatever talents and gifts we have.

Pride is indeed a very serious failing. Nothing lends itself more readily to disguise, and the deceitful heart seems to have excelled itself in devising coverings and new dresses for human pride. We will not here discuss whether the word can ever be applied to a quality that is legitimate and desirable. However, one must agree that all too often it serves as the proper description of a quality which is utterly evil. It causes wars and violence, it prevents men from taking the course which they know is right, and it often leads to great cruelty. If sometimes it may chance to have an opposite effect, making men accept duties which they would otherwise shirk, the little good it does is a poor set-off against the evil that it commonly causes. It is easy to recognize how abhorrent human pride must be in the sight of God. Who can strip pride of its deceptive covering? It can be disguised as duty, as piety, as humility, as zeal, or as indifference. It can take the form of overwhelming confidence in self, of foolish vanity, or of self-righteous complacency. It is found everywhere, and among sorts of people. Even the “inferiority complex” has its root in pride. We can think of those, indeed, who take pride in their humility!

So the final message: we should not truly take pride in our own accomplishments, or those of any other person (or team!). Rather, we should acknowledge that “all good gifts come from above.”

Postscript

On a final note: well after the above was written, I chanced upon a letter written complaining about a sign on a Christadelphian hall. To quote:

“... my sister and myself both gasped at the same moment, when we read the sign in front of what I believe is the Christadelphian Church. It read “I Hate Pride” along with a book of the Bible where I assume it was taken from. As you are probably aware “Gay Pride” was well underway in I cannot believe a person or persons would have displayed such a horrible, hatred-inspired message.”

Thus is the elasticity and plasticity of the English language. The word “pride” has taken on meaning quite alien to those who translate the Bible. Clearly the Bible teaches against homosexuality — but I rather suspect that whoever put up the sign had no such intention.

Peter Hemingray

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

A Scottish proverb says, “Pride is a bad horse to ride.” Texans say, “Get off you high horse!”

Exhortation

“Confound the things which are mighty”(1Cor 1:27)

In this exhortation we will identify a theme from two OT passages¹, concerning

- answering the powers of the world from the word of God.
- obtaining the wisdom to help in times of trouble.
- the way to confound the world, not by the power of flesh, but by the wisdom of God.

Both in Judges 11 and Isaiah 36, there are Gentile kings who are making demands upon the Israelites, yet they are ultimately thwarted by the opposing leader of God's people at the time. He, in both cases, in one whose trust and understanding of God has the effect of creating faith in God amongst those they are leading. Based on this faith, God is able to intervene and bring deliverance in their times.

Jephthah

The first part of Judges 11 explains the background to this most unlikely deliverer in Israel. Jephthah was born as an illegitimate child to a chief family in Israel, yet, as he was not born through marriage but unfaithfulness, he was punished by his brothers and expelled from the family. Albeit, in a time of trouble, the same people who rejected and expelled him came asking for help, as he had gathered together a fighting force of others of society's rejects and malcontents. The leaders of Israel in Christ's day likewise rejected Jesus on the same basis, for they believed he was illegitimate, and that those who were followers of him were at best deceived. Indeed, many such as those who Jesus healed were rejects of society as well. Therefore we can regard this story of Jephthah, this unlikely deliverer, as a foreshadowing of Christ and even our relationship with him, and our relationship to the world, for, by our beliefs, we are likewise rejected by the world.

The king of Ammon sought to make war against Israel, to take their land for his people, and Jephthah is asked by the elders of Gilead to lead them in defense against this coming attack. His first act is to send messengers to the King of Ammon, to seek a solution for his people. Jephthah asks the king of Ammon, this foreign Gentile king, why he was oppressing the Israelites, and receives a demand for territory. Jephthah could have acted as a worldly chief and boasted of his strength and of the people with him. Instead he uses his knowledge of the sacred history of Israel to explain that the king of Ammon had no legitimate basis for his demands. The king of Ammon had nothing left but to attack, but God was with Jephthah and Israel, and the power of the flesh was thwarted. As said, Jephthah was an extremely unlikely deliverer, the son of a harlot and exiled from his family. He was one who had spent his entire adult life leading the lowest sort of people in what we would call today a life of crime. In our day, Jephthah would be something like a gang leader, certainly not a religious man, yet he was the son of one of the great families in Israel. He obviously knew the Bible, such as they had it in those days. When the

time was right, God sought him to deliver Israel, at the same time as delivering Jephthah from an ungodly and unproductive life.

So this is a story of the providential turning around of the life of a man on the fringes, and also the delivering of Israel, made possible by faith and understanding, faith that God could deliver Israel. He would only be a tool, so he could not trust in himself, using his understanding of God to thwart the wisdom of a worldly king. He was, in addition, a military leader, leading the Israelites in a battle of faith, and countered the unrighteous demands being put on God's people.

Hezekiah

Isaiah 36 also contains an account of the word of God being used to confound human wisdom. This chapter is the beginning of the narrative of the Assyrian invasion at the time of Hezekiah. It is a story of a king of the world, the extremely potent king of Assyria, making demands on God's people. This scenario was probably far worse for the Israelites than even that centuries earlier between Jephthah and the king of Ammon. This struggle between the messenger of the king of Assyria, the Rabshakeh, and the messengers of king Hezekiah, is a battle of wit and intellect. We cannot help but see the king of Assyria, and his agents, as typical of the powers of man, waging war against the king of Judah and his agents, those trusting in Yahweh, God of Israel.

It would have been very difficult to argue against the logic that the Rabshakeh used to demoralize the Judeans, as most of what he is saying is after all indisputable. The Assyrian army was overwhelmingly strong, and it had conquered most of the then-known world. No people, king or god of any land had been able to stop them. The Assyrian empire was a superpower that had the deserved reputation of being exceedingly cruel, so the logic of the Rabshakeh would have been even harder for the Judeans on the wall to refute. If a cruel and overwhelming enemy offers mercy if you submit and surrender to their terms now, but will cause immeasurable suffering and likely death or enslavement later if you refuse, then surrender is clearly most logical response. After all, from the Assyrian's perspective, they would much rather not have the conquered resist, for siege warfare is costly and difficult. Hence it would be the calculated policy of the Assyrians, as with every other entity of the kingdom of man, to offer a series of 'carrots and sticks,' persuasions and punishments, to make others submit. This would preferably be with the least resistance as possible, requiring only a minimum amount of force to achieve their ends. In the case of the Rabshakeh, the 'carrot' was the advise that, surrender now, and we will deport you to another land where you can live comfortably in peace. The stick was, if the Judeans didn't starve or suffer from lack of water and die, or be killed in the assault, they would be taken away as slaves.

It was even worse than that for the Hezekiah, his ministers and the Judeans on the wall. This agent of the world not only had some understanding of their faith, but he was also able to challenge it, and the Rabshakeh even claims at one point to be speaking on God's behalf, claiming that God had appointed the Assyrians to go up and destroy this land of Judah. In a sense, Rabshakeh here is acting as a false prophet, one that was very believable.

After all, the people of Judah had been taught for decades, up to the end of the reign of Hezekiah's father, to worship the God of Israel along with idols. They would not have known anything else unless the Law had been available and taught to them, to show them that God is not worshipped in this way. The Rabshakeh was absolutely correct in Isa 36:7 that Hezekiah had been destroying his father's shrines, telling them not worship before these altars, but only in Jerusalem, in the temple. The Judeans would have had good reason to be confused. Were those altars Hezekiah was removing the altars of the God of Israel, as the Rabshakeh was saying, as also the previous kings of Judah had been teaching the Judeans? If that were so, then it follows that God must be angry with them for destroying His altars, therefore it was quite reasonable to believe the king of Assyria has been sent by God to destroy the land. There would have been very few in Judah who would have had sufficient understanding of the Law so as not be persuaded by the Rabshakeh's alternative religious interpretation. Many likely would have been persuaded that God could well be angry with them for destroying His altars on the High Places. From our perspective, we can understand why Hezekiah's ministers did not want the Rabshakeh speaking in a language the people could understand.

Are there examples of things in our lives where the powers of the world have enough understanding of our faith, though they don't share it, to be able to use it against us?

That could be from a secular source, as it is here, or a religious institution which claims authority, either by a recognized traditional influence and history in our society, or by current religious ideas. We know we are right, but, by the sheer number of people that acknowledge and believe falsity, we are pressured to do the same.

Examples of other secular forces challenging our faith can be as simple as acquaintances in the world who ridicule religious belief. They may possibly have legitimate complaints against the practices of 'religious' people, and then assume we are the same, holding against all religion and religious people certain complaints. It can be things much greater than this, as where the state has laws that may compel us to behave in a way that is contrary to our beliefs, or where intellectual thought and philosophy of the age we live in has ideas that are fundamentally contrary to the concept of faith in God. Examples of this would be aggressive atheism, humanism and academic ideas, such as evolution causing the origin of man.

Hezekiah's father Ahaz had cooperated with the king of Assyria, paying tribute and acting the role of a vassal king. This was in conjunction with Ahaz' religious policies, which encouraged a uniting of Jewish religion with that of the nations. At the beginning of the Assyrian attack in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, the king of Assyria demanded tribute from Hezekiah. In an act contrary to his previous policies and probably his conscience, Hezekiah stripped the gold from the newly reopened doors of the temple, along with whatever other money he could find, to give it to the king of Assyria.

Hezekiah was a wonderful man of faith, yet he was susceptible to weakness and could lapse when faced with something as terrible as a threat of an overwhelming

army coming against him. More often than not, our faith is caused to waver and we give in and do things we know are not right. However, most likely for us we give in and pay tribute to the king of sin with far less incitement than an invading army. It is most certain that the young king was being put under pressure by his own ministers to give the king of Assyria what he wanted. Short of belief that God would intervene, that was the only possible way to save Judah from destruction. This brings up another issue for us, that just as we can help others and encourage faith and practice in each other, and, as sinful humans, prone to mistakes, we are just as capable of discouraging each other. This example of Hezekiah giving tribute to the Assyrian king should be a warning for us in our interactions with each other, and in our struggles against temptation.

Alternatively, there would have been a temptation to trust in Egypt. Egypt was the only other power that could rival Assyria, though by this time Egypt was weak and getting weaker. There are earlier chapters in Isaiah which warn against this, for spiritually, Egypt is representative of the world in general. The Rabshakeh recognizes the weakness of Egypt, warning them,

“Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him” (Isa 36:6).

The lesson for us is simply not to turn to Egypt, in whatever sense. We cannot ultimately confound the things of the world by clever manipulation of worldly things. No more could the kings of Judah, in the end, save Judah by playing the diplomatic game between the powers of Egypt and Assyria.

It was the faith of Hezekiah to take the letter from the king of Assyria into the temple and literally spread the letter out, asking God to provide a solution. Humanly speaking there was no solution but surrender. Paying tribute to hold off the Assyrian empire did not ultimately work for Judah, for even after buying off the Assyrians, they still attacked. Such is a picture of trying to confound the world by its methods and principles. The two individuals we considered sought to defend their people against the demands of the world through the word of God, and ultimately rely on God to provide redemption. In Jephthah's case it was a military victory over a larger force, and with Hezekiah a plague that destroyed the Assyrian army's leadership

The pattern of both these deliverances by God is significant for us. In both cases, the Israelites were first challenged by a set of ideas that served to undermine them. From the king of Ammon it was a claim that the Israelites have no right to possess the land where they were dwelling. From the Rabshakeh they were forced to listen to clever arguments being put forth that their God had abandoned them, that their very efforts at religious renewal were in fact the cause of their alienation from the God of Israel. God did not shelter them from having to hear either of these views. Instead the Israelites, particularly these leaders, would have had to work through and examine their beliefs and understanding, in order to know how to react. It is only after the Israelites had been forced to intelligently defend their understanding of the purpose of their God with them that God provided the deliverance.

The suggestion here is that this is how it is for us. The trials we face are not things as obvious as an invading army that seeks to destroy our homes and enslave us. If that were so, we at least would recognize it as a threat. The danger for us is ideas that the world puts to us that can easily undermine our faith and turn us against each other and against the things which Christ was focused on and gave his life for. The world around us does not share our faith in God. It largely mocks the ideas of a kingdom of God on earth, resurrection, and even of a lifestyle of giving of ourselves for others. Likewise, our understanding of our faith needs to motivate us to maintain those lifestyles and practices that make us a peculiar and separate people. The Rabshakeh was able to see the inconsistency in the Judeans worship, a people that claimed to have a unique and powerful single God, but until recently had been worshipping the idols of the nations on their hilltops around. So also others will perceive inconsistencies and mistakes we make, and use them against us.

Conclusion

In the end, God brought about deliverance for both Jephthah and Hezekiah. As we have already seen, Jephthah was a leader who was rejected by his family and nation, and those who were with him were likewise rejected. Nonetheless, it was by his faith that God brought deliverance that day. Hezekiah was a king that had little or nothing to offer as far as the world would regard leaders. He certainly was young and inexperienced when he had to confront the message of the king of Assyria. Since he had turned away from the political and religious policies of his father, he would have had little support from a large portion of the nation. This picture of a seemingly small and despised ruler is apt when we realize that chapters like Isaiah 53, describing a suffering servant who was despised, was ultimately describing Christ. However, this was in the first fulfillment almost certainly written with reference to Hezekiah. What made him different from his father, and most others around him, was his willingness to trust in God when all other possibilities were exhausted. While he made all the practical arrangements he could to fortify Jerusalem and prepare the people for war, he knew that in the end it would be God who would have to bring salvation for all.

These are the two characters we have considered, both of whom would have been dismissed by the world. Yet they had the knowledge of the word of God to defend their people against the exalted arguments of those from the world who wished to undermine the faith of the believers. These could then stand up against the violent imposing of the world's system on generations that were trying to be separate. Both of them are representative and foreshadowing of Christ. The way the people of Israel related to these rulers ought to be an example to us. How we should follow the faith of the one who has gone before us in faith, who triumphed over the demands of the world and flesh, living wholly to God.

When we gather to remember the sacrifice of Christ, our king, the one who has shown us by his example, his lessons and his parables, we are shown how to confound the wisdom of the world. Not by fighting it on its terms but in a spirit of humility and trust. He willingly sacrificed himself, first in a life of service to others, then in a sacrificial death, so that others may see and believe.

The bread and wine are the appointed emblems representing the body and blood of our Lord who died for our sins, yet was raised by God to express both Jesus' righteousness and His own. By partaking of the bread and wine we are associating ourselves with him, and we renew our commitment to living out the life as he did in our own experiences, as much as is possible with our frail minds and bodies.

Wesley Butler, (Vancouver, BC)

Notes:

1. These are the daily readings for June 12.

A Last Letter

"When you come, bring the cloak that is left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments" (2Tim 4:13).

There is an interesting historical parallel to Paul's request for Timothy. William Tyndale, who translated the first New Testament printed in English, was imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle near Brussels before his execution in 1536. In the year preceding his death he wrote to the governor, begging for warmer clothing, a woolen shirt, and above all his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary.

The translated text of the letter, his only letter that has survived from that period, reads as follows:*

I believe, right worshipful sir, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me by the council; therefore, I entreat your lordship and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here in prison during the winter, you will be kind enough to send me from my goods which he [the Procurer] has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh [generally, a nose and throat inflammation], which is considerable increased in this cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin: also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings: my overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He had a woolen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish also his permission to have a lamp in the evening; for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procurer that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study. And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if, before the end of winter, a different decision be reached concerning me, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen.

W. Tyndale

**The original was in Latin.*

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (8)

We continue our study of the gospel substance casting the shadows of the Tabernacle. In the last article, we had just entered the Holy Place, which represents our current lives in Christ.

The lampstand: The Word of God

The reality underlying the seven-branched lampstand is the light of the Word of God and the fellowship with God, Christ, and the saints.

Light represents the Word of God, His law, the gospel that lightens the world:

*“Thy **word** is a **lamp** unto my feet, and a **light** unto my path” (Psa 119:105).*

*“For the **commandment** is a **lamp**; and the **law** is **light**; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov 6:23).*

This is a favorite theme of Isaiah:

*“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. **The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined**” (Isa 9:1-2; cf. Matt 4:12-17).*

*“**I the LORD have called thee** in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, **for a light of the Gentiles**” (Isa 42:6; cf. 49:6; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23).*

*“Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: **for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people**” (Isa 51:4; cf. 2:2-3; 60:1-3).*

Paul and Peter pick up the same theme:

*“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest **the light of the glorious gospel of Christ**, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2Cor 4:3-4).*

*“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto **a light that shineth in a dark place**, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]” (2Pet 1:19-21).*

The lampstand: Fellowship

Besides symbolizing the gospel, the light of the lampstand also typifies fellowship with God, Jesus, and the saints.

(a) **God.** “Fellowship” and “joy” (i.e., the joy of fellowship) are tied to “walking in the light” because “God is light”:

*“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your **joy** may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is **light**, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have **fellowship** with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the **light**, we have **fellowship** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1John 1:3-7).*

To be in fellowship is to walk in the light of God.

(b) **Jesus.** Jesus is the true light that comes into the world to test every man:

*“And **the light** shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of **the Light**, that all men through him might believe. He was not **that Light**, but was sent to bear witness of **that Light**. That was **the true Light**, which **lighteth** every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:5-10).*

*“And this is the condemnation, that **light** is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than **light**, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).*

*“Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and **the true light** now shineth. He that saith he is in **the light**, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now” (1John 2:8-9).*

Throughout John’s gospel, Jesus proclaims himself to be the light of the world:

*“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life**” (John 8:12; cf. 9:4-5; 12:46).*

In short, Jesus fulfills the first day of creation:

*“For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**, hath shined in our hearts, to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2Cor 4:6).*

(c) **The saints.** Jesus explains that the saints are the children of light:

*“Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is **the light** with you. Walk while ye have **the light**, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in*

darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have **light**, believe in **the light**, that ye may be **the children of light**. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them” (John 12:35-36).

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16).

Paul exhorts the ecclesias not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather to walk as children of light:

*“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. **Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day**: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But **let us, who are of the day**, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”* (1 Thess 5:4-8; cf. 2Cor 6:14-16; Eph 5:6-11; Col 1:12-13).

Peter summarizes the blessings of being called out of darkness into the marvelous light:

*“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; **that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (1Pet 2:9-10).

Finally, in the symbolism of Revelation, there is a seven-branched lampstand whose candlesticks represent the seven (primarily Gentile) ecclesias in Asia:

*“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw **seven golden candlesticks**; And in the midst of **the seven candlesticks** one like unto the Son of man... The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and **the seven golden candlesticks**. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and **the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches**”* (Rev 1:12-13, 20; cf. 11:4; Zech 4).

Our Lord identifies himself to the Ephesians as the one walking amid the candlesticks:

*“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of **the seven golden candlesticks**”* (Rev 2:1).

He exhorts them to repent or else he will remove their candlestick:

*“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove **thy candlestick** out of his place, except thou repent”* (Rev 2:5).

The table of shewbread: The weekly breaking of bread

Bro. Barling explains that the table of shewbread had both bread and wine:

“There were thus clearly six altar-offerings in all, and Drink Offering was one of them. It stood in natural affinity to Meal Offering, both together constituting the bread and wine of God’s table, that is, symbolizing that completeness of worship which gives Him full satisfaction. This principle almost certainly expressed itself in the Table of Shewbread: upon it were not only the Loaves (the bread) but also *‘flagons and chalices for pouring the libations’* (Exo [25]:29, Moffatt). These would be used for holding and pouring out Drink Offering (the wine) — otherwise their presence on the Table was pointless” (Law and Grace, 101-102).

The table of shewbread recalls the events on Mount Sinai:

“Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Exod 24:9-11).

The bread and wine were eaten in the “presence of the LORD” (Exod 25:30; Lev 24:6, 8) just as had been done on the mount. As a result, the shewbread is properly called “the bread of the Presence” (RSV, NRSV, NASB, ESV, NIV, NET, etc.). The *Jewish Study Bible* has the following note, “The table was to hold the ‘bread of display,’ that is, ‘the Bread of the (Divine) Presence’ (also called ‘shewbread’), explained as bread placed ‘before (that is, in the presence of) God.’”

Jesus draws out the connection between himself and the shewbread:

“At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple” (Matt 12:1-6).

Jesus makes three arguments defending the actions of his disciples. First, David and his men ate the shewbread. David was not only a king, he was also a priest: he wore a linen ephod (2Sam 6:14), he offered sacrifices (2Sam 6:17), and his sons were priests (2Sam 8:18 mg). David was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psa 110:4; Gen 14:18-20) and as such he brought forth bread and wine (2Sam 6:19) and blessed the people (2Sam 6:18). Because David was a priest, he and his men could eat the shewbread, as long as they had kept themselves from women (1Sam 21:1-6).

Second, among other duties the priests performed on the Sabbath, they had to replenish the shewbread (Lev 24:8), which required them to bake bread on the Sabbath.

Third, Jesus is greater than the temple. God was dwelling in him (John 1:14-18; 2:13-22; 14:10-11), just as He had dwelt in the Tabernacle and the Temple (Matt 23:21).

Jesus was David's Lord (Psa 110:1; Matt 22:41-46). Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7; Psa 110:1-4). Jesus' body was the tabernacle of God, where the shewbread was kept and eaten. So Jesus and his disciples could provide for their food needs on the Sabbath; they had not broken the law.

The weekly replenishment of the table of shewbread (Lev 24:5-9) points forward to our weekly memorial service:

| | The Table of Shewbread | The Lord's Supper |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | 12 cakes for 12 tribes (Lev 24:5-6) | 12 disciples for 12 tribes (Luke 22:14, 30) |
| 2. | the golden "table <trapeza>" (Exod 25:23-30; Lev 24:5-9; LXX, Heb 9:2) | the "table <trapeza>" of the Lord (Luke 22:19-21, 29-30; 1Cor 10:21) |
| 3. | bread and wine (Exod 25:29) | bread and wine (Matt 26:26-28) |
| 4. | in God's Presence, "before the LORD" (Exod 25:30; Lev 24:6, 8-9) | in Jesus' presence (Matt 18:20) |
| 5. | "for a memorial <anamnesis>" (Lev 24:7 LXX) | "in remembrance <anamnesis> of me" (Luke 22:19; 1Cor 11:24-25) |
| 6. | "an everlasting covenant <diatheke>" (Lev 24:8 LXX) | "a new covenant <diatheke>" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1Cor 11:25) |
| 7. | offered by the High Priest and eaten by the priests | offered by Jesus and eaten by the disciples (Matt 26:26-28) |

Though we cannot see God, we can see His Son, especially in the bread and the wine. And by seeing the Son, we see his Father (John 14:7-9). Through Christ, we have access to the Father (Rom 5:1-2; Eph 2:14-18), entering into the holiest by his blood, through the veil of his flesh (Heb 10:19-20).

There is an interesting rabbinic tradition about the "shewbread <03899 *lechem*> <06440 *paniym*>", the bread of the Presence: "So what it tells us here is that they raised the table before pilgrims on the festival day and demonstrated the shewbread to them saying, See how God loves you!" (Menahoth 29a, *The Talmud: A Selection*, Penguin Classics, p. 590). In this way they fulfilled the command, "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before <06440 *paniym*> the Lord GOD, the God of Israel" (Exod 34:23). As we have seen, the shewbread represents Christ. It reminds us that we are to keep the weekly memorial service, the Agape (Love Feast), a joyful meal of fellowship shared with our brothers and sisters in the

presence of our heavenly Father and His beloved Son, imitating their amazing love for us. Scripture connects this manifestation of love to God's dwelling in us:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1John 4:7-13).

Our hymns, especially our breaking of bread hymns, celebrate this amazing love:

"Behold th' amazing gift of love The Father hath bestowed On us, the sinful sons of men, To call us sons of God! (Hymn 374; cf. 1John 3:1).

"When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down; Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were an off'ring far too small! Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all" (Hymn 223).

Recall that the Holy Place section of Leviticus (Lev 18-24) is the source of the second greatest commandment, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39)*. The Spirit emphasizes the importance of this command because by it the whole law is fulfilled (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14; James 2:8). This should be the core of our walk today.

The altar of incense: Prayer

Incense was offered on the golden altar twice daily (Exod 30:1-10) along with the dressing of the lampstand and the offering of the daily sacrifices. The offering of incense represents prayer:

"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psa 141:2).

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Luke 1:10).

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev 5:8).

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev 8:3-4).

The priests' daily ministry is a pattern for us. The lighting of the lamps reminds us to do the daily readings and to preach to those around us; the offering of incense reminds us to do our daily prayers; and the sacrificing of the whole burnt offering reminds us that we should think on and follow the example of our Lord, giving ourselves fully to our heavenly Father. Bro. Roberts writes,

“The high priest was to replenish the oil-lamps of the seven-branch candlestick, and offer incense before the veil, every morning and evening; and on the great altar, he was to offer a lamb in sacrifice every morning and evening. These were perpetual services — things always in the life — things always before the mind. Remembering what they signify... what a lesson they convey: the combusted oil of the lamps, the radiation of the truth from an enlightened mind: the grateful odour of the fire-diffused incense, acceptable worship, thanksgiving and supplication: the offered lamb, the crucified Jesus recognized as the basis of approach” (*The Law of Moses*, p. 191).

We commit to this daily service when we sing, “Come, Lord, thy waiting servants say, ‘Come quickly, set us free’: Meanwhile, in service day by day, We will remember thee” (Hymn 224:4).

Joe Hill (*Austin Leander, Texas*)

*“Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy”
(Matthew 5:7).*

The fifth beatitude assures the Christian that the merciful will obtain mercy. This principle of reciprocity, “Give and it shall be given unto you” (Luke 6:38) — only with an immeasurably multiplied return when God is the donor — emerges again in the petition, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12). Our Lord, therefore, is reminding his followers that, just as God’s forgiveness enables them to practice forgiveness, so God’s mercy enables sinners, who are often stony-hearted avengers, to exercise mercy. They trust in a love which self-sacrificially meets the demands of justice and then moves infinitely beyond the confines of courtroom equity. Hence as [those who experience] mercy, they become agents of mercy. Forgetting their own rights, they do not sternly insist on an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

They do not condescendingly reach down from a superior level to their moral inferiors. The cross prohibits any proud self-righteousness. No, liberated from Pharisaic legalism (Matt 23:23), compassionately and generously, with no expectation of return, New Testament disciples carry out the Old Testament norm, “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). And in exercising mercy, they remain the amazed and grateful recipients of mercy.

Vernon C. Grounds, “Mountain Manifesto”
(*Bibliotheca Sacra* 128:510:141)

Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah” (7) “Come thou and all thy house into the ark”

It would have taken Noah and his family years to build the ark. Some have suggested that it took 120 years based on the warning given in Gen 6:3. Noah and his family also had to stock it with food (Gen 6:21). The construction and supplying of the ark was undoubtedly a major component of Noah's preaching effort. Yet 2Pet 3:5 implies that the antediluvians chose to ignore Noah's message. It is not that they did not know about it. It seems instead that they decided they did not want to think about it. They preferred to focus their attention on the short-term cares of their lives. They had roofs to fix, fences to mend, meals to make, and hobbies to pursue. It must have been hard for Noah and his family to keep working on the ark under those conditions. But they remained undeterred by the indifference of those around them. The end of Gen 6 succinctly states that Noah did everything that God commanded him (Gen 6:22).

Then God told Noah to move into the ark (Gen 7:1). He warned him that the Flood would commence in seven days (Gen 7:4). And He repeated His command that Noah bring the animals into the ark (Gen 7:2-3). It seems that the animals might have come to Noah at that point and that he and his family spent the week loading them onboard.

2Pet 3, which makes reference to the Flood, states that “*one day is with the Lord as a thousand years*” (2Pet 3:8), and it is possible that those seven final days before the Flood represent the 7,000 years during which mankind will have an opportunity to embrace God's offer of salvation. Certainly those seven days would have been the crescendo of Noah's preaching effort. The appearance of all of those animals would have astounded Noah's neighbors. (Had people throughout the world seen them making their way to the ark over the previous months?) It would have been a powerful reminder of God's existence and power. (In that way, it would have been very much like the modern-day miracles surrounding the nation of Israel. They act as evidence that God does what He has said and that the return of Christ is near.) It is evident that Noah and his family came and went from the ark during that seven-day period (Gen 7:13), and it is not hard imagining them pleading with their more thoughtful friends and family members to join them in the ark. Perhaps they even showed a few people around. “See, here is a space for you. And your children can be here. There is lots of room.” Well, that same offer is being made to us now. We are being shown the ark, as it were. And it is imperative that we take the space that has been offered to us because the time is coming when we will no longer have that opportunity. If our response is “maybe later,” we take the huge risk that we may perish before we have the chance to change our mind.

“And the Lord shut him in”

At the end of the seven days, Noah and his family went back into the ark. And God shut the door (Gen 7:16). By doing that, He essentially took Noah and his family out of the world. Their contact with the life they had known before was completely broken.

The same thing is going to happen to us soon when Christ returns. We will be called away to the Judgment. Then our situation will be very similar to the one in which Noah found himself as he waited in the ark. At that point, everything he had done in the world outside of the ark really did not matter anymore. The only things that would have seemed important were the work that he had done in obedience to God. The same thing will soon be true of us. As we await the opportunity to stand before the Lord Jesus, all of our thoughts about school, work, money, success, and how we look will seem incredibly irrelevant. The only thing we will care about then is whether we served our God in the time that we have now.

The Flood began the same day that God shut the door of the ark (Gen 7:11-13). Sometimes people give graphic portrayals of this time. They talk about people banging on the door of the ark and begging for Noah to let them in. If things like that happened, the Bible does not record them. And it is possible that the water came so rapidly that people were washed away before they could have the opportunity to flee to the ark. Videos of the tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan show that the flooding happens incredibly quickly. One minute everyone was going about their business. The next minute they were gone.

The Bible twice states that Noah did everything that God commanded him in building the ark (Gen 6:22; 7:5). Perhaps not having to hear people drown all around him was part of the reward for his faithfulness.

Points of emphasis

But we do not know. The Bible simply states that everyone outside of the ark perished. It does not elaborate. The focus of the text is on other matters. The first part of the account places remarkable emphasis on the animals that were saved in the ark (Gen 6:19, 20; 7:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 23). God's power was certainly demonstrated in the miraculous gathering of the animals. And there is probably an important symbolic teaching associated with it as well. There were clean animals brought into the ark, such as doves. (The dove plays a prominent role in a subsequent part of the story in Gen 9.) The dove, of course, is used repeatedly as a symbol of the Jewish people (Hosea 7:11; 11:11). There were also unclean animals brought into the ark. They represent the Gentiles. In fact, God's command to Peter that he should preach to the Gentiles came in the form of a vision instructing him to eat unclean animals (Acts 11:5-9). By bringing the animals into the ark, God was expressing His intention to preserve a remnant in Israel and to offer the hope of salvation to the Gentiles.

Another interesting feature in the record of the animals being saved is the fact that it repeatedly notes that each animal had exactly one mate: *“And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And*

they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in” (Gen 6:15-16; see also Gen 6:19, 20; 7:2, 3, 9). It was as if God were showing to the polygamous antediluvians, who were “marrying and giving in marriage,” that His intention was for one man to have exactly one woman and for one woman to have exactly one man. This point is really emphasized in this section of Scripture because it is also repeatedly notes that Noah and each of his sons had exactly one spouse: “In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark” (Gen 7:13). (See also Gen 6:18; 7:7.) Although polygamy per se is normally not a problem in our time, having multiple partners is becoming increasingly common because of marriage, divorce, and remarriage and also premarital sex. These are all departures from the ideal that God portrays in this section of Scripture.

The second point of emphasis in the account is how the water completely covered the land. Verses 18-20 and 24 of Gen 7 all describe the waters as “prevailing” over the earth. That meant that all of the houses and buildings the antediluvians had constructed would have been completely submerged and ruined. All of their wealth and markers of success would have vanished. Everything they had worked to achieve would have been lost, along with their lives.

Noah would have had to have dramatically scaled back his investment in the things of this life to build and supply the ark. That work would have commanded his energy and material resources. He would have been hard pressed to find time to add rooms to his house or increase his livestock holdings. His leisure time would have been minimal. He probably “fell behind” his neighbors in terms of worldly achievements and status because his focus would have been elsewhere. But when he emerged from the ark and all of those people and all of their works were gone, he would have seen just how right his choice to serve God was.

Forty days and forty nights of rain, earthquakes, and waves covering the highest mountains would have dramatically transformed the world that Noah had known. Thinking about what he would have seen when he stepped out of the ark can be a powerful motivator for us because it is a foreshadowing of what we will see on the other side of Christ’s return. It should encourage us to spend our efforts on the things of God that will endure to that time and not to waste our lives focusing on things that will not last. We will consider other points of emphasis in the Bible’s record of Noah’s departure from the ark — and the lessons that can be learned from them — in the next article in this series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

“There are two big forces at work, external and internal. We have very little control over external forces such as tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, disasters, illness and pain. What really matters is the internal force. How do I respond to those disasters? Over that I have complete control” (Leo Buscaglia).

Youth Speaks

The Parable of the Two Builders (2)

In the previous article, we considered the parable of the two builders as applying to individuals. The parable teaches two important principles:

- 1) We must put into practice what we believe.
- 2) Our actions are affected by our understanding, and therefore we must have a correct understanding of God's Word, requiring effort on our part.

We saw that faith without works is dead, but that our good works alone cannot save us. The difference between the two men represent two systems of thought amongst those that followed Christ, which later came to denote two systems of thought, manifest in two systems of religion.

The Builders

The parable speaks of the building of two houses. One house is built after its builder carefully prepares the ground beforehand by removing the earth away and uncovering a solid foundation of rock on which to build it. The builder is a man of faith, who sees the coming storm and prepares accordingly. However, the other house is simply built on the earth beneath the builder's feet, with little foresight or attention given to the proper preparation of the building. This builder was self-deceived, and blinded to the reality that a storm was approaching, and that his house would not be able to stand. Although it is not part of the parable, one could imagine many people seeking refuge within this house at the time when the storm came, only to be destroyed therein at the time of its collapse.

Two Houses

We must take note of the fact that Christ was very specific that these two builders were in fact building homes — a residence or abode. Out of all the things these men could have been building, one must give consideration to why Christ would use houses in this parable. What do they represent?

In Gal 6:10, the Apostle Paul describes the ecclesia as *"the household of faith"*. This idea is expanded for us further in Eph 2:19-22: *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit."* We note that the idea of the "household of faith", or the "household of God," is equated in this passage to *"an holy temple in the Lord"*. In 1Tim 3:15 Paul speaks of *"the house of God, which is the church [ecclesia] of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*

The house built upon the rock is therefore a symbol of the ecclesia, firmly established in *"the apostles' doctrine and fellowship"* (Acts 2:42). This is the house made

up of individuals who read their Scriptures with understanding and live their lives accordingly. But Scripture reveals that there is another house, which although appearing similar to outsiders, stands in opposition to the household of faith, and is the greatest enemy of the Truth. As the ecclesia is described as a “house” and “temple,” so too is this other house.

The Apostle Paul speaks of “the temple of God” in which sits “*the man of sin... the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God*” (2Thess 2:3-4). This “man of sin” is equated with the little horn with eyes and a mouth that arises on the 4th “Roman” beast in Daniel 7, and which is described in greater detail in Revelation 13. The description given by Paul and Daniel can only apply to the Roman Catholic Church, and in particular to the Pope himself.

In Zechariah 5, we have recorded the vision of the Woman in an Ephah. At the end of the vision we are told that she is carried to Shinar where a house is being built for her, where she would be established (Zech. 5:11). A woman in Bible prophecy is often the symbol of a religious system or body, and the ephah was an container used for commercial purposes. Here then is a picture of a religious system being caught up in commercialism and established in a house in “Shinar” (i.e. Babylon the Great, the seven-hilled city of Rome).

Rome is the place where this second house and temple is to be found today. There we find a religious system which stands in complete opposition to the truth. She claims to speak God’s Word, but her teachings and practices, rather than coming from that Word, come straight from the religious mysteries of Babylon. Hence, she is called “*Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (Rev. 17:5) and “*In her is found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth*” (Rev. 18:24).

This false religious system has had a long history of persecution and deception. In AD 312, Emperor Constantine ascended to the throne and declared “Christianity” to be the state religion of the Roman Empire. Subsequently, the “Bishop of Rome” gradually grew in prominence and influence through various edicts and proclamations made by the Roman Emperors (reigning in Constantinople), so that he would eventually take on the title of Pope (meaning “Father”) and rule his own lands.

This historic period of Papal influence and rule over Europe is detailed in Revelation 13. In that chapter we are told how the common people living on the European “earth” responded to the religion of Rome in those days: “*All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him* (i.e. the beast of the sea/the Papacy) *whose names are not written in the book of life of the lamb...*” (Rev. 13:8). In Revelation 13:12, the beast of the earth (the Holy Roman Empire), “*causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast*” (i.e. the beast of the sea/the Papacy). In Revelation 13:14, those that dwell on the earth are said to be deceived.

Notice that on four occasions in these verses from Revelation 13, we read of those which dwell “on the earth.” This phrase “on the earth” is the exact same phrase

in the Greek that is found in the parable of the two builders in Luke's account: "But he that heareth and doeth not is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth..." (Luke 6:49). Note also that Revelation speaks of those that "dwell", while Luke speaks of a home — a dwelling place. This echo confirms the link between the house built on the earth and the apostasy.

Here then are two houses — two systems of religion. One is founded on truth, the other on error. The one will stand while the other will fall. The one teaches saving Truth, while the other does not. The one will rejoice at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:7), while the other will direct the nations to make war with Christ and his saints (Rev. 17:14). Yet the members of both houses profess to worship the God of the Bible!

As the servants of the living God, how important it is that we never forsake the reading and studying of our Scriptures. We must always be talking and thinking of the Word, and living our lives in accordance with its principles. The world around us seeks to diminish the importance of "truth," but we must resist that temptation and hold fast the faithful word as we have been taught, that by sound doctrine we may be able to both exhort and convince the gainsayers (Titus 1:9). Our lives and ecclesias must be firmly grounded and established on the principles of God's Word, so that we will not be moved in times of difficulty or trouble.

"Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

Darryl Rose (Toronto West, ON)

Commending the Reader to the Word of God

It remains that we commend you to God, and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think. He removes the scales from our eyes, the veil from our hearts, opening our wits [minds] that we may understand His word, enlarging our hearts; yea, correcting our affections, that we may love it to the end.

You are brought unto fountains of living water which you digged not; do not cast earth into them with the Philistines (Gen 26:15), neither prefer broken pits before them with the wicked Jews (Jer 2:13).

Others have labored, and you may enter into their labors. O receive not so great things in vain, O despise not so great salvation! Be not like swine to tread under foot so precious things, neither yet like dogs to tear and abuse holy things (Matt 7:6). Say not to our Savior with the Gergesites, "Depart out of our coasts" (Matt 8:34; Mark 5:17); neither yet with Esau sell your birthright for a mess of pottage (Heb 12:16).

If light be come into the world, love not darkness more than light; if food, if clothing be offered, go not naked, starve not yourselves.

*Miles Smith, From Conclusion, The Translators to the Reader,
From the Preface to the King James Version (1611)*

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Long Ago and Far Away

For a number of Sundays in 1942, I was taken to the Presbyterian Church in the middle of Aberdeen, Scotland, for my first religious experience. My clearest memories of those visits were what I saw rather than what I heard.

St. Nicholas, Aberdeen, is two churches, one on either side of a more ancient aisle on which has been erected a single lofty steeple. The older West Church was built with gated pews arranged around four sides of a square. Individual families rented their pews.

“Our pew” was on the south side of the gallery, directly across from the pulpit, to which the minister ascended by a short spiral staircase. Sitting at my Aunt’s side, the floor was well below my feet, and the prayers and sermons of the elderly gentleman across the hollow square were away over my head. The die was cast, though. I was going to get a Doctor of Divinity degree and march into the church and climb that spiral staircase! But then, I was five years old.

It was not to be. A couple of years later my father sent me to Mission Sunday School with a neighbor’s family. My second religious experience was learning about Moses heading for the Promised Land. Meanwhile at primary school in Aberdeen, we were being taught that Moses saw the sun set in a blaze of fire behind a desert bush!

When I was nine, my parents were divorced. A year later my stepmother decided that the Mission was “beneath” us, so I was sent to the local Church of Scotland Sunday School which was a good deal closer and a lot more orthodox. This was my third religious experience. There, too, Moses journeyed with the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. My fourth religious experience was yet a long way off.

In 1945, or thereabouts, after a very successful campaign in Aberdeen¹, a small but active ecclesia was formed in the city. Bro. Harry Whittaker was involved and, true to type, Harry agreed to stay on and give guidance to the nascent meeting after the campaign ended. The Whittaker family moved into the tenement across the road from my home. Sis. Phyllis Whittaker was asked to pack everything and come north. And she did, with son, Timothy, and her mother, Sis. Maud Roper, in tow.

Sis. Roper kept an eye on her neighbors from an upstairs window, and after four years of observation decided that I was material for Christadelphian scholarship. “I want that boy in Sunday school,” she told the family. Harry was not impressed. Timothy was dubious. However, after the infamous British 11+ exams were concluded, Timothy and I became school classmates. An invitation to CYC soon followed. This type of evening was a completely novel way of getting out of the house after school and making new acquaintances. Going to Sunday school was an automatic follow-up to CYC. After all, what was one more Sunday school!

I soon found out. Sunday school was at 3 PM on Sundays, in rented premises in downtown Aberdeen. Individual classes sat around tables with their respective teachers. Sis Ida Jagger² became my Sunday school teacher. Sis. Jagger was an experienced professional and soon had me integrated with her other Sunday school scholars. It was made very clear that Sunday school was a Bible class. For three years a second-hand Revised Version Bible was my only textbook. For those years it was enough.

The essentials to me were the people I met and the friends I made. Sunday school brought us together. New Year's gatherings, leaflet distribution, and the hospitality of the ecclesial members kept us together.

"Auntie" Ida provided the first principles, and "Uncle" Harry brought them to life. Often, after Sunday school, Timothy would invite me back for supper on the understanding that I attend the evening lecture with the family. It also meant that I didn't have to go home for supper. I had found another family.

At the beginning of 1954, I went to the New Year's gathering in Edinburgh for what would be the last time for quite a while. I was about to begin a four-year apprenticeship, and I expected to spend it on the high seas — a modern, legal way to "run away to sea". After a talk by one of the young brethren at the gathering, another attendee — David Mills, soon to become a brother in Christ — approached Harry Whittaker. Harry promptly rose from his seat and left, saying as he passed me, "You know what David wants, don't you?"

There was a challenge here! Apply for baptism. Who, me? WHY?

During David's interview, everything seemed to fall into place. I asked David if he'd mind having a double baptism on Sunday morning. He hauled me over to talk with Harry, who had conducted the interview. Harry all but fell off the end of the couch he was sharing with Bro George McHaffie³. My real-life twin brother died when he was two weeks old. He was replaced by a spiritual twin brother that day in Edinburgh, long ago and far away⁴.

To this day, I do not believe that the conditions under which I joined the family of God could have happened any other way. David's decision decided me!

With baptism came a commitment that soon taught me the kind of family I had been adopted into. Six months later I sailed out of Avonmouth on a voyage that would take me round the world at ten miles per hour! Starting with that first year at sea, I visited Christadelphians in Canada, the United States, Australia, and South Africa. No matter where the journey took me, I found with this family I would never be alone.

Ron Easson (*Sussex, NB*)

Notes:

1. On Sunday, July 29, 1945, thirty-five campaigners met to break bread and begin a five-week effort that led to the formation of the Aberdeen Ecclesia. See *The Christadelphian*, Volume 82, 1945, pages 118 and 125.
2. Sis. Ida Jagger was one of several brothers and sisters that moved to Aberdeen and supported the new ecclesia there. When she fell asleep in Christ, in 1971, Sis. Ida was fondly remembered "for her work with the young people for many years." See *The Christadelphian*, Volume 108, 1971, p.515.

3. Bro. George McHaffie was Recording Brother of the host Edinburgh Ecclesia at the time of Bro. Ron's baptism in January, 1954.
4. There was a third baptism that weekend as well: Bro. Timothy Whittaker. Bro. Ron and Bro. Timothy were products of the Aberdeen Sunday School. Bro. David Mills was from the Dundee Ecclesia.

Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. *Can you help preview Sunday school materials before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.*



Overcoming the Dens and Caves of Life (2)

In the previous article, we considered how David confronted some of the caves of his life, either in physical or mental peril and anguish. We continue this theme, considering more of David's experiences.

3) Trust

In Psalm 57:1 David proclaims with confidence, *“Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee; yea in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge”*. David trusted God with all his heart, soul and mind. He entrusted his entire life to God's hands, and wholly believed God was by his side even during the direst of circumstances. Though he wandered for years in the wilderness and in *“dens and caves of the earth”* (Heb 11:38), often not knowing where he was going or what God was doing with him, he still saw the Father as a source of direction, stability, and confidence: *“He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence; I shall not be moved. Trust in Him at all time; ye people... God is a refuge for us”* (Psa 62:2,8).

‘Trust’ and ‘refuge’ are often translated from the same Hebrew word ‘chasah’, meaning to flee for protection or to confide in (e.g. Psa 57:1). Both cave Psalms emphasize David's trust in God as a place of refuge to which he could flee for help. Though *“there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; and no man cared for my soul”* (Psa 142:4), David found in God a reliable confidant and sympathetic source of relief: *“Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living”* (Psa 142:5).

When we are experiencing troubles in our life, there is a temptation to place trust in a multitude of superficial solutions. The temptation grows stronger when it appears those around us are indifferent to our distress, and we cannot rely on their support to assist us with the trial. Prolonged trials can also test our resolve and erode our fortress of trust. After Joseph was thrown in a pit, transported to Egypt, placed in a prison, and ‘forgotten’ for two years after saving the butler, his trust in God must have been severely challenged (Gen 40:23; 41:1).

We must take heart and remind ourselves of the immoveable ‘refuge’ in which we can place complete trust. Joseph grew to trust, “*the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made to prosper*” (Gen 39:23). Likewise, David could confidently proclaim from the cave, “*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed [steadfast]*” (Psa 57:7). “*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*” (Psa 9:10).

Trust, however, requires action. The cave may be dark, and the pit may be deep, but at some point we must force ourselves to ‘*awake early in the morning*’ (Psa 57:8), rise from our bed of sorrow and proactively seek the Father’s direction and protection. *When we do, we will find, like David, that God’s “mercy is great unto the heavens, and His truth unto the clouds”* (Psa 57:10).

At the beginning of Psalm 57 David alludes to a bird covering its young with its wings to protect when a bird of prey is near: “*In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast*” (Psa 57:1). It may also allude to the cherubim, whose wings overshadowed the mercy seat, between which the glory of God dwelt. Either way, it reminds us of Ruth and Naomi who, like their descendant David, demonstrated their sincere trust through action. They left the famine, loss and distress of Moab, and fled to the God of Israel “*under whose wings*” they had also come to trust (Ruth 2:12).

4) Past Assurance

It is difficult to stop and reflect on similar experiences we survived in the past, when consumed with current calamity. Typically, we are absorbed with the troubles directly in front of us and cannot see ‘beyond the troubles’, let alone ‘before the troubles’.

David approached his troubles from a different perspective. He affirms: “*I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me*” (Psa 57:2). To clarify what David is saying, it is helpful to understand that the Hebrew word ‘performeth’ means to end or to complete. The ESV translates this phrase “*to God who fulfills His purpose for me*”. In short, David is stating that it is the character of God to complete, perfect, and bring to a happy end all His plans. David could confidently declare this because he had already witnessed the perfecting of God’s plan many times in the past.

Past assurance was another way David dealt with his emotional turmoil while in the cave. He expresses a similar mindset in nearby Psalm 143. Amidst circumstances that appear to mirror those of the cave in Psalm 142, he proclaims, “*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands*” (Psa 143:5). Evidently, David found great solace in memory, meditation, and musing on happier days, which are here highlighted as therapy for the depressed mind. Beyond our natural inclinations, however, David is not recalling the past as a means of bemoaning the present. Instead, he recognizes that he once had merry days, and days of deliverance with joy and thanksgiving — why not again?

Surely David drew strength by musing (Heb. pondering) on the help God provided to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Joseph, Joshua, or even Gideon,

Barak and Samson — all of whom are commended for their faith in Hebrews 11. Doubtless, he was also inspired by meditating on events from his personal life. There were numerous times when, with God's help, he “*stopped the mouths of lions*” (Heb 11:33, cf. 1Sam 17:34-35) and “*turned to flight the armies of the aliens*” (Heb 11:34). Several miles from the Cave of Adullam lay the Valley of Elah where David slew the giant Goliath with a small stone and turned the Philistines on their heels (1Sam 17:2). “*Out of weakness*”, he was “*made strong*” as God guided him from a lowly shepherd boy to a mighty warrior “*who waxed valiant in fight*” (Heb 11:34, cf. 1Sam 18:7). Using song and instrument David had “*quenched the violence of fire*” as manifested in the blazing moods of King Saul (Heb 11:34, cf. 1Sam 16:23).

While in the cave, David knew his soul was once again “among lions”, and that he “*lay even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears, and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*” (Psa 57:4). But these circumstances were no different than the past, and God would surely save him again “*from the reproach of him that would swallow me up*” (Psa 57:3).

Our personal trials are helped if we likewise approach God with a confidence that is deeply rooted in our past experiences with the Father. If we are lacking in those experiences, we can take courage from the myriad of examples in Scripture. God has not brought us through previous trials simply to “*let us die in the current wilderness*” (Exod 14:11). Instead, God has helped us in the past, and this is solid reason to believe that God will help us emerge from the current cave.

5) Future Assurance

David declares, with great conviction, that “*the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me*” (Psa 142:7). Again, he proclaims with certainty: “*He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth*” (Psa 57:3).

| The Cave Psalms — 57 and 142 | Psalm 116 |
|---|--|
| 142:1 “ <i>with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication</i> ” | v1 “ he hath heard my voice and my supplications” |
| 142:6 “ <i>attend unto my cry</i> ” (Heb. = ‘to prick up the ears’) | v2 “ he hath inclined his ear unto me” |
| 57:3 “ <i>God shall send forth his mercy and his truth</i> ” | v5 “Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful” |
| 142:6 “ <i>I am brought very low</i> ” | v6 “ <i>I was brought low, and He helped me</i> ” |
| 142:6 “ <i>For they are stronger than I</i> ” | v6 “The LORD preserveth the simple” |
| 142:7 “ <i>thou shalt deal bountifully with me</i> ” | v7 “the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee” |
| 57:4, 6 “ <i>my soul is among lions</i> ”, “ <i>my soul is bowed down</i> ” | v8 “ thou hast delivered my soul from death” |

| | |
|---|--|
| 142:1,6 "I cried unto the LORD", "attend unto my cry" | v8 " thou has delivered ... mine eyes from tears" |
| Psa 57:6 "They have prepared a net for my steps" | v8 " thou has delivered ... my feet from falling" |
| 142:5 "thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" | v9 "I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living" |
| 142:7 "bring my soul out of prison" | v16 " thou hast loosed my bonds" |

In each of these Psalms, David is assured of God's future help, as evidenced in the words 'shall' and 'shalt'. Future assurance helped David overcome the anguish he felt in the cave. His present circumstances were daunting, but the future was bursting with hope if he placed his trust in God. **Despite** 'the net that been prepared for his steps', 'the pit that had been digged before him', 'the snare that had been hidden in his path', and the sheer 'strength of his persecutors' (Psa 57:6; Psa 142:3), David was wholly confident that God would watch over his journey, and at some future point 'the storms of destruction would pass by' (Psa 57:1 ESV). "Thou knewest my path" (Psa 142:3) states David, fully recognizing that God could see the way he was treading, from beginning to end, with all its darkness and dangers.

It is interesting to compare Psalm 116 with those written from the cave. This Psalm was written during a far more joyous time in David's life, when he was able to look back on his pilgrimage and count the numerous instances when God responded to the troubles he had "shewed before Him" (Psa 142:2). The expressions 'he hath' and 'thou hast' in Psalm 116 often correspond with his earlier troubles and pleas in Psalms 57 and 142.

While in the cave, David was assured God would help him in the future, and looking back, he could confidently see that God had been with him all along. There was no need to doubt the future: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psa 23:4 ESV).

Coupled, these Psalms demonstrate the reason why David could conclude Psalm 142 with such a strong expression of faith: "Thou shalt deal bountifully with me" (Psa 142:7). Psalm 116 also explains why he could speak so confidently of God's future help: "I **believed**, even when I spoke, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Psa 116:10). It was a deep-rooted conviction in God's ability to rescue him someday, despite the calamity that filled his present circumstances. This faith compelled him to share his love, trust and faith in God, and to 'proclaim among the peoples and nations' (Psa 57:9): "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Thy glory be above all the earth" (Psa 57:11). "Praise ye the Lord" (Psa 116:19).

David's confidence in the future was not limited simply to God's ability to respond to his personal troubles. Psalm 110 and 72 are Messianic and serve to illustrate David's assurance that God would, in the future, establish his kingdom in Zion, and send a Savior to rescue ALL the needy and rule ALL the earth in justice and peace. Speaking ultimately of Christ, he says "The LORD **shall** send the rod of Thy

strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa 110:2). Earlier, in Psalm 72, he ruminates on the glory of the saviour to come:

“He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment ... He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth ... He shall deliver the needy when he crieth ... He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight ... His name shall endure for ever.” (Psa 72:2,6,12,14,17)

How inspired and refreshed David must have been to recognize, that beyond God’s current help in the cave, He would ultimately save through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is incredibly difficult to see both the past and the future when we are overwhelmed with the wanderings of the wilderness, and calamity of caves. Yet, David encourages us to look forward, to place confidence in the future, and to trust that God will ultimately *‘deal bountifully’* with us also (Psa 142:7).

(To be concluded...)

Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON)

Does the Eagle Renew its Beak?

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:31).

“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psa 103:5).

Does an older eagle beat down his beak and then wait for it to grow back, and so “renew its youth”?

Most definitely not. The website www.baldeagleinfo.com says: “The PowerPoint presentation circulating the Internet is a myth and metaphor intended to encourage and strengthen people. Eagles do not go into seclusion, pluck out their feathers, beak and talons, and then after five months emerge renewed. It’s a myth! An eagle’s beak and talons grow continuously, because they are made of keratin, the same substance as our hair and fingernails. Eagles molt in patches, taking almost half a year to replace feathers, starting with the head and working downward. Not all feathers are replaced in a given molt. An eagle without feathers, talons, and a beak would die of starvation and exposure.”

Despite its proliferation on evangelical websites, this pleasant story is simply not true. The writings of the rabbis and early church “fathers” overflow with fables and myths about the supernatural recuperative powers of the eagle. It is natural that such would develop, because in earlier days eagles could be observed only at long range. However, as W. M. Thomson writes on just this topic: “It is not nec-

essary to press every poetical figure into strict prosaic accuracy... To what fact... does the Psalmist refer? Perhaps merely to his coming forth in a fresh costume, and in youthful beauty after the molting season; or it may refer to the fact that this royal bird is long-lived, and retains his vigor to extreme old age” (*The Land and the Book*).

It is quite reasonable, instead of actually believing an unscientific myth, to read this verse (and Isa 40:31) as ‘renewed so as to be like the eagle’, that is, to have a buoyant, tireless strength, as in the eagle-based Cherubim of Glory (Isa 6:2). Isaiah 40:31, which is quite similar in expression to Psalm 103:5, reads: “Those who... renew their strength... will soar on wings like eagles” (RSV).

For further information see the U.S. Government website, “Ask a Scientist”, www.Newton.dep.anl.gov: “Question: Do older eagles beat their old worn-down beaks off on a rock and then grow a brand new one? Answer: No, I have no idea where this notion started. I’ve been asked several times. It is not possible for an eagle to completely lose its beak and grow a new one.”

The National Geographic also reported, in May 5, 2008, that a bald eagle underwent surgery to replace a beak lost to a bullet. It was rescued from an Alaskan landfill, where it was scrounging for food but slowly starving without a beak. With its artificial beak, it should live to an old age, but will have to be cared for in confinement, since its new beak will not be strong enough to cut and tear flesh.

The widely-circulated story of the eagle deliberately destroying its old beak and then growing a new one simply has no basis in fact. It is a modern-day fairy tale, sometimes accompanied by beautiful pictures, and a pleasant, inspirational thought or two. One cannot find fault with the photographs or the uplifting sentiments, but scientific observation simply does not support the assertions.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Clothed in God’s Eyes

At a recent study day I attended, the speaker discussed one aspect of Jewish life which has numerous parallels to our spiritual walk. He spoke of weddings and the Jewish traditions surrounding them. These are traditions with which the men and women of Jesus’ time would have been familiar, and the background knowledge with which they would have listened to Jesus. Often reading the Scriptural record through this historical lens can bring to light some comparisons which we would not normally see.

As with most marriages today, a period of betrothal would precede the marriage. When we look specifically at Jewish marriages at the time of Christ, we learn that the period of betrothal did not exceed twelve months. Once the betrothal had been agreed upon, the two would share a cup of wine to complete this process. The bride and groom were now regarded as legally married, and a divorce was required to break the betrothal. Following this, the bride and groom would complete their

individual obligations apart from each other, and remain separate until the day of their marriage. The groom would return to his father's house and work to prepare a place for he and his future wife. This would either be a room in the house of his parents or an extension to his parents' house. Only the groom's father had the authority to say when the preparations of the groom were complete, and when the groom could leave to marry his bride. During the period of betrothal, the bride would also return to her father's home. She would spend this time preparing her marriage garments and seeking counsel from her mother. The bride did not know the exact time of her groom's coming, and would live in anticipation of his arrival. ¹

I found the description of the bride and her role in the period of separation (that of preparing her wedding garments) very interesting, especially when coupled with the spiritual significance as it relates to our lives. We realize that this is most relevant, as we the bride of Christ, are also living in a period of anticipation, watching for our bridegroom's soon arrival.

God's Provision

To begin, we can examine who provides these clothes that the bride of Christ is wearing. In Isaiah we read, *"I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness..." (Isa 61:10 NASB)*. It is God who clothes us. As we look at Genesis 3:21, we realize that man's garments (or coverings for sin) have always been provided by God. In the Garden of Eden it is God who provided Adam and Eve with 'garments of skins' to cover their nakedness. Similarly, we see this same principle reflected in the Law, in the details of the burnt offering. As we can read in Leviticus 1:6 and 7:8, the burnt offering was a sacrifice which required the entire animal to be burned on the altar, save the skin of the animal. It was God who originally would have provided this animal/flock for his people, and also God who gave the Law to Israel, detailing how they could approach Him and please Him. The flesh of the animal was to be burned, serving as a pleasing aroma to God, while the skin remained.

Paul tells us we are to *"clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 13:14 NIV). God continues to clothe us, but it is no longer with animal skins, as was the case for Adam and Eve. Rather, we are to be clothed with Jesus Christ. Likewise, we no longer sacrifice the flesh of a sheep or a goat, but we sacrifice our own flesh and crucify our own sinful desires, which is pleasing and right in God's eyes. Our fleshly thinking and actions must be done away with, so that all that ultimately remains is a faithful disciple clothed with Jesus Christ. These thoughts are brought together in the words of the prophet Zechariah, *"See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you"* (Zech 3:4 NIV).

We know that God is prepared to clothe us, but we also know that this is not done automatically. God has provided Jesus Christ as an offering or a covering for our sins, but we must each still come to God and seek to be clothed. Or, putting this idea in the context of Revelation, we each must 'buy' these clothes from God through Christ. Here we are told:

“I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see” (Rev 3:18 NASB).

This word ‘buy’ means to go to market, to purchase, or to redeem, and it is used in Matthew 25, when the unwise virgins are advised to ‘buy’ oil from the marketplace. It is this absence of buying which resulted in a lack of oil and not being recognized by the bridegroom at his coming. God is prepared to clothe and redeem us through Christ, but we must wisely use the time God has provided as to seek out or acquire these clothes, as we wait for Jesus to return. It is these clothes which, in God’s eyes, cover our nakedness and will allow us to be recognized by the bridegroom at his coming.

The Clothing of the Faithful

Initially we are clothed with Jesus Christ when we are baptized. Paul states this, *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27 NASB)*. However, we know that this act of baptism must be followed by obedience to God, as we become no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness.

We read of this righteous clothing in Revelation and Isaiah: *“...the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. It was given her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev 19:7-8 NASB)*. *“I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness...” (Isa 61:10 NASB)*. From these two verses we can understand that the faithful are clothed by their righteous acts and with garments of righteousness and salvation. This is not a contradiction to Galatians 3 (above). We see that being clothed in righteousness and salvation can only occur if we are first clothed with Jesus Christ. After baptism we can truly seek to put to death the acts of the flesh and *“put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other ...just as the Lord forgave you” (Col 3:12-13 NASB)*.

In Romans we read of both righteousness and salvation, *“for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom 10:10 NASB)*. Belief therefore results in righteousness, because *“if you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of him” (1John 2:29 NASB)*. But our belief must be coupled with an outward demonstration of our faith, so as to result in salvation. To be clothed in Christ is to ‘wear Christ’ so that all can see him in us. Jesus speaks of how we practice our righteousness in the Sermon of the Mount. He warns *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 6:1 NASB)*. Jesus then goes on to clearly define what these acts of righteousness are: giving to the poor, our prayers, and our humility as we fast. As we perform these works, our thoughts should be of how God perceives our actions, not how man sees them.

Keeping Our Clothes

We know the importance of remaining properly clothed until Jesus returns. We are plainly advised on this point by John: *“Behold I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame”* (Rev 16:15). Like the Jewish bride, we have to live in anticipation of our bridegroom’s arrival. We don’t know the exact date Jesus will return, but we can be confident that one day he will return, and how great would it be if we were found strong in our faith and active in our service at that time!

We each have to maintain our clothes, by putting on Christ and then continually coming to God through Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. It is in this act of judging ourselves (1 Cor 11:31) that we can be made to stand blameless (Jude 24) in that day. As we examine ourselves we should try to see ourselves through God’s eyes. Does He see us as naked or fully clothed with Christ? Have we worked hard this week to keep these clothes spotless, or are there blemishes which must be forgiven? In Revelation we read of the church in Laodicea, and the state of their garments. They did not know they were naked, but this is how God saw them. If this is the state we discover ourselves in, we should listen to the words spoken to those at Laodicea, *“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent”* (Rev 3:19).

Additionally, it is as the bride of Christ that we hope Jesus will find blameless and clothed when he returns, not simply ourselves. We should also be concerned with the physical clothing of our brothers and sisters just as much as we are concerned about our own spiritual clothing. We know we will be held accountable for this, Jesus tells us so: *“Come, you who are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For when I was naked, you clothed me”* (Matt 25:34, 36 NASB).

As we remember Jesus, we see in the bread and wine his body broken for us, and his blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. This is a frequent reminder that we must continually recognize and ask forgiveness for our own sinful tendencies, and be fully clothed in Christ.

Katie Dawes (Toronto East, ON)

Notes:

1. Edersheim, A. (1883). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: The Ascent: From the River Jordan to the Mount of Transfiguration*. London: Longmans Green and Co.

Proverbs about Clothes

“Language is the apparel in which your thoughts parade before the public. Never clothe them in vulgar or shoddy attire” (George Crane).

“When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left I buy food and clothes” (Erasmus).

“Any clothes will fit a naked man” (Irish proverb).

“Many come to bring their clothes to church rather than themselves” (Thomas Fuller).

How do We Value being in the Presence of God?

On Sunday morning we come to meet with our brothers and sisters in Christ, to join in communal worship, to remember the sacrifice of God's only begotten son for us and to receive encouragement to remain steadfast unto the end.

We remember Moses ascending Mt. Sinai to commune with God. We recall the tabernacle in the wilderness and the many laws that reminded Israel of God's holiness. It was an honor to be a priest and to come into the presence of the LORD. They approached with fear and trembling and reverence.

We approach boldly unto the throne of grace where we find mercy and grace to help in time of need. We know that in this we are both blessed and privileged. By grace we may serve God acceptably with all reverence and godly fear (Heb 12:28).

When I look around me on a Sunday morning I wonder if we have forgotten this. I wonder if in our bold and confident approach to the throne of grace, we have forgotten that we draw nigh to the Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of all. *"Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever"* (Rev. 5:13).

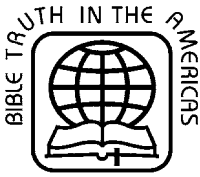
How do we show the awe we feel? How do we honor and give glory to the God of all the universe, to our heavenly Father and to His son?

When we enter the Breaking of Bread service late, dragging ourselves away from our conversations or our snacks, do we honor God? When we enter sipping our cups of coffee or Jamba Juice, paying careful attention to not spill them, do we give God glory? When we pull our cell phones from our bags to catch a call or text, or quietly scroll through the web while the exhortation is being given or the emblems passed, do we honor God? When we are chatting or reading a book or working out a puzzle or knitting or occupying ourselves with the many diversions we have during the Memorial service, do we glorify God? When come to the ecclesia to share the bread and the wine in the presence of God, do we honor Him when we roll out of bed and throw on whatever clothes come handy, dressed to grill or play lawn games?

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:8-9 RSV).

Dolores Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

"The man who deserves the name is one whose thoughts and exertions are for others, rather than himself; whose high purpose is adopted on high principles, and never abandoned while heaven or earth afford the means of accomplishing it. He is one who will neither seek an indirect advantage by a specious word, nor take an evil path to secure a good purpose" (Walter Scott).



Bible Mission News

Jamaica — All-Island Fraternal Gathering at May Pen

The Christadelphian Bible Mission of Jamaica (CBMJ) Committee in conjunction with the Jamaican Ecclesias produces an Annual Calendar of Events. This Calendar includes about 15 different activities, such as: Quarterly CBMJ Meetings, several Fraternal Gatherings, Brothers' Mutual Improvement Days, Sisters' Study activities and Preaching Campaigns. We visited Jamaica from March 8 to 15, and we enjoyed fellowship by attending many ecclesial activities, as well as being treated very hospitably in members' homes.

The Jamaican Brotherhood took advantage of the national holiday of Ash Wednesday on March 9th to organize an All-Island Fraternal Gathering — and organized it was! This year the Fraternal was at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall (which is somewhat central on the Island) and was quite well attended — about 80 brothers and sisters, and 40 youths and children (see group photo with this article). The day started at approximately 10 am and was supposed to finish at about 3:30 pm, but many were still enjoying time together at 4:30 pm! A number of brethren from ecclesias across the island were involved in presiding, reading, praying and presenting studies. I was privileged to provide studies along with Bro. Keith Kinlocke of the Spanish Town Ecclesia. Bro. Keith's talk was on the theme — "Young men, I call you because you are strong" and my study was based on "David — a man after God's own heart!" A number of sisters lead studies for the children, who also put on a presentation for all the adults. After a yummy hot noon meal provided by the sisters, we all reconvened for a Breaking of Bread Service introduced by an exhortation on "The Comforts of the Truth". The day was concluded with a Dedication Service for the Sunday School addition to the May Pen Ecclesial Hall due to the generosity of the North American Brotherhood! One senior brother told me in the evening that the fraternal was like the old days — everybody left happy and with a big smile — a very positive experience.

During the rest of the week, we visited the Port Maria, Spanish Town, White Horses and Round Hill Ecclesias enjoying studies of the Word and fellowship. Along with this article is a photo of some of the CYC group on Saturday afternoon at the May Pen Hall — the photo is taken in front of the May Pen Sunday School addition, with Sis. Annette Johnson on the left and next to her, Sis. Miriam Luff. One of the many encouraging activities underway in Jamaica is the formation earlier this year of a Sunday School at the White Horses Ecclesia. Bro. Stanley and Sis. Judith Frazier, along with Sis. Joanne Samuels, have all worked hard to welcome local children to the Sunday School. The accompanying photo shows



five of these children — their faces tell it all! They are holding up T-shirts that are part of the Sunday School Supplies provided to this and all Sunday Schools in Jamaica by the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund (CSTCF) in London, Ontario, Canada.

Our time with the Jamaican Brothers and Sisters and young people was very rewarding! We pray for God's richest blessings on the Jamaican Ecclesias in these last days.

*Don and Miriam Luff, Brantford, Ontario
CBMC representatives*

**CYC group in front of
the May Pen Sunday
School addition.**



Guyana — Thoughts on the 2011 Easter Guyana Bible School

The Bible School was unforgettable and the highlight of my 10-week visit to Guyana.

We left about 6.30 a.m. from Georgetown and drove all the way to Kilcoy via the eastern coastland of Georgetown in the county of Demerara, continuing through the western coastland of the county of Berbice, crossing a floating bridge over the three quarter mile wide Berbice river (previously crossed by a large ferry boat), then on to the east coast of Berbice to Kilcoy. The drive was still enjoyable despite the continuous heavy rain, as it was a busload of us driven by our capable Sis. Dawne Semple, and it was quite lively with chatter, and the roads were good. I was busily viewing all the new developments along the way.

Bro. Abedi Ndjekulu and his family have done wonders to the ecclesial compound, which is fully planted from the front with fruit trees, of which the children take full advantage, through to the fair size kitchen garden at the back of the house, and chicken and duck pens which help to feed the family. One morning I saw him picking beans to be used for meals for those attending the school.

The entire week-end activity was very well organized and attended by many from all the other ecclesias, necessitating accommodation for those from the three ecclesias in Demerara — Georgetown, Eccles, and Mocha — along with their children.

The entire week-end activity was very well organized (many thanks to our Bro. Autar and his wife, Sis. Shameen, who labored tirelessly in many hours of preparation before the Bible school began), and well-attended by many from all the other Guyana ecclesias. Finding suitable accommodations for all fell to Bro. Abedi ably assisted by others.

It was equally exciting to meet not only with local brethren but also with those visiting from overseas — our beloved Bro. Jerome Linton from Georgia, USA, (who with another brother was the first to occupy a new shelter built for battered women, and which he seemed to have quite enjoyed. I must mention that he did not in any way look battered, neither could he ever be mistaken for a woman). We also were happy to see Bro. Eon Campbell from Tobago, Sis. Dawn Hutchinson (nee David), formerly of Plegt Anker, now resident in St. Lucia, and Bro. Lennox Prashad, formerly of Kilcoy, now resident in Ontario, Canada.

The catering for the entire period was done by the sisters, organized and led by our Sis. Eleze Bailey who has since migrated to the USA. As one of the Georgetown sisters stated, Guyana serves a good purpose in training brethren for the benefit of the overseas ecclesias, though not entirely lost, as some of them do return periodically to continue their support, which is very much appreciated. So please keep visiting as often as you can brethren, your continuing interest and presence are certainly encouraging. The food was very tasty, professionally prepared and served at the appropriate times, and we were all well fed throughout the entire period. Sisters did most of the cooking in an area connected with the Ndjelekulu's kitchen. Most of the cooking was done on the premises by the Berbice sisters. Bawili, Rose, Carmen, Estelle among others. Some of these sisters juggled this with looking after their accommodated guests, myself included. Sis. Seerojnie devoted herself to teaching the children during all of the adult classes. Another sister, Shameen Autar hosted about four from Demerara at her home, yet she was there early, assisting with the cook-



ing for the school, cleaning and preparing the hall for the meetings. Her creative ability was displayed in the tasteful floral decoration around the platform, pretty white laced embroidered cloths on the tables, equally nice-looking doily's covering the emblems and adorning the Bible Stand — all together presenting quite a pleasing picture, and which to my mind greatly honors God,

our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in our commemoration of the tremendous sacrifice they made for us.

Those sisters in their joint and coordinated operation, helped me to comprehend the tremendous support and comfort provided by the sisters who ministered of their substance to our Lord during his ministry, also those who labored with the Apostle Paul — *“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea...for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us”.* (Rom. 16:1-6) This certainly proves how valuable sisters are in God’s service in supporting the work of our ecclesia, and should stimulate us giving our best to Him. I cannot forget those young brothers either who were assisting at the back in the kitchen and also serving.

One of our speakers was Bro. Nathan Badger, son of our late Bro. Colin Badger, who had formed a close bond with the Guyanese in his ministrations to them. Nathan had missed his flight, but then finally made it. He later told me that he would not have missed that experience for anything. The other speaker was our warm and lively Bro. Dev. Ramcharran, from West Toronto meeting, a great favorite and well known to the Guyanese brethren. They were dynamic, coordinating their theme of the Gentiles being a part of God’s plans and purposes from the very beginning. What emerged in the presentation of their subject was the obvious amount of effort and research in the preparation, as they brought out information and thoughts that we found remarkable. I saw here the value and reward of paying attention to details, making Bible reading more interesting and productive. It has certainly awakened awareness for me, of associating some of those names in the genealogies, and not just quickly bypassing them. At the end of each day, there was a public lecture. The one that drew a lot of discussion was the subject of demons presented by Bro. Nathan.

I was also very encouraged and touched by the development of some of our local brothers who presided at the different sessions. A few years ago, one of them confided in me his feelings of inadequacy of performing any duties at his ecclesia. However, with some encouragement from others, he tried, and I was blown away this time by the way he presided — the confidence and zeal he displayed. There was another young brother who showed a tremendous amount of promise in this area too, despite obvious disadvantages. I recall that it was my ecclesial activities when I was young, which prepared me, unknowing to myself then, for the important aspects of my job career later on. Young people must carefully consider that serving the God who has created and is continuing to effectively maintain this powerful universe, closely following his guidelines, adhering to his principles, will develop in them his wisdom and ability, which will be totally effective far surpassing man’s way, which is seen in the resulting chaos and hopelessness all around us.

The fellowship was, as is always the case on these occasions, very warm and enjoyable, giving a taste of what awaits us, by God’s grace, in his kingdom.

Esther Worrell, April 2011

Reflections: Looking back at our three year missionary stint in La Paz, Bolivia



Our lives are to be spiritual journeys upwards into Christ. Before we ever met each other, the two of us independently dreamed of some day learning Spanish and preaching in South America. God made that dream possible in 2007 when the CBMA invited us to be long-term missionaries in La Paz, Bolivia for a period of three years. Together with our eight month old son Zadok, we embarked on the journey of a lifetime — a journey which has shaped us and molded us in unforgettable ways.

The Styles family with Bro. Freddy

Our first impression of La Paz was that it was the most amazing city! Built on a plateau,

down a precipice and into a basin it was hard to believe buildings could stand erect in some places. The surrounding Andes mountains were always an inspiration to look at. There were hardly any trees, the climate very dry, and the local women added splashes of colour with their brightly coloured skirts and bowler hats. At first we thought we were just a little bit crazy, being so far from home with a baby to care for. It was a big leap in faith, trusting that God would help us and care for us through all — and He did!

We had two main jobs: to conduct sustained preaching efforts in the area, and to support the very tiny ecclesia already in existence there. To these ends it was crucial that we learn Spanish well enough to be able to communicate fluently with the people. So we spent the first year learning Spanish whilst assimilating into the culture, taking



Sis. Fiona with Sisters and contacts Luz, Magaly, Jackeline and Justina

on the lion's share of the ecclesial workload and taking over the correspondence work (we also managed to have a second baby in that time as well!). The second and third years were more productive on the preaching front as we became more fluent in the language and could start a weekly preaching seminar each Thursday night. From time to time we also ran two-day public conferences on Bible themes, particularly when we had visiting brethren in town who could speak Spanish — these were advertised widely and well-attended. We also gave extensive personal Bible instruction on first principles to baptismal candidates.

The aspect we enjoyed most about mission work was being a part of the spiritual journey of others. It was so obvious when God was calling somebody to be part of the ‘people for His name’, and then because we were there and willing, God could use us as His instruments to teach them about Himself and His plan with the earth. And we had the privilege of watching Him at work, as His Word took root in the hearts of a few and gradually their attitudes and lifestyles changed to reflect His thinking. We grew to love the people there very much — they became our family — and there are no words adequate to express the joy we felt when beloved friends were baptised or when our brothers and sisters there showed great courage to continue in the faith in the face of trials.

The most difficult part of our three years was when our second son, Judah, was born — at the time we had a flea infestation in the house and had to leave and have all of our belongings cleaned and the house fumigated, right at the time Fiona was sent in for a semi-urgent c-section birth. Right after the birth, Zadok came down with a stomach infection. It was not a fun time and our courage to persist was tried greatly!

We received many visitors — regular visits from our CBMA linkmen, short visits from family and friends, and had several people from NZ and Australia stay with us for anywhere between a few months to a year to help the mission effort. These were definite highlights for us, and an incredible source of strength and support. God always seemed to send the right people at the right time.

There have been countless invaluable lessons learned from our experience — looking at the ecclesia now from a shepherd’s point of view rather than a sheep’s; understanding the immense value each role brings to the running of an ecclesia; that preaching is not about the number of baptisms but about laying a foundation of rock rather than sand so that each ‘house’ has the best chance of surviving the inevitable storms of life that will come; and the great need for supporting fledgling ecclesias and new converts, to name just a few. Missionary work does not necessarily have the same romantic appeal as, let’s say, building wells so that a poor community can have clean water (in and of itself a worthy project); but God willing the results of such mission work will be not just temporary but also eternal.



LaPaz Sisters in Christ
Justina, Laura, Fiona and Aleyda

It has been a most enriching experience for us, a journey full of challenges and blessings. And now, as we ‘catch our breath’ and look back at the view of where we have just travelled, we can see God’s hand at work through all, pulling, pushing, and helping us up in our journey. *“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:15).*

Jacob And Fiona Styles

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BOSTON, MA

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our Sis. Andrea Geraigery on May 13, 2011, at the age of sixty-six. Sis. Andrea was a dedicated and caring member of our ecclesia and her marvelous example of spiritual contentment in the midst of battling cancer was an inspiration to us all.

We are happy to announce that Bro. Richard Lee has been welcomed back into fellowship around the table of our Lord.

We would like to thank our Bro. John Pople for bringing us his series of classes on the Song of Solomon at our 20th Annual Spring Study Weekend. Lord willing, the next weekend will be lead by our Bro. Jason Cicero.

Boston has been blessed this year with several brethren who have come and brought us words of exhortation. They include the following Brethren: John Pople; Dan Wilkinson; Steve Stewart; Denis Therien; Michael Atkins; Phil Baines; Jonathan Smith; and David Stiles. We thank them all for their efforts on our behalf.

Jim Sullivan

BRANTFORD, ON

Please note that effective July 2011 the undersigned will be Acting Recording Brother and Bro. Jonathan Bowen will be Acting Assistant Recording Brother. Ecclesial correspondence can continue to be sent to the ecclesial address or via e-mail to dbillington@gmail.com.

Bro Daniel Billington

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We rejoiced on June 3, 2011, at the marriage of our Sis. Kamice Bailey to Bro. Seon Levius of the Georgetown, Guyana Ecclesia. We pray for the Lord's blessing upon them both as they now walk united toward the kingdom. Additionally, we add that the date of Bro. Orville Earle's baptism was May 8, 2011 as it was missing in a previous issue.

We welcome by transfer from the North Houston, TX Ecclesia, our Bro. Reuben Sande and we pray that he will be happy amongst us as we walk together toward the kingdom.

We have been pleased and privileged to welcome around the table of the Lord and have the company of a number of visiting Brothers and Sisters including: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Jamaul Husbands, Seon Levius, and Eleze Bailey (Georgetown, Guyana); Cornelius Kellett and Deborah Kellett (Washington DC); Reuben Sande (North Houston, TX); James and Charlotte Di Liberto and Denise (West Adelaide, Aust.); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Ryan and Julia Mutter (Baltimore, MD); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Patty Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON); and Dot Phillips and Vickie Tuck (Meriden, CT).

Stewart Marsden

HONESDALE, PA

The Honesdale Christadelphian Ecclesia is glad to report that we developed a tri-fold poster exhibit depicting the four hundredth anniversary of the publication of the King James translation of the Bible and worked with the Honesdale Library who has exhibited it. We hope that their readers have learned from it.

Esther Dunn's grandson, Justin Errick and his wife, Monica, are visiting from California and they attended our meeting on July 3, 2011. We were all very pleased to see them and wish to thank them.

Stephen J. DeMarco

KITCHENER WATERLOO, ON

On June 10-12, 2011, a three-day Bible exhibition was sponsored by the Cambridge and Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesias. The location was a hotel in North Cambridge. The material used in the exhibition was lent by Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) and included various artifacts such as Bibles from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, books on prophecy by Bible students of that time, and the Dead Sea Scrolls Isaiah Replica. The event was supported by brothers and sisters living in Brantford, Guelph and Hamilton. The exhibition was widely advertised in the Cambridge, Guelph and Kitchener Waterloo newspapers. On the day previous to the event, a reporter from the Kitchener Record interviewed Bre. Paul Billington and Martin Webster. Therefore, on day one of the exhibition, a good article about it was published in the paper, conveniently close to the exhibition advertisement.

The exhibition was open for three days and included three lectures which were given on the first two days. The titles of the lectures were: "The KJV — The World's All Time Best Selling Book," "The Dead Sea Scrolls Revealed," and "The KJV and the Revival of Israel". These lectures were well attended by visitors as well as brethren and sisters. Altogether four hundred and fifty people came through to see the exhibits and hear the lectures. We are busy following up with the contacts made with visitors and pray that the work of witnessing to the gospel will be blessed. Much work was done by many brethren and sisters to setup, staff and take down the exhibition for which we give wholehearted thanks.

Since last reporting, we have enjoyed the company of many visiting brethren and sisters. We thank those brethren who have given exhortations, lectures and Bible class addresses.

Martin Webster

LONDON, ON

Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston Aust.) lead our study day on March 5, 2011, on the topic "I Know Thy Works — Letter to the Seven Ecclesias". The message was profound and sobering in these last days as we wait our Lord's return.

With great sadness yet reassurance of the hope of the resurrection, we announce the death of our dear Bro. Colin Meaker on April 22, 2011. Bro. Colin was an active member of this ecclesia for over 40 years and his participation in all ecclesial activities and fellowship will be sorely missed. Our prayers go out on behalf of his wife, Sis. Cherie, children, Bro. Gavin, Bro. Caleb, Bro. Nathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen, and grandchildren and other family members both near and far. We await our Lord's return where God willing, we will meet our brother once again. We thank God for the time we shared with him together in our walk to the kingdom.

As death ends one life, another life begins in the birth of Anna Elizabeth Massey, child of Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey. We welcome Anna Elizabeth and look forward to watching her grow both physically and spiritually.

With joy we share in the marriage celebration of Sis. Marley Higham who was married to Bro. Nick Elliott of Toronto West, ON Ecclesia on Saturday May 21, 2011, and we pray that their walk together to God's kingdom will be joyous.

Our annual fall study day will be held, Saturday, September 17, 2011. Bro. Jay Mayock of Hamilton Book Road, ON Ecclesia will lead us on the subject, "The Prayer of Jabez — According to His Will". Further details will follow closer to the study day.

Dave Birchall

PARIS AVENUE, OH

The members of the Paris Avenue Christadelphian Ecclesia (OH) have enjoyed fellowship with brothers and sister from other ecclesias during the first semester of 2011. Words of exhortation were given by Bre. Gar Cooper and Len Budney, both from the Pittsburgh, PA Ecclesia. Bre. Dana Adams (Jasonville, IN), Robert Lewis (Detroit Milford Road, MI) and Ralph Coy (Venice, FL) also exhorted our ecclesia.

Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston Brisbane, AUS) visited for five days in February to give us a series of classes including a public lecture, which focused on "End Time Prophecy". The title of his Saturday and Sunday classes was "Look unto the Rock Whence Ye are Hewn." Our March Study Weekend was led by Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) on the topic "Gideon." Visitors were in attendance for both events from ecclesias in Pittsburgh, PA, Kouts, IN, Avon, IN, and ecclesias in the Detroit, MI area, plus several ecclesias in Ontario, Canada.

On June 26, our ecclesia rejoiced in the baptism of MORGAN MCNUTT, daughter of Sis. Lisa and Bro. Larry McNutt. We pray for God's guiding hand to be on our new sister in her walk toward the Kingdom.

We are looking forward to an exciting summer this year when we shall again offer an Open House to our neighbors. There will be activities designed for interested visitors to learn more about our community through displays, videos, interactive events, food, and one-on-one discussions with our brethren. We have sponsored a billboard on a busy highway in our community advertising the "This is Your Bible" website.

Other upcoming events this year will be our first ever Vacation Bible School. In October, we are sponsoring the Bible Exhibition out of Ontario (Bro. Paul Billington) for eight days in a local shopping center. There are plans for a new Bible Seminar this fall and our annual Fall Study Weekend will be held on September 17-18 with our speaker being Bro. Nathan Lewis of the Christchurch North (NZ) Ecclesia. He will address the topic "Esther — Queen of Destiny".

For further information on any of these events, contact Bro. Everett Muniz at 330-497-2811 or everettmuniz@gmail.com.

Bro. Jack Vogelgesang

SARASOTA, FL

We report the falling asleep in Christ Jesus of our beloved Bro. Pete Huff, a member of this ecclesia since 1996. Our sympathy goes out to his wife, Sis. Elizabeth, and their family. Bro. Pete gave us all a fine example of patient endurance in the last years of his

life, attending the memorial service until the very end. The Lord has now allowed our brother rest from his pain, and he now awaits the resurrection morn.

Our Bro. Arnold Pringe has now returned to Canada, where he can get the assistance he needs at this point in his life. Our thoughts and prayers are with our brother. May the Lord watch over him, guard, guide and protect him till that day when we have all shed our mortal aches and pains. Please note the change of phone number for the undersigned. My new phone number is 941-412-7988.

James L. Wilkinson

SUSSEX, NB

We are sorry to report the falling asleep of our dear Sis. Brenda MacArthur on June 29, 2011, after a battle with cancer. Sis. Brenda was 90 years old and had been in the truth for 72 years, being baptized in Twickenham, UK. She was a cheerful sister whose infectious laugh we will miss. Her love for the children in Sunday school and CYC was evidenced in her concern for them even while in hospital. Our sympathy is with all those who mourn.

Our Thanksgiving Gathering will be held on October 8-9, 2011. Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA) is the speaker and his subject is, "Corinthians".

Please note that beginning in 2012, our July and August Memorial services will commence at 10 am.

Cliff Baines

TOLEDO, OH

It is with great sadness that we report the falling asleep of Sis. Elinor Henzler on June 17, 2011. She was baptized in the fall of 1942, and was one of the founding members of the Toledo, OH Ecclesia, which got its start in the early 1950's. She was a tireless member who taught Sunday school, as young children came along, and sent Christadelphian lessons to many people she corresponded with. She was an example to all who knew her, lived her life as the Lord wanted her to, and exemplified what a servant of Christ should be. She will be missed by all who knew her, and we look forward to seeing her again in God's coming kingdom.

Doug Henzler

TORONTO WEST, ON

During the past period there have been a number of developments at the ecclesia which we would like to share with our brethren and sisters near and far. We have welcomed by transfer from Church Street, ON Ecclesia, Sis. Kelty Campbell, and from the Toronto East, ON Ecclesia, Sis. Lynne Browning.

We have lost by transfer, Bro. John and Sis. Eleanor Mannell to the Mississauga West, ON Ecclesia, and Bro. Nesbit and Sis. Sevicka Amos, and Sis. Lucille Naiken to the Brampton, ON Ecclesia. We commend our brothers and sisters to their new ecclesias and pray our loving Father will continue to be with them and all who love the appearing of the Lord Jesus to keep them in all their ways in these last days.

We thank the following brethren for their ministrations on our behalf: Gary Cousens (Cambridge, ON); Martin Webster (Kitchener, ON); and Jim Cowie (Wilston, Aust.).

We are pleased to report the marriage in the Lord on May 21, 2011, of Bro. Nick Elliott and Sis. Marley Higham of the London, ON Ecclesia.

God willing, Bro. Leen Ritmeyer (Cardiff, UK) will lead our annual Study Day on September 24, 2011. Bro. Leen's theme will be, "God's Preparation of the Land of Israel for the Kingdom Age".

Rod Ghent

2012 AUSTRALIAN CHRISTADELPHIAN CONFERENCE, APRIL 2012

Registrations are now open for the 2012 Australian Christadelphian Conference to be held in Adelaide from 8 to 15, April 2012. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website (www.adelaide2012.com). The theme for the week is "Lift up you heads". Our two main speakers will each deliver separate studies for adults and young people: Bro Tec Morgan (UK) will speak on *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes — Making Sense of Life* (youth), while Bro Chris Sales (Canada) will deliver studies on *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. We look forward to welcoming attendees to a week of uplifting fellowship in Adelaide in April 2012.

Geoff Henstock

BIBLE EXHIBITION IN TORONTO

God willing, on September 17 and 18, 2011, the joint Greater Toronto Ecclesias will host the tour of the Bible Exhibition and accompanying lectures. The exhibit will be held at the North Toronto Collegiate Institute high school, 17 Broadway Avenue, just east of Yonge Street, 2 blocks north on Eglinton Ave., uptown Toronto. The exhibit will be open from 1-5 pm on Saturday and from 2-5 pm on the Sunday. For more information, please contact Bro. Peter Wisniowski at peteresa@hotmail.com. A website has also been set up www.thebibleseed.org, as well as a toll-free phone number 1-866-96BIBLE.

Knowledge and Love

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1Cor 8:1).

[Paul] was not condemning knowledge, but simply stating a truth. Knowledge of the right kind is excellent, but even that may tend to inflate the individual who possesses it. Men may be puffed up even by their knowledge of the Scriptures, especially if their reading has been ill-balanced. Much charity is needed to guard against this evil and to make knowledge lead to edification. There are people who will say that it is only the dangerous 'little knowledge' that puffs men up, while those who have studied deeply are truly humble and never boast. This thought has been stated often, but it is not true. Indeed it would be difficult to define the words of such a saying. All the knowledge of mankind is only little. The most ignorant and the most cultured are only separated by a few degrees. It is quite true that intelligent people perceive the ugliness and folly of blatant boasting and so if they boast they do it more skillfully. Or it is possible for a man to feel himself so superior to the common run of humanity that he finds no pleasure in the admiration of the multitude. His detachment is a form of pride, and he may fall into the worst of errors by being puffed up against God.

Islip Collyer, Principles and Proverbs, pp. 128, 129

Minute Meditation

Human Nature has not Changed

Thomas à Kempis said more than 500 years ago, “For a small reward, a man will hurry away on a long journey; while for eternal life, many will hardly take a single step.”

Now half a millennium later, this observation is still true. Human nature has not changed. Think how far people will travel for a small and often fleeting reward, such as a midnight madness sale, and yet how few have time to read the Bible, the word of God, which has the key to eternal life written in its pages.

By our actions we show what is important in our lives. There is no doubt that we are living in the last days just prior to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will establish God’s kingdom on earth and rule the world from Jerusalem. Never before in history have these words of the apostle Paul been more true, “Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Yet, not many are willing to take even the first step towards preparing for this momentous event, a cataclysmic change that will impact every single person, and that is about to take place right here where we live.

Just how excited are we as followers of the Lord to be taking those necessary steps to be ready when he comes? He certainly has warned us to be ready, for, as he said, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Every day we hear of events taking place in the world that are signs Christ told us to look for just prior to his return. We cannot say we were not warned when we see earthquakes in diverse places, we see floods, tornadoes and hurricanes destroying whole towns, and we see that almost every state in our nation, as well as the cities and the school systems, are going broke. There are crises everywhere. Sometimes we may think that these things only happen to other people we do not know in faraway places like Greece, which is bankrupt, or Libya and Egypt and Syria in political turmoil and war, but some of these catastrophes are happening in our own neighborhoods.

Our brethren are affected by earthquakes in New Zealand and elsewhere. Certainly the powers of nature are impacting adversely many we know and love in all parts of the world. Fires in Australia and Arizona, tornadoes in Missouri, New England and the Deep South, floods and other extraordinary natural disasters. Certainly men’s hearts are failing them for fear all over the world. How many of those in the world are turning to God as a result of all that they are experiencing? The book of Revelation predicts that ungodly men in the last days will react by blaspheming the name of God, who has power over these plagues, and will not repent nor give

Him glory. Certainly in our secular world, mankind prefers to blame problems with nature on global warming, pollution, or pure chance. Anyone who suggests that God is reaching out to warn mankind is regarded as a lunatic by many.

We see people traveling far distances at great expense to bring supplies and help to those who are devastated, but most still will not take a single step to prepare to meet the one who stopped the wind from blowing and made the sea calm. The Lord has given us many signs to warn us that the end is near, but the world at large is not noticing. Amos tells us, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Mankind has no excuse if the warnings are ignored.

When Thomas à Kempis said over 500 years ago that people will hurry away on a long journey, folks had to travel by wind driven boats or horse drawn vehicles. In our world we can travel to and fro at break neck speed all over the place to get those small rewards. Yet so few are willing to take the necessary steps to read God's word and seek eternal life, the only reward truly worth having.

Paul accurately describes our days when he says, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" These people have plenty of time for fun and pleasure, but no time for God.

The lesson for us is to listen to Paul's advice and turn away from those who have no time for God. We need to make time to read His word and seek first His kingdom, because it is coming soon. Let us heed the words of Jesus when he says, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Robert J. Lloyd

The World is an Ongoing Creation

I used to envy the Father of our race, dwelling as he did in contact with the new-made fields and plants of Eden; but I do so no more, because I have discovered that I also live in "creation's dawn". The morning stars still sing together, and the world, not yet half made, becomes more beautiful every day... This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on seas and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.

John Muir

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

SEPTEMBER 2011

- 3 Moorestown, NJ**, Labor Day Study Day. Bro. Richard Palmer (UK): "Reflections on Science and the Bible". Contact Bro. Dan Langston dklangston@gmail.com.
- 11-16 Adult Study Week**, Daily Interactive Bible Study on "The Life of David", at Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. For information about the workbook, or to register please contact Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson jrobins@worldchat.com 519-448-1696 or Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell thestonells@hotmail.com 905-627-9428.
- 17 Bedford, NS**, Study day. Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) will be giving talks on "Pentecost Revisited". Contact Sis. Julie Snobelen thesnobelens@hotmail.com.
- 17 London, ON**, Study day. Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will speak on "The prayer of Jabez — According to His will". Children's class for ages 5-11. Register for the children's class with Sis. Louis Birchall 519-688-7081 or dalefinancial@rogers.com.
- 17-18 Paris Avenue, OH** Fall Study weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Nathan Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ). His topic will be "Esther — Queen of Destiny". Contact Bro. Everett Muniz at 330-497-2811 or everettmuniz@gmail.com.
- 17-18 Toronto, ON** Bible Exhibition and lectures. North Toronto Collegiate Institute high school, 17 Broadway Ave. Contact Bro. Peter Wisniewski peteresa@hotmail.com, www.thebibleseed.org, 1-866-96BIBLE.
- 24-25 Rogue Valley, OR**. Study weekend in Grants Pass, Oregon. Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA) will be leading us in a study entitled "If God Be For Us". There will be three classes on Saturday afternoon, plus a Sunday School lesson and exhortation on Sunday. Contact Bro. Rob Posey 541-474-6963 or Bro. Randy Yoshida 541-479-5358.
- 24 Toronto West, ON** Study day. Speaker will be Bro. Leen Ritmeyer (Cardiff, UK). His subject will be "God's Preparation of the Land of Israel for the Kingdom Age".

OCTOBER 2011

- 8 Brantford, ON**, Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK).
- 8-9 Echo Lake, NJ**, Fall study weekend. Theme is "Making use of the senses we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry (UK).
- 8-9 Sussex, NB**, Thanksgiving study weekend. Speaker Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA).
- 8-9 Vancouver BC** Fraternal Gathering. Theme: The Way of Life. Speaker : Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA). Contact Bro. Jonathan Stodel, jnthn@telus.net or for accomodation Sis. Pam Snobelen, pamel721@shaw.ca.
- 21-23 Women At The Well Retreat**. Miracle Hot Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) on "Hannah's Prayer." Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org or send a non-refundable \$50 check made out to Sis. Bonnie Sommerville, 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324, (818) 341-3932.

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NOVEMBER 2011

- 5-6 Kouts, IN** Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 AM. Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore,MD), Theme: "The Epistle Of Jude: 'It was needful for me to write and exhort you.'" Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at (219)762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net.
- 12-13 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC Study Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Ryan King (Westerly, RI). The subject will be "Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve". Contact Bro. Bob or Sis. Rebecca Pommer, 518 Donahue Lane, Tarentum, PA 15084. Phone: (724)224-7363; e-mail: pghecclesia@gmail.com.
- 12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL**, Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameslwilkinson@hotmail.com.
- 25-27 Washington, DC** Family Bible Study Weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "James: Brother of the Lord, Elder in the Truth". Contact: Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org for additional information.

DECEMBER 2011

- 24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School**, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

APRIL 2012

- 8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference**, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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Despair

"Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution" (Kahlil Gibran).

"A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair" (Abraham Heschel).

"It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent" (Jeremy Taylor).

"Failure is not fatal. Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. It should challenge us to new heights of accomplishment, not pull us to new depths of despair. From honest failure can come valuable experience" (William Arthur Ward).

"I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the 'is-ness' of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'ought-ness' that forever confronts him" (Martin Luther King, Jr.).

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Editorial

Presumption

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43).

The Thief on The Cross

The story of the thief on the cross is very well known — more perhaps for the use made by other denominations concerning heaven going than for the true message of the account. But the true message of *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise”* is not my primary concern: it is our use of what the account does not tell us, rather than what it does. To quote a typical Christadelphian commentary:

“We indeed justly!” That thief spoke for all mankind when he uttered those words, but especially for those who repent. Impaled though he was on the cross, he had in his heart repented, and was at the foot of the cross of Christ, confessing that he was a sinner, and that only the Lord Jesus could save him. On the other hand, his fellow stayed symbolically where he was because he would not repent. Sin crucifies us all in the end — rich or poor, handsome or plain, eminent or lowly — *“for every man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets”*. And there is no way out except to do what the thief did, that is, to “die” with Christ, knowing that if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. Preeminently, in dying with Christ, the thief did, in fact, what others have simply to do in symbol in the waters of baptism. He died with Jesus in good conscience; and in faith, if so be he also might attain to the resurrection of the dead. Hence his petition: *“Savior (Jesus), remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”*¹

And again

“The contrast between the two malefactors can hardly be missed, and is indeed picked out markedly by Luke’s choice of word “other” — a different kind of man. The one ends his days foaming out bitter curses and sarcastic sneers at Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah. The other not only rebukes him but also acknowledges his own fate as well-deserved. His estimate of Jesus is remarkable: *“This man hath done nothing amiss.”* Inevitably the question leaps to the mind: How did he know that Jesus had done nothing amiss? Even if taken in a vague, general way as signifying: This Jesus has committed no bloody crimes as we have, his words are sufficiently startling as betraying a knowledge of the kind of man Jesus was and the work he had been doing. But if the words are taken at their face value then it would seem that this thief had known Jesus before, and known him so intimately as to be able to say with emphasis: *“This man hath done nothing amiss; his character is without any blemish; none has ever convicted him of sin.”*²

So we have apparently two malefactors, both of whom started their time on the cross by upbraiding Jesus, following the account in Matthew. One then rebuked the other, according to Luke's account, and recognized the true person of the Lord Jesus, who had done no wrong. And so this second thief was rewarded with "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" We read no more of either thief: both clearly died the same day as Jesus. Jesus was raised on the third day, and the second thief was assured of a place in the future kingdom — in the paradise the earth will become.

So the presumption is that the first thief did not repent, and therefore was condemned out of his own mouth. But are we certain? The time frame of the crucifixion was for many hours of pain and suffering, and undoubtedly there was more said than is recorded for us.

There is a saying, attributed to St. Augustine, that illustrates this:

Do not despair one of the thieves was saved.

Do not presume one of the thieves was damned.

The first phrase of the couplet indeed is an expression of the Christian hope: that despite the situation, faith in the Lord Jesus can result in salvation. How much the second thief knew of Jesus beforehand we are not told, but certainly, with his mind not wholly focused on his own imminent demise, he could recognize both the innocence of Jesus, and the power residing in that Son of God. His petition "*remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*" is a prayer we could all echo, but few can begin to appreciate the example of this thief. He is one of many, outside the group of disciples and apostles, who expressed a degree of faith not found in the expected followers of Jesus. We can think of the Roman centurion's answer to Christ's offer to heal his servant, and which called forth the Master's exclamation, "*I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel!*" Of the Samaritan leper, who amongst the ten who were healed, alone returned to Christ to offer thanksgiving. Indeed, of the centurion who upon the death of Jesus declared "*Certainly this was a righteous man.*"

The example, then, of the second thief is of great comfort to those troubled by their own inability to live up to the high standards set up by our Lord Jesus, who feel impelled to echo the words of the tax collector "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" There is no doubt the thief deserved to suffer his judicial death, as we can perhaps see from Mark "*And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection*" (Mark 15:7). However, there is no doubt of his ultimate reward. So, in our darkest moments, the beacon of the destiny of the thief serves as a vital remembrance of the grace and mercy of God and of His son, Jesus.

The Other Thief on the Cross

But what about the other thief, the one who railed at Jesus and was then rebuked by his fellow victim? Do we feel he is an example of those who were told "*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" By silence, we presume he did not repent — and was therefore condemned, as we will be unless we repent. And thus we presume that those who do not apparently repent are doomed to eternal destruction. We

punctuate the phrase in our own mind as “Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned.” Thus we take it this to mean, as many have, that if we presume that our faith has indeed saved us, we could despite our efforts fall into the category of those on the left hand, condemned to the everlasting fire.

Or alternatively we could punctuate it differently, and take it as a warning not to presume about the destiny of any individual. After all, both thieves, according to the record, initially mocked Jesus.

“Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, ‘he saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if He will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.’ The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth” (Matt 27:41-44).

We know from the record in Luke that the one repented: but if we did not have this record, we would surely have presumed both thieves were subject to destruction. Arguing from silence is surely very dangerous. However we choose to interpret the saying, we must acknowledge there were not two crosses on Golgotha, but three. Jesus, by his presence there, as by his presence now, silences our every natural tendency to separate the world into sinners and saints. Without the evidence of Luke, we would have naturally said only one of the three on that Judean hill was destined to be saved. So can we be sure that only two were to be saved? There is a natural human wish to be able to categorize: winners, losers, those who triumph, those who fail. But these are not necessarily the categories that will ultimately be decided at the judgment seat.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt 7:21-23).

We cannot tell who will be redeemed by external clues. Only God knows the heart of man — only Jesus, the judge, is able to make distinction between the saved and the damned. And we have to wait for the judgment for the truth to be revealed. Undoubtedly there were three present on the hill: but to presume we know the fate of all three is to presume upon the prerogative of God.

But as we should not presume, we should not despair. As we cannot tell who will be saved, we cannot tell who will be condemned. In the darkest periods of our lives, we can take refuge in the example of at least one of the thieves in the cross, who certainly will be remembered at the coming of Jesus.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. John Mitchell, *The Christadelphian* : 1994, S. 131:371
2. Harry Whittaker, *The Christadelphian* : 1970, S. 107:449

Exhortation

Days of Infamy

Days we Remember

July 4, 1776. December 7, 1941. November 22, 1963. September 11, 2001. All of these are dates that will live in infamy, and the mere mention of the date conjures an up an indelible image or a specific memory unique to one's experience. Many of the older among you will surely remember where you were on that day in November 1963 when JFK was assassinated. I will certainly never forget 9/11; being woken up, as usual, by the clock radio and hearing the DJ's describe the action while still being half asleep. Then, realizing that something very serious was going on, I turned on the TV to witness the full extent of the attacks. We are still living in the aftermath of the events of that day.

However, the events of those days didn't just "happen." In retrospect, those events weren't all that surprising. The path to the Declaration of Independence was years in the making. Relations between the colonies and Britain had been deteriorating since the early 1760's. The Revolutionary War had been going on for 13 months by the time independence was officially declared. The Continental Congress had empowered a committee of five in June of 1776 to write a formal declaration that underwent several drafts before it was formally approved.

The Japanese had been planning the attack on Pearl Harbor for almost a full year before it was carried out on December 7th. Some have even suggested that the US pushed Japan into it through a series of provocative economic and military decisions, such as the US seizure of all Japanese assets in the states and embargoing all oil exports to Japan. There is a conspiracy theory that goes something like this: the US wouldn't get in the war of its own accord, the country needed to be pushed so steps were taken that ensured a Japanese attack. The Japanese also took the move of the US Pacific Fleet from San Diego to Pearl Harbor as a direct threat.

Similarly, post 9/11 it came to light that the FBI knew about the hijackers movements in the US and their attendance at flight schools. Other warnings should have alerted officials, such as the intelligence briefing the President received only a few months earlier that was entitled "Bin Laden determined to strike inside US."

What's the point of this history lesson? Through it, I hope I have illustrated that things just don't "happen." Invariably, there are always signs, hints, foreshadowing.

Genesis 7:6 tells us that Noah was 600 years old when the flood began. Gen 5:32 tells us that he was 500 years old when he became a father. Sometime in that intervening century he was commanded by God to build the ark (Gen 6:14). Surely someone noticed Noah building this really big boat. I highly doubt Noah did this in secret. People must have seen what he was doing, and he should have received some sort of notoriety for what he was doing. In addition, I really believe

he must have done some sort of preaching to warn people, as is indicated by the reference in 1Pet 3:20.

Look at how God acted with Abraham with regards to His judgment on Sodom. He promised to spare the city if he found 50 righteous people there, then 45, then 40, 30, 20, finally 10. God was willing to be exceedingly merciful in that situation. I think it is reasonable to assume that if Noah had found other righteous people beside his family that they too would have been saved. Alas, it was not to be; the signs were ignored and only Noah, his wife, sons and their wives entered the ark.

Foretelling Jesus

There is one thing of note about the Old Testament: it is rife with references to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus himself spoke of it; “*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27 NIV), and also Luke 24:44-45. Also look at John 5:46, which says “*If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.*” And what does Moses say? We read “*The LORD your God raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers*” (Deut 18:15,18).

Consider what God says to David “*When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*” (2Sam 7:12-13). And consider “*But you Bethlehem Ephrathah...out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel*” (Micah 5:2). From this we can establish that he was to be of the line of David and born in Bethlehem. Confirmation of this comes in Matt 1:6, 16 and 2:1.

Consider also the prophecy “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son...*” (Isa 7:14). And also God to David through Nathan “*I will be his father, and he will be my son*” (1Chron 17:13). These establish that he is the Son of God and Rom 1:2-3 confirms this; “*The gospel he promised beforehand...regarding his Son...a descendant of David.*”

Moreover, the Old Testament also mentions his message, what he would preach — Isa 61:1-2 and 50:4. We are there told the message was the “good news”, i.e., the Gospel (Isa 61:1).

The miracles Jesus would perform were also foretold, for example “*Then will the ears of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped*” (Isa 35:5). Matt 12:22-24 verifies this and also confirms that Jesus was to be rejected, which was said in Isa 50:6 and 53:3 (“*He was despised and rejected by men*”) as well as Psa 69:19-20. Indeed in his darkest hour, just before his death, his closest friends abandoned him — Matt 26:31-43. While his death was imminent the disciples couldn’t stay awake while he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. And we know how his prediction of Peter’s denial came true.

Jesus was asked by the disciples for the signs of the end when he would bring the kingdom. Jesus goes on to predict the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70. "...they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name" (Luke 21:12). Many of the apostles and other followers were persecuted and put to death by the Jews and Romans. He even tells them when it will happen; "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" (Luke 21:32). Let's do a little dating here for a second. It is generally accepted that Jesus was born around 3 B.C. So, given that he was crucified at 33 he was saying this in A.D. 30. If a generation is 40 years then this gets us to A.D. 70.

Where does all this leave us? Quick story; some time in the mid 1990's in the basement of the Livonia, MI, ecclesial hall I was asked if I was going to go the Manitoulin Bible Camp that coming summer. I indicated that I would not, and was asked why. I responded that I don't sleep in tents. I was then asked what would I do in the kingdom? I said that; firstly, we didn't know where we would be sleeping in the kingdom; and secondly, if I'm there I don't think I'll be complaining about the sleeping arrangements.

My point is that I don't know what things in the Kingdom are going to look like, but I feel pretty confident that I'll like the way things are set up. My focus is getting there, doing the things in this life that I need to do, training my mind, keeping on that straight and narrow path as best as I possibly can, looking to the example that Jesus set for us on how to live and act and behave.

May 14th, 1948¹, June 5th, 1967², October 6th, 1973³, and December 9th, 1987⁴ — the signs of his coming are all around us. Just read a newspaper or watch the news.

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26).

We need to set our focus NOW, get on that straight and narrow path NOW, because when he does return shame on anyone who says, "wow, I didn't see that coming."

Matt Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. The British mandate over Palestine officially terminated at midnight, May 14, 1948. Earlier in the day, at 4:00 p.m., David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel and became its first prime minister.
2. Start of the Six day Israel-Arab war where the Jews capture Jerusalem from Jordan and for the first time in almost two thousand years they control the City of David.
3. The Yom Kippur war when Israel captures Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.
4. Date generally regarded as the beginning of the First Intifada — the Palestinian uprising against Israel that is still ongoing today.

"If you do not want to fall, do not walk where it is slippery" (John MacArthur, Jr.).

Bible Study

Leviticus and the Tabernacle (9)

Having walked our way around the Outer Court and through the Holy Place, we now enter the Most Holy Place, to see the substance behind this shadow.

Passing through the veil that separates the two rooms of the sanctuary, we recall that there is one piece of furniture in the holy of holies, the Ark of the Covenant covered by the mercy seat and overshadowed by the attached cherubim. It is here that the LORD dwells (Exod 25:8, 22; 1Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2; 2Kgs 19:15; 1Chr 13:6; Psa 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16).

The Day of Atonement (Lev 16; 23:26-32; 25:9)

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered into the Most Holy Place. By sprinkling the mercy seat and the altar with the blood of sin offerings for himself and the people, he made atonement for the tabernacle and the altar:

“And he shall take of the blood of the bullock [of the sin offering, which is for himself, v11], and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: He shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness” (Lev 16:14-16; cf. 16:33; Heb 9:1-10).

This “figure for the time then present” foreshadowed Christ’s offering of himself to cleanse heaven itself:

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption... It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:11-12, 23-24).

Of course, the tabernacle and the altar had not sinned; they needed to be cleansed because they were in the midst of an unclean people. Likewise, neither heaven nor our Father in heaven nor the angels in heaven with Him, had sinned; they needed to be cleansed in order for God to dwell among sinful mankind. So, fol-

lowing the pattern of the Day of Atonement, Jesus offered for himself and for the people (Heb 5:1-9).

Unlike the shadow in which the high priest offered every year, Jesus offered himself once for all time: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28).

We wait for him to return, to bring the high priestly blessing:

“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Num 6:24-27).

In the meantime we sing: “To God be the glory, great things he has done! So loved He the world that He gave us His Son, Who yielded his life — an atonement for sin, And opened the holiest that we may go in” (Hymn 132).

The Most Holy Place (Leviticus 25-27)

The Year of the Jubilee. The section of Leviticus corresponding to the Most Holy Place (Lev 25-27)¹ includes the laws concerning the year of Jubilee:

“And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family” (Lev 25:8-10).

Four classes of laws govern the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee:

- **Sabbath for the land.** The land was to lie fallow every seventh year (Lev 25:1-22; Exod 23:10-11).
- **Forgiveness of debts.** All debts between Hebrews were cancelled every seventh year; lending to the poor was encouraged, and this lending was to be without usury (Lev 25:35-38; Deut 15:1-11).
- **Redemption of slaves.** After six years of service, slaves (including those who were paying off debts) were emancipated (Lev 25:39-55; Exod 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18; Jer 34:8-22).
- **Redemption of property.** Every 49 years in the year of Jubilee each family returned to the property they had been given in the promised land (Lev 25:10, 13, 23-34, 41; Neh 5:1-13).

The Spirit refers to these years as “a year of rest” (Lev 25:5; cf. Lev 25:2-6, 34-35), “the year of release” (Deut 15:9; 31:10; “release” occurs six times in Deut 15:1-18), “the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isa 61:2; “acceptable” is from the same Hebrew word translated “enjoy” in Lev 26:34 twice, 43; and “accept” in Lev 26:41, 43), “the year of liberty” (Ezek 46:17; cf. Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1; Jer 34:8, 15, 17), and the “the year of jubile” (Lev 25:13, 28, 33, 40, 50, 52, 54; 27:17, 18, 23, 24).

The year of Jubilee is the crown jewel of the law's lessons on the Kingdom Age. The historical foundation for these promises was God's redemption of Israel from Egypt to bring them into the land:

*"The land shall not be sold for ever: for **the land is mine**; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me... I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God... For unto me the children of Israel are servants; **they are my servants** whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Lev 25:23, 38, 55; cf. v42).*

Bro. Barling summarizes the significance of these relationships and the Jubilee:

"Land and People alike belonged to God in the ultimate sense... He intended the one to be the free inheritance of the other, and both alike to be a dwelling place for Him. The fiftieth year was but the pre-eminent reminder to the nation of this fact: it was superlatively the Year of Rest, both recalling the original occupation of the Land after the toilsome sojourn in the wilderness, and at the same time anticipating that glorious future era when the nation would at last attain to its ideal destiny and enter into the perfect Rest symbolized by the inner sanctuary of the Most Holy Place... It spoke of newness of life and also perfection of service—"It is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you" (*Law and Grace*, p 168).

"If sold, it [the land] automatically reverted in the great Sabbatical Year of Jubilee to its rightful tenant, whose inheritance it was... (Lev 25:10). It was like the occupation of Canaan all over again: it even brought release to the slave in the same way as the occupation had completed the release of those redeemed from slavery in Egypt... Coming, however, as it did once only in the adult life of the average man and woman, it must have seemed, when it did come, like the advent of the final Rest" (*Law and Grace*, p. 180).

Bro. Ashton connects the Jubilee trumpet and the trump of God at Christ's return:

"The sound was to be 'sent abroad... throughout all your land' (Leviticus 25:9 RV), suggesting that a sequence of trumpeters would sound the jubilee, with the blast rippling outwards from Jerusalem to the farthest borders of Israel. No wonder the apostle catches the echo of this once-in-a-lifetime release and speaks of the Lord's return to call his people from the grave 'with the trump of God' (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Like that great day of release from the snares of death, each man and woman would enter into God's rest" (*The Beauty of Holiness*, pp. 163-164).

Similarly, Bro. Barling identifies our situation, as we eagerly anticipate the ultimate Jubilee:

"We today are in the position of the Israelites when they awaited the return of Aaron from within the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement. Jesus, having gone into heaven, will as assuredly return. To such as look for him shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation (Heb 9:24-28). Once again the trumpet will sound, and the great antitypical

Year of Jubilee will begin with the dead returning every man unto his inheritance” (*Law and Grace*, p. 200).

The Gospel of the Jubilee. Throughout his ministry Jesus preaches the gospel of the kingdom, and throughout he declares it to be a year of Jubilee. Early on he came to his hometown of Nazareth and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day:

“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:17-21).

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1-2a LXX;² he inserted the phrase “to set at liberty them that are bruised” from Isaiah 58:6 LXX.

On the phrase “to proclaim liberty” (Isa 61:1), Kay writes, “The LXX has *aphesin*, as in Lev 25:10. In Lev 25:28-33, etc. *aphesin* is used for ‘jubilee.’—It was such a release, then, as involved a return to their lost inheritance” (*Speaker’s Commentary*, Isaiah, p. 292).

The Greek “recovering of sight to the blind” paraphrases the Hebrew “the opening of the prison” <06495 p@qach-qowach> derived from <06491 paqach>, which is commonly translated “to open the eyes” (see Gen 3:5, 7; 21:19; 2Kgs 4:35; 6:17, 20, 20; 19:16; Job 14:3; 27:19; Psa 146:8; Prov 20:13; Isa 35:5; 37:17; 42:7; Jer 32:19; Dan 9:18; Zech 12:4). Recovery from blindness and release from prison are linked in “**To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house**” (Isa 42:7), and in the Psalmist’s Hallelujah song of Jubilee:

*“Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul... Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. **The LORD looseth the prisoners: The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind:** the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD” (Psa 146:1, 5-10).*

Kay writes, “In reality:—the prison-house, from which man’s spirit needs to be delivered, is ignorance of God; and this may be viewed, on one side as blindness, on the other as darkness (2Cor 4:4, 6)” (*ibid*).

This was only the beginning of Jesus’ preaching the gospel of the Jubilee.

Blessed are the poor. A Jubilee year was a special blessing for the poor (Exod 23:11; Lev 25:25, 35, 39, 47; Deut 15:4, 7, 9, 11; Isa 61:1 LXX). After naming the twelve (Luke 6:12-16), Jesus opens his Sermon on the Plain with these Jubilee themes:

“Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Luke 6:20-23; cf. especially Isa 61:1-3 LXX).

In response to John the Baptist’s inquiry, Jesus responds,

“Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Luke 7:22-23; cf. Isa 35).

The poor are liberated from the slavery caused by debt, and are restored to their land, the land of the fathers, the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Lev 26:42-45).

Don’t worry what you will eat, God will provide. Every seventh year, including the year of Jubilee, the land was left fallow so it could rest (Lev 25:2-6, 11-12, 19). This might raise a reasonable concern, to which God responds:

“And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store” (Lev 25:20-22).

By addressing the same concern, Jesus implies they were in a Jubilee year:

“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on... Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls... And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind... your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:22-32; cf. Matt 6:25-34).

The Jubilee year setting of these words indicates they should not be taken as a general command to laziness (see 2Thess 3:6-15); instead, God’s provision for a sabbatical year means you worked hard for six years and God blessed you with sufficient abundance to “rest” yourself and the land in the seventh.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Forgiveness of debts was a fundamental principle of the Sabbath year (Lev 25:35-38; Deut 15:1-11). Likewise,

Jesus preached, “*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*” (Matt 6:12; cf. Luke 11:4; 6:37). At its core, this is an economic command; financial debt can enslave a person like few other masters. It also includes the forgiveness of sins, sin being the master of us all (Matt 6:14-15; 18:23-35; Luke 11:4).

Lend freely to your poor brothers and sisters. Requiring that all debts be forgiven every seven years could cause a significant damper on lending; God addresses this propensity to tight-fistedness:

*“At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that **lendeth** ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD’s release... If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him** sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. **Thou shalt surely give him**, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, **Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land**” (Deut 15:1-2, 7-11).*

Jesus echoes this command to be generous:

*“And if ye **lend** <1155 daneizo; cf. Matt 5:42; 18:27> to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also **lend** <1155> to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and **lend** <1155>, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful... **Give**, and it shall be given unto you” (Luke 6:34-36, 38; cf. Matt 6:22-24).*

“Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:33-34; cf. Matt 6:19-21).

The restoration of all things. Nehemiah exhorted his brethren to keep the Jubilee (Neh 5:1-13), emphasizing the idea of restoration:

*“**Restore**, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will **restore** them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest” (Neh 5:12-13; cf. 5:1-13).*

The Greek word for “restore” <600 *apokathistemi*> is a keyword of the gospel message:

- The man with a withered hand “*stretched it forth; and it was **restored** whole*” (Matt 12:13; Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10).
- Jesus put his hands again on the eyes of the blind man, “*and made him look up: and he was **restored**, and saw every man clearly*” (Mark 8:25).
- Elijah “*truly shall first come, and **restore** all things*” (Matt 17:11; Mark 9:12).
- “*Lord, wilt thou at this time **restore** again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6).

The covenant blessings and curses described in Leviticus 26 show that the LORD’s fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs is conditioned on the repentance of Israel (see especially Lev 26:40-45). Similarly, Peter preaches to the Jews in Jerusalem:

*“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution** <605 *apokatastasis*, from 600> of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began”* (Acts 3:19-21).

The tabernacle of God is with men. The covenant fellowship between God and His people is described as the LORD setting His tabernacle among them:

“And I will set my tabernacle among you... And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev 26:11-12; cf. Ezek 37:21-28).

This is a key feature of New Jerusalem, the heavenly bride prepared for her husband the Lamb (cf. Isa 61:10):

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:3).

Just as Mount Sinai, the Tabernacle, the Temple, Jesus, and the saints at Pentecost were each engulfed in the cloud of glory, the ultimate fulfillment of the LORD’s purpose is to turn the whole earth into a Most Holy Place filled with His Shekinah glory: “*But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*” (Num 14:21; cf. Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14; Psa 72:18-19). We celebrate this thought when we sing: “Hark! Ten thousand, thousand voices, Sing the song of Jubilee; Earth through all her tribes rejoices, Broke her long captivity... Yea, He reigns, the Great Messiah — In Millennial glory crowned; ‘Israel’s Hope,’ and ‘Earth’s Desire,’ Now triumphant and renowned” (Hymn 296).

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)
(Series concluded)

Notes:

1. See article (5) in this series, *Tidings*, May, 2011. For example, the word “covenant” occurs eight times in Leviticus 26 (cf. Isa 61:8; Ezek 34:25; 37:26), connecting this chapter to the ark of the covenant which housed the tables of the covenant.
2. LXX (Seventy) stands for the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Bible Study

"As it was in the days of Noah" (8) "And The Ark Rested"

The Bible records that the Flood began on the 17th day of the second month of the year (Gen 7: 11). During the weeks that followed, the earthquakes and storms continued. That kept the waters that covered the earth in a state of turmoil (Gen 7: 24–8: 3). But God kept Noah and those with him in the ark safe. Psalm 29 offers the assurance that God was in complete control of what was happening: "*The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever*" (Psa 29:10). This passage illustrates that there is no time or place that is outside of God's dominion. That is a wonderful fact to keep in mind. There are going to be times when we are going to feel tossed and turned by life, just as Noah and the ark were heaved to and fro by the waves. But we need to remember that even though God's steady and loving hand is unseen, it is always present. He remains in control of our lives even when it seems that the world around is falling apart. And if we place our trust in Him, we can rest assured that He will guide and protect us, just as He kept the ark safe as it bobbed among the waters that had engulfed the earth.

And God's care extends beyond merely keeping us alive. He provides for our emotional needs as well. By itself, the ark probably would have been a pretty dreary place. So, God made provision. He had Noah bring lots of animals on board. Having them there to feed, to pet, and to play with would have made the ark a warmer and happier place. It would have made the many hours spent on the seas pass more quickly.

The welcome distraction the animals brought was certainly a practical benefit of having obeyed God's command to bring them onboard (Gen 7:5). Our Heavenly Father is caring and wise, and His commands are given out of love. Doing what He requires often yields natural benefits — as in the case of bringing the animals into the ark — in addition to eternal reward.

"God remembered Noah"

Gen 8: 1 records that "*God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark*". The phrase "*God remembered*" should not be taken to mean that God had somehow forgotten them for a while. That would contradict the many other passages that testify that God is continually aware of even the minutest events of our lives. Instead, "*God remembered*" is a phrase that is used throughout the Bible to signal when God is about to intervene to change a situation. For example, the Bible records that God "*remembered his covenant*" with the Patriarchs before He acted to send Moses to deliver the children of Israel from the Egyptians: "*And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them*" (Exod 2:24-25).¹

Gen 8: 1 continues by describing the action that God took to change Noah's situation. He caused "*a wind to pass over the earth.*" It had the effect of calming the environment (Gen 8: 2). The violent storms ceased, and the waters began to recede (Gen 8:3).

Nautical experts have estimated that the bottom of the ark would have been about 12 feet below the waterline.² That meant that it could come to a rest while the land around it was still completely covered in water. So, after God calmed the sea and the waters had receded enough, it was able to do exactly that.³ The ark came to a rest several months before the highest mountain peaks appeared out of the water (cf. Gen 8:4, 5).

"In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day"

The Bible records that the ark ended its journey on the "*mountains of Ararat*" 150 days after the Flood began: "*And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat*" (Gen 8:4). Note that the Bible uses the word "*mountains*" in this verse. The precise location of where it came to rest is not given. The Bible only provides the general region where the ark's journey ended, which is the mountainous area where the borders of modern-day Iran, Turkey, and Armenia converge. In fact, the Hebrew word translated "Ararat" in Gen 8 is rendered "Armenia" in 2Kgs 19:37 and Isa 37:38. There is a mountain in that area that is nearly 17,000 feet high, which is known as Mount Ararat today. But there is no particular reason to regard it as the final resting place of the ark any more than any of the other mountains in the region.

It is remarkable that the Bible focuses so much attention on the day that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. It gives so little information about the five months during which the earth was covered in water, and almost the entire human population of the planet was extinguished. We are told that the Flood began on the 17th day of the second month (Gen 7:11). The ark came to a rest 150 days after that on the 17th day of the seventh month. That date is mentioned Genesis as "*And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days*" (Gen 7:24). It is mentioned again in Gen 8:3 and Gen 8:4. So, it really seems to be a point of emphasis in the account.

And that is probably because of what happened many centuries later on that date. To see the connection, however, it is important to realize that a new calendar was introduced when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. At that time, God ordered that the calendar be re-calibrated so that Passover would occur in the first month of the year: "*and the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you*" (Exod 12:1-2). That meant that the seventh month of the old calendar became the first month of the new calendar. See Figure 1.

The dates of the feasts in the Bible, such as the Feast of Tabernacles, are given using the new calendar, which became the ecclesiastical or religious calendar. The old calendar was retained and became the civil, secular, or non-religious calendar. Both continue to be used today.⁴ What the calendar change meant is that the seventh

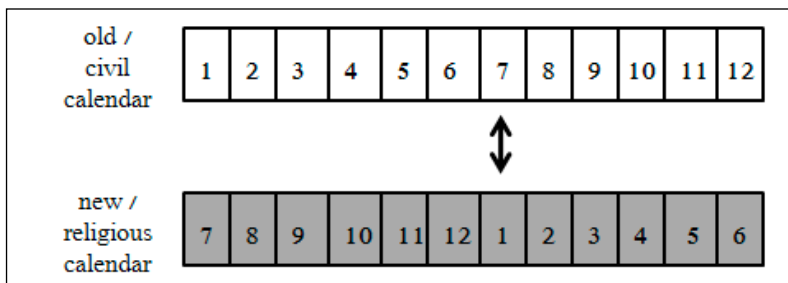


Figure 1 Correspondence between the old and the new Jewish Calendar

month of the old calendar — the month that the ark rested — is the same as the first month of the religious calendar.

So, let us consider what else happened in the first month of religious calendar, Abib. On the 14th day, Passover occurred: *“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’s Passover”* (Lev 23:5). That was the day that Christ died. On the 15th day of the first month, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread was observed: *“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein”* (Lev 23:6-7). That was a Sabbath day. Then, on the week when Christ died, there was a weekly Sabbath on the 16th day of the month (Matt 28: 1) On the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, the firstfruits’ offering was made. On that day, the priest took a male lamb and offered it as a burnt offering, and he took a sheaf of barley from the firstfruits of the harvest and waved it before God: *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD”* (Lev 23:10-12).

The ceremonies of that day were very significant. A male lamb without blemish was offered, symbolizing perfectly the sacrifice of Christ. Then a single sheaf of barley that had been cut down and died was held aloft and waved. Paul tells us what that symbolizes. It represents the resurrection of Jesus: *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”* (1Cor 15:20). That ceremony took place “on the morrow after the Sabbath” following Passover. That was the first day of the week after Passover. That was the very day that Christ rose from the dead! And it was the 17th day of the first month of the religious calendar.⁵ That was the same day that the ark came to rest on the “mountains of Ararat.” See Figure 2.

This connection between Noah and Christ has important implications for us. God caused the details about the end of the ark’s journey to be preserved when so many other parts of the story are omitted. Remember that there was a huge amount of human drama associated with the Flood. Had it been recorded, it could have oc-

| <u>Date</u> | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 14 th Abib | Passover | Christ crucified. |
| 15 th Abib | Feast of Unleavened Bread, first day | |
| 16 th Abib | Weekly Sabbath | |
| 17 th Abib | Firstfruits | Christ resurrected. |

Figure 2 Events that occurred in the first month of the religious calendar

cupied thousands of pages of text. But God does not care for human drama, and He does not want us to be preoccupied by it. He wants us to focus our attention on following in the footsteps of Christ. That is probably why the aspects of Noah's life that point forward to Christ are emphasized in the record. And when we see the Lord in the life of Noah, it is a reminder to us that people should be able to see the Lord in our lives as well. We will continue our consideration of Noah's departure from the ark in the next article in this series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. See also Genesis 30: 22 and Numbers 10: 9.
2. Jack Glover. "Thoughts on Noah's Ark." *The Testimony*, August 1995.
3. The LXX renders "and the waters asswaged" as "and the water stayed."
4. See, for example, Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.81. He states, "Moses...appointed Nisan...as the first month for the festivals...the commencement of the year for everything relating to divine worship, but for selling and buying and other ordinary affairs he preserved the ancient order (i.e. the year beginning with Tishrei)."
5. Rob Hyndman. *The Times: A Chronology of the Bible*, (Victoria, Australia: Bethel, 2000). Available at <http://www.robjhyndman.com/bible/times/times.pdf>

New Editor of the Christadelphian

*As some of you might have noticed from the September **Christadelphian**, it has a new editor, Bro. Andrew Bramhill. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the former editor, Bro. Michael Ashton over the past twenty-five years. He has provided a steady hand in these past turbulent years, and given freely in efforts and advice to us in North America. I am sure we will see him over here quite frequently in the future, and I am sure you will all join with me in wishing him well. I would not say "in retirement", for I expect his efforts for the Truth to continue, although perhaps not in the strenuous way his editorship required.*

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Learning Together (1)

Sunday school teachers are used to working with mixed-ability classes. As in ecclesias, we do not separate off the intellectually bright from the slow. We can all learn from each other, appreciating the special contribution that each part of the body can make to the successful function of the whole.

Sometimes we may have in our Sunday school children who are “learning disabled”. They may have congenital abnormalities, like Down Syndrome; they may be brain damaged, or simply slow learners. They may have multiple handicaps. Some are easy to recognize by their physical characteristics. Others will be less obvious. But we shall soon be aware, as we teach them, that they have memory retention problems, difficulties with concentration and problems with understanding.

How like us! We have to admit that we are all “learning disabled” in the things of God. We hear the message and so soon forget it! We start the readings and find our minds wandering! We are all too often “fools and slow of understanding” in spiritual things.

If we remind ourselves of this, we shall be even more motivated to do our best for all the children in the class, whatever their capability. What is more, we shall encourage the class to respect all of the members. Cleverness is no passport to the kingdom. Humility and love are essential requirements. Children with learning difficulties provide a real opportunity for the strong to help support the weak. The disabled will often demonstrate strengths of their own that the more apparently capable may lack.

The Lord's example

But how are we going to cope with such children and make their learning experience worthwhile, at the same time as managing the rest of the class? What did the Lord do with his slow learning disciples?

- 1) He cut through the complicated burden of the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees to get to the heart of God's message. The key points of any effective lesson will be simple and relevant.
- 2) With admirable patience he kept repeating the same points, over and over again.
- 3) He made extensive use of visual aids, drawing on the experiences of his listeners.
- 4) He engaged them in active learning. We all generally learn by doing faster than we learn by listening. He demonstrated his message and gave his disciples opportunities to have a go themselves! In fact the whole point of teaching people about God's kingdom is to enlist them into active service now, in preparation for the future.

Keep it simple

Take the story of Naaman (2Kings 5). Much of the detail and KJV Bible language that the more able children can grasp will be lost on the less able: e.g., Syria, “mighty man of valor”, leprosy, mistress, prophet, talents, raiment, rending of clothes, flesh, rivers of Damascus.

But we might successfully link the story to the children’s own experience: being in someone else’s house without your own mom and dad, being kind and helpful to a sick person, going to the doctor (would taking a big present make any difference?), being obedient — medicine is not always welcome!

At the heart of the story is the lesson to be kind and helpful in all situations, and to be obedient to God. We shall want to emphasize that baptism is a key demonstration of such obedience. A simple proof, like “*You must obey the voice of the LORD your God*” (Deut 27:10), would be appropriate.

Of course, the lesson will not be all talk. Some activity will be needed — drawing and coloring, simple model-making, dramatization, filling in missing words, checking off the right answers, a simple word search. Clearly what is possible will depend on the capabilities of the class. Where there is a great range of ability and maturity, different activities will be needed to meet differing individual needs. The teacher’s knowledge and experience of each child is the guide.

Involve the parents

Education is a partnership, involving parents, students and teachers. Sometimes disabled learners are not easily able to communicate with parents what has gone on in the lesson. But if we teachers can get the parents working with us, how much more effective the process of learning will be. So we must talk to them, spend time finding out what they can tell us about their child’s abilities and interests. They can help us to find out what succeeds. We can seek their cooperation in preparing for the lesson, in following up by reinforcing the message, by ensuring that any follow-up task is managed successfully.

Above all we must remember that the key partner in our work is the Lord, himself. His attitude to us will be the inspiration for our attitude to each of our students!

Michael Owen (Seaton, UK)

Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.

Tidings on Facebook

*There is a now a Facebook page for the **Tidings**. Hosted by Bro. Levi Gelineau, it currently posts the Daily Readings along with some other comments. In future we hope to add relevant News and Notices, so please “Friend” this page. (Bro. Levi can be contacted at leviandjessica@gmail.com.) [And if you have no idea what I am talking about — do not worry!]*

Reflections

Overcoming the Dens and Caves of Life (3)

In the previous two articles, we have considered how David had confronted some of the caves of his life, either in physical or mental peril and anguish. We conclude this theme, continuing David's experiences and contrasting them with those of Jesus Christ.

6) Reaching Out to Others

In 1Sam 22 we find David escaping Gath for the Cave of Adullam. Perhaps we can picture him hiding in the recesses of this dank, dark cave warily watching for Saul and his troops. Chapter 22 also explains that David did not spend all his time in the cave alone. Instead, his brother's and father's house gathered to meet him in the cave (1Sam 22:1), and this small group grew daily to include "*everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented [Hb. bitter of soul]*" (1Sam 22:2), until 400 men had mustered around the former captain of Saul's army!

One might naturally assume that David and this troubled crew shared a mournful 'pity party' amidst the solitude of the cave. However, David could clearly see that the strength of this group lay not in collectively commiserating over their troubles, but in elevating each other and channeling their energies into something positive. This could only happen if someone provided strong leadership and spiritual guidance, and so, David bowed to the privilege and "became a captain over them" (1Sam 22:2). Gradually, through David's organization and ability to draw out the best from people, "this desultory, low spirited company was forged into a closely knit, responsible and loyal troop, energized by the courageous, godly, faithful strength of a man who 'had not where to lay his head' ".¹

There are several powerful lessons to observe from this moving record. When we learn of someone who is experiencing troubles, it may be our first inclination to avoid them. Perhaps we do not know what to say, or how to help. We may steer a wide course from them, fearful the dark and despair of another's cave will swallow us up. Rather, when we are aware of the struggle, we should take the example of David's family and 'go down to the cave', reach in with a helping hand and assist those who are "bowed down" and "among lions" (Psa 57:4).

While suffering in the cave, we can become completely focused on self: our problems, our challenges, our misery, what I need, what I am dealing with. The magnitude of our trial may indeed be quite serious and burdensome (it is not to be minimized!), but we will benefit greatly, at some point, by shifting our focus from self to others.

David and his crew would gain nothing by collectively wallowing in their personal distress, debt and discontent. This only serves to further rot and destroy ones spirits. Instead, listening to others, comforting the downtrodden, helping lift others

from the mire, and sharing the confidences we have in God can help restore our spirits and move us forward. Granted, God as a comfort provided the 400 men to a lonely, anxious man, but they also became his responsibility. As God had ‘sheltered David under His own wing,’ so David saw a need to shepherd this flock of sheep threatened by beasts of prey. In effect, it also became an opportunity to “*praise thee, O LORD, among the people*” (Psa 57:9).

With David as captain, the gloom of the cave was swiftly swept away. Adullam means ‘justice for the people,’ and it was here that David began to rebuild the justice which Saul’s faithless leadership had destroyed. It is remarkable to observe that the number of men following David grows from 400 to 600 in the space of one chapter (cf. 1Sam 22:2 with 1Sam 23:13). It is equally striking that Adullam is described as a cave in 1Sam 22:1, but shortly thereafter as a stronghold (Hb. fortress) (1Sam 22:4 ESV)! God had ‘answered David’s prayers’ (Psa 142:1,6), ‘brought his soul out of prison,’ ‘compassed him’ (Hb. to crown, as a captain) about with the righteous’ (Psa 142:7), and provided him ‘refuge under His wings’ (Psa 57:1).

When we channel our energies into Godly support and leadership, it is amazing how the cave can, with time and patience, slowly dissolve and give way to God’s warmth and light.

7) Exiting the Cave

It would be a mistake to assume that David readily applied the aforementioned solutions, and immediately ‘the storms of destruction passed by’ (Psa 57:1). Although we do not know how long David abode in Adullam or En-gedi, the Psalms suggest a prolonged stay, accompanied by a protracted struggle to come to grips with the trial. The battle between the ‘carnal mind’ (Rom 8:7) and the ‘inward man’ (Rom 7:22) was intense, as evidenced within the Psalms by the frequent flip-flop of confidence and despair. Trust in the Father was not developed overnight, rather it took time and tears.

It also took time before David was ready to rise and exit the cave. He had found refuge, respite, friends and family while in the cave. Perhaps life had stabilized, and the thought of moving from the cave, only to expose himself to Saul and the risk of greater distress, was strong motivation to stay put.

Our personal trials may also require a prolonged struggle, in which God-centered solutions do not come about immediately. The caves may crush our spirit and deplete our energy. Often, it is challenging to shake off the despair, draw near to God, and work with Him to overcome our challenges. Emerging from the cave is not an easy process.

But, prayer cannot simply be presumption. “Prayer is cooperating with God. It does not leave everything to Him, nor does it ignore His help”². If we ask God to help us with our burden, He expects us to act on our prayers. David could not pray for refuge from Saul and then stand waiting in the open fields of the Shephalah for his imminent destruction. Likewise, he could not pray, “Bring me out of prison” (Psa 142:7) if he was not willing to look for the exit and firmly grasp God’s hand as He drew him from the pit.

Eventually, divine direction came to deliver David from the danger. The prophet Gad meets David and tells him to “depart, and go to the land of Judah” (1Sam 22:5). It was time to exit the cave and find safety, but it was also a test of David’s obedience. Without questioning, David and his men accept God’s guiding hand and travel onwards to the forest of Hereth some 20km north near Hebron.

There comes a time in our own cave experiences, hard as it may be, when we must do the same. Pick ourselves up, stumble from its dark recesses to the opening, and though blind to the future, move forward in full confidence that God ‘knows our way’ and will continue to be ‘our refuge’ wherever we may reside ‘in the land of the living’ (Psa 142:3,5). In *The Man David*, Harry Tennant provides a touching summary of this last solution:

“Weeping relieves feeling and betokens inner emotions, but it does not solve problems. Out of our tears finally, if they are to be of value to us, there must emerge a resolve of spirit. Perpetual and inconsolable grief is defeat and self-destruction. However great the burden, however irreplaceable the loss, however terrible the desolation which brings about our sorrow, for the follower of Jesus the moment must come when, having poured all our tears into God’s bottle, we lift up our head and say ‘Arise, and let us be going!’ ”³

Christ and the Cave

David’s experiences at Adullam and En-gedi are two of the most prominent ‘cave events’ in Scripture. Yet, the most significant is contained in the New Testament. While preaching to the Jews in Antioch, Paul summarizes the account when he says “*And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre*” (Acts 13:29). The word ‘sepulchre’ or ‘tomb’ is the same Greek word translated ‘cave’ in John 11:38 whereby John describes the burial place for Lazarus. It is heartening to recognize that even Jesus spent time in a cave.

The Old Testament foreshadowed the power of this event many years earlier. In Josh 10, we find Joshua mounting a battle at Gibeon against the united forces of five Amorite kings. Collectively, the kings represented the sin that Israel was commanded to remove from the Promised Land. In an attempt to evade Joshua, the kings flee and hide in the Cave of Makkedah, several kilometers north-west of the Cave of Adullam. When Joshua finds them, he has the men dragged from the cave, and instructs his captains to place their feet on the necks of the kings (Josh 10:24). Afterwards, “*Joshua smote them, slew them, and hanged them on five trees ... And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave’s mouth*” (Josh 10:26-27).

The events at Makkedah pointed forward to the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The feet placed on the necks of the five kings are an echo from Gen 3:15 where the head of the serpent is to be crushed by the heel of the seed of the woman. In effect, sin (as represented by the kings) was slain by Joshua (a type of Christ),

hung on a tree to die, removed in the evening and placed in a cave behind a great stone (Mark 15). Although God rolled the stone back and raised Christ from the cave (Mark 15:46), sin was left behind, never to exit again.

Once again, God's salvation is illustrated through events surrounding a cave. The very man that released others from physical, emotional and spiritual caves (e.g. Lazarus, Legion) was saved from the cave and freed from the shackles of sin. His release from the cave is surety of our own salvation. Ultimately, it is sin that brings us to the cave, but 'king sin', along with our human struggles, can be overcome through trust and hope in God. As he stood over the five kings at Makkedah, Joshua reminded Israel of this same hope: "*Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight*" (Josh 10:25).

In addition to the physical cave, it is encouraging to recall that the Lord Jesus also experienced emotional and spiritual caves throughout his life. He was ill-treated, slandered, betrayed by friends, pursued by his enemies, and accused falsely. At times, he must have been lonely and overwhelmed, ready to retract from those around him, curl up in a dark place and leave the crowds behind. In the garden he was '*greatly distressed, troubled, and very sorrowful, even to death*' (Mark 14:33 ESV).

When his spirit was overwhelmed, Jesus turned to the same solutions as David. In the dark and anguish of Gethsemane, Jesus left his disciples three times to pour out his pain to God in prayer (Mark 14). Several times Jesus weeps to relieve his emotions (Luke 19:41; John 11:35). During the transfiguration, we can be sure he drew strength from the faithful 'past' experiences of Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:28-31). In Mark 13 Jesus expresses his 'future' assurance of the kingdom age: "*then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory*" (Mark 13:26).

Throughout his ministry, Jesus devoted himself to helping others through comfort, healing, and teaching. Of Christ, Isaiah declares, "*the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*" (Isa 61:1). Despite their weaknesses, even the disciples are commended for supporting a lonely man during his darkest hours: "*Ye are they which continued with me in my temptations*" (Luke 22:28). Finally, Jesus recognized it was time to exit the despair of Gethsemane, and to be obedient to the cross, when he instructs his disciples "*Rise up, let us go!*" (Mark 14:42).

Cave experiences played a necessary part in the development of the Lord Jesus. While pursued by his betrayers, there was method in the madness: like David, he was being prepared to become the next King of Israel. We are comforted and inspired when we realize, that he too "*offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard*" (Heb 5:7).

'They Without Us'

We began by considering the faithful saints of Hebrews 11 who experienced both triumph and trial, including experiences where many “*wandered in dens and caves of the earth*” (Heb 11:38). Hebrews 11 closes with some encouraging thoughts for ALL who have spent time in caves and relied on God's strength to help them through: “*These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*” (Heb 11:40).

Despite the tough times they endured, they have not yet received their full inheritance. Instead, they await a future day when, together with us, we will ALL witness the fulfillment of God's salvation in the kingdom age.

The darkness of the cave is an overwhelming experience. Everyone who truly follows God will enter the Cave of Adullam sooner or later. Perhaps our sin brings us there; perhaps the testing of our faith, or perhaps the correction of the love of God. The experience has been designed by God and is necessary for our proper growth. Adversity is one of the tools God uses to chisel our characters into shape, and we must allow that to happen. Through it, our patience, trust and faith in God are developed.

Far from abandoning us, God brings us to the cave to recognize, like David: “*THOU art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness*” (2Sam 22:29). The cave is not made for despair. Instead, it forces us to seek refuge in God and to lean on God-given solutions as illustrated so faithfully in the life of David — a type of Christ, and a man after God's own heart. In so doing, our Father will ultimately dispel our darkness, rescue us from the cave, and “*deal bountifully with us*” (Psa 142:7).

(Concluded)

Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON)

Notes:

1. Harry Tennant, *The Man David*, 2nd ed., The Christadelphian, 1996, p. 42-43.
2. H.P. Mansfield, *Making Prayer Powerful*, Logos Publications, 1974, p. 37-38.
3. Harry Tennant, *The Man David*, 2nd ed., The Christadelphian, 1996, p. 33.

The Wise Man Among You

Legal Papers

When I was in the maternity ward after birthing my daughter, I was given a package containing several items. There were coupons for baby products, a photographer's price list, and there were the legal documents which I was obligated to fill out and file in order to legally register my daughter's birth and chosen names. It was exciting to fill in these documents at a time when I wanted the whole world to be aware that one of the greatest things ever to happen to me had been born. The idea that it was a legal obligation made little or no impression on me.

This summer that daughter got married. When planning a wedding we accept the responsibility of another legal obligation, and the signing of the necessary

documents is such a small part of that day that it is often passed over with very little thought.

How many of us have made a will? When a loved one dies, it is often necessary to obtain the legal death certificate in order to process the will of the person who has died. A will is considered to be especially important if you have children. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob recognized this, and their final wills and testaments are recorded for us in Genesis. Joseph's final will and testament asked that his bones be taken out of Egypt and buried in the land of Canaan (Gen 50: 22-26; Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32). His will was a form of prophecy fulfilled, in the act of compliance. If we have made up a will, then there are legal obligations to the wishes mentioned in that will. Perhaps the estate of a brother or sister is left to the ecclesia with specific instructions that the homeless be fed or that the ecclesial parking lot be repaved. Whatever it is, the legal will is filed and the laws of many countries allow and support that final wish or gesture.

Consider this, that in North America and in most other countries in the world, all our births, marriages, and deaths are legally registered. In order to travel anywhere in the world, we are required to carry a passport which indicates the country where we hold citizenship. We live and therefore are legally obligated to obey the laws of the land in which we dwell, and the country in which we are born is legally obligated to bestow on its citizens the rights and privileges for which they qualify. These rights and privileges are not something that we have to apply for in order to benefit from, but are an automatic occurrence assumed for all the qualifying individuals of the country. Perhaps we are not conscious of or even acknowledge the use we make of the legal system in everyday life. This is not completely unscriptural: Paul took advantage of his legal position as a Roman. (Acts 16:35-39)

Disputes

Although we may feel somewhat comfortable with the above mentioned scenarios, what about when disputes arise and a brother or sister finds themselves in conflict with another person, whether within the ecclesia or outside of it? How do we feel about an individual who pursues legal action against another, seeks legal advice, uses the legal system to settle a dispute, or allows the legal system to police an agreement already reached? Most of us hope to avoid having to deal with these situations, and the best way to do that is to avoid using the legal system of the land, and to encourage members of our community to do the same. If someone is seeking legal advice or taking legal action to solve a problem, a typical reaction from our community is to reprimand that person. We chastise them for behaving in a way that we feel is contrary to how a brother or sister of Christ should behave, and ask them to cease their pursuit of justice through the legal system. Using the legal system may become our focus, instead of us trying to understand the reasons motivating the individual to pursue this avenue for resolving the conflict in the first place.

“The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.” — Theodore Rubin.

In his pride the wicked does not seek God; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. He says to himself, *“Nothing will shake me; I’ll always be happy and never have trouble”* (Psa 10:4,6 NIV).

We need not feel as though we are all alone with this issue; the ecclesia in Corinth struggled with the same things. Paul acknowledges that there will be disputes, or conflicts. His first and foremost concern was that the ecclesia assist those who are struggling with these challenges by accepting that they happen and providing a way of helping people through them. Paul addresses it by asking the probing question: *“... is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?”* (1Cor 6: 1-10 NKJV). In other words, Paul was asking, is there not one hoary head that you can employ to discern between opposing parties, when disputes arise? Surely there must be someone who is well respected, who is able to use the moral Godly principles which you have been taught, and who can use the wisdom of their years to come up with solutions to disputes you might have with other brothers or sisters, or even with your neighbor outside of the ecclesia. Is it not possible that you could police your own agreements so that brethren don’t land up in prison, or even in trouble with the authorities of the land in which you live? Surely this is better and more likely to be justly decided than going to the courts of the land? Surely mercy is more likely to be a factor with your wise man, than with these same courts?

This was not a new concept in Israel. Think for instance of the judges which Moses appointed to help him with the matters of governing as they travelled through the wilderness (Exod 18:13-26). Think of the men sitting at the gates of Bethlehem who upheld the law, and witness it’s provision for Boaz to take Ruth as his wife (Ruth 4:1-12). Outside of Israel the laws were made by men, and perhaps the courts of Paul’s day in Corinth, were so corrupt that justice was rarely done, or perhaps the courts were amoral, and not built on Godly principles. For whatever reason, Paul implores the Corinthian brethren to look within their congregation of believing elders for a wise man who could help them settle things amongst themselves.

The fact that Paul asks this question, tells us a few things about this community and the believers of that time. First, they obviously struggled with similar challenges that we struggle with today. They were human beings dealing with all the imperfections and sinful tendencies of their natures, and the world around them. They were influenced and seduced by the world, and often failed to measure up to the example set by Christ. They were living in a community and country that did not care what their beliefs were, with laws and traditions that were often contrary to beliefs they held. Not only was it a challenge to stay pure and avoid the world’s influence, but also it was a challenge to preach by example. Next, they were asked to look as much to the keeping of the moral code as they were to the laws of the land. Obedience to the laws of the land included giving to Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and to God the things which are God’s (Matt 22:21). And the moral code demanded that they become and remain accountable for their personal lives, before God (2Cor 5:10). This would include the way they treated their neighbor and each other; it involved looking after the fatherless and the widow (James 1:27), and lastly serving the community in which they were living (Rom 12:9-21; John

3:16). Does this command to a high calling and the struggles or conflicts with human nature sound familiar? Not much has changed in the past two thousand years. We are asked to do the same things: to be obedient to both the laws of the land and accountable before God.

Many have decided that to compare ourselves to Old Testament times on this topic is irrelevant since we are not under the Law of Moses, which was perfect, and we are not living in Israel. Others have decided that the first century advice from Paul is irrelevant since pagan government no longer governs us. Obviously, Corinth was built and run on human and often pagan religious laws and traditions which would have given the believers then an extra challenge to cope with and all the more reason to seek for the 'wise man among them.' However, we neither live in ancient Israel, under the Law of Moses, nor in First Century Pagan Rome, thus we might be better served if we consider this issue in the modern context. Perhaps the biggest difference now is the fact that in our time some nation's laws are presumably based on Christian principles. Even if countries take measures to separate their legal systems from religious definition or influence, laws such as "thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal" and so on, are recognizable in the laws of these Christian based countries. On top of that, the consequences of breaking those laws, although perhaps not as severe as the original consequences would have been, are deemed to be severe enough to deter those who would flout their authority.

However even in a country whose laws are based on Christian principles, the question of how much we use the law and how often we take advantage of that law is something that presents many of us with a difficult challenge. There are various reasons given for shying away from either providing a wise man within our community or using the legal system of the country we live in to settle disputes or legal questions. These reasons include the following:

- Some do not understand the legal system of the land, and are intimidated by ignorance into inaction, not motivated to educate themselves where necessary.
- Some rationalize that we don't have time or energy to involve ourselves in the disputes of others, because of our prior commitments within the community.
- Some come to the conclusion that to get involved is wrong and somehow condones the behavior of one or both parties, or makes us into busy bodies poking about where we should not be.
- Some believe that a brother or sister seeking legal assistance is in the wrong, simply because they are seeking it, and that they should "turn the other cheek", "suffer yourself to be defrauded" and seek to "live peaceably".

Therefore, often the reaction is to avoid confrontations, avoid casting a judgment of our own or voicing our opinion, or ignore them in an effort to keep order and peace. The result is that nothing is resolved for the people directly involved in the conflict. Whatever the reasons and reactions to these conflicts, the fact remains that disputes and conflicts do arise, and to wish they would go away, or to suggest that they don't exist, would be akin to believing that we are all perfect and in the Kingdom. We are conceding to greater ignorance when we do not acknowledge them.

Our ecclesial schedules, the demands of family, the strain of work, and other obligations, make life very busy. Ironically, although we may have very high demands on our time, as students of the Bible we are readily willing to discuss in great detail and at great length many Biblical topics. Discussions involving doctrine and interpretation, are given our full attention, often with a view to conversion. However, many times the topics that are personal, moral or relational are avoided, ignored, or left with the best of intentions, to be dealt with another day. Yet, these are usually the areas in which conflicts, needing a wise man among us, arise. We can excuse this by acknowledging the importance of preaching the gospel, and none would dispute this, but we are also supposed to be known as people who love each other. It is to be our defining attribute as disciples. If we are unable to resolve conflicts, we do not promote love. We are also supposed to be known as those who uphold a moral code, given to us by God. If we do not speak to personal behavior, in a loving way, and support the belief that we need to treat each person we come into contact with as Jesus would have treated them, and by doing so to reflect the love of God into their lives, then what good is all the doctrinal teaching going to do? A person can know what is right and wrong from a doctrinal standpoint and yet be condemned by their behavior and lifestyle. Christ did not come to save the righteous according to the law, but to reach those in the darkness of immorality. We are asked to carry on his work, to be lights in a dark world, to shine Christ's light for the lost to see. We are asked to come along side those in the darkness and show them the right way, and encourage them in striving for it. In light of this fact it would seem ultimately important, even essential that we take a very good long hard look at how we are handling any sort of dispute that may go before a court of law in whatever country we happen to live, before the parties involved have to resort to using the legal system available to them.

The Wise Man

So, who is this wise man? It is worth noticing a few things about what Paul has to say on this topic. First, that a wise man is not necessarily described as someone who holds any particular office within the ecclesia. So often we feel that to take on legal matters ourselves would overburden our Arranging Brethren who are already weighed down by "*the cares of the ecclesia*" (2Cor 11:28). However a careful reading of the text does not allude to that at all. The only quality necessary is wisdom; both in what is necessary as a follower of Christ, and in life experience. And grey hair is a definite asset! Second, we are not asked to write or rewrite the law of the land or God's law. There is a format already in place and all we need do, is use the God given principles and examples to help us interpret the law and protect the innocent. As a community of believers, we are not asked to like the fact that there are conflicts, but we are asked to deal with them in a spirit of love, and we are given the tools and the instructions to do just that. Whether it is a breach of contract in business or a divorce settlement, the principles of the conflicts, and the solutions to the conflicts are the same. We as a community of believers in the same things that the Corinthians believed in, and under the same laws of Christ that they adhered to, similarly should be seeking, "the wise man" among us.

If a contract of any kind is formulated and filed as law within the courts of the land in which we live, it becomes law. With that comes the legal understanding that the courts we have trusted with the decision will be the same courts that we will trust to do the job of making sure the parties meet their obligations and responsibilities. When we waive the responsibility we have to our brothers and sisters to find the hoary head to help find solutions to conflicts and disagreements between us, we inadvertently waive our ability to comment, criticize, or control the policing of that agreement. When one, or both, of the parties fails to meet the obligations and responsibilities to each other, it does no good to then bring this reference of 1 Cor .6:1-10 to the parties involved as proof that they have to let the matter go and allow God to decide on what judgment will be placed on the offending individual. At that point this is not only unrealistic, but also impossible. The courts of the land will do the job they have been asked to do, without any reference or even acknowledgement of our personal or ecclesial views.

However, a careful reading of 1 Cor 6:1-10 helps us to avoid the frustration associated with poorly made decisions and permits us to be part of a very cooperative and communally beneficial solution in resolving conflicts. This passage indicates that the responsibility of conflict resolution falls primarily on the ecclesia! If there is no wise man to be found, or if we choose not to appoint that wise man to handle these challenges amongst us, we are in fact encouraging and sometimes forcing our brethren who come up against conflict and disagreement, and to seek to have it assessed and decided upon in the courts of the land in which we live. Although this is something that we readily acknowledge, we kick against the very thing that we have encouraged, if things go awry. Further, in not providing a wise man to speak to brethren or ex-brethren about the moral aspects of their conduct does a great disservice to not only our brother or sister, but also to those parties involved in their wrong doing, and those who are victims of his or her immoral actions. Some would promote withdrawing from a brother or sister completely in an effort to remind him or her of the error of their ways. That withdrawal also absolves us from any need for intervention with what that individual is doing. In actual fact it gives the distinct impression, if not the blatant message, that withdrawal then removes accountability.

Obviously some personal relationships, including things such as molestation and physical abuse, need to be dealt with by the legal system of the country. In many places individuals are legally obligated to report molestation of children, and other forms of abuse, and there is no place for the wise man, however willing they may be to help in this situation. Sometimes there needs to be serious measures taken to protect the children and other family members from an abusive individual. It would seem incomprehensible that Paul would be alluding to these sorts of situations when suggesting that they appoint a wise man from among them. In turn, do we condemn a person for using the God given securities available to them in order to save a life or protect a child? Do we punish the victims because of the crime, instead of reaching out to them in love and giving them our protection? Do we in effect support the behavior of an abuser, molester, or violent criminal, by disallowing or discouraging legal action towards them? By asking our community

not to use the legal system available to them in these examples, we in fact become an accessory to the crime by enabling it to continue. This is a fact, which we very well could be called to account for ourselves by both the courts of the land and the God which we serve.

The idea of a wise man among us to counsel those in need of assistance in settling disputes is a concept that is often easier to discuss than to implement. Let us consider then what this would look like if we could put it into practice. A very familiar scenario is a divorce. If a divorced couple are struggling to meet the obligations of their divorce agreement, having a wise man in place would provide the buffer needed between the two parties to come to an agreement as to the responsibilities of each party and how they will be implemented. It also allows the wise man to act as the person they are accountable to if they do not meet their responsibilities. If there is a breach in the agreement the wise man can be there to help rectify the issue or challenges they are facing. Perhaps the woman is not allowing the man to visit the children. The man would go to the appointed wise man and in turn that wise man would go to the woman and discover why she is acting in this way. A solution that meets the criteria of the agreement can be developed, and at the same time the woman's concerns about the situation are better understood. If the man is unable to pay for the support of the children from the marriage, the woman could go to the wise man and he in turn would speak to the man regarding this matter. Perhaps the ecclesia needs to step in with some short term financial help, or employment for the man, but at the very least the children would not suffer from want, and the situation would not escalate to the level of either party having to take further outside legal action against each other.

Going outside the typical example of divorce, we could also consider the personal contracts that we enter into with not only fellow believers, but also those outside of our faith. The wise man could help formulate the contract within the parameters and wishes of the parties involved, and there would be less opportunity for the vulnerable to be taken advantage of by preying individuals either within or outside of the community. The same system of using the wise man as a buffering between the two parties when they come into conflict, could be used not only to solve any issues arising, but also the give council and advice to both parties which could help to give perspective to the situation. Perhaps Paul's suggestion of using the wise man could be seen as form of outreach, while protecting and taking care of the flock already gathered. By setting up a system of administering this sort of care and compassion to our members and to those that we are interacting with, we could be known as a community who advertises and actively supports the ideas of honoring contracts, promoting good marriages, healthy families, and being active in our community, so that they know who we are by what we do!!

It is a question for today: Is there not a wise man among you?

Eileen Henthorn (Victoria, BC)

"Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living, the other helps you make a life" (Sandra Carey).

Thoughts on Science and Faith — Noah's Ark

In a recent *Tidings Magazine*,¹ an article tackled three common questions posed by those who challenge the veracity of the Bible's flood account and Noah's deliverance:

- 1) Were dinosaurs on Noah's Ark and if so what happened to them?
- 2) How did they all, including dinosaurs, fit in the ark?
- 3) How did all the animals make it to the Ark?

The intent of the article was three-fold. First, it was meant to acknowledge that these kinds of questions are legitimate when asked in good faith, particularly by young people and interested friends. Second, as believers in the Bible, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to those with whom we come into contact to have developed thoughtful answers to those kinds of questions. We should never let indifference to the subject be the reason we offer "just have faith" as an explanation to a reasonable question. Third, since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we need not fear challenging questions being asked of it. It will withstand any legitimate test.

However, the article was limited in two main respects. First, due to space constraints, it did not properly acknowledge the limitations of the answers to the questions that were presented. Second, it did not state in sufficiently clear terms that while the questions posed need to be addressed, there is a need to be aware of and avoid the trap of thinking that only the historical records of science and archeology, or our own intellect for that matter, can be used to prove the veracity of all Scripture. These two limitations will each be considered in turn to address the article's deficiencies and to clarify its intent.

Were dinosaurs on Noah's Ark, and if so what happened to them?

To explain the existence of dinosaurs, how they could have fit in the ark and why they became extinct in a postdiluvian Earth two different theories were discussed in the article. The first theory is commonly referred to as the "water canopy" theory. This theory, first proposed by the Quaker, Isaac Newton Vail, over 125 years ago, states that a thick layer of water vapor (or ice) blanketed parts of the antediluvian Earth's atmosphere. This atmospheric water canopy would have been the source of the water used to flood the entire Earth during Noah's time. Also, it is argued that this water canopy would have protected antediluvian creatures from the harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) radiation. This protection would explain the longevity of pre-flood humanity. Animals, including dinosaurs, would have also benefited from this protection. According to those who proclaim this theory, this elongated lifespan could explain why some humans and even dinosaurs grew to be "giants" (Gen 6:4). Once this water vapor canopy precipitated and the protection was removed (i.e., the flood), some animals were particularly affected by the sudden increase in UV radiation and became extinct (e.g., dinosaurs). This theory is commonly used by some in our community in support of their understanding of the Genesis account.

Unfortunately, neither the Bible nor science directly supports the idea that a "water canopy" existed over this Earth during Noah's time. The Hebrew word (*raqia*)

used to describe the “expanse” or “firmament (KJV)” in Genesis 1:6-8 does not necessarily affirm the existence of a water canopy. In fact, it is used later in the same chapter to describe the place where the constellations reside (Gen 1:14), as well as the place where the birds fly (Gen 1:20). But more importantly, *raqia* is also used to describe a postdiluvian expanse (Psa 19:1). Therefore, the text does not provide any direct or indirect evidence of an antediluvian “water canopy”.

Scientifically, this concept also presents us with major difficulties. The presence of a thick canopy on the Earth’s atmosphere would have significantly impeded “the lights in the expanse” from being directly observed from the Earth, creating a potential contradiction of Gen 1:14. In addition, the theory also postulates that the canopy would have retained within it enough water vapor volume to cover the Earth during the flood — upwards of 22 feet — above the tallest mountains. This amount of water vapor would have dramatically increased Earth’s atmospheric pressure and the unbearable surface heat produced from this rise in pressure would have significantly hindered life on Earth. Due to space constraints, we will not be able to discuss in detail the many other scientific reasons that contradict this theory, including the effects that gravity would have had on this canopy and the obvious problems that photosynthetic organisms would have faced given the reduced amount of light capable of reaching Earth’s surface.

How did they all, including dinosaurs, fit in the ark?

The second topic discusses how dinosaurs could have possibly fit in the ark together with all the other animals. In the article it is suggested that perhaps “baby dinosaurs” were placed in the ark, thus providing a solution to the insurmountable problem posed by the size of some adult dinosaurs. The first problem with this somewhat reasonable proposition is that the vast majority of the fossil evidence unambiguously points to the pre-Adamic existence of dinosaurs thus, in all likelihood, Noah did not have to deal with this difficulty because dinosaurs were not alive during his time. But for the sake of argument, let us assume that “baby dinosaurs” made it into the ark. Why aren’t these dinosaurs with us today? There is no scientific evidence or historical record to support the hypothesis that UV radiation or any other postdiluvian climate change (i.e., within the past ~6,000 years) would have selectively eliminated this entire Order of the *Reptilian Class*. It is a very attractive speculation, but that is all it is. Regardless, although questions of exactly when dinosaurs first populated Earth and how they became extinct (gradual versus catastrophic) are still debated in the scientific community, the evidence consistently supports the conclusion that both of these events predated Adam and Eve. Some within our community contend that both science and Scripture support the idea of life on Earth prior to the Edenic Creation. For example, Gen 1:2 could be rendered “*And the earth became waste and empty*”, and this would be in harmony with Isa 45:18. In fact, some of our past brethren believed in the existence of an inhabited pre-Adamic Earth: see, for example, *Elpis Israel chapter 2* by Bro. Thomas or *The Christadelphian Expositor: Genesis* by Bro. Mansfield.

How did all the animals make it to the Ark?

Finally, theories regarding the incredible worldwide journey that many species

would have undertaken to reach the ark are not directly supported by science. For example, it is argued that perhaps distances across continents were much shorter in the antediluvian world (i.e., allowing for easy travel from one continent to the other). Great tectonic plate movements surrounding the flood event could have dramatically changed Earth's landscape, establishing the long distances we find today between places like Australia and the Middle East. Once again this is speculative, and it is not directly supported either by science or by the Biblical account in Gen 6-9 (i.e., we may assume earthquakes but they are not mentioned in the record). No verifiable geological footprint has been found to support a global catastrophe of such magnitude. In addition, although science might be able to explain how all the animals journeyed to the ark, it is incapable of describing how they returned to their points of origin following this cataclysmic event. For example, how did some of the marsupial species found only in Australia journey all the way back to Australia following the flood? It is worth noting that the account in Genesis 6-9 does not rule out the possibility of a local flooding event, and some brethren have argued that the flood could have been, in fact, local. For example, Bro Roberts argued strongly for a local flood.²

Caution

None of us can truly conceive the appalling and awe-inspiring power of Yahweh. The article correctly states, "There are no definitive answers to these questions". No wrong can come from this proclamation. It points us to our faith. Caution is warranted when we attempt to provide evidence-based answers to these miraculous events using "scientific" arguments, which some reasonably regard as outdated.

In the history of our Christadelphian community there has always been numerous opinions regarding the origins and age of our planet. Some brethren believe that the Earth dates back to approximately 6,000 years while others believe in a much older Earth (millions or billions of years). Opinions have also varied when it comes to our understanding of where and how the flood took place. At all times, however, we have been encouraged to seek "*after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*" (Rom 14:19). For example, while the Scriptures do not necessarily reveal the age of our planet, they clearly teach us that God, our Father, is the Creator of all.

Due to space constraints, the article presented only one of the many explanations that have been offered to the questions posed. This omission of other points of view was not intended to be an indictment on those who hold them. Nor was it intended to promote indoctrination of the views contained within it.

Nevertheless, this consideration presents an opportunity to raise an important issue. In recent years, there have been Christadelphian publications and lectures where scientifically questionable presentations about creation and the flood were presented as material that *must* be accepted and taught by all. What is more concerning, some of the brethren who were proclaiming these theories did so while ridiculing those who make a living as scientists. This ought not to be.

We urge caution in promoting scientifically questionable theories in support of

one view of creation (or the flood) to the exclusion of others. First, it could lead to unnecessary fractures in our body. As the return of our Lord nears, we ought to focus on the things that unite and edify us as a community. Second, trust is the key to teaching and preaching the truth. Using questionable theories as teaching or preaching tools can backfire and may provide an unwarranted burden on our young people or on those who have just begun seeking out the Gospel. How? In today's world, almost anything we say and claim can be easily vetted using the vast amount of information that is readily available on the Internet. It is therefore imperative that we speak, teach and focus only on that which we believe to be true, while avoiding the use of conjectures to teach or preach the truth. That is not to say that reasoned arguments backed by scientific or archeological evidence are to be excluded from our presentations and conversations. When properly used, they can be quite beneficial.

Let us meet the challenge with faith

“And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace’ ” (Luke 7:50).

Faith is essential for salvation (Rom 1:16-17). There are times when the intersection of science and Scriptures can serve to strengthen that faith. But often science will challenge our belief in the veracity of Scriptures. Moreover, as discussed above, the use of scientific inaccuracies could cause even more harm than good. In these instances, it is profitable to rely on our faith. We must keep in mind that answers to our intellectual questions regarding challenging Biblical accounts (i.e., creation, the flood, the resurrection, etc.) might remain inaccessible to us until that day when all shall be revealed (Isa 40:5). Let us together meet this challenge with faith.

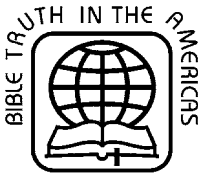
A complete understanding of the physics, chemistry and biology underlying God's miraculous work will not necessarily make any of us better servants of our Almighty Father. Having tangential proof of God's work does not necessarily lead to obedience: the Pharisees and Sadducees teach us this fact (e.g., Luke 16: 31). Faith and the instruction of Scripture help us become obedient. Noah, before beginning his arduous work of constructing the ark, did not need evidence or explanations of how the flood would take place. He did not need to know how the animals would get to and fit in the ark or how he would feed them. His faith in God guided and saved him (Eze 14:20, Heb 11:7). When faced with questions regarding the veracity of this account it might be helpful to not simply rely on scientific arguments or evidence but also be mindful of the beautiful lesson in faith that it teaches us.

Edgardo Rodriguez (Ann Arbor, MI) and Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Note: Brethren Rodriguez and Mutter are happy to be contacted by anyone interested in discussing these ideas in more detail. They can be reached at edgardo-rodriquez@uiowa.edu and rmutter1@umbc.edu, respectively.

Notes:

1. “As it was in the days of Noah”: (6) Objections Considered, Ryan Mutter. *Christadelphian Tidings*, July 2011 p 277.
2. *The Visible Hand of God*, Robert Roberts, p49 (1st Edition).



Bible Mission News

Five baptisms in El Salvador

On Sunday, June 26, the Christadelphians in El Salvador arose much earlier than usual in happy anticipation of the events planned for the day. All were due to arrive at the San Salvador hall by 9 am to celebrate together the decision taken by five friends of the Usulután Ecclesia to follow Jesus every day and to make their intention public through baptism. And so we gathered from different parts of the country, looking forward to this eagerly-awaited event with joy in the ecclesia and in heaven, as Jesus said so long ago:

"... there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

After studying for almost a year and a half under Bro. Jaime Mate during the visits he made every weekend with his wife Karla and three of their children, a four-hour round trip, we were able to see the fruit of his labours for God reflected in the fervent desire of these new members to belong to the great household of the Christadelphian faith. It was incredibly stirring to hear the confessions of faith of each of the new brethren. They are José Santiago Chávez Castro, 51; Juan José Chávez Posada, 18, son of José Santiago; René Armando Chávez Silva, 23, son of Sis. Carmen Chávez and younger brother to Bro. David Chávez; Alexander Vladimir Rivas Velásquez, 18; and Samael Adonay Flores Carranza, 17.

The task of instructing the candidates was shared by the other members of the Usulután Ecclesia: Carmen Chávez, her son David, Julio García and his wife Angélica, who gave freely of their time during the week to reinforce Jaime's classes.

The day of the baptisms was the occasion of a great celebration. The 150 attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch thanks to the love of the sisters who had been working in the kitchen since early morning: Lily Rivera, Lilian Villacorta, Karla Mate and Cristina Sorto. This was a very large gathering for us; many relatives and friends came from Usulután in a hired bus and also present were the brethren and sisters of the other satellite ecclesia in the city of Sonsonate. In addition we were happy to have with us Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter; Jim gave the exhortation based on Psalms 1, 19 and 103, which was very instructive for us. He also gave the public lecture which followed and Jean gave a Sunday-school class to the large group of young people present.

We pray that God will strengthen and guide our new brethren in the faith and guide them to walk hand in hand with the rest of us who have embraced the hope of eternal life and have set ourselves the goal of being in God's kingdom. We know

that the return of our Lord Jesus is imminent and we must not cease to preach, for there are still many people who need to come to know the divine plan and be a part of it. We ask for your prayers that the work may continue to increase in El Salvador and the world over. Amen, come, Lord Jesus.



*Submitted by Sis. Silvia Fernández,
San Salvador, El Salvador*

**From left to right:
Samael Adonai Flores Carranza, 17;
René Armando Chávez Silva, 24;
Alexander (Alex) Vladimir Rivas
Velázquez, 18;
Juan José Chávez Posada, 18;
José Santiago Chávez Castro, 51
(Juan José's father)**

A trip to Guatemala City

On the weekend of August 13 and 14 a group of brethren and sisters from El Salvador had the opportunity to visit the ecclesia in the capital of our sister country, Guatemala. The purpose was to share fellowship with Rec. Bro. Jorge Trinidad and the other members in Guatemala City and encourage the friends who have been regularly attending meetings there. With this in mind, two lectures were given at the ecclesial hall on Saturday afternoon: “Do you understand what you are reading?”, stressing the importance of really knowing the Scriptures, and “After death, what?”, covering various aspects of the nature of man. There was enthusiastic participation from the interested friends; in fact they became so wrapped up in the studies that though the activity began at 3 pm the visitors stayed on until 8 pm, with many questions and much edifying discussion of the themes of the talks.

On Sunday, following the breaking of bread, we gave a lecture entitled “The forgotten kingdom of God,” pointing out the necessity of understanding the promises God made to Abraham and David and the way in which the true gospel hinges on them. Unfortunately the discussion couldn't carry on as long as it had the previous day because we had to rush to catch the bus back to El Salvador!

In the course of the weekend eight interested friends came out, four of them from one family. The sessions were full of questions, answers and reasoning from the Scriptures. All of us were blessed with an uplifting opportunity to share the good news of the Kingdom of God.



Five contacts on Saturday at the ecclesial hall



Sunday's group in front of the Guatemala city ecclesial hall.

*Bro. René and Sis. Crisia Castillo and Bro. Neftalí and Sis. Zuelen Espinoza
Sonsonate, El Salvador*

Guadalajara — Several Perspectives

I've always wondered what contribution I could make to ecclesias in Latin lands. While I took Spanish in high school, I certainly would never claim to have Spanish fluency. I have wondered if I took a trip to one of our ecclesias in Mexico, Central or South America whether I could really make any tangible contribution? Would the visit be for the benefit of my brethren, or really all about me?

In early August, I had the pleasure of joining a group of brothers and sisters from North America who participated in a campaign in Guadalajara. Few of us had any usable Spanish speaking skills. We were eager to serve in whatever capacity we could. The team consisted of a mix of ages — ranging from eighteen to, well, let's just say a few of us that were more “mature.” What I re-learned was an important lesson about our God. He uses what we **are** capable of offering and provides, in His way, a blessing to compensate for what we cannot.

The work centered around the city of Guadalajara, a city of more than seven million. The ecclesia in Guadalajara is thriving and growing, now at 14 members. Sis. Cindy Paiva and Bro. David Lloyd (Link Man for Guadalajara) planned the activities for the week. I would choose the word “resourcefulness” to describe their use of the team. Rather than focusing on what we could not do, we engaged in a multitude of activities that, through the blessing of our Heavenly Father, led men and women to the Bible Study Center where the ecclesia meets. At the end of the week, each of us had distributed several thousand leaflets, created Sunday School lessons for future use and updated essential computer records for contact follow-up. In all, more than a dozen men and women came to the advertised classes and public Bible readings and about the same number registered to begin receiving the postal correspondence course. It is rare to have the opportunity in a week's time to see the response to a team's work. We were all greatly uplifted.



Bro. David Lloyd handing out leaflets in front of the Bible Center in Guadalajara

myself able to cobble together just enough Spanish to answer their questions. The work was not tedious and as a team and we found ourselves looking forward to the distribution of the leaflets.

But, to tell the story from my point of view exclusively is to lose the true appreciation of the week. What will remain with me are the loving and close relationships we developed with the brothers and sisters in Guadalajara. The story of each brother and sister is truly amazing and a clear witness of the hand of the Lord in the ecclesia. What I learned was that the team's presence in Guadalajara was not only encouraging to us, but highly encouraging to the members too. Here's what Bro. Gabriel Munoz, a brother now for six years (pictured here on the right



conversing with Bro. Paul Harris, Washington, D.C. Ecclesia), had to say about the team's visit.

"We are very happy to have brothers and sisters visit us. Most of all, it is helpful to get to know more brothers and sisters so that we get to know that we are not alone in this world and we're not the only Christadelphians. It is always a great help when they give us exhortations or when we can just have good Bible discussions. We also welcome all the help that

we can get to preach the Truth. Whenever they can come, they will be always welcome in the Guadalajara Ecclesia and we will always receive them with open arms. It is not really required to speak Spanish because we can help with that. If you are willing to come and help, please come. If you can speak Spanish, that is an added blessing."

Sis. Cindy Paiva has been living in the Guadalajara area since 2003. She and her late husband, Bro. Carl, were instrumental in the early work of forming the ecclesia and Sis. Cindy remains thoroughly immersed in the daily work. There have been many volunteers from North America who have come to help the ecclesia. The

San Diego, CA Ecclesia particularly has been a great help over the past few years. Sis. Cindy excels at finding useful work that members can do, based on their interests and capabilities. Here's how Sis. Cindy (seated in the middle in picture below) viewed the campaign.



From my perspective, there is always much to be done here in Guadalajara, as we are open every day. The whole group distributed flyers, which may seem rather simple work, but is very effective as the people do read them and save them and actually give them more credence when they come from foreigners. But beyond that, the interchange that happens with the brethren here and the visiting brethren is vital. They get to exchange ideas and

talk of their faith at a much higher level than they are able to do with the contacts and the young brethren here. The daily readings were often the venue for this exchange. Although we read in Spanish, those who do not read fluently would read silently from their own Bibles and be able to make comments at the end... having them translated so all could benefit. There are also many other tasks: I also am always grateful for those who have some computer skills to help with a variety of files I deal with. There is printing, cutting and binding of literature and flyers as well. Sis. Brittany Magill filled a very vital role in preparing and organizing simple activities for the very young Sunday Schoolers here. I explained my need and she ran with it, enlisting the help of Sis. Dassie Link, Sis. Megan Milne and Bro. Sam Van Rueter. They also taught the Sunday School group all day, not letting language be a barrier to the love they shared. Sis. Sandy Sillars was the angel behind the scenes keeping all the meals, everyone's health, and a myriad of other things all on course, as well as providing inspirational music and singing each night before we went to bed. Bro. Michael Conner, who speaks Spanish well, gave several motivating classes and the exhortation in Spanish which was greatly appreciated by brethren and contacts alike.

Here's a few brief comments from the team members about their experiences.

My contribution to the Guadalajara Campaign was not at all what I had expected. I went there thinking that I was going to have a hard time helping out because I did not know any Spanish. Quickly, though, I found out my true purpose of serving. Some days I did go out with the group and help hand out flyers, but other days I stayed at the Ecclesia and prepared Sunday School lessons. Because Sis. Cynthia is the only Sunday School teacher, it is very hard for her to get the lessons prepped before each Sunday. I found that helping out around the hall and doing lesson plans and crafts for the kids was a big help; the help that I was not expected to be so useful at! There is no



**Sis. Brittany Magill,
Pomona, CA**

need to know Spanish to help around the Hall, and a great deal of work is needed. I felt that I accomplished a lot in the weeks' time. With help from the other group members, we completed six months' worth of prep work for the Sunday School class in just two days!! It was definitely worth all of my time to go down and serve! **Sis. Brittany Magill, Pomona, CA**



**Sis. Megan Milne,
Brampton Ecclesia, ON**

My experience in Guadalajara provided me with many insights and joys. There were memories I wouldn't soon forget and a motivation to do things differently once back in my hometown. It also left us with a keen sense of appreciation for this blessing-filled life and MANY photos to sort through! But what I loved most was knowing that the work we did each day was helping local Mexicans come to a knowledge of the Truth. By delivering flyers and speaking with them, perhaps these perfect strangers would be regulars at the meeting in Guadalajara and later become part of our worldwide family through Christ? A memorable moment was teaching Sunday School to the youngsters. I learned that language is more than mere words. It's said "actions speaks louder than words", and how true this is! We spent three hours playing and interacting with these kids, without the privilege of speaking the same language. But you know what? We communicated through other means, and I learned an important lesson about how we are called to lead by example - living our way of life through actions. Going to Guadalajara allowed me to use my talents and abilities. Everyone has something to offer. Everyone has a gift. Each may be different, but they are all so necessary (1 Cor.12:12-31). God has given me abilities and I can use them to further God's Word by redeeming the time I have left in this life before Christ returns. **Sis. Megan Milne, Brampton Ecclesia, Ontario**

Being in Guadalajara was such a blessing and I look forward to going back as soon as possible. The brothers and sisters are very excited about the truth. Though the meeting is small, the enthusiasm is great. Hymns are sung with gusto and discussion is thoughtful and interesting. The love of the truth shows in the faces of all who have found it, and in the faces of those who are now seeking to know God. The culture is different from what I'm used to, and I love it! It's much more relaxed and peaceful. People would eagerly take the leaflets we handed out and to our amazement they'd stand there and read them! If we missed someone in handing leaflets out they would come back and ask for one. That is very encouraging for me, a novice at preaching. I would like to let everyone know that I never felt unsafe in Guadalajara. I realized that there is so much more work to be done to build up the Ecclesia. People are yearning to learn



**Sis. Hadassah Link,
Baltimore, MD**

more and like Jesus said in Luke 10:2, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.” I encourage all my fellow brothers and sisters to do what they can to help out, whether it be donating money, actually spending time in Guadalajara, or sending encouragement in letters or emails. Most importantly, prayer is what will help the most, without God’s help we cannot do anything. We have a beautiful hope and it’s amazing to see even when going to a different country with a different culture the bond of the truth is still strong and evident. **Sis. Hadassah Link, Baltimore, MD**

One of the great blessings we have in the Lord is the honor to work together in His service. May the Lord continue to richly bless the Guadalajara Ecclesia as well as all the ecclesias around the world who are proclaiming the Name of our God.

Bro. Dave Jennings, Pomona, CA

My Experience



**Bro. Guillermo Gomez Fajardo,
Guadalajara, Mexico**

Hello, my name is Guillermo Gomez Fajardo. I was born into a traditional Roman Catholic family. As for myself I have never identified myself as Catholic. I have always thought that they gave very little importance to our Lord Jesus Christ and I never was in agreement with how they do things in all the churches. One Sunday, the 14th of November 2010, I was walking along a street called San Pedro in Guadalajara, thinking of all the problems that I was going through. At that time, there were gusts of wind and in that very moment a flyer, that said “Study the Bible with Understanding” in the Christadelphian Bible Center, literally stuck itself to my body. The Bible topics caught my attention: Basic Principles of the Bible, The Work of Jesus, and The Sabbath Day. I thought that this is the calling for which I had asked God.

On the 16th of November, 2010, I went for the first time to the Christadelphian Bible Center. Sis. Cynthia Paiva attended to me and told me that I could take two pamphlets. I took them and went to the park to read them. I returned that same day at 3 pm to do the daily readings. We read Nehemiah 3, Hosea 13 and I Thesalonians 1 and 2. That same day they gave me my first Bible study course. During November and December I was going during the week for studies and pamphlets. In January 2011, I began attending on Sundays. I was beginning to like all that I was learning. I finished four Bible courses and many other study books, as well as studying much with the brethren. I was baptized the 12th of June, 2011. Always, when I am at the Bible Center I find happiness and a tranquility that I have never had in all my life. Mathew 12:49, 50 “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whosoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
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Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BOSTON, MA

We are pleased to announce the baptism of DEBBIE MAILING on July 24, 2011, into the saving name of Jesus Christ. Sis. Debbie is the daughter of Bro. Wayne and Sis. Cindy Scott as well as the granddaughter of Bro. Bill and Sis. Penny Caddell.

It is with sadness however, that we announce the sudden passing of our Bro. Avarad Moore on August 10, 2011, at the age of seventy-six. Avarad was a longtime member of the Boston meeting and the loving husband of our Sis. Ann Moore, as well as the father of our Sis. Cindy Sullivan and Diana Linskey.

It is also our unfortunate duty to announce that our Bro. Mark and Sis. Anita Vincent and family have transferred back to the Stirling, UK Ecclesia. The Vincent's were a marvelous addition to our ecclesial family in Boston over the past five years and they will be sorely missed, though we know that they will be a great addition to our fellow brethren "across the pond".

Jim Sullivan

ECHO LAKE, NJ

The ecclesia rejoiced on August 19, 2011, at the marriage of our Sis. Suzie Prashad to Bro. Adam Phillips, both members of the Echo Lake Ecclesia. We pray for the Lord's blessing upon them both as they are now united in their walk toward the kingdom.

The recent hurricane in NJ flooded many areas and caused widespread damage, but by God's mercy all of the members were preserved.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, and David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Dot Phillips, Vickie Tuck, and Alyssa Tuck (Meriden, CT); Susan Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ); Matthew Link (Washington DC); Seon Levius (Barbados); Borgette Charles, Keena Charles, and Jamaul Husbands (Georgetown, Guyana); Colleen Bailey (MD), Joel and Amy Robinson (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Scott Wallace (Boston, MA); Craig and Jenny Hill (Enfield, Aust.). We thank Bro. Craig Hill and Bro. Scott Wallace for their words of exhortation.

Stewart Marsden

HONESDALE, PA

Our ecclesia was very pleased with the visit of Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ), and his inspiring exhortation. After our meeting we all attended our annual picnic at a nearby lake. We wish to thank our sisters for their wonderful and abundant food, as well as thanking God for his providence. We have also, along with our work promoting the four hundredth anniversary of the KJV, been mailing Bibles directly to a needy ecclesia in Malawi, Africa.

Stephen J. DeMarco

JASONVILLE, IN

We report with sadness the loss of two beloved brethren. Bro. John Plew, 89, a brother to Bro. Ted Plew, and Bro. Ron Howe, 47, husband of Sis. Chariss Howe. Our loving sympathy to Sis. Chariss and their two children. Our dear brethren are sorely missed in this small ecclesia, and our hope, as theirs, is in the resurrection at our Lord's return.

Ted Plew

MERIDEN, CT

Since late last year we have enjoyed the fellowship of brothers and sisters from several ecclesias including Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Cranston, RI; Echo Lake, NJ; Maple Ridge, BC; South Florida; Sussex, NB; Tulsa, OK/Joplin, MO; Wachusett, MA, and Worcester, MA.

On March 6, 2011, we were delighted to welcome 16 members of the Honesdale, PA Ecclesia who joined us for the celebration of Sis. Lois Beck's ninetieth birthday. We would like to thank Bro. Kirk Kenneway (Wachusett, MA) and Bro. Sam Taylor (Echo Lake, NJ) for their exhortations in the past few months.

Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines (Sussex, NB) visited in June. Bro. Cliff led our spring study weekend on the theme, "Practical Principles in Peter". We enjoyed Cliff's and Julia's company very much and are grateful for the ministrations rendered on our behalf. The study weekend ended with our annual Sunday school picnic which was enjoyed by the ecclesia and many visitors.

Our Sunday school year ended with a Bible Read-A-Thon. Young and old alike joined in a non-stop reading of the New Testament that began at 5 PM on Friday, June 17, 2011, and ended 16 hours and 58 minutes later with two of our young sisters completing the book of Revelation. We followed the order of the daily reading plan. At one point the reading team consisted of a nine-year-old Sunday school student taking turns with an elder brother of 78 years, young and old alike!

We are delighted to announce two baptisms. On April 17, 2011, NANCY ANN WIGHT was baptized into Christ. Sis. Nancy is the wife of Bro. David Wight and the daughter-in-law of Bro. Everett and Sis. Faith Wight of our ecclesia. Bro. Everett was responsible for her instruction. Quite without prearrangement, Sis. Nancy was baptized on the fortieth anniversary of Bro. David's baptism, April 17, 1971. On August 14, 2011, YUNFANG ZHANG was baptized into Christ. Sis. Yunfang is from China and first came to a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar, led by Bre. Gary Chodkowski and David Stiles, in 2002. She has been attending Memorial Service ever since. We are grateful to God for calling our two new sisters. May He bless their journeys in faith.

Following Sis. Nancy's baptism, Bro. David Wight transferred his membership to Meriden from the Telford, PA, Ecclesia. In May, we welcomed Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura back to Connecticut. They have now transferred their membership to Meriden from the Washington DC, Ecclesia. In September we also welcomed Sis. Sarah Waite by way of transfer to Meriden from the Moorestown, NJ Ecclesia. We are very happy to have all of them with us.

Last December, our Bro. Jimmy Hart had double by-pass heart surgery and has just recently gone back to work again. Our Sis. Edythe Skinner, now in her mid-nineties, was hospitalized in January and is confined to her home. Our Bro. Ron Sweet fell during the winter and has had other difficult health issues. He is unable to get out to ecclesial services. We pray that God's blessings will be with our brothers and sister.

Death has claimed three of our beloved former members. In January, Bro. David Rawson, father and father-in-law of Bro. Chris and Sis. Donna Rawson, fell asleep in Christ. Bro. David was baptized in Meriden in 1980 and was more recently a member of the Springfield, MA Ecclesia. In February, Bro. Mickey Duffelmeyer fell asleep in Christ. Bro. Mickey was baptized here in 1985 and was more recently a member of the Westerly, RI Ecclesia. He was the husband of Sis. Ann Duffelmeyer and father of Sis. Heather Woodward of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia. In April, Donald Lipfert died in Maine. He was the beloved brother of our Sis. Gertrude Turner and was a highly respected member of our ecclesia many years ago. Our sympathies are with the three families that have been closely touched by these deaths.

Plans for our new ecclesial hall in South Meriden are going forward. Building plans have cleared the necessary municipal hurdles opening the way for construction to begin in the near future. We pray that God will continue to bless the progress of this work.

Stephen Harper

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

The Northern Virginia Christadelphian Ecclesia began meeting on April 3, 2011. We have continued to have our weekly memorial service in members' homes and at a local community center not far from Dulles International Airport. Everyone wishing to visit with the Northern Virginia Ecclesia can contact us through our ecclesial email at: nva.ecclesia@gmail.com, or call Bro. David Fertig at: 703-644-6311.

We have been blessed with visiting brethren and sisters almost every week. They include Andrew and Erin Amis and family, Jason and Stephanie Fertig, Roberto and Megan Lara and family, and Heather Locke (Washington DC); Chuck and Robin Colby (Mansfield, PA); and Leslie Colby (Hamilton Book Road, ON). We thank Bre. Andrew, Jason and Roberto for their words of exhortation.

It is with sorrow that we note that Bro. Pete Huff fell asleep in the Lord. Bro. Pete was a member of the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia, and the father of Bro. Lee Huff in our meeting.

On a happier note, we are pleased to announce that we have been blessed with the baptism of ZACHARIAH THOMAS KEMP on August 28, 2011. Bro. Zack has been a long time member of the Washington DC Sunday school, and after giving a good confession of faith, was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that God will continue to bless the efforts of our new lamp stand in Northern Virginia.

David Fertig

VICTORIA, BC

A number of our members fell asleep in Christ during the past quarter. Bro. Jerome Knorr (June 16, 2011), Sis. Ruby Martyn (July 10, 2011), Bro. John Evans (July 20, 2011), Bro. Fred Crawford (Aug 18, 2011). Our Sis. Ruby became one of our few centenarians reaching her 100th birthday earlier this year.

Bro. Malcolm and Sis. Josie Shrimpton were transferred to the Saanich Ecclesia, with our love, during August 2011.

We enjoyed the presence of Bro. Shane Kirkwood at our recent Fraternal Gathering held on the Labor Day Weekend. His theme was "Psalms for the Journey". Bro. Stan Isbell presented our Sunday Evening Lecture entitled "Fear of Death, the Gospel's Answer". We are continually blessed with visitors. The list is too long to publish,

however, their presence is a constant reminder of the value of our larger world-wide fellowship in Christ.

We will hold another Bible Exhibition this fall on October 14-16 at the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney BC. The exhibition will be on display during their annual Art Fair. Our semi-annual Joint Arranging Meeting of the Vancouver Island Ecclesias will be held in November 2011. A Fall Study Day will be held the weekend of November 5-6. The theme for the weekend will be "Turning Points" and our Bro. David Lawrence from the Prince George Ecclesia will lead the study. For further information please contact the undersigned at csnobelen@csll.ca.

Clyde Snobelen

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the Table of our absent Lord the following visiting brothers and sisters: Kerri Maier and Sarah Maier (East TX); Bethany Young (North Houston, TX); Seba Wolfe, and Levi Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Jeanna McLaughlin (Dallas, TX); Sharon Glumac, and Carmel Glumac (Houston, TX); Victoria Bates (Paris Ave., OH); Linda Jones (Los Angeles, CA); and Stan and Eunice Newton (Pomona, CA). We thank Bre. Levi Wolfe and Stan Newton for their words of exhortation.

In April we held our annual Spring Gathering and Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston Brisbane, Aust.), lead a series of classes on the sermon on the mount entitled, "The Lord's Manifesto for Life". There were 175 in attendance that benefitted from the lessons brought forth regarding the characteristics which lead to eternal life. We thank our brother for his efforts in strengthening us in the things of the kingdom.

In July, we welcomed back Bro. Ben Beutel and also welcomed Sis. Sarah Beutel (formerly of Reseda, CA) to our ecclesia. We are thankful to have two more fellow laborers in our midst as we continue our journey together toward God's kingdom.

In August, we were blessed with the addition of two potential Sunday school scholars. On the tenth, Bro. Aaron and Sis. Loretta Clubb welcomed Jack Albert and on the twenty-fourth, Bro. Ben and Sis. Sarah Beutel welcomed Audrey June. All are healthy and we pray our heavenly Father's blessing will be upon both of these little ones.

John A. Clubb

WORCESTER, MA

We are sad to announce that our dear Sis. Virginia Ross has fallen asleep in the Lord after a long struggle with cancer. She was a tireless worker in the truth for decades and always had a smile and kind word for everyone. We pray for the comfort of her family and look forward to seeing her in the kingdom.

Our Sis. Marilyn has returned after a long absence and we are pleased to be meeting with her again. We are also pleased to announce our new sister, ANNE GAUTHIER who was baptized recently and is now engaged to Bro. Wayne Cortis. May God bless Sis. Anne, Bro. Wayne and Sis. Marilyn as we all walk together to the kingdom.

Sadly, our beloved Bro. Kevin Mayock transferred recently to the Moorestown, NJ Ecclesia to be with his family. Bro. Kevin served in many offices over the years, was a wonderful exhorter, and a leader in our CYC. May God be with him until we meet again.

Mark Fulmer

Minute Meditation

Do we worship in vain?

Abigail Adams (1744-1818) was the wife of John Adams, the second president of the United States. She wrote in a letter to her husband, “We have too many high sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them.” In other words, talk is cheap.

Unfortunately this practice of saying the right things but not following up with right actions was not new in her day. Almost two thousand years ago Jesus remarked, “This people draws nigh unto me with their mouth, and honours me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” The people gave the impression of upholding the highest standards in faith and practice in what they said, but in their hearts and by their actions they were not so doing.

Jesus was actually quoting what God had pointed out to Isaiah many years before. “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

Unfortunately in our day, godly thinking is not valued. Folks don’t even go through the motions of worshipping God. As a result, true wisdom is hidden, as was predicted in Isaiah, and the deeds of many are evil. Jesus tells us, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Who hasn’t been tempted to say the wrong thing when provoked? We need to remember that what we actually say is important and will be remembered at the judgment. As the expression goes, choose your words carefully — you may have to eat them. If we truly trust God with all our heart, then when we face a bitter trial, rather than condemning God as so many of those around us do, we rely on God to bring us through the trial, using words similar to those we find in the Psalms. “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” Throughout all his tribulations, we are told that “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” We, too, need to be careful with our words because we will be held accountable for them.

We also will be held accountable if we say and do not, Abigail Adam’s concern. We may impress others with our lofty ideals, but do we actually act on them? Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright, once said, “A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed.”

We need to take seriously the warning in the parable that Jesus told to the scribes and Pharisees: “Jesus said: I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Then you can tell me what you think. The father went to the older son and said, ‘Go work in the vineyard today!’ His son told him that he would not do it, but later he changed his mind and went. The man then told his younger son to go work in the vineyard. The boy said he would, but he didn’t go. Which one of the sons obeyed his father? ‘The older one,’ the chief priests and leaders answered. Then Jesus told them: You can be sure that tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you ever will!”

We must act on our beliefs. Mouthing good words is not enough. Our actions and behavior should be consistent with what we say, for “Actions speak louder than words.” The chief priests and leaders may have spoken of justice, mercy and truth, but they did not demonstrate these principles in their lives, as Jesus later explains. Abigail Adams was correct in her suspicion of the sincerity of those who did not follow up their high sounding words by acting on them. James admonishes us that faith without works is dead — if we have faith, then we should have works that demonstrate that faith.

Are we honoring God with our lips only? Are we worshipping in vain by going through the motions of worship rather than truly believing in God and acting on that belief? Let us whole heartedly trust in the Lord and spend our time working in His service.

John tells us, “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” Jesus explains, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord;’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” May we be diligent workers in our Lord’s service showing our love by deeds of kindness. May we hear those welcome words, “Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

Robert J. Lloyd

*Last night I passed beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring with vespers chimes.
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you had?" said I,
"To wear and batter all those hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know!"*

*And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon.
Yet though the noise of telling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, but the hammers are all gone.*

John Clifford

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

OCTOBER 2011

- 8 Brantford, ON**, Thanksgiving gathering. Copetown Community Centre. Speaker will be Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK).
- 8-9 Echo Lake, NJ**, Fall study weekend. Theme is "Making use of the senses we are born with" and our speaker is Bro. John Parry (UK).
- 8-9 Sussex, NB**, Thanksgiving study weekend. Speaker Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA).
- 8-9 Vancouver BC** Fraternal Gathering. Theme: The Way of Life. Speaker : Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA). Contact Bro. Jonathan Stodel, jnthn@telus.net or for accomodation Sis. Pam Snobelen, pamela721@shaw.ca.
- 14-16 Victoria, BC** Bible Exhibition at the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney BC. The exhibition will be on display during their annual Art Fair.
- 21-23 Women At The Well Retreat**. Miracle Hot Springs Resort in Palm Desert. Sis. Nancy Brinkerhoff (Denver, CO) on "Hannah's Prayer." Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org or send a non-refundable \$50 check made out to Sis. Bonnie Sommerville, 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324, (818) 341-3932.

NOVEMBER 2011

- 5-6 Kouts, IN** Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 AM. Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore,MD), Theme: "The Epistle Of Jude: 'It was needful for me to write and exhort you.'" Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at (219)762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net.
- 5-6 Victoria, BC** Fall Study Day. The theme for the weekend will be "Turning Points" and our Bro. David Lawrence from the Prince George Ecclesia will lead the study. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at csnobelen@csl.ca.
- 11-13 Austin Leander, TX** Study weekend at the HEB Camp near Leakey, TX. Bro. Nathan Badger (ON) will be speaking. To register email Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net.
- 12-13 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC Study Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Ryan King (Westerly, RI). The subject will be "Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve". Contact Bro. Bob or Sis. Rebecca Pommer, 518 Donahue Lane, Tarentum, PA 15084. Phone: (724)224-7363; e-mail: pghecclesia@gmail.com.
- 12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL**, Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameswilkinson@hotmail.com.
- 25-27 Washington, DC** Family Bible Study Weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "The Testing of Your Faith: The Challenge of James". Contact: Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org for additional information.

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DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

FEBRUARY 2012

6-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org Or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

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TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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Remember that You are Going to Die

This was part of a commencement address to Stanford University graduates in 2005. The speaker, Steve Jobs, had been diagnosed with an incurable pancreatic cancer.

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true. Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21).

Editorial

Fish and Its Symbol

I would be the first to admit I am no fisherman. Actually, when asked, I usually reply “I do not want to destroy my batting average.” For, you see, many years ago, standing on the shore of the Long Island sound, I made two casts of a borrowed rod and caught two fish. How can you beat that? So I have very rarely fished since. (I must explain there was a shoal of Blues (or bluefish) in a feeding frenzy where I cast my lure.) And this is my own only fish story — although I have heard many more, some of which were probably true.

And who can help being fascinated by fish? They are strange, blank-eyed, silent, enigmatic and slippery creatures from another world — hard to grasp both literally and figuratively. Theirs is a world hidden and dark and deep, so different from our dwelling in the transparent medium of air. Fish, in all their sizes and shapes, come to us as emissaries from beyond, ambassadors of another existence.

And there is something unique about fish. In Gen 7:14, Noah invites onto the ark *“every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind— every bird, every winged creature.”* And in Gen 8:17, after the flood has ceased, Noah and his family emerge from the ark with *“birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

These passages and their wording, of course, mimic the account in Genesis of the creation of the world and all its creatures. That is, they mimic it with a single exception. Gen 1:20-23 notes the creation of birds and also of *“the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm.”*

But on Noah’s ark there is no aquarium. Alone among “all flesh,” the fish are left to fend for themselves. While fish are not always spared the effects of God’s judgment in the Bible, they are uniquely equipped to survive the judgment of the flood. Under this judgment they not only survived but thrived.

So it is that in the earliest chapters of the Bible fish become a sign of salvation, able to pass through judgment unscathed. Later, in the tale of Jonah, a fish scoops up the embattled prophet and carries him to safety. So a fish bears another along to his salvation.

Fish in the Gospels

Fish are mentioned and given symbolic meaning several times in the Gospels. Several of Jesus’ twelve Apostles were fishermen. He commissions them with the words *“I will make you fishers of men”*.

At the feeding of the five thousand, a boy is brought to Jesus with *“five small loaves and two fish”*. The question is asked, *“But what are they, among so many?”* Jesus multiplies the loaves and fish to feed the multitude.

In Matt 13:47-50, the Parable of Drawing in the Net, Jesus compares God's decision on who will reign on earth, or be destroyed in the furnace of fire at the end of this dispensation, to fishers sorting out their catch, keeping the good fish and throwing the bad fish away.

In John 21:11, it is related that the disciples fished all night but caught nothing. Jesus instructed them to cast the nets on the other side of the boat, and they drew in 153 fish. (Thus generating a lasting controversy on the symbology of 153!)

Another use of fish in Christ's life may be found in the words of Matt 17:24-27, in which, upon being asked if his Teacher does not pay the temple (two-drachma) tax, Simon Peter answers, "Yes." Christ tells Peter to go to the water and cast a line. He says that a coin sufficient for the tax will be found in the fish's mouth. Peter does as told and finds the coin.

ICHTHYS

So the fishy resonances resound throughout scripture. Then they splash well beyond the pages of Scripture. The early church made the fish a symbol of baptism, implicitly recognizing how fish survive the waters of judgment. Soon enough, it was noticed in the Greek word for fish an acronym — ICHTHYS (ΙΧΘΥΣ) which is derived from:

- Iota (i) is the first letter of Iēsous (Ἰησοῦς), Greek for "Jesus".
- Chi (ch) is the first letter of Christos (Χριστός), Greek for "anointed".
- Theta (th) is the first letter of Theou (Θεοῦ), Greek for "God's", the genitive case of Θεός, Theos, Greek for "God".
- Ypsilon (y) is the first letter of (h)yios (Υἱός), Greek for "Son" (the initial "h" was pronounced in classical Greek but has long been silent).
- Sigma (s) is the first letter of sōter (Σωτήρ), Greek for "Savior".

Thus this becomes, "**Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior,**" which made Jesus himself represented by a fish. So in a figure, the fish becomes Jesus, the first-born of all creation, the Jonah-fish bearing all who hear and obey him to salvation. So it is that he whose body we partake of at our memorial service, in symbol he swallows us up, carrying us through chaotic seas to a distant realm we cannot attain on our own.

The Use of the Fish Symbol¹



The ICHTHYS is seen in 1st-century catacombs in Rome, and according to tradition, ancient Christians, during their persecution by the Roman Empire in the first few centuries after Christ, used the fish symbol to mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes. When

a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good company. (It is not certain the use of the fish symbol is totally based on the acronym.) Its use died out after the so-called Catholic Church began to dominate the landscape under Emperor Constantine.

However, it would be no bad thing if, like the faithful of former days, we all carried constantly around in our minds this image of the fish, this word which spells it, and these saving truths which it symbolizes. They are the essential source of that peace which the world cannot give but which Jesus promised to “his own”. The inmost heart of the Christian Gospel is represented both in the personal name of Jesus and in the title *sōter*, Savior. This word appears in Luke’s record of the angelic announcement to the shepherds: “*Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*” Savior from what? “*Thou shalt call his name Jesus*”, said the angel to Joseph, “*for he shall save his people from their sins*” (Luke 2:11; Matt. 1:21).

In the second title of the ICHTHYS symbolism, the word *christos* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *mashiah*, meaning “anointed”. Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed of God, foretold in the Old Testament as the one who should come in the fullness of God’s time to deliver and rule the people of God. To John in Patmos it was given to see in vision the fulfillment of this prophecy: “*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*” (Rev. 11:15). The preaching of Jesus as Christ, as Messiah, the Lord’s anointed, and of his coming again as king to reign over a renewed and purified earth — this also is central to the message of the Christian Gospel: “*These (things) are written*”, says John concerning the testimony of his Gospel, “*that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (20:31).

This last quotation also gives to Jesus the third title associated with the word ICHTHYS: Son of God. This is the most striking of the titles which Jesus claimed for himself and which were given him by the early church. In it are involved two profound Christian truths. The first is the ultimate truth of all, that God, out of His love for men, gave His own true Son to be the means of their deliverance from sin: “*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*” (1John 4:10). The second truth involved in the title is the supreme status and absolute authority of the one who could justly claim it and be referred to by it.

The use of the fish symbol was revived, as far as I can tell, in the 1960’s, primarily in Evangelical circles. Thus you often see it on bumper stickers, and sometimes as a pendant — but rarely with the Greek letters included. Thus most people recognize it as a symbol of Christianity, but know nothing of its origin, or its use in the 1st Century Church. It is a pity that its association with a set of beliefs we cannot share inhibits its use among our body!

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. Some parts of this section are drawn from an article by Bro. Neville Smart In *The Christadelphian*, 1981, p 253

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

Exhortation

Will your Faith get you into the Kingdom?

The basis of this exhortation came from the last time I had to teach Adult Sunday school, and we were studying Romans 8. The more learned here would say I had an epiphany that day, but in my lingo, the light bulb finally came on! This exhortation is based on Rom 8:31: “if God is for us, who is against us?” After studying this verse I finally understood what our friend Wilma in California believes. Wilma is 95 years old and ever since I have known her, she’s had this positive attitude that she is going to be in the kingdom. Now me, just being newly baptized when I met Wilma, I thought at that time there was no way I was worthy of the Kingdom. I felt the only thing I could say for sure was that I would be at the judgment seat because I was baptized, and that the only thing that would get me into the kingdom was God’s grace and mercy. I couldn’t understand how she could be so sure of herself. Now, almost 30 years later, I see the flaws in my thinking.

At Bible School I asked 18 people these questions :

- Will you be at the judgment seat? Yes or No.
- Will you be in the kingdom? Yes; No; Not sure, but hope so.

The answers were 18, ‘yes I will be at the judgment seat’; nine said ‘yes’ they would be in the kingdom and nine said ‘not sure but hoped to be’. The nine yes’s were from older people, or should I say, those who have been baptized longer.

By the way I also asked some little kids, six to ten years old or so, if they would be in the kingdom, and they all said ‘yes’! Doesn’t that remind you what Christ said in Mark 10:15: “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.” So, we need to be like little children in our faith and belief. Kids believe what parents and Sunday school teachers tell them, almost a blind faith — they believe it when told they will be in the kingdom. Then at some point in their life they get baptized because they believe the promises of God. As we grow, the cares or lusts of the world start to encroach and our faith may wander or at least not continue to grow. We recognize that we can never be worthy of the kingdom, that it is only by His grace and mercy that we will be there. It’s those of us that aren’t sure but only hope they will be in the kingdom, you are the ones that I’m trying to encourage today and to reinforce the rest of us. As we age, we learn more about faith and it begins to grow but it took a long time for me. Here I am in my sixth decade, but the light bulb finally came on.

Our faith gets stronger when we truly start to believe God’s promises and here is one promise that I want you to memorize: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”(Luke 12:32). Did you **hear** that? It is God’s **good pleasure** to give us the kingdom — we must believe that. We must trust in God and what He says so that we **know** that it is His good pleasure to give us the kingdom. That is what I never understood about our friend Wilma whom

I've known for 30 years. She was always so sure she would be in the kingdom and I couldn't understand how she could be so sure, but now I know...because **THE BIBLE TOLD HER SO**. Just like the children's song, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so". So let our faith be more like that of little children and believe in God's promises. If you believe them, you should feel sure that you will be in the kingdom. And I hope when I'm done here today that 18 of 18 would say, "YES, I'll see you there!"

So, we must have faith in the promises and believe them. *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"*(2Pet 3:9). Faith is vital: *"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"*(Heb 11:6). It is also true that none of us will be in the Kingdom without God's mercy and grace but are we putting our faith in that alone? *"For by grace you have been saved **through** faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"*(Eph 2:8). So, faith is vital but as James says in James 2:14: *"What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"* As we know, faith without works is dead. Therefore, I would submit that grace and mercy hang on our faith. Faith does not hang on grace and mercy. Let me say that again — faith does not depend on grace and mercy but grace and mercy depend on our faith. And if we truly have faith, the works will follow. So even if we have faith enough to be baptized but don't remain in Christ, if we leave the Truth and no longer believe the promises, faith won't get us grace and mercy. Our ultimate salvation of course is not guaranteed, there is no 'once saved, always saved'. There are conditions — we must remain faithful and obedient to God's will as we are told in Rom 2: 6-7 *"God will render to each person according to his deeds; to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, that is, eternal life."* We must remain 'in Christ' — that is to daily walk and try to be like him. Our faith should be creating positive changes in us knowing that we won't change overnight. Now we know, we are weak creatures of the dust and fail continually but as it says in Prov 24:16: *"a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity."* That doesn't mean we can stumble ONLY seven times, the point here is to never give up. We will continue to fail as Paul said in Rom 7:19: *"For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want."* As long as we keep trying and never give up, God will keep his promises to us.

Back to faith...

Luke 18:8 says, *"when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"* So, what is the definition of faith? Faith is the conviction of the truth of anything In short, faith to us, is belief with the predominant idea of trust or confidence in God and in Christ.

Now, Heb.11:1 says: *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see"*.

So do you have faith enough to get you in the Kingdom? Faith in what? Faith in the promises of God?

I know you believe the Bible is the Word of God. I know you believe and have faith that there is a God for Isa.45:5 says: *"I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides me there is no god."*

I know you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the son of God. For Matt. 3:17 says *"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'"*

I know you believe that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead. It is my feeling that this is the very core of our beliefs: THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED AND WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD!! Paul says, *"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed' "* Rom 10:9-11. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation. And Jesus' resurrection is our guarantee, for by it he *"confirms the promises made unto the fathers"* (Rom. 15:8). This one fact gives us complete certainty and overcomes doubt! Do you believe we will be like him? That is, we will be raised and in the kingdom? Because if you do, you already believe you'll be in the kingdom. I know you don't believe there is a devil that makes you do things that you do not want to do. And you do not believe in an immortal soul. And I know you believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth and establish God's Kingdom here on earth. But, will you be there? We know we are responsible for our actions and will have to give account of what we have done. I know that you believe that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were the fathers of the Jewish Nation, and that the promises given to them have an effect on us today. And that God brought them out of a place of sin (Egypt) by great signs and miracles. I know you believe in the good news and tidings of the Bible. And if you believe all these things, you are surely responsible.

If you believe all these things you have faith enough already in the promises. So if you are not baptized and believe all these things, I say again if you believe all these things and are not baptized, I have just one question, WHY? We are already in the end times and Christ is at the door. The lights are on, but are you home? But if you believe all these things and are baptized you DO have enough faith and may just not realize it yet. If you are baptized and believe in the promises that God has given us, in His word, you WILL be in the kingdom. Who wouldn't want to be in a place of no more sorrow or suffering or pain?

Faith and a Baseball

So let us liken our faith to a baseball. Do you how a baseball is made, what it looks like on the inside? First of all it has a center core, then many wrappings of string, and then a covering to protect everything inside.

Now, if we have the beliefs and the faith I have spoken of, then that is the core of the ball. If that is true, then the first wrapping around the core is represented by our baptism. Baptism confirms our faith, but can faith and baptism by itself get

us into the kingdom? NO. Now we have to wrap our faith with works. What are works? Contributing to the needs of others, both with material goods and with physical helps like mowing the lawn or cleaning the house, but we also need to give spiritual help where needed. Sometimes that is just an encouraging phone call. Should we do this only to people in our fellowship? No, we are told to help the lost sheep and the stranger. We need to help the sick, the lame, the poor, the mentally ill, the spiritually ill. Let us make as many wraps of these things as we can around our faith, don't be self-centered and think only of ourselves for that would take away many wraps of good works. Now let us wrap our belief and faith in prayer. NO — let's wrap our faith in lots of prayer, knowing that it must be in harmony with the will of God to be effective.

We need to also apply lots of wraps of love and forgiveness around our faith, knowing that as we forgive, our Heavenly Father will forgive us. God's way of forgiveness is a refusal to punish; it is a denial of revenge of on His part, except for disobedience. Paul says, *"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life"* (1Tim 1:15-16).

Peter says it better than I can. He has a whole list of things we should be wrapping around our faith. He is talking to those who have been called into the knowledge of God, and our Savior, Jesus Christ. To paraphrase his words from 2Pet 1:4: He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by the promises, if you have faith, you may be partakers in the promises of the kingdom.

Now here are the wraps: if we apply our efforts to moral excellence, knowledge (studying the word), self-control, perseverance (don't ever give up), godliness, brotherly kindness and love — lots of love to all people. Love for all starting with God and Christ. For if you are working on these things and improving, no matter how little, you will be moving forward to the kingdom.

Again, to paraphrase 2Pet 1:10, Therefore, people, be all the more sure about his calling and choosing of you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never fail completely. We are also told: *"for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you"* (2Pet 1:11)

So what will save us? Grace, hope, belief, baptism, knowing the gospel, the blood of Christ, faith, works, and patient endurance. Christ shares our trials and understands our weaknesses. So live in hope and be assured that whatever trials we have are from God for our ultimate benefit.

God has taken all the steps necessary for our salvation. We are sons, and heirs. Nothing stands between us and eternal glory except our own loss of faith; not our sins for they are forgiven. Fear not little flock, there is no limit to God's grace. If God gave us His only begotten Son, how could He possibly hold back anything?

Now that we have all the string wrapped on the core, we need to put the protec-

tive covering on the ball. We find comfort from the words of Paul in Ephesians, where he says:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Eph 6:10-18).

Just never give up.

So now you have all the equipment, the promises, so that when you get knocked out of bounds, like a foul ball, you can always get back in play. For this is what Christ has done for us, to give us a way to get back into fellowship with God — Christ had faith, Christ did the works, Christ believed the promises of God. Christ died and was resurrected in newness of life and we shall be like Him. Here in the bread and the wine are the promises from God. Do you have faith and do you believe in the promises? I will see you in the kingdom. If God is for us, who can be against us?

James Hagler (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. All references are from the NASB

God's servants may have to undertake tasks involving a lot of tedium, patiently carrying out responsibilities less than entirely pleasant, regularly doing things they would much rather not have to be involved in. Preparing for a Sunday school class week after week, leading a Bible study year by year, visiting shut-ins steadily as time goes by, patiently shaping the behavior of and caring for children as the years come and go, laboring to bring about social change; these sorts of things are hardly always enjoyable.

Faithfulness involves sticking to tasks where the reward cannot necessarily be experienced right away. Loyal Christian servants may not see in this life the rewards of their steady labors, but we carry on because God's work is never done in vain, no matter how hard it may be (1Cor 15:58).

Douglas Stuart, Communicator's Commentary: Ezekiel

Bible Study

“As it was in the days of Noah” (9) “Behold, the face of the ground was dry”

In the previous article in this series, we considered the day that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The tops of the mountains became visible 73 days after the ark came to a rest (Gen 8: 5); 40 days later Noah decided to find out what the ground outside the ark was like (Gen 8: 6). So, he opened the window of the ark and released a raven out into the world (Gen 8: 6).

The raven left and never came back into the ark. The Septuagint renders Gen 8: 7 as *“And he sent forth a raven; and it went forth and returned not until the water was dried from off the earth.”* The raven found the outside world to its liking.

Noah also released a dove (Gen 8: 8). Verse 9 says that it *“found no rest for the sole of her foot.”* There was still water everywhere, so the dove returned back to the ark. As it returned, Noah reached forth his hand, took it, and brought it back inside (Gen 8: 9).

Noah sent the dove out again seven days later. It stayed out longer and returned to him in the evening. When it came back, it brought a sprig from an olive tree in its mouth (Gen 8: 11). So, Noah could tell that the waters were receding enough for life to return to the world. In fact, when he released the dove again seven days later, it did not return at all (Gen 8: 12).

A reasonable course of action

From a natural perspective, what Noah did by sending out those birds made a lot of sense. Ravens can survive in a pretty harsh environment. Remember that the ravens were alive and well during the famine in Israel in Elijah's day. God used them to feed him: *“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan...And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook”* (1Kgs 17:1-6). Ravens feed on corpses, and there would have been plenty of those around after the Flood: *“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it”* (Prov 30:17). Noah probably figured that if any animal could survive outside of the ark, it would be the raven. So, when he released it, and the raven thrived, Noah knew that the world could support the hardiest forms of life.

But that did not mean that the outside world was suitable for other kinds of life. So, he released a dove to get a sense of whether more delicate creatures could survive. The dove is a gentle bird: *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”* (Matt 10:16). They

also do not like filth. The Song of Solomon repeatedly equates being undefiled with being like a dove: “*I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*” (Song 5:2). So, Noah did not remove the ark’s covering until he knew that the dove could survive outside of the ark (cf. Gen 8: 12, 13).

Spiritual lessons

The way these animals are used in other contexts in Scripture suggests that there are probably spiritual lessons that can be learned by also viewing this section of the Bible as a series of parables. The raven has negative connotations. The word that God uses to describe the wanderings of the raven in Job 38 is also frequently used for committing sin (Job 38: 41). And the raven was an unclean bird under the Law (Leviticus 11: 13, 15). In Gen 8, the raven left the ark and never came back. It preferred the muck and grime of the world to the company of those inside the ark. Perhaps God is teaching that those who would rather spend time in the world than associate with those who have embraced the hope that He has offered are unclean in His sight.

The dove was a clean bird, and it was used in sacrifices under the Law (Lev 1: 14). When Christ emerged from his baptism, the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove (Matt 3: 16). And the dove is used throughout Song of Solomon to represent the redeemed who will comprise the Bride of Christ.¹

The dove disliked the filth of the world outside of the ark. So, even though it left the ark, it returned because it found nothing better. And when Noah saw that it was coming back, he reached out and brought it inside. This vignette could be an illustration of God’s mercy and love. Just as in the parable of the prodigal son, the message could be that the Father is watching for the return of those who have left and have discovered that the outside world has nothing of value to offer. Indeed, not only is He looking out for their return, but as they approach, He reaches out to draw them back to the security and fellowship of salvation in Christ.

The dove was later released again. It was sent forth to find out about developments on the earth, and it returned in the evening with an olive sprig. Darkness tends to represent the times of the Gentiles in which we are now living in the symbolism of the Bible. The olive tree represents Israel (Hosea 14: 6). Perhaps, therefore, the dove returning to the ark in the evening with the olive sprig represents believers sharing news of signs related to Israel with one another as we await the developments that are coming on the earth. Regardless of whether or not what the dove did is intended to have that interpretation, however, we know that believers should encourage one another with reminders that change is coming on the earth.

And the dove’s return with the olive sprig was a portent of change. Noah removed the covering of the ark not long thereafter in anticipation of exiting the ark (Gen 8: 13).²

The first day of the first month

On the first day of the first month of the 601st year of his life, Noah removed the

covering of the ark (Gen 8: 13). Under the religious calendar, that date is the first day of the seventh month. It was commemorated under the Law of Moses by the blowing of trumpets and the observation of a Sabbath: *“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord”* (Lev 23:24-25). This date continues to be celebrated by Jewish people. It is known as Rosh Hashanah. It is the start of a new year according to the Jewish secular calendar.

And the text makes it clear that Noah, his family, and the animals were embarking on a new start. The old, sinful world had been washed away. They were part of a new creation, as it were.

And they intended for the new creation to be founded on obedience to God, even when it meant having to sacrifice of themselves. After Noah removed the covering of the ark, he was able to see the outside world. Gen 8:13 states that he looked *“and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.”* But he did not leave the ark because God had not told him to do so.

At that point, Noah, his family, and all of the animals had been in the ark for nearly a year. They must have been itching to get out, and they could see dry land all around them. But they waited in the ark for 56 more days until God directed them to leave (cf. Gen 8: 15, 18).

God was not being cruel by keeping them in the ark during that time. It is often the case that what we perceive and what reality actually is are two different things. Although the ground appeared dry to Noah, God knew that the earth had not yet recovered enough to support them. The Hebrew word translated “dry” in verse 13 means “to be waste or desolate.” God did not want them to venture forth into a wasteland, so He caused them to wait. The Hebrew word used for “dried” in verse 14 means “to make dry.” Once the earth had reached that state, God told Noah that it was time for them to exit the ark.

This section of Scripture is a good reminder that we need to trust God and not our own instincts when it comes to making decisions. It also shows how important having the right perspective is. During the time in which the covering was off the ark but Noah was still kept inside of it, he could have complained that God was being harsh by letting him see the drying ground but not permitting him to walk around outside. Alternatively, he could have trusted that God was trying to keep him safe, and he could have been filled with joy at the prospect of his soon release, which was indicated by the changes he would have seen in the earth as the days passed. It was all a matter of perspective. Having the right perspective can make our lives more satisfying, and it can help us to be more pleasing to God. Noah's actions demonstrated that he had the right perspective when he and his family exited the ark, as we will see in the next article in this series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. See Song of Solomon 1: 5; 2: 14; 4: 1; 5: 2, and 6: 9.
2. The covering was removed 43 days later.

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel (1) Quoting Creation

Our Creator still veils His incredible glory. He waits patiently and silently for the appointed time for His unveiling, when the blindness of our global societies, produced by personal glorification, will no longer be tolerated. The prophecies of the Creator's silence will be fulfilled when He roars like a charging soldier and screams out like a birthing mother. "*The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once*" (Isaiah 42:13-14). This will mark the fulfillment of the prophecies of the extended divine silence presented by Amos and Micah.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12). "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God" (Micah 3:6-7).

It is highly significant that this extended time of divine silence is expressed as both darkness, and as a famine caused by lack of rain. Let's file this in our short term memory for future meditative consideration.

The Transition into the Age of Divine Silence

This self-imposed silence began after that second generation of believers had died off, who were promised and then awarded the Holy Spirit power at Pentecost. There were no more Apostles to place their hands on the faithful, to give them the capacity to host divine power for miraculous preaching. *That which is perfect* had eliminated the need for *that which was in part*. The completed Bible eliminated the new Ecclesial Age's dependence on the Spirit gifts... just as a newborn matures beyond its dependence on mother's milk. "*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*" (1Cor 13:8-11). It was certainly impressive to witness the instant healing of the diseased and crippled, to

witness the dead returning to life or a brother or sister instantly communicating the gospel in every language. However, this power had a very limited application. Its purpose was to validate a transition from one divine age to the next. To go from the laws of the Kingdom of God established at Sinai, to the laws and rituals of the Ecclesial Age initiated at Jerusalem. Maturity requires the putting away the childish dependence upon the temporary displays of power. We need to progress into thoughtful consideration of the eternal divine principles, to be discovered in the fully mature word of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

The completed Bible is where the glory of the Creator was now to be veiled. This is also where that glory can currently be discovered, witnessed and appreciated. Incredible divine glory is hidden in plain sight in the most popular book on our planet, yet it is invisible to the masses of humanity. The hidden power in this book reduces the entire nuclear arsenal of the United States to the equivalence of cap pistols. The eternal truths and principles of this Holy book are shielded, as greater degrees of Holiness always have had protective barriers. Our Heavenly Father refuses to be approached casually or disrespectfully. This particular holiness barrier (the intentional complexity of divine expressions) is reinforced by the natural arrogance of the fleshly mind. The metaphors, similes, parables, and prophecies of scripture must be interpreted. Any interpretation attempt which is filtered through a spiritually uncircumcised heart will always result in conclusions that are both degrading to God, and exalting of the flesh. This is why all false doctrines (without a single exception) share these two features: God degrading and flesh exalting. The glory of our Creator is currently available for witness, inspiration and experience. This is found within the carefully chosen words of the Bible, which are beyond the comprehension of the self-possessed. And this glory will eventually cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea

Creation Quotes

Our intention is to consider one theme of that incredible divine glory, which is veiled from the multitudes of self-worshippers covering the globe. This is the expression of divine principles projected in infinite ways through the creation... creation's gospel.

The legitimacy of this consideration is validated throughout Scripture. Jesus himself invites us to explore how the features of creation project divine principles. Jesus quotes creation as proof that we must love our enemies and do good to those who abuse us. *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matt 5:44-45). According to the Creator's son, sunshine and rain were designed by his Father to teach divine principles... at least to those with seeing eyes and hearing ears. Obviously Jesus harbored no delusions about a slow, progressive evolution into complex interdependence from a state of simple chaos, which despises the Creator. Paul also references creation to demonstrate divine principles. He offers the interdependent parts of the human body as evidence for

valuing and nurturing of every member of the Ecclesial body (1Cor 12; Rom 12). Paul references the lesson of the seed to demonstrate the correct understandings of resurrection (1Cor 15:35-38). Validations abound for this meditational avenue.

In the course of twelve commentaries we will investigate this scriptural theme of the features of creation, and how these flawlessly project the divine truths and principles of our Intelligent Designer. This meditative avenue will draw back the veil ever so slightly, to witness just a small measure of the divine glory that will eventually saturate creation as completely as the waters cover the sea. The key to witnessing this glory is the Truth. Doctrinal distortions create an impenetrable barrier through which no glory can be seen.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Creation, and the Battle for the Mind of Man

The God who formed man is the same God who reforms man... And in the miracle of regeneration, He gives man the opportunity to be restored to Him. But what is a miracle? Arthur Custance gives this clear definition: "I believe that miracles are occasions upon which God suspends or supersedes or accelerates or in some way modifies the natural order so that an event occurs which is entirely exceptional. A miracle then, according to this view, would be an indication that God is interfering in the natural order by an act of will because it pleases Him to do so."

It is the God of miracles who created the unfriendly porcupine, which can carry up to thirty thousand quills with which it repels its predators. Though exclusively a defensive animal, the porcupine is a killer since a fox or timber wolf might die of starvation, unable to eat because of the quills in its mouth. It is said that only one North American animal can kill a porcupine with impunity — a large member of the weasel family called the "fisher", which has developed a knack of flipping porcupines over on their backs and attacking the unprotected underside. Why should one creature alone be able to do this? It is one of the mysteries in the endless fascination of the God of creation.

The flight of wild geese is a study in aerodynamics. The leader of the "V" formation breaks trail through the air, and each bird thereafter gains "lift" from the updraft created by the wing action of the one in front of it. Being the leader is not easy, and that is why one can see the birds change the lead position periodically, as if by prearrangement. It all works so smoothly that spectators rarely stop to ponder what a remarkable system it is.

It is the God of the porcupine, the weasel, and the geese who seeks to transform the mind of man so that through the haze of sin which surrounds him he can see again the purity of the Creator.

Kenneth O. Gangel (Bibliotheca Sacra, 137:546, p. 168)

First Principles

The Atonement in Practice

If you've read this far, well done. For many people the word "atonement" evokes thoughts of controversy, arguments about words, complicated terminology, or just plain boredom. But it shouldn't be like that, because the Atonement is all about the means of our salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Atonement is a very practical topic, with meaning in every facet of our lives. But perhaps you are one of those turned off by the subject. You can't get your head around Paul's arguments in Romans. You observe brethren arguing about it and even dividing over things you think shouldn't make that much difference. Does any of that stuff have any real meaning in our daily lives? Well let's analyze this topic, but from a different angle. This series of articles isn't going to be an in-depth exegesis of Romans or Hebrews. It's not going to go deeply into the Law and try to understand the types and contrasts with the sacrifice of Christ. Instead we're going to look at how the Atonement was a living doctrine in the lives of people like Abraham and David. That's because the Atonement is ultimately about life, about living as a son or daughter of God.

But first of all, as if to contradict what I just said, let's have a look at Romans, Galatians and Hebrews, the three main books of the New Testament that delve into the Atonement. Did you know that these three epistles can all be summarized in just seven words found in one of the most obscure Old Testament books? If you were given the task of coming up with just one seven-word sentence to describe the atonement in practice, what would it be? Well let's see what Habakkuk had to say:

*"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but **the righteous shall live by his faith**" (Hab 2:4).*

The righteous shall live by his faith. That's it; that's the atonement in practice in a nutshell and the background to the three great treatises on the Atonement in the New Testament. Before we look at how this verse is used in those three epistles let's first consider what the phrase really means, on a practical level, in this context. In fact the practical nature of the phrase in Habakkuk's day was truly a matter of life and death rising far above any theoretical meaning that we might attach to it.

Habakkuk's prophecy was a warning to the people of his day that they were about to be recipients of God's judgment for their iniquity. The judgment would come at the hands of the Chaldeans mainly because of a problem that had arisen in the land:

"Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralysed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted" (Hab 1:3-4).

There were two groups of people antagonistic to each other in Habakkuk's day; the righteous and the wicked. This of course was not just true then but has been

true since the beginning and is still true now. This antagonism is one of the keys to understanding the practical nature of the Atonement. The history of the world from the Bible reader's point of view is about the conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness. This is true from the time that God said he would put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). I'm going to analyze several examples of these conflicts in this series, for instance between Cain and Abel, as well as Saul and David. The death of Christ is about abolishing one sort of person — the unrighteous, and encouraging the other — the righteous.

Coming back to Habakkuk the unrighteous were those who through destruction, violence, strife and contention, paralysed the law so that there was only injustice. A righteous person is someone who establishes true justice. Someone who defends the fatherless and widow, someone who is a person of integrity (Hab 2:4 NET), someone like Christ, someone like God (Psa 82:3-4, 6). In fact being like God is one of the central tenets of the Atonement (we'll see this in the example of Abel) and shows the strong link between the sacrifice of Christ and God manifestation. Habakkuk himself goes on to record *"for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"* (Hab 2:14), or that God's righteousness and justice will be established in all the earth when Christ rules on David's throne. This righteousness was demonstrated at the cross of Christ (Rom 3:21-25) and it's people who demonstrate this righteousness in their lives who will, as the prophet says "live by their faith."

Habakkuk's message to the righteous

So what was Habakkuk's message to the righteous? They were the ones at the receiving end of the unrighteous and so God was giving them a way of escape from the justice he was meting out on those who paralysed the law. That's because God is righteous, or just. Ezekiel tells us *"the soul who sins shall die"* (Ezek 18:4ff) and the Bible is the story of God's righteousness and justice in how he deals with men and women. Habakkuk was told by God to warn the people about the impending invasion of the Chaldeans:

"I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the LORD answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith'" (Hab 2:1-4).

The people in Habakkuk's day had a simple choice. They could listen to God or turn away from him. This is another vital part of the Atonement puzzle; do we listen to God? But more than that, do we trust God? That's what faith is, trusting that what God says is true. And more than that, true faith is trusting what God says is true and doing something about it. The Atonement is about listening to God and obeying him. But not in the sense of reading a list of commandments and ticking them off one by one. That's false religion and the Atonement is about changing us from people of law to people of principle-based faith. And the prin-

ciple in Habakkuk was a simple one: the Chaldeans were coming and the people were being warned to flee!

The righteous would live by his faith. Habakkuk was told to “*write the vision; make it plain on tablets*” and the reason for this was “*so he may run who reads it.*” Another way of saying this is “*faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*” (Rom 10:17). Do you react when you read the Bible? What if the Chaldeans were coming? Would you react then? If you saw Habakkuk’s message clearly written on tablets would you run when you read it? If you had *faith* then of course you would. You would believe what God had said and you would run, and you would live. This is what it means to be righteous, to trust that what God says is true and to act on it.

What has God said to us? He’s said that judgment is coming, and He has set a day for it (Acts 17:31). Do we believe Him? The righteous shall live by his faith and the cross of Christ demonstrates the righteousness of God and that we should trust in Him and not in anything else (Prov 3:5-6). When Jesus hung on the cross what could he trust in? In a short while he would cease to exist. He couldn’t trust in the flesh; it was nailed to a cross. He couldn’t trust in man, for even his own closest friends had forsaken him (Matt 26:56). There was only one person he could trust in and that was God. The death of our Lord is the supreme example of the righteous living by faith, for even in the act of dying he trusted what God had made plain upon tablets.

Romans, Hebrews, Galatians

Now let’s look at how Romans, Hebrews and Galatians take up the story. Each of these epistles quotes Hab 2:4 and the phrase “*the righteous shall live by his faith*” becomes the central theme. But each epistle is different and that’s because each writer is putting emphasis on a different word.

In Romans the apostle Paul is keen to stress that “**the righteous** shall live by faith.” Righteousness is the key word in Romans and Paul begins with showing that both Gentile (Rom 1) and Jew (Rom 2) are unrighteous because of their sin (Rom 3:23).

Let’s have a quick look at Rom 3 because here Paul uses an analogy we can all understand, that of a courtroom scene. The chapter begins with God himself being brought before the judge. Throughout history men and women have accused God of injustice. But as Ezek 18:4 says “*the soul that sins shall die*” and God has demonstrated throughout Scripture that he is fair and just in all his ways (Ezek 33). So the conclusion is “*let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, ‘That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged’*” (Rom 3:4). Those are words taken from David’s Psalm 51 which he wrote after his sin with Bathsheba and when he came to a full realization of God’s righteousness and his own iniquity. When we come to the cross of Christ we have to say “God is right and I am wrong”.

The rest of Romans 3 is about man being brought before the judge with the accusation that he is unrighteous because of sin. The evidence is overwhelming (verses 10-18) and the verdict is guilty as charged (verse 19-20). But Paul ends

this courtroom scene with God acquitting the faithful because of his grace (verses 21-24). And that is *justification*: declaring someone innocent despite their guilt. Why? Because of their faith, and God can work with someone who demonstrates faith and that faith can produce true righteousness.

In Hebrews the writer emphasizes “*my righteous one shall live by faith*” (Heb 10:38). The book of Hebrews is about the contrast between the old covenant, connected with the Law of Moses and its rituals, and the new covenant in Christ. The problem is that ritualistic religion can’t bring life. It can’t bring life now because it’s meaningless outside of a religious setting, and it can’t bring eternal life. Under the Law of Moses someone could offer a burnt offering, representing their dedication to God, but live a life of sin. We can partake of the bread and cup and do the same thing. Or we can have a theoretical understand of the Atonement, that it’s all about dealing with some legal issue for instance, and forget that Jesus said “*take up his cross daily and follow me*” (Luke 9:23). That’s why the epistle of Hebrews ends with what true living is all about. It’s about righteous people living *by faith*. Hebrews 11 follows the quotation from Habakkuk with a list of men and women who lived by faith, and not only that but their faith was about living beyond death according to the promises God had made. Again we come to the supreme example of living by faith in the person of Jesus Christ, who upon the cross demonstrated his trust that there was life beyond the grave.

Finally we come to Galatians where Paul emphasizes “*the righteous shall live by faith*” (Gal 3:11). Paul wants to emphasize faith because the Galatians wanted to return to the philosophy of salvation by law. All the way through the chapter Paul contrasts law with faith. He’s talking more about the principle of law rather than the Law of Moses itself (although he does use that as the obvious example) and the lesson for us is that life is not about following a list of rules. That can’t produce in us true righteousness, which is what God wants. It can’t produce people with an attitude and character which avoids destruction, violence, strife and contention. Someone basing their righteousness on law can be the most divisive, hateful person and yet keep the letter of the law. Once more we are brought to the cross of Christ, a man murdered by those who based their religion on law. What our Lord did on the cross was make an open show of where law-based religion leads (Col 2:15) and this will be one of the central themes of our continuing study in practising the Atonement. It’s about changing us from natural brute beasts to sons and daughters of the living God.

Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)

Tidings on Facebook

There is now a Facebook page for the **Tidings**. Hosted by Bro. Levi Gelineau, it currently posts the Daily Readings along with some other comments. In future we hope to add relevant News and Notices, so please “Friend” this page. (Bro. Levi can be contacted at leviandjessica@gmail.com.) [And if you have no idea what I am talking about — do not worry!]

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Learning Together – Part 2

Repetition

Repetition plays an essential part in the learning program of the Almighty. The Law provided an annual cycle of events which repeated year by year. The rituals of the tabernacle and the personal devotions of the faithful Israelite were repeated day after day. Jesus often made the same points in his teaching, illustrated in different ways. The weekly Breaking of Bread is needed to constantly remind us of the basis of our salvation. The apostles were given the Holy Spirit to help them remember and repeat what the Lord had taught.

The rituals of Sunday school are an important part of repeated patterns of learning: the Superintendent's opening, the hymn, the prayer, the weekly repetition of memorized Bible passages. The learning disabled child will feel secure with these rituals. They will need to feel part of them — even to having a proof like the others, adapted where necessary and learned with the support of parents.

Success is vital. We all make progress when rewarded by success. The dolphins and whales at Sea World know they will get a bucketful of fish and a lot of fuss from their trainers as soon as they have performed well. Human beings are no different. So the tasks we set must be within the capability of the child. Their successful performance needs positive reinforcement with smiles, congratulations, the accolade of the rest of the class, sometimes even a small gift.

Every little thing the disabled child has learned to do will need to be repeated again and again, and with constant encouragement — like all of us need! Stories learned, facts mastered, proofs memorized — all will need to be reinforced again and again. “Catch them doing it well” is a good motto for progress in learning as well as behavior. But we must not be discouraged by limited progress. We shall learn to be pleased by even the smallest achievement. And don't forget to tell the parents. They, too, need every bit of encouragement.

Visual aids and activities

The Bible reveals to us how extensively visual aids feature in the education of God's people. Pictures, models, reference to the students' everyday experience, will all bring alive the printed word of the Bible and make it the living Word of God. Some teachers have a marvelous gift for dreaming up simple models that can easily be cut out and assembled in the short time available in the lesson. Many of us depend on the activity sheets and suggestions accompanying some of the best Christadelphian Sunday school programs.

Our experience is that these give a great sense of achievement and pleasure to children with limited capability and provide a means of recalling the lesson and reinforcing it in the home.

I do and I remember

Our own disabled child, Amy, recalls more easily almost than any other Bible stories those she has acted. Of course, many Sunday school classes meet in cramped space where acting is difficult, but it is surprising what can be done in a simple way with many Bible stories. She also responds well to music and enjoys greatly listening to taped Sunday school hymns.

Often Sunday schools will put on a small play for a special occasion. These involve a lot of time and effort, but how well they are remembered, particularly by all who take part. This serves to emphasize the value of choosing good scripturally based plays. All children can get a great deal out of being given a part in a larger enterprise, not least one which involves understanding and supporting those with special needs. In a practical way they will learn about family responsibility, about grace in action.

And they may come to understand that we are all needing to be helped to cope with our imperfections. Sometimes in our family we wonder if Amy isn't managing this better than any of us! We often think she has taught us more than we have taught her!

So it is that through those experiences and opportunities we least look for, the Lord develops in us the qualities and skills needed for his Kingdom.

Michael Owen (Seaton, UK)

Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at sundayschool@tidings.org.

George Booker

Those who are sharp eyed might have noticed that the name of George Booker has disappeared from the inside front cover. This event should not pass without notice, because Bro. George has contributed in many ways to the Christadelphian Tidings. This is in addition to the multitude of books, articles, and commentaries he has written, most of which are available on his website, which is to be found at www.christadelphianbooks.org/agora.

It is by his choice that George's name has been removed, but he has, I am glad to say, agreed to continue to both supply the "fillers" scattered throughout the magazine, and to continue to supply the magazine with his insightful pieces of Bible Study and Reflection. He felt that his role as "Assistant Editor" had been fulfilled with the transition to my own editorship, but I must express my heartfelt gratitude to his guidance as I took over the reins that Bro. George had so ably held in his period as Editor. He set the direction and framework for the magazine, and greatly assisted in the transition.

Thank you indeed, Bro. George.

Peter Hemingray

The Daughters of Zelophehad (1)

The Story of the Daughters

In the entire account of the forty years of wilderness wanderings, the divine narrative only contains a few select stories. The children of Israel had fled from Egypt, arrived at the Promised Land and sent in the twelve spies. After the unfavorable report from the spies, the nation spurned the land which Yahweh would give to them and sought to return back to the land of Egypt. As a result of their unbelief, God pledged that the faithless generation would wander in the wilderness for forty years, until everyone above twenty years old had perished — all except a few. Their children would then be allowed to enter into the land and receive the inheritance which their parents had lost.

The historical account of the wilderness wanderings begins in Numbers 15, just after God had pronounced the curse on the unbelieving generation. The account continues all the way until the end of the book of Numbers, in chapter 36. Those 16 chapters span 40 years of history and events. Some of them contain new laws and others contain stories. Yet one of the most intriguing things about these chapters is that in the limited amount of space devoted to this period, the story of the daughters of Zelophehad isn't only mentioned once, but twice!

Our God thought this to be such an important story that out of all of the other incidents that happened in those forty years, He chose to have this mentioned multiple times. Yet this is not the only characteristic of the daughters' story which denotes its importance. In addition to its inclusion and references in the book of Numbers, their story seems to be the only event in Israel's history which caused the law of Moses to be amended multiple times! God specifically changed His law twice because of this incident — first in Numbers 27 and then again in Numbers 36.

Thus, the tale of the daughters of Zelophehad has special significance for us. God has marked it out as something that comes up twice in a section of time that has relatively sparse history, and it is also an event which was so important, that God changed the law of Moses twice to fit with the circumstances.

As we look at the story of these five daughters, we will see the characteristics that made them so precious and significant in God's sight — they loved their inheritance. For our first article, we will get to know the daughters themselves — their background and their understanding of Scripture. In the next article, we will note the importance of the inheritance in ancient Israel. Finally, in the third article, we will see the end of their story; God rewarded their love for His land. In all of this we will see the importance for each of us to cherish and steadfastly desire the inheritance which our Father has offered to us.

Family Tree

The story of the daughters begins in Numbers 26. Moses was to take a census of the people — this is the first place in which the daughters are mentioned.

“And it came to pass after the plague, that the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers’ house, all that are able to go to war in Israel” (Num 26:1-2).

The time of the wilderness wanderings was now nearing its end, and Yahweh called Moses to take a new count of the people — only those twenty years old and above would be counted. This would be the group of people who would inherit the promised land.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names” (Num 26:52-53).

All of those who were numbered would receive an inheritance. One of the men counted was a man named Hopher, he was of the sons of Manasseh.

*“Of the sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites: and Machir begat Gilead: of Gilead come the family of the Gileadites. These are the sons of Gilead...and of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites: **and of Hopher, the family of the Hopherites.** And Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah” (Num 26:29-30, 32-33).*

Just to get the family tree in your mind, Joseph was the father of Manassah, Manassah begat Machir, Machir begat Gilead, Gilead was the father of Hopher, and Hopher was the father of Zelophehad. This genealogy is confirmed again:

“Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah” (Num 27:1).

Since Hopher’s family was part of the censuses in Numbers 26, the children of Hopher were supposed to receive a portion of Manassah’s inheritance. Part of the land would be parsed out to them, according to this numbering. Yet there was a problem. It would appear that Hopher had only one son — and that son, Zelophehad, was dead. There was no one to inherit his portion in the land — under the law, the land was not passed down to daughters.

As the census went throughout the camp, the daughters of Zelophehad suddenly realized the problem.

Petition to Moses

And so they came to Moses, which was no easy task. According to Exodus 18, Moses had trained up groups of judges to make decisions in matters so that he would not have to. He had judges over hundreds and judges over thousands. It would

seem as though the daughters would have to go through each of these levels until they could come to Moses and the princes — which demonstrates their resolve. The matter of this inheritance was something that was extremely important to them and they would not be deterred from speaking to Moses about it.

“And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes of all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons” (Num 27:2-3).

Zelophehad’s Death

As they stood before Moses and Eleazar and the rulers of Israel, they declared to them that their father had died in the wilderness — not with a rebellious spirit, like Korah, but had simply died in his own sin.

Zelophehad doesn’t seem to be one of the previous generation who had died in the wilderness because of unbelief, but rather one who died of natural causes. Keep in mind that he was the son of Hephher, mentioned in Numbers 26 as one of those who should inherit the land. He had five, young, unmarried daughters, probably putting him at a fairly young age — young enough to have not fallen into condemnation with the generation before his own.

In addition, look at what the daughters ask in connection with their statement:

“Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father” (Num 27:4).

The purpose of the daughters explaining the death and lack of rebellion in their father was to show that his name was worthy of keeping in the remembrance of Israel! “Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family?” They were seeking to prove Zelophehad’s righteousness by distancing him from Korah’s rebellion and seeking to show that he died of natural causes — therefore he was not able to inherit his land, and as a result, the family name would be forgotten.

The Wisdom of the Daughters

This was not what they wanted to have happen. These sisters cared about their family and cared about their inheritance. They understood the significance of the inheritance (which we will explore in the next article). Despite their youth, they had great spiritual insight. These were sisters who knew God’s principles and understood the meaning behind His law! Just look again at the words that they spoke to Moses:

*“Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together **against the LORD** in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons” (Num 27:3).*

Notice that the daughters of Zelophehad said that Korah’s rebellion was specifically directed against Yahweh Himself! They didn’t say, “the company that gathered

themselves together against Moses and Aaron,” but they markedly said “the company that gathered themselves together against the LORD.” Their understanding was a massive contrast to the reaction that most of the congregation had after Korah, Dathan, and Abiram died:

*“But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, **Ye have killed the people of the LORD.** And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared” (Num 16:41-42).*

The next day after the death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the people actually gathered against Moses and Aaron — accusing them of killing Yahweh’s servants! The daughters of Zelophehad had much more spiritual insight than this. They were able to recognize that the rebellion of Korah was misguided and an actual rebellion against God. Thus, their thinking lines up exactly with that of the Father.

*“And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, **when they strove against the LORD**” (Num 26:9).*

Scripture clearly shows against whom Korah fought. Yet in addition to recognizing this, the daughters also understood that death is a normal occurrence for humanity $\frac{3}{4}$ but it happens because of our sin:

“But died in his own sin, and had no sons” (Num 27:3).

They were able to see that it was sin that brought about their father’s death. They understood that death from sin was the normal condition for humanity.

These were remarkable sisters. They had a deep understanding and perception of things that many at that time did not grasp — partly because of the teaching passed down by Joseph (as will be seen in the next article), but no doubt partly because they wanted to know and understand, so they sought out answers.

This is a powerful example for our young sisters. As you graduate from youth circle and Sunday School, don’t let your reading of the Word stop! Sometimes it can be easy to think that only the brothers need to spend time in Scripture every day. Yet it isn’t just for the brothers to understand God’s Word. It’s true that the brothers are the ones who speak and teach the ecclesia, but the sisters as well are responsible for teaching the other sisters, being an example to the children, and having a spiritually focused attitude throughout the day. Both the brother and the sister are capable of understanding the divine principles and the divine record. Both are responsible for their knowledge and the conduct that develops from that knowledge.

These sisters understood Yahweh’s principles and as a result they could see the true depth in the things that they were commanded. It was this understanding which led them to recognize the powerful meaning behind the inheritance and

which motivated them to strive to receive the inheritance themselves. In the next article, we too will comb through the Word of God and will reveal the significance behind the inheritance in the Promised Land.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Music in Worship

Hymns and Memories

Many of us treasure particular hymns because they generate special memories of past events or situations. Stories of these memories can be very interesting as they draw on a vast range of experiences from different cultures and languages. In the reflections that follow we are taken, in thought, to England, Canada and Nigeria. God's precious Word is central to each of these reflections as people in different parts of the world sing the same hymns with joy and vivid memories of important links with their life in the Truth.

Reflection 1: Hymn 218 — “Loving Shepherd of thy sheep”

Our family has many fond memories of Hymn 218, “Loving Shepherd of thy sheep”. Whenever we sing this hymn reminisces and loving thoughts are triggered. Our memories go back many decades in time. We are now in our seventies and this hymn was the favorite hymn of my husband's grandmother. She was a member of the Clowne Ecclesia in England and she requested that this hymn be played each Sunday. The organists obliged her and the hymn was played at each Sunday meeting. Because she enjoyed this hymn so much and never tired of hearing it, and because it reminded others of her faith in the work of her “Loving Shepherd”, it was played at her funeral when she fell asleep in the Lord in her late 80s.

In addition to recalling this hymn in relation to his grandmother, my husband also associates this hymn with his experiences working with sheep during the Second World War in England while doing alternative service. He was a conscientious objector and was assigned to work on a farm. During the course of his tenure of farming, he had many experiences with sheep and had the opportunity to closely observe their habits. He found that once sheep got to know and trust their masters, they would heedlessly and trustingly follow them anywhere. Their trust grew to such an extent that when the mother gave birth to a lamb she would bring the baby lamb to you, to proudly show off her offspring. He observed the need of all sheep for safe guidance and the constant care of a caring shepherd. The first two lines of hymn 218 — “Loving Shepherd of thy sheep, Keep thy lambs, in safety keep” — came to have particular meaning and special value for him as he observed the habits of sheep in their daily life.

Reflection 2: Hymn 218 — “Loving Shepherd of thy sheep” Part 2

Hymn 218 has fond memories for our family. This hymn was sung during a presentation at the Toronto Easter Gathering when Bro. Alan Hayward from England was the guest speaker. He gave a Saturday evening program entitled “Desert Island

Hymns”. He introduced us to hymns that had special memories for him and that he would take with him to a desert island if he could only take a limited number of hymns. The reason this hymn was so special to Bro. Alan was that it was sung at his wedding.

When our daughter and son-in-law were preparing for their marriage ceremony we requested everyone sing hymn 218. They granted our request and our memories of Bro. Alan Hayward were triggered, as well as the special meaning for our dear children, when we sang hymn 218. The last verse, requesting teaching and safe keeping in God’s way for the two people who were embarking on their new life together, was very appropriate for their wedding service. “Loving Shepherd, ever near; Teach thy lambs thy voice to hear: Suffer not their steps to stray, From the strait and narrow way.” What a wonderful petition to make on behalf of a newly married couple. How important it is for them and us to remember the loving shepherd care we receive each day.

Reflection 3: Hymn 221 — “Was it for me thy flesh was wounded sore”

When I learned the Truth in 1985, I lived on the 24th floor of an apartment building in Toronto, and had a view of most of the city. I used to stand on the balcony and wonder why God would choose me to call out of all those people. A few years later Bro. Harry Tennant was giving the classes at a Bible School I went to, and he gave a vivid description of the crucifixion. He told how Christ would have had the “crown” of thorns slammed on his head, be whipped with pieces of bone embedded in the lashes, how he was impaled on the cross and the cross being lifted up and slammed into the ground. Yet Christ endured not only the pain, but the taunts as well. Then Bro. Harry Tennant said, “If you were the ONLY person in the history of the world to come to God, Christ would have done that for you.” I was shaken and cried, “not for me Lord, not that.”

A few years later I moved to Barrie and began learning to play the piano, as we had no organist. As my ability improved, I wanted to learn a hymn I’d never heard before, and came across Hymn 221. I shook as I read these profound words, “Was it for me thy flesh was wounded sore, thy body lifted high on Cross of shame? Was it for me the King of Glory bore so meek the scourge and ruthless men’s defame?” Bro. Tennant’s vivid description came flooding back to me. “Was there no way for any man to live but thou must die, no joy but through thy grief? Is sin so dark that God cannot forgive save through thy sacrifice, and our belief?” That feeling of “not for me Lord, not this” overwhelmed me again.

As I began to learn how to play the music, I realized the music and words complement each other. Shivers still come over me every time I play this hymn, thinking of what Christ went through for me. “Lord, let me learn thy sorrow, mark thy pain, that no more heedless through the world I roam, but come to take the pardon thou didst gain, and find within thy fold, eternal home.” I pray that I may be ever mindful of this, that I might never take the agony out of the sacrifice he made for me.

Reflection 4: Hymn 369 — “O For a thousand tongues to sing”

I cannot sing Hymn Number 369 — “O For a thousand tongues to sing” — without thinking of our brothers and sisters in Nigeria. In my head I hear the distinctive sound of the Nigerian style of hymn singing. I was not familiar with this hymn before Steve and I and our daughter Rachel went to Nigeria to make a videotape about our brothers and sisters there, as part of a series on Christadelphians around the world. Hymn 369 inspired the title of the video, “A Thousand Tongues to Sing”.

A hallmark of Nigerian Christadelphians is the spontaneous singing of hymns in any circumstances where believers are together. They break out in song without hesitation at every opportunity that presents itself, whether in transit in a vehicle, walking, waiting or when open-air preaching. They sing in harmony and with gusto! They have a repertoire of hymns that are sung from memory, of which the most prominent seems to be “O for a thousand tongues to sing”. We heard them sing this one repeatedly and I began to identify them with this hymn.

When I looked at the words to Hymn 369, I was struck by their appropriateness to the believers in Nigeria. It is a hymn about preaching and this is a high priority to them. They held several open-air preaching sessions while we were there, all beginning with the singing of hymns to draw a crowd. Verse three of this hymn particularly resonates with their efforts to reach out to others in their situation with the message of salvation.

*“He speaks — and, listening to his voice,
New life the dead receive.
New life the dead receive.
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.”*

I found it interesting that Nigerian Christadelphians numbered about a thousand when we were there in 2001. And it appears that many of these thousand tongues are very actively singing praises to God! This hymn calls for “a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise”. And it asks, “My gracious Master and my Lord, assist me to proclaim, to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of the Name.” I see the Nigerians very much attuned to the meaning of these words when they sing them. And I cannot help but think of our Nigerian brothers and sisters, and their example to us whenever I sing this hymn.

Ken and Joan Curry (Toronto East, ON)

Note: Additional hymns that are favorites or trigger special memories for you are invited for future publications. Please send comments to Ken and Joan Curry at krcurry@sympatico.ca.

*I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.
Civilla D. Martin*

*“A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song”
(Chinese proverb).*

Reflections

Faith and Death

If you please, I'd like you to start by answering one very simple question. Don't hesitate. Don't analyze. Just answer as quickly as you can, with the first thing that comes to mind:

Fill in the blank: "I believe in _____."

Please remember your answer; you might want to think about it later, and consider what if anything your answer tells you.

Faith...

What is faith? A set of principles? Yes, in one sense, faith can mean a set of fundamental principles. Sometimes we call these "The First Principles". They are the Bible beliefs which, together, explain and express the object of faith: i.e., that in which we believe. We may call it "*the* faith".

The Greek "pistis" is a noun which means faith, belief, trust.

What is *our* faith? Is it our own set of principles, possibly distinct in some degree from our brother's or sister's personal beliefs? Or should we define "faith" in a very different way? Is faith the personal ability or capacity of each individual which enables him or her to truly believe?

The Greek "pisteuo" is the verb form of the noun "pistis". This word refers to the action of believing, putting one's faith in, or trusting someone or something.

In Bible terms, there is no difference between faith and belief, as nouns. And there is no difference between the verbs: "to have faith in" or "to believe". Though "faith" and "belief" are distinct words in English, there is no distinction at all in Greek.

How seriously do we hold "The First Principles"? What are they worth to us? Is every one of equal value to us? What would we give up for them? Do we truly have faith in "*the* faith"? Do we truly believe in our set of beliefs? Do we put more stress on *what* we believe than on *how committed* we are to our beliefs?

Our faith (or belief) cannot be in words or ideas, at least not by themselves. Words printed on paper, or on a computer screen, or spoken in conversation, are not something to believe in. The real belief, or faith, must be in the being, whether human or divine, who has by some means communicated ideas, or made promises, to us. In short, we must have faith — we must believe — in God and His Son. Any faith, belief, or trust in any ordinary man or men, or in any mere idea by itself, will prove to be an illusion.

Or is faith a subjective thing? That is, our own individual "faith" in God, and in His purpose and promises. Our personal ability or capacity to trust in God and in what He has said.

To put it this way reminds us of the man in Mark 9, who asks Jesus to heal his son. The man tells Jesus that his son has been afflicted with an illness which sounds like epilepsy, an illness that brings on terrible seizures and convulsions. Then he says, almost as if he has no real hope: “**But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us**” (v 22).

“**If I can!**” says Jesus, putting great stress on the word “**if**”. He seems to say, “Do you *doubt* that I can do this?” Then the Lord adds: “*Everything is possible for him who believes*” (v 23).

Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed:

“*I do believe [‘pisteuo’]; help me overcome my unbelief [‘apistis’: literally, ‘not faith’, i.e., a lack of faith]” (v 24).¹*

The man seems to say — and Jesus doesn’t dispute the idea — that it is possible to believe and *not* believe at the same time. It is possible to *have* faith and to *lack* faith at the same time.

This passage describes a subjective faith, a faith or belief unique to each individual. A changeable measure of the ability to believe. A changeable degree of spiritual strength to hold on to, or to trust in, anything or anyone. Going up and down like the daily temperature.

To think of faith or belief in this way is to ask other questions:

- Where does such an ability — the ability to believe or trust — come from?
- Do we generate it all on our own?
- Or is it a gift from someone else?
- Does it come from our parents?
- Or our teachers?
- Or from the printed Bible?
- Does it come from God? Do we find faith all at once, Or do we develop faith bit by bit, like we accumulate knowledge of a school subject, or experience in a profession?

Other questions:

- Is it better to have a *half-hearted* faith in *the* perfect “faith” (meaning: the perfect set of Bible principles)?
- Or is it better to have a *wholehearted* faith in what is perhaps a slightly less than perfect set of Bible principles?
- And maybe a third question to follow the first two: Is it wrong even to ask such questions?

I’m *not* going to give you definite answers to these questions. But I *am* asking these soul-searching questions, and I *am* going to challenge you to consider certain scenes/pictures/ideas while trying to wrestle with such questions.

There is also a third distinct aspect of faith, as defined in the Greek of the New Testament. I’ll put it this way: *If I have faith in Jesus, does he have a right to put faith in me? If I trust him, can he expect to trust me?*

We have thought about God and His Son as objects of our trust. And we have thought about the individual's capacity to "believe", and to hold on to that trust, in them, through various trials of life. Now the third aspect of faith is this: Even allowing for my weaknesses, and inevitable failures, can Christ expect that I will be "faithful" to him?

The third Greek word, related to the first two, is "pistos". It is an adjective, a descriptive word meaning: faithful, trustworthy, reliable. It occurs in these passages, among others:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful ['pistos'] servant! You have been faithful ['pistos'] with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (Matt 25:21, and other verses also).

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful ['pistos'] in prayer" (Rom 12:12).

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove [themselves] faithful ['pistos']" (1Cor 4:2).

We can summarize at this point. We can now say that "faith" has at least three aspects:

- The person or idea in which we choose to place our faith;
- The ability of each person, or the gift given to each person, even to *have* faith at all; and finally,
- The need for each person to be *faithful*, or to show *faithfulness*.

...And death

So now we are entering into the area where we might say to one another, and certainly to ourselves: "Now this is getting *personal!*"

Does the New Testament command us to "**be faithful**"? The answer is: 'Yes, it does, but only one time!' (This is true, whether we use the NIV, the RSV or the KJV: it's only one time.)

Where is the passage? And what does it say?

It is in Christ's message to the ecclesias in Rev 2:10:

*"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil [i.e., the Roman authorities] will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. **Be faithful** unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

Jesus says, 'Be faithful. Start now. Expect that you will suffer, one way or another along the way. It's alright — I suffered too. Continue to be faithful until you die. That's alright too: I was faithful, and then I died. You wouldn't want it any other way, would you? Do that — that's all! — and I promise you that I will give you a crown of eternal life.'

Somehow, "faith" and "death" seem to go hand in hand, don't they? The young

person decides to be baptized, and we read for him or her (and one more time for ourselves):

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6: 3-11).

We take a young person, with plans and hopes for the future, and seemingly with everything to live for, with years and years of life ahead, and we talk about crucifixion, death and burial. And I wonder sometimes how real these concepts are to us, especially when we are quite young. The young especially (though they are not the only ones!) may think they have the luxury of just about all the time in the world. But they don’t necessarily. No one does.

Should it be surprising, even for the young person who accepts Christ in baptism, that we should speak of death and burial? When the baby Jesus was brought by his mother and Joseph to the Temple for the first time, the old man Simeon came forth and by inspiration blessed the baby. Then he turned to the young mother, and told her, *“And a sword shall pierce your own soul (or life) also” (Luke 2:35)*. It seems almost casual, as though it were perfectly natural and reasonable: ‘For this child, as well as for you the mother, there will be the sword of death. Know that for a certainty!’

The circumcision of Jesus on the eighth day and the sacrifices on the fortieth day, with their bloodshed, were previews of the scourge, the thorns, the cross, and the spear. These were pains felt keenly by the young mother Mary as she came to see more and more of her son’s mission.

Every mother knows that her child is born to die one day. Like it or not, there is a “sword” for each of us. We all bear our “crosses” every day, as we carry about these bodies doomed to death. We may, however, all choose what “death” we will die — either eternal death or the “death” of our ambitions and desires in this world:

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:39).

For each of us who seek to walk in Christ’s steps, salvation is on the other side of suffering -- whether it be a brief and fiery trial, or long years of temptation and waiting. We cannot step around the sword or leap over the flames; we must walk straight forward, and Christ will walk with us.

Whatever else our faith is, it centers upon the cross, the place of an excruciatingly painful and humiliating death. The man who died on the cross was raised from the dead, and he now offers us... literally everything in the world! But he tells us

that we must “be faithful unto death”. He tells us that we must deny ourselves, and that each of us must take up our cross and follow him (Matt 16:24).

The Christian writer, A.W. Tozer, says: “The cross is the symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of the human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going out to have his life redirected. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing. It slew all of the man completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck swift and hard and when it had finished its work the man was no more... In coming to Christ we do not bring our life up on to a higher plane. We leave it at a cross. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die. That is the beginning of the gospel.”

What does it mean to “be faithful unto death”?

On Sept. 11, 2001, the Twin Towers of New York were struck by great planes filled with jet fuel, which exploded and fatally weakened the buildings. As clouds poured out of the towers and engulfed the center of the city, many thousands of people fled the scene, covered with ash and struggling for breath as they ran or stumbled away. But a few hundred men and women — police and emergency services and fire department — rushed *toward* the conflagration, and into mortal danger. Some of them did not come out alive. It was, simply put, their job.

“Be faithful unto death”

The writer to the Hebrews describes many nameless men and women who were “faithful unto death”, who were in fact faithful in the face of imminent death: “What more shall I say?” he wrote.

“Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goat-skins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated — the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (11:35-38). “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off” (v 13).

“Be faithful unto death”

The young Jewish bride of a king realizes that she has been put in her position, close to great power, so as to be able to intercede on behalf of God’s people. But she also understands that to speak out will endanger her own life. Esther asks for prayers and fasting as a preparation, and vows that after three days she will approach the king, “even though it is against the law.” She adds: “*And if I perish, I perish*” (Esth 4:16).

“Be faithful unto death...”

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he

broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes**" (1Cor 11:23-26).

We conclude with another little quiz. So again, please answer one very simple question. No need to hurry this time. Take all the time you need, and think about your answer. The question is:

What, in *YOUR* life, is worth dying for?

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. Many Quotations are from the NIV

Sanitizing the Heart — Isaiah 6, 7

If you work as a supervisor or manager in the food service industry you are often expected to take a class to become certified in Food Safety and Sanitation. It is in this class that you get to learn about all those food borne illnesses that can either make you sick or kill you. You learn about Botulism, Salmonella, E-coli and the ever prevalent Campylobacter (which is actually the most common form of food poisoning but nobody's ever heard of it because it doesn't make you all that sick). There is an interesting irony that occurs when you take a food sanitation class, and that is that it can make you paranoid about food. It's ironic because food is the thing that sustains life; yet after hearing about all the various bacteria that are so prevalent in our food, you feel like you never want to eat again!

Now there are some golden rules for cleanliness in food preparation. The first rule is that there is a difference between being clean and being sanitary, and you have to understand the difference in order to understand the sanitation process. Clean is the removal of dirt; sanitary is the elimination of bacteria. In the food industry, you clean with soap and water and you sanitize with heat.

It is easy to recognize the spiritual metaphor. We are cleaned by the waters of baptism. Baptism is a symbol of our willingness to accept Jesus as our savior. So through baptism we are made clean, but that doesn't make us sanitary. In scripture 'sanitary' relates to being pure or perfect. Now, we know that Jesus was clean because he did no sin. But we also know that he was not perfect, not naturally anyway, because the book of Hebrews tells us that he "...learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And **being made perfect**, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb 5:8-9). Likewise, even though we are made clean through baptism, there is still a purification process that needs to take place. Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, explained the process this way: firstly "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot **see** the kingdom of God" and then "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born of **water and spirit** he cannot **enter in** to the kingdom of God" (John 3:3,5). Jesus was

showing that spiritual purification is a twofold process; just because someone is clean doesn't mean that they are pure.

There is a second rule in the food preparation process which is: something cannot be sanitized until it is clean. You have to clean it first before you can sanitize it. So if you are working in a kitchen and you spray a dirty surface with only hot water; then that item is neither clean nor sanitary. It may look clean and because it's hot you may think it's sanitary but it's neither. The bacteria actually hides beneath the dirt, the hot water may get rid of the visible dirt but it won't get rid of the dirt you can't see. You have to wash it first, then you can sanitize it. Likewise, Jesus says you have to be born of water first, and then the spirit, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. We are washed by the waters of baptism; then we are purified by the Holy Spirit. You have to be clean before you can be sanitized.

Likewise, sometimes we can appear to be clean when we are not. We can sometimes become so wrapped up in becoming sanitary (or pure) that we forget from where we were made clean. We forget that we were once dirty and repented of our sins, acknowledging through baptism that we are only made clean by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When we forget this fundamental truth about ourselves, then we are no longer clean and we are incapable of being sanitized. In his letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation, Jesus called this forgetting your 'first love' and reminds them to *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent"* (Rev:2:5 NKJV).

Peter also reminds us never to forget how we were made clean with these words: *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (2Pet 2:24). We were once unclean, but now through Christ we are made clean so that we might be purified even as Christ was purified. Or as Jesus put it *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"* (Matt 5:48).

Ken Camplin (Southern Highlands Ecclesia, NSW, AUS)

The Energizer Bunny of Christadelphia

Here I go again... got the suitcase packed, got the computer packed in the brief case, have proper ID for the airport, the plane ticket has my boarding pass already attached, the cell phone is powered up. If I take the back roads I can make it to the airport with enough time to park the car in the long-term lot and still get into the terminal. Maybe once I clear the check points I can grab a bite to eat and, oh yes, a bottle of water, since my ticket clearly states that no refreshments will be served. And while I wait between flights, I should have some time to review various notes.

Good thing I was able to see the kids off to school this morning and to kiss the wife goodbye before leaving for the office and then the airport. I must take her along on one of these trips. She'd love the change of pace.

Well, it's only one week away from home. My boss has me teaching two classes each morning at the local office, and each afternoon I'll be meeting with company reps from all over the world. Lunches and dinners will allow some networking time, and then maybe I can retreat to my hotel room for some time on emails, phone calls (must remember what time zone I'll be in), and grab a few minutes to review my presentations for the next morning.

Not too bad a schedule really, but I truly haven't been feeling great lately... a little run down. Hope I'm not coming down with the flu that was going round at the office and the ecclesia. These days there are pills for everything and surely the wife packed something for all possibilities. She takes such good care of me.

Yes, God willing, it won't be a tough week. But I was totally caught off guard by the phone call from the recording brother of one of the ecclesias in the city where I'll be visiting. He had heard, thanks to the Christadelphian grapevine, that I'd be "in the neighborhood" for some work. He was wondering if I'd mind doing some Bible studies for them... not too much, since it is such short notice. What can a brother say to such a simple request? "No" is seldom an option, it seems. So, I said "yes". But I was shocked with last night's email from him, detailing the weekend program. But I've already said I could do the studies, and I do have my conference assignment fairly well organized. I feel certain the boss won't mind my using the business trip for "church" time as well. He's always cared for family and church values.

Okay, so the plan went from a couple of Bible classes to seven talks over two days, but there will be some breaks for tea, coffee, socializing and oh, yes, a "pot luck" meal or two. Mustn't forget the add-on Wednesday Bible class — the scheduled brother just didn't have time to prepare. I really hope I'm not getting sick... I've felt a little run down lately. Now if only I can get rides to and from the hotel and the hall. Did I leave a copy of my schedule and contact information for both the job and the ecclesia with the wife? Oh, well, she'll be busy enough with the kids and the ecclesia. She'll understand. She really is a "super Mom" and wife... and I need to tell her that more often.

Traffic is light, airport is in sight... all is going well... parking lot is not yet full... airport terminal not extra busy... all going well... cleared the check points and have found my gate... all going well... sure hope I'm not getting sick... have felt a little run down lately... I'll just skip a meal and drink plenty of fluids...

Flights were smooth and on time, luggage also arrived, weather is good and I caught up on office work. Another airport, another city, another hotel... but more importantly: another ecclesia. Yes, another home away from home. A home where I will be made welcome and will, hopefully, bring some spiritual comfort and renewal to my brothers and sisters.

Sure hope I'm not getting sick... I've been feeling a little rundown lately.

Brother Sparky

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psa 46:10).

When Man and Woman Play with Fire

“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?” (Prov 6:27, NIV).

The context of this verse is to be found earlier: *“My son, keep your father’s command and do not forsake your mother’s teaching... For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light, and correction and instruction are the way to life, keeping you from your neighbor’s wife, from the smooth talk of a wayward woman” (Prov 26: 20-24).* It shows the way to avoid the temptations of immoral women, the attractions of a wayward wife, and/or the prostitute is to follow the teaching of your parents. To follow their instructions is the way to observe true Godly morality, and the passage warns against the temptations with playing with the fire of passion.

The “lap” (“bosom”: KJV) of verse 27 (Hebrew “cheq”) is the place in which one holds or cradles a loved one, the center of affection. The ESV puts it “next to his chest.”

There is an elaborate three-part pun in this verse, one part being implied. This is very common in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament: it has been estimated there are at least 300 deliberate “puns”, or more properly word plays, in the Hebrew of Isaiah alone.

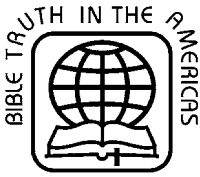
The Hebrew for man here is “iysh”, and for “fire” it is “esh”. In fact the two Hebrew words for man (אִישׁ) and fire (אֵשׁ) are adjacent in the text, and differ only in the vowel pointing. Then there is the implied part, since this word does not occur in this verse: the Hebrew for woman is “ishah”. This pun provides the opportunity for an interesting example of rabbinical teaching by clever word-play. According to the NET Notes, “A passage like this probably inspired Rabbi Gamaliel’s little explanation that what binds a man and a woman together in a holy marriage is Y (yod) and H (he), the two main letters of the holy name Yah. But if the Lord is removed from the relationship, that is, if these two letters are removed, all that is left is the ‘esh’ — the fire of passion. Since Gamaliel was the teacher of Paul, this may have influenced Paul’s advice that it was better to marry than to burn [1Cor 7:9].”

A bit more clarification may be helpful here, for the most of you who are not altogether familiar with the Hebrew. If the “yod” were removed, the “man” (Hebrew “iysh”) would become the Hebrew word “esh”, or “fire”. And if the Hebrew letter “he” were removed, the “woman” (Hebrew “ishah”) would become the same Hebrew word “esh”, or “fire”.

The marital sexual relationship finds its true meaning and purpose in being centered upon the love of the LORD, Yahweh. But if this is not the case, then, the rabbis would say, there is nothing left but “fire”. Perhaps even fire twice over:

- 1) for the man and woman now, only the “fire” of a consuming lust or passion, and
- 2) for them later, only the “fire” of eternal destruction.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)



Bible Mission News

Challenges in Jamaica — 2011

As the countries in many regions of the world struggle with economic woes including rising debt loads, these factors have a negative impact on their infrastructure. Road maintenance, public services such as safe drinking water and electricity to homes, along with health care are some of the first things to be affected.

During our visit to Jamaica in July, ecclesial members readily drove us from one meeting hall to another, only to be faced with varied road conditions. Parts of our journey were travelled on very smooth highways, but when using secondary and rural roads we encountered sections full of pot-holes. Some brethren knew the pot-hole locations by memory — and few even had their own names! Jamaicans accept these challenges cheerfully (and with exceptional driving skills), while their vehicles certainly suffer the consequences of these rough conditions.

The larger cities and towns usually have reasonable water and electrical supplies but water is sometimes shut off for extended periods of time during the dry season and electricity can be turned off with no notice for several hours at a time. However, as in many countries today, storage reservoirs can be seen on rooftops to provide a consistent supply of water and stand-by generators are used to power places like grocery stores and hospitals. The situation outside of cities can be quite different. For example, in the rural areas of the Free Hill Ecclesia, I was told that there had been no municipal water supply for some homes for 15 to 20 years. The underground pipe kept breaking, so they decided to stop repairing it due to lack of funds!

One of the biggest challenges facing the Jamaican brotherhood though is the lack of brothers. In the 11 ecclesias with regularly scheduled weekly activities, the number of brethren per ecclesia who minister the Word ranges from one to five. In several ecclesias, one or two brethren share the load on behalf of 10 or 12 sisters. It is evident though, that the sisters serve the ecclesias in a manner which cannot be underestimated: examples like Phebe in Romans 16:1-2 or Tabitha in Acts 9:36-41 are present in the Jamaican Brotherhood. During our stay we were involved with a three-day special effort at the Free Hill Ecclesia — three evenings of special lectures were held at the ecclesial hall, and at one lecture there were 10 adults and 10 children and teens present, with good audience participation during the talk. Brethren Malchus Wallace and Martin Shirley provide the leadership for this ecclesia. Brother Martin is giving baptismal instruction to a few of the young men, so there is hope of more brothers for the future. The accompanying photo in front of the Free Hill Ecclesial Hall includes some of the members, friends and

youth who were in attendance at the Remembrance Service on Sunday, July 24th. Our week-long stay was organized by Sister Annette Johnson (secretary of the CBMJ) and we visited the Free Hill, May Pen and Broughton Ecclesias, as well as meeting isolated members in several areas like Norwood.



Bro. Martin Shirley on the left, Bro. Malchus Wallace on the right, Sis. Simone Wallace in the center (younger woman — the older woman with a hat on is not a sister) and Sis. Jessie Jones in the doorway behind the young woman with no hat.

Our appeal to the brotherhood is for brothers, in particular, to consider visiting Jamaica and other Caribbean Ecclesias for short term support — ministering the Word by providing preaching and pastoral assistance. Long-term support is also needed. Your service and encouragement will be greeted with brotherly hospitality. The appeal to Our Heavenly Father is to strengthen their Faith in these last days, in a very troubled world.

Enquires to the CBMC can be directed to Phil Snobelen at philsnobelen@shaw.ca or Don Luff at luffs@sympatico.ca or CBMC, Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Avenue, Surrey, BC V3R 0J7, Canada. Information can also be obtained from Sis. Annette Johnson, 866 Uranium Way, Mineral Heights, May Pen PO, Clarendon, Jamaica, W.I.

Bro. Don Luff, CBMC

"I cannot call riches anything but the baggage of virtue. The Roman word is better — impedimenta. For as the baggage is to an army, so are riches to virtue. It cannot be spared or left behind, but it hinders the march. Yea, and the care of it sometimes loses or disturbs the victory. Of great riches there is no real use, except it be in the distribution; the rest is but conceit" (Francis Bacon).

Trinidad and Tobago Bible School

It had been about a year and a half since Sis. Ruth and I had been asked to go down to Trinidad and Tobago. Now, I was leading the two of us through the airport in Port of Spain with an old “Christadelphian” magazine in my hand, looking for someone else with something similar in their hands. It wasn’t long before we saw them.

We were met at the airport by a local brother and his son — Bro. Raj and Bro. Anil Gobin, members of the Marabella Ecclesia. As we stepped into Bro. Anil’s car, our stay in Trinidad and Tobago began. We were to be on the islands for two weeks. The first week would be spent at a Bible school in Marabella and the second week at a youth camp in Gran Couva. Many memories were made, but we will focus on two major things — the notebooks of the teens at the youth camp and the fellowship with the brethren.



A group of young people at the youth camp preparing answers for questions about the classes.

Near the end of our trip, I sat looking down at the notebooks in my hands — all belonging to the teenage campers who had attended the week long youth camp. The notebooks contained their notes on my classes and Bro. Clive Drepaul’s classes — and the notes were stunning. I had spoken on Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and Bro. Clive had spoken about Spiritual Lessons from Natural Formations. Going through the notes, it could be seen that the campers understood the classes and picked up on the lessons. Each day, after the classes were over, the teens

would get together in groups and answer questions relating to what they had heard that day — using their notes for support. They aptly answered all of the questions and demonstrated their understanding of the material. These notebooks that I held in my hands were quite well done.

My task was then a bit difficult. The campers had all been told that at the end of the week they would turn in their notebooks — and the neatest, most accurate book would be chosen. I had to decide which book best met these qualifications. This whole idea of taking notes and turning in the notebook for grading was almost entirely foreign to me — but after looking at the work done by the teenagers, I could see the value in the exercise. This was quite an awesome experience, and quite special to be able to see what the teens had learned throughout the week.

That term, “special” seemed to characterize our time in Trinidad and Tobago. Our time spent with the brethren around the Word was precious. To be able to go to another country, be enveloped by a completely different culture, and be



The entire group at the youth camp.

surrounded by tens of people whom you have never met — yet still feel at home is something incredibly special. Through the Truth as it is in Christ, we have a family that spans national borders, races, and cultures. It isn't barred by prejudices or social status. We are brothers and sisters in the Hope of Israel — and we could feel that relationship with them, even if we were simply there for a few weeks. It is my hope that you too will one day have the opportunity to share in fellowship with your family in Trinidad and Tobago — it truly was an extraordinary time.

Bro. Jason Hensley; Simi Hills, CA



**Bro. David Edwards and
Sis. Tamika Campbell on
one of the mornings at the
Bible School**

*O Lord, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.*

*Lord, we are few, but Thou art near;
Nor short Thine arm, nor deaf Thine ear;
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts Thine own!*

William Cowper

St. Lucia Missionary Trip

26-Aug-11 to 16-Sep-11

St Lucia — land of promise

No sooner had Joan and I emerged from the arrivals area at Vigie, the little municipal Airport on the northern end of Castries, St Lucia, when we spied the tall stately figure of our beloved friend and Brother, Andre George, one of the many active members in the lone ecclesia of about eight Brethren and five Sisters. Faithful as ever, Andre was on time to greet us on arrival for our second visit in two years. Very shortly thereafter, we were also happy to see Bro. Eddie Anthony appear with his vehicle and together they saw us safely off at the Mission House in Sans Souci, less than two miles away.

St Lucia is a beautiful island in the Eastern Caribbean chain and is noted not only for the hospitality of its 175,000 or so citizens but also for its spectacular mountainous views including the world famous twin Pitons peaks in the south, and sulphur springs. A land that hungers for the gospel of the coming Kingdom of Christ, it is over 70% Roman Catholic, and carries prime vacancies for laborers who are willing to settle among the Brethren for a few years to lend the necessary guidance and support this little Olive tree.



Wedding treat!

Our short stay began with a treat! On 3rd September our dear Bro. Mark David and Sis. Alicia Rampersaud were joined together in holy matrimony during a brief but lovely ceremony at the Ecclesial Hall in Castries. (See adjoining photo of the beaming Bride and Groom). Bro David Andrews was privileged to preside over the ceremony and give the address before a small but packed Hall of Brethren, friends, and well wishers.

Fellowship and Bible Study

We spent three Sundays on the island and thus had opportunity to share fellowship with all the Brethren.

We invited all to visit us at the Mission House any day of the week for Bible Readings and discussions. Three study classes were planned and held at the Mission House in addition to a class designed especially for serving Brethren. During the latter we were able to discuss a number of Biblical queries as well as suggestions for the development of the ecclesia as a whole.

Public Lectures

Six Bible presentations were made by Bro. David at the Ecclesial Hall — mostly pertaining to Israel and the coming Kingdom of God. Many flyers were prepared and distributed but the public response was rather disappointing in terms of numbers. Keen interest in the topics were nevertheless shown by the few that came, judging by the questions they asked afterward. Maybe for public lectures we could give consideration to making greater use of the public media and perhaps

try to acquire a more central venue as we did on previous occasions, such as the Public Library.

Contacts

We were once again able to visit and hold Bible discussions with the Lambert family, a long standing home of the Christadelphians who greatly assisted our accommodation in the formative years of the Castries Ecclesia. Their love for the Word of God is no doubt genuine and our visiting Brethren are always welcome into their home to share it with them.

We also paid two visits to Vieux Fort, together with Andre, and held discussion with Ms. Shauna Joseph a young kindergarten teacher who has been a contact for some time. She invited her friends over and together we delved into the Bible for answers to pressing questions in their spiritual lives. We left a few copies of Bible Basics and encouraged them to do the course in Bible first principles.

Some observations

Notwithstanding our few disappointments we must admit our joy in being allowed once again to share in the work in this part of our Lord's vineyard. We insist that St Lucia has potential and should be vigorously pursued. We left with a few suggestions that may help in giving added impetus to the work being done there, such as:

1. **A resident missionary** Castries needs the presence of an experienced couple who is prepared to settle and work among the Brethren long-term and withstand the rigors of Caribbean society. This should be a couple who preferably would be employed within the community on a long term basis **with no immediate plans to leave** (a minimum stay of five years is suggested)
2. **Mutual Improvement Class** This would serve to build the serving capacity of the local Brethren and help them to foster a deeper understanding of the time tested methods and traditions of the Brotherhood and add confidence to their spirit in terms of interacting with the public and conducting a variety of meetings.
3. **Mid-week Bible Class** The Brethren and Sisters need to get together on a regular basis to listen to presentations from among themselves — to give place of permanence to the first principles which define us as a special people.
4. **Youth Work** If only we could get a youth group started (or even a Sunday School). This would eventually pull the parents and relatives out to meetings or at least kindle interest. It is also a way of investing in the community by combating immoral influences among the young, something I believe even the government appreciates (and prefers) as practical religion. They all recognize the value of their youth and the world is fighting a losing battle.

We pray that the Lord of the Harvest send laborers into His vineyard. We sincerely appreciate this opportunity to share, if but a few days, in the work in beautiful St Lucia.

Submitted by Bro. David and Sis. Joan Andrews

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We rejoice and are pleased to report the baptism of AMANDA BUCK, on April 3, 2011. She is the daughter of Bro. John Banta and Sis. Kim Trevino.

We are indeed blessed with the transfer of four brethren from the North Houston Ecclesia, who have moved to the Austin area. They are Bro. Rick and Sis. Cindy Hackett and Bro. Brad and Sis. Anne Bennett. We know they will be an encouragement and strength to our light stand.

It is with great sadness that we announce that our Bro. Chris Matthiesen has moved to West Virginia. Bro. Chris has been a strong asset to our ecclesia and we will miss his words of wisdom and encouragement. He will be a great asset to his new ecclesia. We also announce that both Bro. Bryan Berry and Sis. Kim Banta Trevino are no longer in fellowship.

On November 11-13, 2011, we will again be hosting the Fall Fraternal Gathering at the HEB Camp, near Leakey, TX. This year we have Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) leading classes titled, "Jacob: In His Strength, He Struggled with God."

We have welcomed the following brethren and sisters from other states and countries: Scott and Cindy Nevers (Wachussett, MA); Charlotte Kirsch (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); David and Janet Riley (Bournemouth, UK); Dan and Janet McDonald (Paris Avenue, OH); Julie Anderson and Linda Putnick (Milford Road, MI); and Mark O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand). We wish to thank Bre. Scott Nevers and Mark O'Grady for their encouraging words of exhortation and also thank Bro. Mark for his weeknight class.

George Brown

EDMONTON, AB

We commend our Bro. Roly and Sis. Sharon Pretty to the New Westminster, BC Ecclesia and our Sis. Linda Ikle to the London, ON Ecclesia. We will miss their fellowship and service but at the same time we know they will be a great asset to their new ecclesias.

Our Meeting has been greatly enriched by the fellowship of the brothers and sisters who have stopped and visited with us over the past while. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Bre. Paul Aback (Calgary, AB.); Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Aust.); John Fletcher (Kamloops, BC); Theo Readman and Nathan Bartholomew (North Battleford, SK); and Stephen Pitts-Francis (Earling London, UK). We are thankful for the ministrations of these brethren.

Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) lead our last fraternal gathering and gave some great classes on his theme "The Bible vs. Evolution." For all who attended, Bro. John gave us much to think about.

This year in October, we are looking forward to Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) leading our Calgary/ Edmonton Thanksgiving Fraternal here in Edmonton.

We are continuing to enjoy the time Bro. Patrick Smidt (Cambridge, ON) is spending here in Edmonton on his work assignment. He has been a really big help to our little ecclesia.

Jerome Toronchuk

PITTSBURGH, PA

We would like to thank Bro. Daniel Osborn for his excellent classes on, “Jehoshaphat” as well as the music class he presented Saturday evening for our CYC November, 2010 weekend. We are grateful for the song “Lifted Up in Thy Ways” that our Bro. Dan prepared to assist us in our worship.

The Pittsburgh ecclesia has appreciated the help of several brethren who have given us words of exhortation. They include the following: Bre. Tim Cooper, Dan McDonald, Kevin Flatley, Kyle Misko and Jack Vogelgesang.

Our heavenly Father has blessed our ecclesia with a new life. We rejoice with Bro. Tim and Sis. Holly Pommer in the birth of their firstborn son, Ethan Jacob, on May 11, 2011.

Bro. Richard Morgan led our study weekend in May on “The Temptations of Christ”. We thank him for his helpful exposition.

We have been uplifted and encouraged with many visitors this past year. Our two gatherings were graced with those of like precious faith from Canada, Florida, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Washington DC, and Telford, PA. Other visiting brothers and sisters include: Peter and Margaret Stonell (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Jim and Anne Barton (Kingston, ON); David Bennett (Salem Heights, IN); Kevin and Melinda Flatley (Columbus, OH); Derek Elder, Kyle Misko, Tyler Misko, Greg Misko, Jr., Tim and Annalee Cooper, Dan and Janet McDonald, and Roger and Joy Snyder (Paris Avenue, OH); Joe Sparacino and Valerie Ifill (Ann Arbor, MI); Mary Sparacino and Joe Sparacino (Kouts, IN); Coleen Uiga and Sarah Telles (Norfolk, VA); Jonathan and Charlene Bowen, Shaphan Bowen, Soshanna and Josiah Bowen (Brantford, ON); Dalis Bediako and Maria Bediako, and Shawn and Padma Auger (North Bay, ON); Michael Davey (Cranston, RI); and Tim Young (Cambridge, ON).

We report Bro. Joel Ifill has removed himself from fellowship. We continue to pray for him in his time of need and encourage him to make sound spiritual decisions about his lifestyle and his commitment as a follower of Christ.

On August 28, 2011, our ecclesia rejoiced in the baptism of JONATHAN SCHWIEGER, husband of Sis. Vanessa Schwieger. He has already proven to be a worker in God’s vineyard. May the Lord bless and guide him toward His coming kingdom.

We are happy to announce that Sis. Jennifer (Pommer) Bekhit has been welcomed back into fellowship around the table of our Lord.

We are looking forward to our CYC weekend scheduled for November 12-13, 2011, with Bro. Ryan King (Richmond Petersburg, VA). His subject will be, “Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve”.

Our “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” Bible seminar began September 29, 2011. We pray that Yahweh will call those who have “eyes to see and ears to hear” for we know that He desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of His truth.

Bill Folkerts

PIANO MUSIC CD AVAILABLE

A new multi-purpose CD called, “A New Beginning,” is available for purchase. Funds from the purchase of this CD will help Agape in Action and welfare funds for CBM, CBMA and CBMC. This lovely music may help you meditate upon God’s word, or assist you in relaxing after a busy day. Brothers, sisters and children will benefit from your purchase, as well as your own spiritual and physical wellbeing. “A New Beginning” is a good way to help you achieve all these worthwhile ends. For more information please contact Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines by mail at: 97 Fourth Street, Sussex Corner, NB. Canada, E4G 1G7; by email at: christad@nbnet.nb.ca; or by phone at: 506-433-1728. Thank you for your help.

Cliff and Julia Baines

Striving

*I cannot think why Christ, my Lord,
Should take account of one like me
And yet, according to his Word,
He came to set us sinners free.*

*Free from shackles due to sin,
I should no more in bondage be,
But still I cannot shake its claims;
It still retains its hold on me.*

*With my whole heart I long to serve,
And in my life my Savior see,
And yet below the surface stirs
A lust that strives with constancy.*

*But God, our Father, knows our frame,
And for this world He did provide
A Saviour, His beloved Son,
Who for our sins was crucified.*

*So now, with grateful, contrite heart
I’ll walk with Jesus as my guide,
Oh may he see himself in me,
And in that day be satisfied*

*Maggie Stonell
(Hamilton Book Road, ON)*

Minute Meditation

Think Twice, Speak Once

Calvin Coolidge, known as a man of few words, once remarked, “I have noticed that nothing I never said ever did me any harm.” Our words can get us into trouble. When we bite our tongue, we can save ourselves grief. Too often we react before we think, blurting out words that may be offensive or insulting or make us look like a fool. Just as a carpenter learns to “measure twice, cut once” because once a piece of wood is cut it cannot be uncut, so we should learn to think twice, speak once. James advises, “My dear brothers. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry,” and then warns us that our religion is vain and we are deceiving ourselves if we do not bridle our tongues.

In many circumstances, as Calvin Coolidge discovered, it is better to say nothing. Solomon said, “Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.” Solomon’s words inspired Abraham Lincoln to say, “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open the mouth and remove all doubt.” Often we do not fully understand a situation and jump to conclusions. We need to be patient, willing to do more listening and less telling others what we think, willing to wait before interfering, to be helpful and forgiving rather than judgmental. A children’s poem by Edward H. Richards reads, “The wise old owl lived in an oak; The more he saw the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard: Why can’t we all be like that bird?”

It is sad to think that many will be kept out of the kingdom because of what they have said. Jesus warns us, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” This warning should make each of us very careful of what we say. To think that we will have to answer to the judge of all the earth for every word that has come out of our mouth is frightening. We are so very thankful for the forgiveness offered by our gracious God, for without forgiveness certainly no one could be saved.

Nowadays, the speed of communication by email and websites presents new dangers that we must take seriously. More than ever before our words can get us into trouble. Postings travel to thousands of people at lightning speed. Somehow, it is easier to be insulting from afar, and terrible things have been written that probably never would have been spoken to someone in person. Once the send button is activated, the message is out on the web and we cannot retract it. Think twice, send once. No matter how strongly we may feel about issues that are swirling around us, we must remember that God is not willing that any should perish

and wants all to come to repentance. To avoid offending those who may be weak in faith, we must examine each message carefully, asking ourselves, would Jesus have used these words in this situation, and are we being kind as well as truthful? The apostle Paul advised Timothy when dealing with those in error, to “speak in a gentle tone when correcting the errors of opponents, in the hope that God will at last give them repentance, for them to come to a full knowledge of the truth.”

May our words be few and well thought out, whether spoken, written, or sent out electronically. We should all be praying the prayer that David prayed when he said, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Robert J. Lloyd

“Every bush a burning bush, and all ground holy ground”

The Dutch theologian, preacher, politician, and cultural critic, Abraham Kuyper, coined the above phrase. To Kuyper, this present world is the Christian's home — not just ultimately, but really and presently. One could even say that Kuyper was consumed with this vision of life. Listen to him again: “There is not a single square inch of the whole of human existence over which the risen Christ, who alone is Sovereign, does not say, ‘That is mine!’ ”

There is a priestly activity involved in the believer's use of the everyday blessings of this creation. Because he receives these gifts of God with thanksgiving and in the knowledge that they have come from Him, even these common things become holy. It is consecrated (sanctified) by the Word of God and prayer. Just as the Levitical priesthood consecrated the various offerings and sacrifices by prayer and the command of God under the old covenant, so this new covenant priesthood does the same with “everything created by God” (1Tim 4:4; cf 1Pet 2:5; Heb 13:15; Rom 12:1,2; 14:6). In this manner “every bush becomes a burning bush, and all ground, holy ground.”

Under the call of grace, every Christian is a priest, a part of the larger Christian priesthood, and therefore he is engaged in the priestly activity of sanctifying the whole of life, even in its “common garden variety” aspects, to the Creator-Redeemer God.

What a wonderful door to life is opened with this truth! I am now free to live, free to obey, free to use this world, free to give thanks to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. I am, in a word, free to be human in the fullest sense of the word! So, while we look for a new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells, we live out the days of our pilgrimage in training and anticipation of this, and we live as priests, acknowledging God in the whole of our existence. This is life indeed! This is the promise that Paul speaks of when he says, “Godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1Tim 4:8).

Thomas N. Smith (Reformation and Revival, 7:3; pp. 34-36)

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

NOVEMBER 2011

5-6 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 AM. Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore,MD), Theme: "The Epistle Of Jude: 'It was needful for me to write and exhort you'" Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at (219)762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net.

5-6 Victoria, BC Fall Study Day. The theme for the weekend will be "Turning Points" and our Bro. David Lawrence from the Prince George Ecclesia will lead the study. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at csnobelen@csll.ca.

11-13 Austin Leander, TX Study weekend at the HEB Camp near Leakey, TX. Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) will be speaking on "Jacob: In His Strength, He Struggled with God". To register email Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net.

11-13 6th Annual Brothers' Weekend, New Hamburg, ON. Trust and Prayer ("Trust in Him at all times, Pour our your hearts to Him" Psa 62:8). Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA); Bro. Alan Markwith (Hamilton, ON). Contact Bro. Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 natejbadger@gmail.com.

12-13 Pittsburgh, PA CYC Study Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Ryan King (Westerly, RI). The subject will be "Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve". Contact Bro. Bob or Sis. Rebecca Pommer, 518 Donahue Lane, Tarentum, PA 15084. Phone: (724)224-7363; e-mail: pghcecclesia@gmail.com.

12-13 Sarasota, Largo and Orlando, FL, Study weekend. Bro. Phil Prater (Paris Ave., OH) will lead a study in "The Seven Abominations" based on Proverbs 6:16-19. Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at 239-849-3301 jameslwilkinson@hotmail.com.

25-27 Washington, DC Family Bible Study Weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): "The Testing of Your Faith: The Challenge of James". Contact: Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org for additional information.

DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com.

JANUARY 2012

28 San Diego County, CA Annual Study Day, beginning at 9:30am. Bro. Bill Rawson (Exeter, UK) will be speaking on "Lessons from the Wilderness". Lunch will be provided. Contact: Bro. Kent Ellis, 619 818-6701 or ellisk@san.rr.com.

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
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FEBRUARY 2012

6-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org Or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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December, 2011

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1).

[Paul] was not condemning knowledge, but simply stating a truth. Knowledge of the right kind is excellent, but even that may tend to inflate the individual who possesses it. Men may be puffed up even by their knowledge of the Scriptures, especially if their reading has been ill-balanced. Much charity [love] is needed to guard against this evil and to make knowledge lead to edification. There are people who will say that it is only the dangerous ‘little knowledge’ that puffs men up, while those who have studied deeply are truly humble and never boast. This thought has been stated often, but it is not true. Indeed it would be difficult to define the words of such a saying. All the knowledge of mankind is only little. The most ignorant and the most cultured are only separated by a few degrees. It is quite true that intelligent people perceive the ugliness and folly of blatant boasting and so if they boast they do it more skillfully.

*Islip Collyer,
Principles and Proverbs, pp. 128, 129*

Editorial

Are the Current Natural Disasters a Sign of the End?

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matt 24:6-8).

The accepted view

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and random violence have filled the news lately. We all probably know of someone who experienced travel problems due to the eruption in Iceland, and many marveled at the way our brother in Haiti survived the catastrophic earthquake there. The Japanese tsunami produced by the shift in the earth's crust early in 2011 in Japan still have ramifications that are being felt today, both economically (car production is still restricted in Japan) and environmentally (the nuclear reactor complex there is not yet totally under control). And the slaughter of the youth in Norway made headlines, coming as it did from a famously peaceful society. Probably these events have all been used in Christadelphian lectures and exhortations, some based on the words of Jesus above. The expectation of the imminent return of our Lord is emphasized, and merged with the words that follow on in verse 37: *“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* So it is common to point out the moral decay in North America and around the world as confirmation of the imminent return of our Lord. But it must also be pointed out that this type of exhortation, or this type of public address, is much less prevalent than it once was. A quick glance at the magazines from around a hundred years ago shows a much keener awareness of the “Signs of the Times” than is common today. Accounts of earthquakes, of famines, of outbreaks of disease, of moral decay, were all discussed in terms of their significance in demonstrating the imminent return of the Lord. This is not to deny such connections are made today, but their prevalence is not nearly so noticeable.

Even the armed conflicts of recent years, although they make headlines in our newspapers, pail into insignificance compared to the great conflicts of the twentieth century. WWII holds the distinction of destroying more lives, it is estimated, than any of the conflicts before and since. But, as a proportion of the world population, as we turn to pestilence, the black death of 1348 killed perhaps 50% of the population of Europe. The rise of HIV/AIDS is serious, but compared to this the number of deaths is quite negligible. If we remember all the concern about SARS in 1996, its actual toll was almost insignificant, with around 900 fatal cases. (I would like to acknowledge, however, that to the affected, even one death is a deep tragedy.) As to famine, millions are at risk in these times in Africa, at least partially due to regional armed conflict. But history records perhaps 30 million died from famine in China in the 1950's, an episode which made little impact in the Americas. The

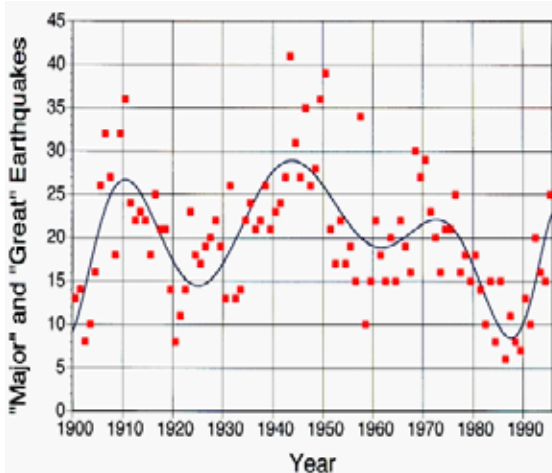
great Irish potato famine of the 1850's resulted in a population decline of perhaps 50%, much of it attributed to the emigration of those affected to America. .

Are Violence and Earthquakes Signs of the Return of Christ?

Let us first consider violence, a topic of particular concern in the USA. We read of terrible episodes of random violence: the shooting of congresswoman Giffords in Arizona, the Columbine High School massacre, and the seemingly constant litany of similar events, and we worry. We say they are signs of increasing violence in the world, and relate them to events which will surround the return of Christ.

So is this, in fact, true? Let us consider the USA. It has a murder rate of around 5 per 100,000 at present, which is much higher than that in Canada (about 1.6) and England (1.2). So we have had about a 1% chance of dying by violence in the USA, from both domestic violence and wars combined in the 20th Century. But is this high by historical standards? Well, the best estimates show, for example, that 20% of the population perished by violence in what can be termed tribal times — a situation that can perhaps be seen to this day in parts of Africa. And the murder rate is recorded as being around 200 per 100,000 in Oxford in the UK in the 14th century, much higher even than in current day border towns in Mexico, an area most of my readers would not willingly travel to¹. Even in recent years, a quick look shows the incidence of violence has decreased considerably of late. In the USA the murder rate has fallen from 9.8 in 1991 to 4.8 in 2010 (last year.) In fact, all rates of crime have fallen in the last ten years, despite the economic struggles of many. Thus, despite the many terrible crimes reported in the news, we in the USA are currently safer than at any time in the past forty years.

To turn to another area, the topic of the increase in Earthquakes has been subject to much discussion in our literature, with a seeming consensus that yes, such an increase is real and a sign that we are in the end times. But is there unequivocal evidence of this? Well, I am not an earthquake specialist — a profession that, incidentally, is perhaps subject to the major problem that earthquakes are almost



impossible to predict in any meaningful way. It is often claimed that there has been a recent increase in earthquakes, and indeed we have detected many more in recent years, and the trend is increasing. (Much of this is undoubtedly due to the proliferation of seismographs.) But are severe earthquakes increasing? I cannot myself detect a significant increase over

the last century from the count of earthquakes over magnitude 7.0 over the last 100 years, as shown alongside².

What is the Current Situation?

Well, to claim the recent episodes of violence or natural disasters, both in the Americas and the world, is a sure sign of the imminent return of our Lord is, at least in my opinion, doing damage to the available information. But what of the political earthquakes? As we customarily interpret the Book of Revelation, when we come across the term “earthquake”, we traditionally assign such episodes to certain events in history. For example, of the four earthquakes mentioned in Revelation, the first, in Chapter 6, is usually related to the political changes surrounding the reign of Constantine. In Rev 11:13, we read *“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”* This is normally taken to refer to the French revolution of the late 18th century, to which is ascribed the liberty the Western World is said to enjoy — although how much enjoyment such liberty affords might be debated. On the other hand, the earthquake of Rev 16:18 is usually taken to be yet future, when Christ will return in his glory to overthrow all the nations of this world. Whether it also refers to the great earthquake foretold by the prophet Zechariah is quite likely. *“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee...”* (Zech 14:4-5).

Thus the great earthquakes foretold in the book of Revelation refer to events in the political earth, at least most probably. And even the Olivet prophecy in the passage from Matthew above clearly refers primarily to the fall of Jerusalem, which certainly greatly shook the Jews, but not by any recorded physical earthquakes.

So what of ourselves? Are we to read about literal earthquakes, and violent episodes, and proclaim them as sure and certain signs of the long hoped for return of our Lord? Or are to look for signs in the Political Earth, such as the turmoil in the Middle East? Perhaps I am wrong, but I believe that it is the latter events that are the surer sign of the coming of Christ. There have been many violent earthquakes over the centuries, and countless wars, but for the current changes in the Middle East there is no true precedent. Even the withdrawal of Turkey “The Drying up of the River Euphrates”, was of a small impact compared to the simultaneous upheavals in Syria, Jordan, Libya and Egypt. How much further these effects will spread, and the impact on Israel and its land, is hard to predict, but certainly the Jews of the land are facing a changed world — as we are. So are physical earthquakes increasing? Is violence on the rise? I am not sure of this — but I am sure there are political earthquakes all around Israel at present.

The exhortation is real, that we are to look for signs of the sure return of our lord Jesus. But we ought not to do so using anecdotal evidence of “natural” or human disasters pulled from the headlines. I am personally inclined to put more respect in peace as a sign of the coming: *“And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,”* (Ezek 38:11). The world might be getting safer, but the nations around about Jerusalem are arming themselves with nuclear weapons. Safety in the short term might cause us to relax our guard, but *“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1Thess 5:2).

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. See, for example, “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined” by Steven Pinker
2. Data from the USGS — who have a nice FAQ on “Has earthquake activity been increasing?”

Letters to the editor can be sent to letterseditor@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

***“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells” (Psalm 46:4).***

Through the pages of the Bible flow two very different streams. The raging torrent, the seasonal river overflowing its banks, is used by Isaiah as a figure for the great Assyrian army advancing upon little Judah (Isa 8:7,8). The waters thereof roar and are troubled; proud billows and lashing waves, high as hills, sweep aside mountains in their path (Psa 46:3). But in their tumultuous course the wild waters come at last against the immovable height of Zion (Psa 125:1): “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt” (Job 38:11).

For here, beneath Zion’s hill, flows another stream that is the secret of her survival. It is not harsh and overpowering; its waters flow gently and softly (Isa 8:6) through the rock-hewn channels of Hezekiah’s conduit (2Kgs 20:20) into the pool of Siloam (John 9:7). This stream brings life to thirsty watchmen on Zion’s walls. In its silent, unerring course it symbolizes the sure and certain purposes of God. Its whispering waters speak in a still, small voice of the blessings of faith in God. This is the river of life, the streams which make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of Jerusalem; God will watch over her, and at last save her (Psa 46:4,5,11).

Let us drink from this peaceful stream. Its quiet waters will restore our souls and bring us inward peace in the midst of Last Days troubles.

George Booker

Exhortation

The Body of Christ — The Ecclesia

1st Corinthians 12 talks about the ecclesia and compares it to a body. All of the members of the ecclesia come together as one unified body.

A human body is made up of many different parts. These various parts differ one from another, but they all have a necessary role in the body. This applies to us as members of a group of believers. We are all joined together as one unit. Also, we have been baptized into a special relationship with Christ. Paul explains it this way: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1Cor 12:13).*

Paul also explains in verse 13 that we come from all kinds of backgrounds. Back in Christ’s day and in the time of the early ecclesia the biggest difference would have been between Jew and Gentile. But there was also the slave and the free. You had different kinds of men and women joining together as one in service to Christ and to his Father. We also come from various backgrounds, various races, different levels of income, and different levels of education. But none of those things matter as we join together as the body of Christ. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).*

Some people have been raised in a home where there was knowledge of the Truth. Some have attended Sunday school and been associated with Christadelphians their whole life. There are also some who came to the knowledge of the Truth later in life and were converted. Whether you have been baptized for 50 years or for 5 months, all of us are part of the body. That is a very beautiful concept to me. We are all parts, but we are not all identical parts, we can’t be, we shouldn’t be. This is touched on as follows: *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” (1Cor 12:15-17).* And also *“And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” (1Cor 12:21).*

All parts are important. There are some parts of a body that are more prominent; the eyes, the hands, the feet, they are the more obvious parts. But that doesn’t mean that they are the most important parts. There are parts of the body that are not even seen, but they are essential for life. There are vital organs in our body that even though they aren’t seen, they are what keep our bodies functioning and healthy. As a matter of fact, if you had to choose, they are the more important parts of the body as far as surviving is concerned. You could potentially lose your eyes, ears, hands or feet and still live. It certainly would not be easy, but it is possible.

You couldn't lose your heart, lungs, or kidneys and keep on living. In the body of the ecclesia, many things are done behind the scenes that may not be noticed, but they are crucial for the function of the ecclesia.

Parts of an Ecclesia

Sometimes the most obvious things in an ecclesia are considered the most important. The good speakers among us might be given more prominence than other members, but it shouldn't be that way! Consider the arranging brethren. They aren't the rulers of the ecclesia, rather they are servants. There is no glamour in that job. Often, the things that the arranging brothers meet to discuss are very unpleasant matters. They have the responsibility of making decisions that hopefully will help the body survive. They are a part, but not the most important part of the body. Nor should they consider themselves more important. There isn't room for a superior attitude, there isn't room for envy. We all have different abilities, different talents, and different potentials. We should acknowledge one another's strengths, because we all have our different areas of ability. When all of these various strengths are brought together, it makes for a healthy ecclesia.

The first part of 1Cor 12 talks about the different gifts that the early believers might possess. The gifts of the Holy Spirit could be manifested in a number of ways. It could be wisdom, healing, working of miracles, prophesy, speaking in tongues, or the interpretation of tongues to name a few. Not one of these gifts was considered more important than any of the others. They were all equally important. Why is that? Because they all, in their own way, were useful as a witness to show the power and glory of God. It wasn't to glorify the person who had the gift. It was to glorify the one who gave the gift, God.

So it is with an ecclesia today. We don't have the gifts of the Holy Spirit today, but we all have different talents, that when brought together and used correctly, gives glory to God. Rom 12:3-10 describes the differing gifts and how they are to be used. In the NIV verse 9 reads "*Love must be sincere*" rather than "*Let love be without dissimulation*" as read in the KJV. We are not to think too highly of ourselves, but at the same time we are to take seriously our various jobs and positions within the body so that we can do the best job possible. If a responsibility is laid upon us, then it's our duty to try our utmost to handle that responsibility.

If we don't have love, then it doesn't matter what gift or talents we have. 1Cor 13 talks about the importance of love. The first verses describe gifts and qualities that would have been very admirable to possess. If one had gifts of the Holy Spirit, but no love, then it was worthless. If one were to give everything to the poor or even give themselves up as a martyr, but had no love, it would be meaningless.

Today, if a member is an outstanding speaker, or a strong Bible student able to delve into the deepest recesses of the Word, but has no love, it's nothing. If a member has a so called "position of authority" without love, it's all a waste of time. With love an individual will put others first.

If we were all exactly the same, what kind of ecclesia would you have? The examples of the different parts of the body are used in 1Cor 12. If all of the body were made

of eyes, how could it hear? If it were all ears, how could it smell? If we all had the exact talents, taste, likes and dislikes it wouldn't be a good thing. If everyone was exactly like me, then we would probably end up not getting much accomplished. Fortunately, we're all different.

Learning to Fit Together

Sometimes these differences cause us to become frustrated with each other. Our different opinions and viewpoints can cause contention among us. More often than not, our differences contribute to the well-being of our ecclesia. An excellent example of this is our group Bible discussions. We discuss a portion of the scripture and weigh in on the discussion. Everyone has a slightly different angle on a subject. This helps to bring out things that might not come out otherwise. Even if someone brings up a point that you don't agree with, it at least makes you think. So our differences can actually strengthen us as a group and individually.

1Cor 12:18 talks about God's role in the arrangement of the body. KJV *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."* NIV *"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be."* We know that God formed our natural bodies so that many different parts function together. In the ecclesial body, isn't it the same? Our heavenly Father has put us here all together for a reason. We need to learn how to work together and learn together, to rejoice together and be sad together.

We all have to learn how to fit into our diversity of roles in the ecclesia. We sometimes may complain about our role, but we shouldn't. It could be that God put you in a position because you have a knack for that particular job, even if it's not the most enjoyable job in the world. It also could be that, in some cases, God puts you in a situation to help develop something in you that you would never naturally develop on your own. It often takes us out of our comfort zone. A good example might be the writer of this exhortation. I get nervous about speaking before my own ecclesia. 1Cor 12:26 reads *"And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it."*

In our natural bodies, if we have a problem with one part of our body, it can affect the rest of our body. Have you ever injured your lower back? It makes you feel bad all over. It affects the way you walk, the way you sit, the way you sleep. It has a bearing on just about every aspect of your life. So it is with the ecclesia if one member is suffering. The rest of the body suffers as well. If one member is ill, injured, or suffers loss we all feel that pain. That is because of the love we have for each other. If someone you love is hurting, it makes you hurt.

Some of our members who are the most loving and sympathetic, are the brother or sister who have suffered a lot of illness and adversity in their own lives. Perhaps they can more readily identify with others' suffering because of what they've been through, and they know first-hand that it's a bad place to be. To me that is Christ-like behavior in the purest form. In many ways, the days ahead will become tougher for the body of Christ.

We have to work hard to remain together in unity. The immorality of this world is becoming more of a problem every day. Some of it is very subtle. We have to be very careful to keep ourselves separate from the world around us as much as possible. Unfortunately, sometimes we lose a member of this body and it is very saddening. Some will succumb to the temptations of the world and fall away. Some will lose the desire to be a part of the body and slowly fade away. But what remains of the body has to continue on in faith, working together as a unit to get this body ready for the kingdom. The glue that binds this body together is love. It is the most important thing. When we partake of the emblems, let us really think about the love of Christ. His love for us was so great that he endured torture and death to open a way for salvation.

Now, there might be a danger of becoming complacent if we start to think that we have our little role in the ecclesia and that is all we need to do. That could impede personal growth. That's not the point. The point that I hoped to get across, is the idea of a diversified group of people coming together and working together as a strong unit, with the sum of the parts being greater than the individual parts. And also that no one should feel insignificant in their ecclesia. You are all important! Never forget that your ecclesia needs you; also never forget that you need your ecclesia.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Love and Tolerance

Love will lead us to tolerance. We humans are by nature and practice intolerant creatures. Differences in others are repellant to us. Even those of us who love non-conformity nurture a desire to conform others to ourselves. This is especially true within those social subcultures where [doctrine] is taken seriously. Certainly there are breaches of [standard beliefs] and [standard practices] which must merit our stern [disapproval], and, if not repented of, must receive our censure and rejection. This is Christian. But when censure and rejection are among our most immediately apparent traits, as individuals or as churches, something is sadly amiss. We must show tolerance for one another out of the motivation of love (Eph 4:1)... In matters not directly related to the faith and life of the gospel, freedom in a non-threatening environment must predominate. There must be no contempt; there must be no judgmentalism. There must be love. There must be tolerance. Or to illustrate it in another way: It is not just the smart members of a church who have something to say to the life and direction of that church.

Those members who are not so cerebral, but who pray and who listen to the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures have something vital to contribute to the church's life and health. This is surely in keeping with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12. Tolerance will lead us to respect one another.

Thomas N. Smith, "Christian Unity",
Reformation and Revival, 8:3, pp. 63-65

Bible Study

“As it was in the Days of Noah” (10) “Go forth of the ark”

In the previous article in this series, we considered Noah’s willingness to remain in the ark because God had not directed him to leave even though he could see dry land around him. Noah’s subsequent actions indicate that he was truly appreciative of God. On the 27th day of the second month, God told Noah to leave the ark and to bring the animals with him (Gen 8: 14–17). Noah obeyed. And the next thing he did was to build an altar to God. On that altar, he sacrificed one of every clean animal on the ark as a burnt offering (Gen 8: 20).

The fact that he offered burnt offerings is significant. The burnt offering is described in Leviticus 1 with further details given in Lev 6, 7. A characteristic of the burnt offering was that almost all of the animal’s body was burnt on the altar. This was in deliberate contrast to the body of an animal given as a sin offering. When sin offerings were made, most of the animal’s body was not placed upon the altar. The head of the sin offering, symbolizing thoughts dedicated to sin, the legs of the animal, representing actions given to sin, and the animal’s skin, representing the flesh generally, were all excluded from the altar. God did not want any of that. In fact, God decreed that those parts of the animal be cast away with the animal’s dung. (That shows us just what God thinks of our evil thoughts and actions.)

Almost all of the body of an animal sacrificed as a burnt offering was given to God symbolically by being burnt on the altar. The Law specified that first the animal’s head, then its fat, and then the rest of its flesh were placed on the altar. The burnt offering, therefore, symbolized complete dedication to God. It was an appropriate offering for Noah to make. (He is actually the first person in the Bible recorded as having made a burnt offering to God.) The people of the antediluvian world had been dedicated to serving themselves. By offering burnt offerings, Noah signaled his intention to dedicate himself to serving God in the new start that he and his family had been given.

Noah had been in the ark for one year and ten days. During that time, he had given a lot of care to the animals and probably developed a fondness for many of them. But that did not keep him from voluntarily offering one of each of the clean animals in sacrifice to God. The fact that he was willing to sacrifice those animals is an indicator that his greatest affection was for God. It showed that he esteemed God much more than the result of his own labor.

And God was pleased with Noah’s offering. We read:

“And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Gen 8:21).

“Be fruitful, and multiply”

And God blessed Noah and his sons. The blessing that he gave them sounds familiar: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”* (Gen 9:1). It is an echo of the words that God spoke to Adam and Eve: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”* (Gen 1:27-28).

There are a number of similarities between the blessing given to Adam and Eve and the one given to Noah and his sons. Both were told to replenish the earth and both were given dominion over the animals. Both were given commands about what they could and could not eat. These similarities indicate that the world after the Flood was like a new creation.

But there were also some important differences between the words spoken to Adam and Eve and those spoken to Noah and his sons. Noah and his sons were also informed that the animals would fear them (Gen 9:2); they received a command about the blood of the animals killed for food (Gen 9:4), and they were told that God would judge murderers (Gen 9:5,6). These additional statements reflected the fact that the creation they inherited was going to be a much more savage place than the one that Adam and Eve had initially received. The difference, of course, was sin. Sin had not entered the world when God spoke to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1. So, there was no need to discuss fear or blood. But sin ruins everything. Indeed, the world will not return to the way it was in the Garden of Eden until sin is suppressed under the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the words of Isaiah will be fulfilled: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them”* (Isa 11:6).

There was certainly no terror or bloodshed there. And that is a fact that it is important for us to remember, especially when it comes to our entertainment choices. Violence stems from sin, and one of the benefits of Christ’s return is the end of it. So, it certainly does not seem to be the best idea for believers to be entertained by graphic depictions of violence.

God repeated His blessing to Noah and his sons in Gen 9: 7. Although the Flood had brought destruction to the old world, it had meant salvation to them. They probably would have eventually been swallowed up in the confusion of the antediluvian’s way of life (or slain by wicked men) if they had not been delivered from it by the Flood. The Flood gave them a new start, and God wanted them to use it to be fruitful and to multiply: *“And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein”* (Gen 9:7).

Peter states that the Flood was like baptism: *“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of*

the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:20-21). Peter’s words make it clear that Noah and his family were saved by the Flood. It wiped away the folly of the old world and made a new life possible for them.

The same opportunity has been given to us. Baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ is like a Flood covering for the error of our ways. It is the opportunity to wipe away the old world that we used to know. It gives us a new start. It makes us a new creation in Christ: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Cor 5:17). Baptism, like the Flood, is a necessary step to a new beginning. And it should be followed by being fruitful and bringing forth abundantly to the glory of God. That is our calling.

“The saving of his house”

Heb 11 declares that Noah was a hero of faith: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark **to the saving of his house**; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7). This verse shows that not only did Noah save himself, but he also saved his family as well. Hebrews 11 refers to them as “his house.” Noah’s salvation of himself as well as others is one of the ways in which he prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, those who will be saved by Christ are referred to as his “house” in Heb 3: “But Christ as a son over his own house; **whose house are we**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6).

Noah’s sons were named Shem, Ham, and Japheth. “Shem” means “name.” He is the father of the people of the Middle East. Abraham and the Jewish people are descended from him. (When a person does not like Jewish people, he is called an “anti-Semite.” The word “Semite” is derived from the name “Shem.”) God intended for His Name to be declared through the descendants of Shem, so the fact that their forefather’s name means “name” is fitting: “For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear” (Jer 13:11).¹

The name “Ham” is identical to the Hebrew adjective that means “to be hot” or “to enflame.” He is regarded as the father of the families from the warm regions of Africa.

The name “Japheth” is derived from the word “enlarge” used in the prophecy about him: “God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen 9:27). His name conveys the idea of expansion. He is considered the father of the Europeans and the Asians, whose domain has expanded to cover much of the globe, just like this prophecy said would happen.

“Behold, I establish my covenant with you”

God established a covenant with Noah, with his sons and their descendants, and with the animals after they left the ark (Gen 9: 9-10). He said that He would never again destroy the earth with water: “And I will establish my covenant with you;

neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen 9:11).

God is unwavering in His commitment to this covenant. In fact, when He wanted to express how determined He is to re-gather Israel with mercy, He stated that His level of commitment to doing so is the same as it is to keeping His covenant with Noah: *“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go **over the earth**; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:7-10).*

“I do set my bow in the cloud”

God demonstrated His dedication to His covenant with Noah by giving the rainbow as a token of it. The rainbow is an ideal symbol for this covenant because it is formed by sunlight hitting particles of rain in the sky after a storm.

The rainbow is also a visual depiction of God’s plan to fill the earth with His glory. It is a representation of us as immortals reigning with Christ in the coming Kingdom. In fact, Revelation uses the rainbow in a symbol of Christ and the immortalized saints in the future. *“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: **and a rainbow was upon his head**, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire” (Rev 10:1).*

So, why does the rainbow make sense as a depiction of Christ and the saints ruling in the Kingdom? The sun’s light is necessary for a rainbow to form, and the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the sun in 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” (Mal 4:2).* So, the future depicted by the symbol of the rainbow will be a reality when the Lord Jesus is reigning in Jerusalem and the light he provides will enlighten the world.

The benefits of Christ’s reign are described as being like nourishing rain: *“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psa 72:6).* So, when he is ruling as king, there will be both sunlight and rain, which are necessary for a rainbow to be seen.

God declared that the rainbow would be formed in the clouds: *“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Gen 9:13).* Clouds are a symbol of believers (Heb 12:1). So, the rainbow is a reflection of the glory of God seen in believers. Indeed, the colors of the rainbow are displayed when the pure white light of the sun is split when it encounters particles of rain in the air. When the saints are immortals ruling as kings and priests in the Kingdom, we will be in the political heavens according to the symbolic language of Revelation. We will be like little particles of water that share God’s doctrine with the world. *“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as*

the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut 32:2-3). And like raindrops in the sky, we will project some of the light of Christ. Although we will each make individual contributions, our collective work will all be for one purpose, which is the glory of God. Everything we do will come together to give illumination and warmth to the earth, just like the colors of the rainbow together comprise the light of the sun. That wonderful depiction of our hope is conveyed in this symbol that is inextricably linked to the life of Noah, a man who was faithful in the perilous times at the end of the age in which he lived. (Series concluded)

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. The Hebrew word translated “name” in this verse is *shem*.

Bible Study

Creation’s Gospel

(2) The Principle of God Manifestation

Our premise is that the two forms of divine expression agree completely at every layer of examination. These two divine expression formats are the written word of God (Bible) and the spoken word of God (creation). The terms and features of creation confirm the truths and principles in the Bible, from the vastness of the universe down to molecular structures, chemical compositions and even mathematical relationships. The Creator ‘spoke’ and light came out of darkness. Our planet responded to the Creator’s verbal command with rising land masses and sinking oceans. Stars with all their mass, fuel, and gravitational relationships multiplied throughout space at the Creator’s spoken directive. Countless species of vegetation, animals, fowl and fish appeared upon the verbal summons of the Intelligent Designer, with all their appropriate relationships and interdependences intact. Our God is not a mere manipulator of a universe greater than Himself. Yahweh spoke, and our incredibly diverse, complex, balanced and interdependent environment became a reality over a very appropriate six nights and six days.

The Things That Have Been Made

The validation of divine truths and principles through the examination of the terms and features of creation eliminates any claims of illegitimacy for the judgments against the unenlightened. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom.1:18-20).* This is one of the foundational statements in Paul’s eight chapter discourse on the subject of atonement to the Roman Ecclesia. Paul emphatically states that the things that have been

made (creation) declare truths about our Creator. No one is guiltless. Everyone is responsible to God's judgments. However not all are individually accountable.

King David recognized this validation of divine truths by creation's testimony. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard"* (Psa 19:1-3). The heavens communicate divine glory and divine knowledge. Their testimony is universal, but only registers with the hearing ears and seeing eyes of those who are circumcised in heart.

Multitudinous Singularity

The first issue to address between the mirrored testimonies of scripture and creation, between the written word and the spoken word, would be the alpha and omega foundational principle of God manifestation. Creator manifestation is the original design template and the ultimate result. Our Heavenly Father projects Himself through features of creation, angels, prophets, kings, the kingdoms of men, the faithful and especially His beloved son. The ultimate plan is for peace, which should be understood as the presence of divine harmony. This divinely expressed definition is diametrically opposed to the popular misconception of peace being the absence of disturbance or the absence of conflict. The defining feature of God manifestation is a multitudinous singularity: that is when many independent components blend perfectly into a single, interdependent functioning singularity. This is the philosophical concept of synergy, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Divine projections of the concept of God manifestation include:

- the design of the human body
- the institution of marriage
- the family unit
- the written word of God
- ecological integrity (the one-ness of nature)

Each of these examples demonstrate the principle of a multitudinous singularity. The family unit would be the most obvious example of multitudinous unity. A man and a woman become one through love and marriage. The wife customarily takes the name of the husband, by divine example. This is demonstrated in baptism where we (the Messiah's bride) take the family name. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19). It is a single name for the whole family into which we are baptized, just as the wife and children all take the name of the father and husband in a family. The love of the husband and wife produce new manifestations of themselves. It is a single family made up of individual but interdependent members. This is the concept of God manifestation, the alpha template and the omega conclusion.

Everything Affects Everything Else

Bible truths exhibit this same cohesive singularity made up of numerous interdependent features. Nothing in scripture is completely isolated. Everything affects

everything else. Have you experienced the frustration of trying to present or defend just a single feature of the gospel truth to the defensively unenlightened? If we address the inherent mortality of man as opposed to the immortality of the soul, the conversation can quickly degrade in to a series of “what about” challenges. If there is no immortal soul then what about going to the kingdom in heaven when we die? ... and what about hell and what about a fallen, evil angel? No part of divine truth is separate from all the other parts of divine truth. It is a single unit comprised of many interdependent parts.

This principle is also true of creation. Even godless mankind recognizes this feature of nature. We use the term ‘nature’ reluctantly, as it is the cowardly, defensive term employed by humanity in order to distance themselves from the moral responsibilities associated with using the more accurate term of ‘creation’. However, we are referencing the thought process of the flesh and therefore use the term ‘nature’ in that context. Mankind has learned over the last few generations that everything in nature is interconnected and interdependent. Our global ecosystem is a single unit comprised of many interdependent components. The concept of global warming is a feature of this understanding. The continual elimination of wetlands destroys the integrity of our current ecological balance. The continual burning and cutting of countless square miles of Amazonian jungles diminishes the replenishment of oxygen necessary for sustaining life around the globe. This multitudinous singularity (God manifestation) is the foundational platform for maintaining Bible truths as well as ecological integrity. Everything affects everything else because every individual component is interconnected into a single unity.

Our next commentary will address how of the creational glory of our Heavenly Father can be seen in how the construction of the universe perfectly parallels the divinely appointed construction of the Kingdom of God at Sinai.

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

The World is an Ongoing Creation

I used to envy the father of our race, dwelling as he did in contact with the new-made fields and plants of Eden; but I do so no more, because I have discovered that I also live in “creation’s dawn”. The morning stars still sing together, and the world, not yet half made, becomes more beautiful every day... This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on seas and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.

John Muir

Tidings on Facebook

*There is a now a Facebook page for the **Tidings**. Hosted by Bro. Levi Gelineau, it currently posts the Daily Readings along with some other comments. In future we hope to add relevant News and Notices, so please “Friend” this page. (Bro. Levi can be contacted at leviandjessica@gmail.com.)*

Bible Study

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis

Introduction to a series of excerpts from a new book

From its outset, Genesis enthalls with the vast scope of its subject matter. The creation account conveys the origin of the universe, Earth and life upon it, the origin of humanity, sin, forgiveness, justice, and evil. It introduces God the Creator and humanity the destroyer. What might that pristine world have been like? Just how was it that Adam and Eve made the fateful choice to eat the forbidden fruit?

Although the subject matter is well-known, the first four chapters of Genesis have received far too little critical analysis. Study of the text of early Genesis is repeatedly hampered by three persistent problems, one external to the text, and two internal. The external problem has to do with the physical outworking of the creative program. When did it all happen? How long were the days? How does Genesis relate to current science (or conversely, how can science be accommodated in the light of Genesis)? These are issues external to the text; the text does not address these matters. I take the Hebrew account of early Genesis as is, hence the title, *The Creation Text*. I have set aside consideration of external matters to focus solely on the text itself. These external issues are ultimately insoluble. As people speculate about how the Bible and Science ought to match up, careful analysis of the Bible text goes largely ignored.

That brings us to the two internal issues: lack of appreciation of the structure, and persistent misconceptions or partial truths that have achieved widespread acceptance but don't hold up under careful inquiry. As to appreciation of the structure of the text, early Genesis holds a unique place among ancient creation accounts. It is succinct, ordered, strictly monotheistic, prosaic, teleological (moving toward a goal), sequential, and reverential. It carries much content in few words because the text relies not only in the meaning of the words themselves, but in their arrangement: in the sequences, the dyads and triads, the opposites, the appositions, and the series. For instance, the creation of Adam, climactic as it is, gains even more focus when you realize it is the culmination of several uses of the words for "earth" and "ground." Also, a keen eye for the structure reveals a latent meaning of "the image and likeness of God." Placing Gen 1:1-2 in the overall structure of Genesis as a whole shows that the Prologue to the creation account is to be read as a genealogical statement. One of my main goals in writing the book is to unpack the structure of early Genesis.

Early Genesis is one of the most familiar sections of Scripture, but many common ideas about these chapters don't wear well under close, critical examination. Some examples:

- The Bible does not describe Adam and Eve's created nature as "very good."
- They did not pass blame after they sinned.

- Genesis 2 is not a repeat of the general creation account given in different terms.
- The serpent did not question God or cause Eve to question God.
- There is not nearly enough appreciation for the subtleties and complexities of the temptation process. The placing of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil off limits is not a mere test of obedience; it establishes the basis upon which Adam can form a proper relationship with God.
- The Cain and Abel account has far deeper significance than the material content of each brother's offering.
- The consequences of Adam and Eve's transgression are different from the punishment God had originally stated.

I do not shy away from reshaping or rejecting ideas that lack support within the text itself, especially when alternative interpretations harmonize better with a basic understanding of Bible truth.

For the next several months, God willing, *The Tidings* will publish excerpts from *The Creation Text*. The book runs about 350 pages and contains 49 studies. Some of the studies focus on a specific theme, some cover one verse, and others cover a few verses. All of Genesis 1-4 is treated in great detail. Some other studies cover broad themes running the entire book of Genesis. The content is primarily exegetical and expositional, but there are also devotional and exhortational sections.

With great thankfulness and gratitude to our Heavenly Father I have been able to complete this work that reflects some 30 years of investigation of early Genesis and many years of writing. I hope you will find these studies stimulating and challenging. Whatever you decide concerning my position on certain issues, I hope this book will raise your awareness of the magnificence and inspiration of the Genesis creation account.

(1) The Greatest Sentence Ever Written

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The Bible's first verse reigns majestically supreme over all other writings just as God reigns majestically supreme over all creation. While we cannot compare mere written words with the realities those words represent, we can compare the Genesis narrative with other texts. No other writing, ancient or modern, so elegantly delivers truth, beauty, and order as the highly structured and multi-layered text of Gen 1-4, which contains the creation account and its immediate aftermaths.

Starting from the most profound overall declaration, then thematically developing that declaration, the Creation Text (the first four chapters of Genesis) displays profound density of meaning, with the most compact statements at the beginning. The first verse is the keynote; the ideas it contains expand into the first chapter in greater detail. Chapters 2 to 4 add yet more detail, each word and phrase laden with meaning and far-reaching foreshadowings. As dedicated Bible students know, the teachings of Genesis form the backbone of the entire Bible. Echoes of Genesis redound even to the conclusion of the New Testament.

Gen 1:1, the first half of the two-verse Prologue, has the densest meaning of any verse in the Bible, as it covers the most territory in the fewest words. To fully appreciate the riches of this magnificent verse, this study will explore it from several perspectives:

- **Scope:** Gen 1:1 includes the entire realm of heaven and earth. What's left?
- **Theology:** it's the most profound statement about God ever written or that can be written.
- **Impact:** our overfamiliarity with Genesis dulls our awareness to its monumental impact.
- **Literary Structure:** it simultaneously introduces the creation account, the book of Genesis, and the Bible as a whole.
- **Uniqueness:** no ancient writing can compare with the orderly, elegant structure of the creation record.
- **Vision:** it reaches all the way back to the inception of the universe to establish an historical and "scientific" account.

Let's look at what each aspect brings to our understanding.

Scope

The most obvious feature of 1:1 is its universal scope. Encompassing heaven and earth, verse 1 includes the entire universe as the initial creation of God. We can read this verse three ways, not necessarily mutually exclusive, and each offers a very broad scope. The first reading that comes to mind is a picture of all the vast heavens, with Earth, our home, being singled out for particular attention. A second possibility is that the phrase "heaven and earth" is a figure of speech meaning "everything there is," such as when you say you searched "high and low" to indicate "everywhere." If this is an idiom for "the entire universe," it describes the vast panorama of God's creative enterprise.

A third possible reading would take us even further. The phrase "heaven and earth" could encompass even more than the physical universe! How could that be? What is there beyond the universe? The key word here is "physical," for the word "heavens" can carry a meaning beyond the material universe; it can also express God's creation of the spiritual realm. The word for "earth" in the first verse denotes not only our planet specifically, but also the material realm in general. Consider the passage in Eph 1, where "heaven" refers to spiritual matters concerning the Divine presence and "earth" refers to humanity. God's purpose is to unite these two through Jesus his Son:

"For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10).

This unity depends, in part, on our development of the spiritual values cited in Eph 4-5. These come from God, for from God flow all things, physical and spiritual, material and immaterial.

I don't know for sure if the primary intent of "heaven" in verse 1 is to include the intangible realm of such virtues as love, grace, mercy, virtue, and compassion, but it does accommodate this idea, and succeeding studies will use this perspective. This concept of heaven, combined with the entirety of the physical universe, embodied in the word "earth," would embrace the complete expanse of all creation.

Theology

What can we know about God using only Gen 1:1? The verse has no description or information about God, but it does tell what God did. From that we can at least attribute "Creator" status to God. However, this sentence employs with maximum effect the technique of implication. In this way, it can tell us much about God without a direct word. By stating that in the beginning (that is, when the universe began, and here we define universe as the sum of all time, matter, energy, and space) God created, it implies that God exists/existed outside the realm of that universe. It does this incidentally and almost offhandedly. God was already present at the moment of the beginning.

Given that the beginning included the entire universe that came into existence at God's volition, what does this tell us about God? The Prologue gives no explanation of God other than by implication: God existed already at the beginning and is the cause of the entire universe. No amount of words describing God could propound this fact more eloquently than to propose God as already existent at, and the cause of, the beginning.

What could one say about the essential nature of Deity that "*in the beginning God*" doesn't already imply? This is a statement of infinite sublimity, condensation of thought, and moral and metaphysical power. In the fewest possible words, and therefore with the densest of meaning, the Bible introduces one eternal and omnipotent creator God. It does this without any direct description, by placing God outside the realm of our existence. Outside, in the sense of beyond, before, above, and around; encompassing and bringing into being the universe as we can barely comprehend it. Before the creative process starts, even before the statement describing the situation in which God began creation, God already existed. No more can be said on the matter.

Untold millions of words have issued forth from the mouths and pens of theologians and philosophers, but none of them will ever say nearly as much as does the Bible in one sentence that simply presupposes God has the attributes of creativity *ex nihilo*, omnipotence, and eternity. As we in the twenty-first century sense our minuscule presence in an ever-expanding knowledge of our universe, we should have all the more awe and respect for the Deity who brought it all into being by his will alone.

Impact

The brief statement of the creation of the universe, featuring a creator God who stands outside the constraints of that universe, makes an impressive and comprehensive opening. Imagine a first-time reader picking up a book, looking at the first page, and reading no less than a declaration of the creation of the universe! What

kind of book is this going to be? Gen 1:1 is almost proverbial in its familiarity, so you may not appreciate its impact when you read it. Do not let familiarity dull your sense of the magnificent. It is not only a colossal declaration; it is also the very first sentence, with a massive impression upon the aware reader.

Yet no other statement or sentence could come first, at least not in a book that (to use human terms) audaciously and ambitiously sets out to teach us everything we need to know about God and life! Gen 1:1 has no peer for an opening sentence. Only overfamiliarity dulls our sense to its power and impact.

Literary Structure

As a first verse, Gen 1:1 not only grabs our attention, but also introduces the text that follows. This verse fulfills four literary functions:

1. It sets the schematic stage for the shift of focus in verse 2.
2. It introduces the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. It gives the broad picture of the creation of the universe after which the first two chapters specify the details.
3. It introduces the entire book of Genesis, which ends with the embryonic nation of Israel. The God of creation works out his purpose through Israel.
4. Ultimately, Gen 1:1 introduces the entire Bible. It is a synopsis of the entire plan and purpose of God (to unite things in heaven and earth, Eph 1:10), including events as far distant in time as those depicted at the end of the Revelation. The last chapters of Scripture are still within the context (and explicit language) of the heaven and earth declaration of the Bible's first verse.

The Prologue (verses 1 and 2) extends its overview from 1:1, first densely and strongly through chapter one, then it tapers to a guiding line through Genesis and all of Scripture. This feature alone displays the unsurpassed magnificence of verse one. It is the Prologue of the Creation Week and the Prologue of Genesis and the Prologue of Scripture. Regardless of where we are in the Bible, we are always in the shadow of the Prologue and the purview of the one creator God.

Uniqueness

Despite this profound declaration, many critics have placed the Bible on the same order as other Near-Eastern Creation epics. Nothing in mythology comes even close to the precision, theological sophistication, literary sublimity, and exquisite structure of early Genesis. Those who study such matters know that no other ancient writing approaches the expression of thought evinced in Gen 1:1.

Read this assessment from one scholar who concedes that the Bible's creation account far exceeds primitive mythologies:

These foreign (Phoenician, Egyptian, Babylonian) creation myths recount not only the origins of the visible world, but, at the same time, of the Gods. Genesis 1, however, distinguishes itself radically from these all since there is no such theogony. This observation indicates the grandeur of Israel's religion.

The surrounding nations believe in gods who came into being at a most

ancient time. Israel's God, however, lives from eternity to eternity. Furthermore, all these creation accounts are mythological in nature There is no greater contrast, then, than between the colorful, fantastic mythology of these peoples and the intellectually clear, prosaic supernaturalism of Gen 1.¹

"Intellectually clear, prosaic supernaturalism" refers to the structured text and understated activity of God. We will focus as often on the structure as on the message, because Genesis is uniquely structured.

Vision

Some defenses of early Genesis assert that the text is not intended to be a scientific account of how the world came to be. They dismiss the simplistic picture of God making stars and giraffes and say the narrative is figurative or symbolic.

To appreciate the issue of "vision," set aside your familiarity with the text and assume the role of a first-time reader. Also set aside concepts of the division of knowledge that treat "scientific" and "religious" as separate realms of inquiry requiring different modes of investigation. The question of origins leads us to the nexus of science, philosophy, and theology. The first verse of the Bible clearly implies that moral and theological matters depend ultimately upon the question of origins. As the French scholar Henri Blocher observed:

In the last analysis one cannot make an absolute separation between physics and metaphysics, and religion has to do with everything, precisely because all realms are created by God and continue to depend on him. To oppose 'doctrine' and (factual) 'history' is to forget that biblical doctrine is first of all history. Faith rests on facts, objectively asserted.²

The Bible doesn't recognize the assumptions most modern readers bring to it. The resurrection of Jesus is the most pertinent example of the principle expressed in the quotation above. The resurrection is a matter of faith and theology only because it is first a matter of history and biology. Likewise, the idea of a creator God is a religious matter only because it was first a matter of physics.

A fair reading of Genesis requires this expansive vision. The fullness of God's message involves matters that we, in this age, consider matters of "science," those that deal with the material, observable world. We may not know the details, but we do know that the Bible considers the origin of the universe a theological issue. By including a precisely formed creation account, the expansive vision of biblical narrative intends to relate the physical world and its Creator to issues of faith. That is why we want to ask not only questions about the creation account, but why it's even in the Bible.

A Concluding Thought

Gen 1:1 stands without equal to any words ever written. I can say this confidently, having read only a small fraction of the great writings of the world, because it cannot, in principle, be exceeded. This verse, encompassing all heaven and earth in its grand sweep, takes us to a realm even beyond our reckoning of time and space.

Genesis 1:1 goes to the absolute limit of anything the human mind can conjure, and places God beyond that — all in a mere handful of words. No other thought could possibly start the Bible. It is the sentence of sentences in the Book of Books.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), p. 126.
2. Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: the opening chapters of Genesis* (trans. D.G. Preston; Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 24.

First Principles

The Atonement in Practice (2) Adam and Eve

No exposition of the Atonement can be complete without looking at the story of Adam and Eve. Many Bible students have delved deeply into this chapter, and some have extrapolated from it certain ideas which go beyond what we read in the text. Perhaps one difficulty we have with the story is that it is so other-worldly, speaking of things beyond our experience like the talking serpent, the idyllic setting of the garden of Eden, and life before sin and death had conquered mankind. But what are the real practical lessons from Gen 3 and the fall of man? Well consider what Paul says about it in the book of Romans:

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

That verse and its context is at the centre of many controversies, like the doctrine of Original Sin which says that we are tainted with Adam's sin which needs to be atoned for as well as our own personal transgressions. It's hard to get your mind around such a concept, especially against the backdrop of the rest of Scripture which says things like *“the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek 18:4)* teaching we are responsible for our own sins and our sins alone. It also speaks against the doctrine of Substitution which says that Christ died instead of us. So what does Rom 5:12 mean in its simplicity? Read it carefully. It says death passed upon all men *“for that all have sinned”*. In other words we don't die because Adam sinned. We die because we're just like Adam and we sin too, and that's true for the entire human race (which Paul proves in Rom 3). The only man who broke this rule was the Lord Jesus Christ and that's why Rom 5 contrasts Adam with Christ. Suffice it to say Paul tells us in Rom 5 that Adam is the *typical man*. Adam is just like us, and by extension so is his wife Eve, and we're just like them. This means when we're reading Gen 3 we're reading the story of our own lives. We're reading about our own experiences. We're reading about the process of sin and death we're all a part of and for that reason Gen 3, far from being something outside our experience, is eminently practical.

In last month's article we had a look at the fundamental concept that the righteous shall live by faith. Well the story of Adam of Eve is the antithesis of that — how lack

of faith brings death. Instead of putting their faith in God they trusted a serpent. When it comes down to it, that's what Gen 3 is all about: do we trust God or do we trust the serpent?

Whatever we think of the serpent the most important thing to understand is what he represents for you and me. And the apostle Paul provides two Bible echoes where there are obvious links to the serpent of Genesis:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom 16:17-20).

Here Paul is talking about false teachers and he uses the imagery of the serpent throughout. Paul makes a firm connection with the serpent by alluding to Gen 3:15 when he talks about Satan being bruised under their feet. He also says they serve their own belly, which reminds us of the serpent being cursed to slither along on his belly (Gen 3:14). But what does that mean? How do we serve our own belly? By listening to our instincts instead of listening to God. If you think about it you obey your belly quite often and in fact the phrase “gut instinct” recognizes this fact.

Also Paul says these false teachers use good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple, or naive. That's exactly what the serpent did, enticing Eve with his half-lie about the tree. This isn't the only place where Paul uses language of the serpent to describe false teachers:

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil 3:18-19).

Again we have reference to the belly and the final destruction of the serpent, which ultimately is connected with a certain mindset — minding earthly things. That's where the serpent's mind was one hundred percent of the time because he was just an animal and animals can't raise their thinking above the earthly level. A false teacher is someone who follows in the footsteps of the serpent and speaks out of the thoughts of their earthly hearts instead of the spiritual words of God.

But that's not to say serpent thinking is an obvious thing to spot and counter in our own lives. We can be our own false teachers when we rely on what the flesh is telling us (our gut instinct) instead of what the Word of God says, and it's subtle. In fact we know that the serpent is described as more subtle than the other animals God created. But that word is actually a Hebrew word most commonly translated *prudent* and is more often than not a positive attribute, especially in the book of Proverbs. The question is, though, where does our prudence or wisdom come from? Let's see what Proverbs says:

“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit” (Prov 14:8).

That word translated “prudent” is the same as the word used to describe the serpent as “subtil”. In a sense the serpent was no fool. He analyzed the situation and gave his summation of God’s commandment, concluding that it was wrong. You don’t die from eating fruit, you see, and since it was named by God *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* then it was worth eating its fruit because you would grow in wisdom. Without faith in God’s commandment that seems reasonable, and that’s how the flesh thinks. We make what can often seem like very prudent decisions but without them being driven by God’s word they are going to be wrong, as far as eternal life is concerned. And quite often what God says is so against our natural fleshly desires that it sounds wrong. However faith says God is right and the just shall live by faith, and that’s what Adam and Eve lacked. Look at what the Proverbs do on to say just a few verses later:

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov 14:12).

There are a lot of things that seem right, especially when we go with our gut instincts. And very often in this world gut instincts actually work. Research has shown, for instance, that going with your gut when choosing what stocks to invest in can often be more successful than trying to analyze all your options. But as far as eternal life is concerned things are different. We can’t go with our gut, we can’t be ruled over by our belly; we have to trust in God even when the other way *seems* so right. Eating the fruit seemed right to Eve: it looked good, it tasted good and it promised wisdom. But it was wrong and it led to death. This world is full of serpent teaching, not just in a religious context but in so much of the advice this world offers. It’s all based on earthly thinking and instead the motto of our lives should be *“let God be true, and ever man a liar” (Rom 3:4).*

After Adam and Eve sinned we’re told *“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7).* What does that mean? We can’t take it literally unless we suppose they were blind before they sinned. It’s actually an experience we all go through when we taste something pleasurable for the first time. For instance when you let a baby taste chocolate for the first time you see their eyes widen as they contrast it with the bland taste of baby cereal. Their eyes have been opened and there is no going back. It’s the same with sin. Once we have tasted the pleasure of sin (or anything pleasurable like eating) the *nucleus accumbens* (a part of our brain) releases a chemical called dopamine and our memory system associates the activity we are doing with this feeling of pleasure. And so Adam and Eve, due to their experience, gained a propensity to sin and we follow suit. We are hardwired to sin because survival is based on gaining pleasure from advantageous behaviour. That’s all well and good as far as this world is concerned but once again it’s minding earthly things. Faith doesn’t release dopamine from the *nucleus accumbens* but it does promise eternal life.

Adam and Eve, ashamed of themselves, tried to cover up their sin with fig leaves (Gen 3:7) but then came their education. God doesn’t want us to have a fig-leaf

religion. He wants us to have a religion based on sacrifice, and so he clothed the pair with animal skins. What is the difference between these two pictures? Why animal skins instead of fig leaves? Well when we do something wrong we have the natural desire to want to cover the nakedness we feel. Often this comes in the form of self-justification and that's what a fig-leaf religion is, a religion based on trying to cover our sins with man-made solutions. We might try to justify ourselves by saying what we did wasn't wrong, or we might try to balance things up by doing what we think are good works to make up for it.

But that's not God's way. God's way is sacrifice and this was what he was teaching Adam and Eve when he made them coats of skins. He was teaching them, and us, that in order to be right with him we have to die. This was what the sacrifices under the Law of Moses taught and it is what the death of Christ should mean to us too. What it means on a practical level, as we see throughout Scripture, is that we need to live by faith if we want to be righteous. Living by faith is trusting God and that means sacrifice. It means saying "no" to the serpent even though it seems right. It means denying ourselves the pleasures of sin despite the intense desire we have for the dopamine effect. And it means putting the survival of others ahead of our own — or in other words loving our brothers and sisters and giving up our lives in service to them. These things are all against our nature and require us to sacrifice the things we want to do.

Faith is the battle between the *nucleus accumbens* we're born with and the spiritual pleasure of doing God's will which is not based on earthly thinking. Gen 3:15 describes that battle; the battle between those who desire to do God's will but are confronted by the serpent, whether it be our own gut instincts or the world around us. Both constantly draws us away from God's truth with ideas that seem right but lead to death. This is the doctrine of the atonement, demonstrated finally upon the cross where Jesus showed his supreme trust in the living God and utterly denied the natural thinking of the flesh.

Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)

"Consider David's sons. Amnon thought it right to rape his sister: he died for it (2Sam 13:1-39). Absalom thought it right to steal his father's kingdom: he died for it (2Sam 15:1-6; 18:1-18). Adonijah thought it right to use Solomon's mother to beg for Abishag: he died for it (1Kgs 2:12-25)" (Jonathan Crosby, Let God Be True).

"Reject the flesh as a way of life. It isn't. It is a way of death. Reject it over the whole spectrum of your thinking and activity. It is cheating, deceptive and misleading. It has nothing to offer by way of satisfaction and happiness, in spite of all its false promises and glittering attraction. It's the world's biggest fake and fraud" (G.V. Growcott).

**Sunday school resources coming soon on the Tidings website:
<http://www.tidings.org/>. Can you help preview Sunday school materials
before they are posted on the web? Please contact Bro. Jim Harper at
sundayschool@tidings.org.**

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

The Learning Disabled Child in Sunday School

It has been estimated that one in ten children has a learning disability. In Sunday school, therefore, teachers may also be faced with the unpredictable and delicate challenge of teaching learning disabled children. The teaching methods used with such children must be highly personalized, compatible with the child's strengths and accommodate their areas of weakness. The following suggestions may be useful in working with these children.

- 1) Learning disabled children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process, such as acting out a story or constructing a model of the tabernacle. Most of these children will remember things they touch and hear and see and smell. They need to have information presented in a variety of ways.
- 2) Don't assume that the child has understood your instructions. A learning disabled child finds complex instructions confusing and difficult to remember, so it is necessary to break down what you want the child to do into very clear and precise steps.
- 3) If you know what readings you plan to use during the lesson, contact the child during the week so that they can practice the verses assigned to them to read.
- 4) During the lesson have the child sit by you or a competent reader. When reading aloud, teach them to point to an unknown word so they can quickly be told what it is without disrupting the flow of the reading.
- 5) Allow the child to use their finger or a marker as they read to help them keep their place on the page.
- 6) Reduce the amount of written work that the child is expected to produce. If a written assignment is part of their homework, enlist the parents' help by having the child dictate their answers to them.
- 7) If possible, evaluate the child's progress by testing them orally.
- 8) Progress must be made tangible with gold stars, stickers, or charts noting completed assignments or appropriate behavior.
- 9) Learning disabled children can be disruptive, so plan your seating carefully.
- 10) Sensitize the other students to the learning disabled child through specific Bible lessons: e.g., how did the blind man at the pool of Siloam feel? Or use the lesson of 1Cor 12 on the various parts of the body.

Many learning disabled children experience some sort of social and/or emotional problems because of their handicaps. You can help the learning disabled child by encouraging him to participate in activities in which he can excel — to the honor of God and his own growth as a person.

Let the child know that you love them. Look for things to praise, and find ways to make them realize that they are accepted and worthwhile despite their difficulties.

Unsigned contribution: submitted by Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Youth Speaks

The daughters of Zelophehad (2) The Inheritance

The daughters of Zelophehad had presented their plea to Moses. In what they said to him about Korah's rebellion and about their father's death they showed the depth of their spiritual insight. This same insight will shine forth as we now explore the inheritance and the significance of a family's name in Israel. The daughters understood the meaning that God had given to each of these things. Rather than just being a piece of property, the inheritance was much more; rather than just being a title, a family's name was much more. In this article we will look first at the inheritance, and second at the family name.

When looking at the characteristics of the inheritance, it becomes clear that the inheritance pointed forward towards something greater to come: it was the end result of a teamwork between the children of Israel and Yahweh their God. He would strengthen them to drive the nations out of their land:

“To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day” (Deut 4:38).

It was not to have any of the old inhabitants still dwelling in it — it was to be cleansed:

“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth” (Deut 20:16).

Along the same lines as the thought above, it could not be defiled. It must be pure:

*“His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) **that thy land be not defiled**, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance” (Deut 21:23).*

It was connected to the time of rest:

“For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you” (Deut 12:9).

It was only given to the faithful:

“Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever” (1Chron 28:8).

“When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me

shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain” (Isa 57:13).

Conversely, just as the inheritance was given to those who were righteous, it could also be lost by those who were unrighteous or unfaithful. This is the principle that the prophet Ezekiel sought to teach the people:

“Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?” (Ezek 33:24-25).

The people looked at Abraham and said, “he was only one man and he was given the land. We are many people, surely the land is ours!” Yet because of their wickedness and idolatry, God said that they would not inherit it. The same principle comes out when we think about the wandering in the wilderness after the people left Egypt. God had promised them an inheritance, yet they were unfaithful and didn’t truly believe that God would conquer the giants in the land. So God refused to give it to them, but instead the land would be given to their children. An inheritance depended on a life based on faith and righteousness.

When we bring all of these things together, we can see that the inheritance had a powerful significance behind it. Here are the characteristics again:

- It was the end result of a faithful teamwork between the people and Yahweh their God
- It was pure, with all of the heathen nations driven from it, and it was not to be defiled
- It was connected to the time of rest
- It was given strictly to those who were faithful
- It was withheld from the unrighteous

These characteristics come together and have strong undertones of the Kingdom — a time when the land will not be defiled by the immorality of its inhabitants, when the gift will be given to the believers for their faithful teamwork with their Father (Phil 2:12-13). It will be a time of rest.

This is why we see other verses which mention an inheritance, and at the same time, can only be applicable to the Kingdom of God. Let’s just survey a few of those:

*“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and **his seed shall inherit the earth**” (Psa 25:12-13).*

The seed of the righteous would have the entire earth as their inheritance! This is surely Kingdom-type language. Again, just a few psalms later, we see that this same theme shows up repeatedly:

*“For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the LORD, **they shall inherit the earth**” (Psa 37:9).*

*“But **the meek shall inherit the earth**; and shall delight themselves in the*

abundance of peace” (Psa 37:11).

“For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off” (Psa 37:22).

Yet in addition to connecting the inheritance with the Kingdom in this respect, Psa 37 also brings out another connection between the two:

“The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever” (Psa 37:18).

The inheritance of the righteous will truly be in the Kingdom of God, when the Lord Jesus reigns from Jerusalem. We will remember that this is the type of inheritance that was promised to Abraham and his seed. Yahweh promised him the land from the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt (Gen 15:18) as his inheritance — yet he never received it! Only after the Lord Jesus returns will Abraham receive his inheritance.

In ancient Israel, the inheritance had a very powerful spiritual meaning. It was beautifully connected to the Kingdom. Just like the Kingdom would be filled with God’s glory, so this inheritance was to be undefiled and a place where His name would be lifted up — thus, if this was not happening, then the family would lose the land. It was a place for God to be honored. The inheritance would show a family’s connection to the Father in heaven, and show their desire to lift up His name.

These sisters had brilliant spiritual perception in this matter of the inheritance. Much of this wisdom was probably passed down by one of their role models, their ancestor Joseph. This cleaving to the inheritance was a trait powerfully demonstrated by him and passed on to his descendants.

Joseph’s Influence

“And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph’s knees” (Gen 50:23).

Look at the impact that Joseph had on his progeny. We can perhaps picture the scene of great grandpa with all of the little children sitting around, speaking to the seed of Israel about the miraculous way that Yahweh had brought them to Egypt and had saved them. Imagine him telling them his story, and about the way that he was revealed to their great uncles. Think of the impression that it would have on them when he spoke to them about the Promised Land, and assured them that one day, they would be back in that land. Then, picture how his faith would have been burned into their minds as the frail, old Joseph took an oath of them that they would not forget to bring back his bones to the land when Yahweh brought them out of Egypt.

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence” (Gen 50:24-25).

With this charge, surely Joseph would have driven into his descendant's minds that the land and their inheritance were of great importance. His one dying wish was to have his bones brought back to the land which was to be inherited by the seed of Israel. He knew that God would bring them back, he knew that Israel was the Promised Land, and as he raised up his great grandchildren, he must have urged them to remember that. This love for the inheritance, and the greater inheritance that would eventually be given at the resurrection, was almost surely passed down through the generations, as Gilead heard it directly from his great-grandfather Joseph and passed it on to Hephher, and Hephher passed it to Zelophehad, and Zelophehad told his daughters.

So it was that the daughters of Zelophehad had a strong understanding of the spiritual meaning of the inheritance. It wasn't just a plot of land to them, but it was their family's connection to God. Yet not only did these sisters seem to understand the meaning of the inheritance, but also seemed to understand the significance of a name in Israel, and how that name was connected to the land given by God. They specifically said that their father's name would be "*done away from among his family*" if he did not receive this inheritance.

The Name

Zelophehad's young daughters were exactly right in what they said. The inheritance also had strong connections with the name of the one who possessed it — if the inheritance was lost, their name would too be lost in the history of Israel. The name of a family was carried on through their inheritance; the plot of land that they received would be known as that family's space, their territory. This is shown in the story of Ruth and Boaz. When Boaz performed the part of the kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, one of his jobs was to keep the name of her dead former husband alive through his inheritance.

*"Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, **to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance**, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day"* (Ruth 4:10).

Boaz was to raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance. He would use Mahlon's old inheritance to keep his family name alive. Thus, if a family lost their inheritance, not only would they lose their gift from God, and their possession which symbolized their connection to Him, their name would also disappear from Israel.

It was extremely important that the family name was kept alive, because having a good name in Israel symbolized your favor with God. Over and over Scripture tells us that the name of the wicked are blotted out, and that they disappear:

*"Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast **put out their name for ever and ever**"* (Psa 9:5).

*"The memory of the just is blessed: but **the name of the wicked shall rot**"* (Prov 10:7).

If a family name was lost from under heaven, then it would be assumed that this happened because the family had fallen out of favor with God. The family had become wicked, and so God destroyed the name. The daughters' point was that their father wasn't part of a rebellious group like Korah's henchmen, he just died in his own sin. He died a natural death. Therefore, why should his name be blotted out?

Thus they presented their plea to Moses, eagerly awaiting God's response. What would be decided? What would be the fate of their father's name? Would God in His mercy allow them to inherit the land?

In our next article, we will see God's response.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Come, Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing

*Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.*

*Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount — I'm fixed upon it —
Mount of Thy redeeming love.*

*Here I raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.*

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand'ring from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood.*

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.*

Robert Robinson

"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (Zech 13:1).

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:1,2).

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs

(1) Guidelines for a Happy Relationship

*“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD”
((Prov. 18:22 NKJV)*

Prologue:

Marriage is a God given institution established from the very beginning when “... the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”[ESV] And “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:18, 24).¹ In ages past marriage was considered to important and serious an affair to be left to the actual participants; instead the parents mutually arranged it. In some regions of the world that may still be the case, but for all intents and purposes, in so-called advanced cultures that practice faded out in the 20th century. I doubt that there can be many in our Christadelphian community here in North America whose marriages were arranged in the fashion that Abraham did for his son Isaac!² Nevertheless, the fact that individual men and women, almost without exception, make their own free choices of whom to marry has not meant that we are necessarily wiser or happier than generations past in terms of our relationships. In fact data on the state of marriage in the United States is downright painful to contemplate and shamefully, the decay of the sanctity of marriage has also increasingly afflicted our own community.

The facts related to the decline in committed lasting unions are readily available, because the numbers of marriages and divorces is a matter of public record. Beyond the obvious numbers one can also get a picture of the details with respect to how perhaps maturity, culture and other factors might affect the chances for success or failure in a marriage. According to recent federal government statistics in 2009 there were 6.8 marriages and 3.4 divorces per 1000 people in our population.³ This corresponds to approximately a 50% divorce rate, which is relatively consistent with data reported in a number of other sources.⁴ What is quite discouraging, and at the same time painfully revealing, is that second and third marriages fail at even a greater rate than first marriages.

Divorce statistics in America for marriage⁵

| Marriage | Divorce rate |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| First Marriage | 45 to 50% end in divorce |
| Second Marriage | 60 to 67% end in divorce |
| Third Marriage | 70 to 73% end in divorce |

Obviously, some people may learn from their earlier mistake(s), but most don't. Also these numbers don't say anything about the growing trend to co-habitat and not bother to get married at all. The percentage of the population that was married in 1970 was 72% and that has dropped to 59% by the 21st century. There is also a growing trend for couples to live and sleep together prior to marriage, claiming that they are, in effect, "trying before buying" as one young student mentioned to me at work. The presumed idea is that apparently people believe that this try out period leads to a more stable marriage relationship in the long run. Not unexpectedly, this doesn't seem to be the case. In fact, approximately 60% of the couples who co-habitat prior to marriage end up divorced. As one family source explains: "These couples are less likely to stay married, probably mostly due to the fact that they are less conservative about marriage and divorce in the first place."⁶

The United States is not that unique among advanced industrial nations. In the United Kingdom, the divorce rate for the year 2000 for first marriages was nearly identical to the United States, approximately 51%.⁷ One can trace the change in divorce rate in the UK from 1950, where it was only 8% and didn't change significantly over the next 20 years until 1980 when it jumped to 38%. One can only wonder if this pattern is echoed in the decline in religion in western societies, in general, as one important factor in determining a couples' commitment to marriage. Certainly, among close-knit religious communities, with strong family ties, such as the Amish, divorce is extremely rare.⁸

The divorce rates for Canada are nominally lower, but appear to be climbing into the same range as the USA and UK since the liberalization of the divorce laws in 1985. To quote one source for Canada: "The all-time 'low' (for the divorce rate) was in 1987, when it was expected that 50.6% of all marriages in Canada would end before the 30th wedding anniversary."⁹

The fact is that almost universally the divorce rate tends to peak from around the seventh to eighth years of a marriage through the tenth and eleventh years and not immediately in the first year or two. Many experts believe this is a result not of a husband and wife waking up one day and realizing they made a mistake, but rather it is the product of pent up frustrations that stayed unresolved until they eventually lead to a rupture in the relationship. Hence, in many cases proactive counseling and the realization by the married couple that they need to address issues and solve them might be beneficial and could save many a relationship.

The nature of the family has also changed dramatically over the past 30 plus years and has put new strains upon marriage that didn't exist in *grandma and grandpa's time*, to coin a phrase! At one time the father was the primary wage earner in the family and mothers stayed home and did the housekeeping while caring for the children. This is no longer the picture of the American family. Today, most recent figures show that approximately 54% of the households in the United States have both partners working and in roughly 7% of the cases the woman is the sole breadwinner. The latch key family today is not an anomaly, but more or less common phenomena in about half the households in America — I myself grew up in such a household with Mom working on and off to make ends meet.

There is a tendency sometimes among Christadelphians to put our heads, as it were, in the sand and act like this has nothing to do with us. After all we say, *this is the world, that is not the way it is in God's household*. Unfortunately, in the almost 54 years since I was baptized, I have recently witnessed more and more breakdowns in marriages in our own community. We may not yet mirror the statistics of the rest of America, but we are certainly heading in that direction. Too often we are reactive only after the fact when the breakdown has entered a public state of affairs and remedial action is by then far too late. Many couples along the way don't recognize the signposts that should warn them of trouble ahead, and take action themselves to move their relationship to a better place.

What will follow, in succeeding essays, will not be a comprehensive analysis that can cover every circumstance, because that would require a series of volumes. But instead it is my intention to give some scriptural guidelines that may help some in their own personal situations and make others who may be counselors aware of tools they might apply to restore relationships. **None of these essays are intended to be a substitute for good professional Christian counseling where circumstances dictate.**

Having said all this it is important to realize, once again, that marriage is a God given institution and should be taken very seriously. When Mary and I were married the presiding Brother included in our vows — *for better or worse, till death do us part* and we never gave it a second thought to have any reservations concerning those words. So lightly do some couples take their vows today that I understand from a jeweler that people rarely have their wedding bands engraved these days — just in case they eventually become community property! The Scriptures tell us that “*Marriage is honorable among all*” (Heb. 13:4). It is with this in mind that, Lord willing, in succeeding articles we will look at some Scriptural guidelines for a happy marriage.

Next: Guideline Number 1: Choose wisely.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. This is not to say that everyone must be married recall the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 19:12) and of the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 7:1), but this is a subject to be treated in a later essay.
2. Genesis 24:4
3. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/divorce.htm>
4. <http://www.divorcestatistics.org/>, and many similar, which you can find on the web.
5. Jennifer Baker, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology, Springfield, Missouri.
6. <http://www.meninmarriage.com/article05.htm>
7. www.statistics.gov.uk/
8. It is claimed that the divorce rate among the Amish is virtually nil. One website claims it is about 0.5%; see <http://www.amish-heartland.com/amish/article/193348> and also http://www.lydiaofpurple.com/divorce_stats.htm.
9. <http://www.ottawadivorce.com/statistics.htm>; Note here in the context of the article cited the word ‘low’ referred not to the divorce rate (which was indeed high) but to the emotional state of the author of the statistical study.

Belonging to the One Body

“...Each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function” (Rom 12:4).

This verse and the next are a repetition of 1Cor 12:12-27 in miniature. To offset the danger of individualistic thinking with its resulting danger of pride, Paul refers to the human body. Two truths are set forth in this verse:

- 1) the unity of the body; and
- 2) the diversity of its members, with corresponding diversity in function.

We can, individually, be very different from one another, yet still be bound in unity by a common faith and hope.

“So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each members belongs to all the others” (Rom 12:5, NIV).

Paul now offers a third truth to go with the two in the previous verse: (1) The body of Christ is a unity, despite (2) the diverse nature of its members. And then he adds:

- 3) Diversity must never mean independence; every member **belongs** to all the other members, and depends on them all.

This verse is the positive side of the negative statement in Paul’s corresponding analogy for the Corinthians believers:

*“If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, **I do not belong** to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, **I do not belong** to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body” (1Cor 12:15,16).*

Furthermore, each member should profit from what the other members contribute to the whole. Reflection on these truths reduces preoccupation with one’s own gifts, and with one’s own ‘special’ place in the brotherhood, while at the same time it makes room for appreciation of other people and the gifts they exercise.

Harry Tennant writes: “A man’s reaction to the needs of the body to which he has supposedly given allegiance is often a measure of the true character of the man himself. Self-seeking, opportunism and disregard for the lasting well-being of the corporate fellowship can cause untold unhappiness both to the individual and to the higher cause of the association and community spirit by which his fellows live. This is especially true of our relationship as individuals to the ecclesia and community to which we belong. Our attitude to the body is our attitude to Christ. The ecclesia *is* his body. If we are superior to it, we lack humility; if we are divisive within it, we deny the atonement by which we were reconciled and made one” (*The Man David*, 182).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

“Most of us can read the writing on the wall; we just assume it’s addressed to someone else” (Ivern Ball)

Letters

Dear Editor:

Re: October editorial (Presumption — dealing with the Thieves on the Cross):

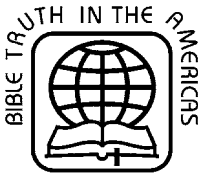
The accounts of Matt 27 and Mark 15 are in perfect harmony concerning the story of the thieves crucified with Christ. Luke 23:32 says that Christ was crucified with two “*malefactors*.” This is significant because thieves can be malefactors, but a malefactor is not necessarily a thief. In the strongest sense of the word, a malefactor is simply, *an evil person*. Paraphrasing Luke; **Both evil-doers were crucified with him; one evil man on the right, the other evil man on the left.** The rest of the Luke agrees with Matthew and Mark.

All three gospels state that **everyone** at the crucifixion was mocking Jesus. One *evil man* crucified with him begins to mock him as well; at this point we must pay close attention to the words exchanged between Jesus and the *other evil man*, and recall that Luke purposely wanted us to understand that Christ was crucified with **two** evil men, one on either side. Moreover, Matthew and Mark agree that **both thieves** mocked him. At this point, the other *evil man* rebukes the first *evil man* and says, “**Don’t you know who this is? This man is a man of God. Don’t you fear God? He is hanging on this cross with us because he’s done nothing wrong.**” And then he says the same thing as everyone else, mocking the “supposed” King. “**Remember me in thy Kingdom**”. I submit that in view of the fact that **both malefactors** derided Christ it is logical to assume that these remarks were intended also in a mocking fashion!

One further observation regarding Christ’s response to the second thief, namely, “**Today** you’ll be with me in paradise”; we know that Jesus did not go to heaven that day. He went to the heart of the earth, for three days and three nights, yet he said to the *evil man* on the cross, “**Today**.” So we must now recognize that Christ could not have been referring to Heaven by the prior statements he had made. Paradise therefore must have been a reference to a place in the heart of the earth, for the heart of the earth is where Christ was going, “Today.” Thus, the standard Christian teaching on *heaven going* upon death, which is taken from the Luke dialog between Jesus and the malefactor, cannot in fact be supported after careful consideration of these passages.

Your brother in Christ, Jim Day (Canterbury, Aus)

Other Christadelphian writers have inferred that the expression “Today” was the emphatic form of the Greek. Thus Christ wasn’t implying something would happen literally that day, but rather that he was “speaking” that day. Also note that Luke’s gospel was intended for Gentiles and Christ’s reply to the words “Remember me in thy Kingdom” were included to give hope that even in extreme circumstances forgiveness was possible when one was repentant. (Letter Editor)



Bible Mission News

Guatemalan Ecclesia — An Example of Perseverance!

Perseverance is a character trait that is required throughout our lifetime. It is one of the key factors that has helped maintain the lightstand in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Bro. Ross and Sis. Wendy Melles from New Zealand labored to establish an ecclesia in this city when they were there with their young family for approximate three years — 1995 to early 1998. Bro. Juan Palacios was the first member baptized on September 25, 1995. Then Bro. Douglas Vanegas (originally from El Salvador) and his wife (Marisol from Costa Rica) continued the efforts in Guatemala from late 1998 to early 2001, and then moved to Costa Rica. Over the years there have been 12 baptisms in Guatemala — for various reasons the Truth has not been well received in this country. Sadly, several members have fallen asleep in the Lord and several members do not attend at all now. Brethren Juan Palacios, Jorge Trinidad and Encarnación Gómez have remained faithful to their calling and have persevered!



Guatemala, Sunday, September 25th — left to right
back row — Bro. Juan Palacios (first brother 1995), Victor Garcia,
Carlos Pelen, Bro. Jorge Trinidad, Roberto Diaz
front row — Victoria (Victor's daughter), Marina (Victor's wife),
Saul (Victoria's son), Bro. Encarnacion Gomez.

During my visit with the ecclesia from September 23 to 27, we were received very hospitably by the members and friends, spending many hours together around the Word throughout the weekend. Jorge met me at the airport and accompanied me to the hotel, and the two of us enjoyed meals and readings together on several occasions. One of the highlights of the visit was to meet six contacts who have been regularly attending the ecclesia — four men and two women. One 30 year old man certainly had a story to tell! He had attended an evangelical church and was fully involved. However, he could never agree with the doctrines and felt he had no real tangible hope! He started searching the internet and soon came across www.labiblia.com! He told us he had found real hope which made such a difference in his life. We have heard since our visit that he has requested preparation for baptism and we pray that in a future communication we can announce this happy event. We also spoke to two other members who regularly attended in the past and we're encouraged by a positive reception. It is our hope they will once again join the Body of Christ in Guatemala City.

Don Luff
CBMA Representative

Visiting El Salvador after 17 years

Although we have been privileged to visit ecclesias in other Latin American countries in recent years, for several reasons we had not been able to return to see our brethren in El Salvador since 1994. And although I went prepared to present a number of studies to the three ecclesias in San Salvador, Usulután and Sonsonate — I also received much encouragement through witnessing the spiritual health of the brotherhood in this country.

The brethren from the original ecclesia in the capital city of San Salvador have supported the establishment of two other ecclesias for many years. The CBMA just



Sisters who prepared the hot noon meal. Sis. Carmen on left is a mother in Israel to this ecclesia. The old house on the lot is to the left and street in background.

completed the purchase of a lot for the growing Usulután Ecclesia, on which the brethren are preparing to build their own hall, after renting for many years. During our stay we were able to visit Usulután and see the location of the lot and actually enjoyed a hot noon meal there on September 28th under trees on the very site of the future hall. After lunch, a Bible Class was held on the “Cities of Refuge” — about 25 in attendance — and

the ecclesia numbers nine members! The rest were regular visitors and some are preparing for baptism.



Usulután Bible Class in older house on lot we are purchasing (due to thunder storm!) — dirt floor and old clay brick walls that has withstood many earthquakes. Fabulous group with more preparing for baptism.

On September 29th, we were driven in the opposite direction from the capital, west to Sonsonate. This ecclesia rents a very adequate house, in a quiet neighbourhood about three blocks from the center of the city. The members are

happy with their rental facility and although most work during the day, about ten members and youths were present in the afternoon to greet us and provide refreshments. Although our main objective was to see the rental location and no activity had been arranged, I could sense a degree of expectation for something, so I asked “Cantamos unos himnos?” (Shall we sing some hymns?) and the positive response was immediate. So we added a class on the “Role of the Saints in the Kingdom”, and enjoyed fellowship for the afternoon!



Members of the Sonsonate Ecclesia at the Bible Class. Bro. Jaime Mate (green shirt) and his wife Sis. Karla drove from San Salvador to the Usulután Ecclesia almost every Sunday for years, and took time away from his furniture business to drive us to Sonsonate.

So we added a class on the “Role of the Saints in the Kingdom”, and enjoyed fellowship for the afternoon!

The San Salvador Ecclesia planned activities for both the Saturday and Sunday (Oct. 1 and 2nd). The Sunday was a fraternal for all three ecclesias — 130 brothers, sisters, youths and friends were present. The hall was packed! The day's activities consisted of a Breaking of Bread, a hot meal and two studies. Two of the weekend's studies focused on "Marriage in the Truth" — this is a challenging task in today's society, in any country.



The San Salvador Fraternal, a group of brothers and sisters. The oldest sister is Lilian Rubio. She was one of the first baptisms in 1975.

In addition to these activities, a memory verse competition was held that lasted an hour! I was astounded and overcome by what I witnessed. In the children's section Eduardo Mate (11) recited about 35 verses and Krissia Lea Castillo (10) recited about 30 verses. Both with very little prompting — I was amazed! But the topper was two of the adults who recited large portions of Scripture. Jorge Augusto Garcia from Sonsonate recited 65 verses with very little trouble — this included the whole epistle of Philemon! Then Crisia Castillo (Jorge's sister) recited 76 verses from all over the Bible — she broke down crying reciting a good portion of Psalm 139 — I wondered what happened. Her husband, Rene, was presiding about four feet from her and had to hold on to her until she composed herself. She was finally able the turn to the audience and told us that it was one of her favorite Psalms — she finished a few more verses of the Psalm and went on to other passages. Krissia, Crisia and Jorge are all of the same family! I could hardly believe what I just witnessed. I was humbled by this and other indicators of the level of spirituality throughout



Eduardo Mate and Krissia Lea Castillo in memory verse competition.

the day. We arrived at the Hall for the 9:30 Breaking of Bread and left at about 4:30 — what a day! I tried to give my best for all ages present, but I felt that I received more in return. What an uplifting experience! The hospitality and fellowship was exceptional.

*Submitted by Don Luff
CBMA Representative*

Guyana — Joint Demerara CYC



While in Guyana in June for our annual visit we had the pleasure of attending the CYC in Georgetown. We were amazed to watch Sis. Dawne Semple, CYC leader, reciting 2 Timothy 2 while others eagerly followed in their Bibles to jump to her aid if she stumbled. This was followed by Sis. Elisa Howard (baptized from Sis. Dawne's Lively Stones youth group a few years ago) with Ephesians 1. As if that was not sufficient Sis. Atiya (Diana) Ndjelekulu then stood up and began reciting James 1. The goal these sisters have set for themselves is to memorize a chapter per week until the book is memorized. What a powerful example to the other CYCrs

and to us! We struggle to have our children memorize a verse.

As I watched around the room at the engaged faces, waiting on each word, I felt great admiration for what they were modeling for the other youths. There were about 36 youths in attendance from all three Demerara ecclesias (Georgetown, Eccles, Mocha). CYC was then officially opened. Ted gave an engaging presentation on Noah's flood, supported by powerpoint images for over one hour. The youths rarely fidgeted but paid close attention to what he presented. After a brief question/comment period, they played Bible "swords" (a race to see who could look up a verse quickest and read it). They dismissed with all CYCrs forming a circle and each one reciting a verse or two of their own choosing then they closed with prayer and dismissed. It was enjoyable to watch their enthusiasm and engagement.

Each year we look forward to the weeks we spend in Guyana. We come away physically exhausted but spiritually rejuvenated. If you are able to spend even six months working in the mission field there is great need in Guyana. Please contact us for more information (tsleeper@astound.net) or attend the annual Bible school held Easter week.



*Submitted by Ted and
Dolores Sleeper
CBMA Link Couple*

Introducing "Learn To Read The Bible Effectively" On ThisIsYourBible.com!

We are pleased to announce that the **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** seminar has been added to the courses available to students on www.thisisyourbible.com. This adds a second course for our students, which supplements the **Exploring the Bible** correspondence course.

We are excited about this new course. For some time now, we have been seeking a course that would encourage students to learn new skills and apply them to their own Bible study. We are convinced that asking students to evaluate and assess Scriptures for themselves is at the core of what www.thisisyourbible.com wishes to offer. As our search went on for a second course, it became apparent that the **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** course, which has been successfully employed across North America for more than 20 years, provided such a learning platform.

The new course is designed as sixteen video lessons that are viewed on-line by students. They have control over which lesson they watch and the speed of which they complete the lessons. Each lesson provides a skill or an insight that will facilitate improved Bible study. At the completion of the lesson, the student is asked to apply the skills from that lesson by answering several questions that are then submitted for review to the assigned tutor. These questions are framed in a way that the student will need to open their Bible and decide what the critical Bible message is.

We are now asking our tutors to consider adding **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** to their tutoring service. Clearly, the challenges for a tutor on **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** will be different than on **Exploring the Bible**. With **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively**, the tutor serves less as a content expert and more as a coach. The objective is to nurture the student's use of the skills learned and their confidence that they can be a strong Bible student. We've provided a short presentation on the role of the tutor with **Learn to Read the Bible Effectively** and tutors may now view it on their homepage when they sign in.

The Lord has greatly blessed our work together with This is Your Bible.com. In almost seven years of operation, more than 20,000 men and women have registered on the site and thousands have taken the lessons. We are aware of many baptisms that have resulted due to an initial contact through This is Your Bible.com. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless our work with this new course.

*Thank you very much for your loving support of this important work.
Bro. David Jennings, www.thisisyourbible.com*

If these lessons be not written in thine heart, then is all the Scripture shut up as a kernel in the shell, so that thou mayest read it, and commune of it, and rehearse all the stories of it, and dispute wittily, and be a profound sophister [debater], and yet understand not one jot thereof.

William Tyndale

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas.
www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, email: jdhunter@gte.net

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

ANN ARBOR, MI

We are very thankful to announce the following baptisms. SARAH BILELLO was baptized on April 24, 2011. Sis. Sarah is the daughter of Bro. Peter and Sis. Dottie Bilello and the granddaughter of Bro. John and Sis. Mary Bilello. DANIELLE CAMPBELL was baptized on May 22, 2011. Sis. Danielle is the daughter of Bro. Bob and Sis. Jan Campbell. CHLOE MICHAELS was also baptized on June 19, 2011. Sis. Chloe is the daughter of Sis. Christy Michaels. All three of these young sisters were tutored by Bro. Jon Brinkerhoff in what has proved to be a most profitable Sunday school class.

We are also very thankful to announce the baptism of JERRY EISING on September 25, 2011. Bro. Jerry was first attracted to the Christadelphians by coming home from an 8 am service at the local Lutheran church to see two young brethren, Bro. Seth Michaels and Bro. Bryan Adams, exiting a nearby apartment headed for meeting in Sunday morning attire. Jerry was intrigued that two young men should obviously be headed for "church" and asked them their affiliation. One thing lead to another and we are now delighted to have Jerry as a brother in Christ.

During the past several months we have enjoyed visits of brothers and sisters from many surrounding ecclesias. Our special thanks to Bro. Grant Anderson (Milford Road, MI) for his lecture and exhortation. We have also enjoyed a joint Sunday school entertainment, Sunday school picnic and sister's tea with the other Detroit area ecclesias.

We sadly announce the falling asleep in Christ of Bro. Val Sobczynski earlier this year. Bro. Val was in the process of becoming an out of town member of the ecclesia when he fell asleep in our Lord. We also welcome by transfer Sis. Linda Banta Putnick. Bro. David and Sis. Shawn Bell along with Katie, Jessica and Jaime, from the Milford Road, MI Ecclesia and Bro. Lindberg and Sis. Shirley Van Reuter from the Detroit Livonia, MI Ecclesia.

Dan Styles

CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA

During 2011 we have enjoyed the support of many brethren and sisters who have come to St. Lucia. Preaching continues in several locations, but the results are a little disappointing. Since moving into our ecclesial hall we have been able to have some lunch-time study groups with a number of colleagues of Bro. Eddie Anthony, who works at the Central Library.

On September 3rd, we celebrated the marriage of Bro. Mark David and Sis. Alicia Rampersaud. The wedding and reception took place in the ecclesial hall. Bro. David and Sis. Joan Andrews were in St. Lucia at that time and Bro. David performed the ceremony. The hall was full of ecclesial members, friends and well-wishers. We pray that our Heavenly Father will bless them in their new relationship together.

Martin J Webster.

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We were pleased to witness the baptism into Christ of one of our young people, JONATHAN NELSON, the son of our Bro. David and Sis. Laurie Nelson on September 10, 2011. We look forward to the fellowship of Bro. Jonathan as we walk together toward the kingdom.

Our ecclesial study day took place October 8-9, 2011, and we thank our Bro. John Parry for his classes during the weekend and for the time he and Sis. Louise spent with us. We also thank all those who joined from other ecclesias to spend time around the word of God. We also thank Bre. Des Manser and James Mansfield for their words of exhortation on their recent visits.

We have been pleased and privileged to have the company of a number of visiting brothers and sisters, and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord including: Margan Packie, Virginia Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, David and Maryann Jorgensen (Union, NJ); Eleze Bailey (Georgetown, Guyana); Tom and Sally Davies (Pomona, CA); Ruthann Jorgensen (Rochester, NY); Cornelius Kellett and Deborah Kellett, and Bob and Norley Kling (Washington DC); John and Louise Parry (Leamington, UK); Sandy and Janice Piskura (Meriden, CT); Gary and Arlene Goodman, Steve and Mary Demarco, and Loraine Reinfurt (Honesdale, PA); Charles Link, Jr. (Moorestown, NJ); Varghese Kurian Trivandrum (India); and Des Manser, and James and Glenys Mansfield (Enfield, Aust.).

Stewart Marsden

HONESDALE, PA

On October 23, 2011, we welcomed visitors to a luncheon after our service. They were Gary Burnard and his two daughters, Heather Norell, and Denise Kowal with her two children, Rachel and Ryan. Another visitor was Pat Seipp, a neighbor. The sisters did an excellent job of making the tasty luncheon with the theme of soups.

Bro. David and Sis. Connie Stiles and Sis. Lois Beck (Meriden, CT) visited us on October 30, 2011. We greatly enjoyed and learned from Bro. David's exhortation and Bible study as well as Connie's beautiful organ accompaniment to our hymns. We also hosted a light brunch between the service and the Bible study.

We also placed a poster depicting the Four Hundredth anniversary of the King James translation of the Bible in the Binghamton, NY Library. We hope the readers are reminded of the importance of this Bible placed in the hands of all peoples.

Stephen J. DeMarco

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

We are very happy to report the marriage of two of our members. Bro. Josh Robinson and Sis. Amanda Baines were wed on October 15, 2011. Our prayer is that they will be blessed in their new relationship as we all await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sorry to lose by transfer to the Cambridge Ecclesia Bro. Paul and Sis. Sue Brokaw.

Martin J Webster

NANAIMO, BC

We extend our sympathy to our Bro. Mike Minter, in the passing of his mother, Sis. Alice Minter of the Norwich, Norfolk Ecclesia in the UK on August 29, 2011. Sis. Alice was to be one hundred years old on Oct. 2, 2011. She now rests in the sure and certain hope of the kingdom of God on earth, and resurrection to eternal life.

We would also like to express our thanks to the many brethren who travel to assist us in exhortation and proclamation. Should there be any brethren and/or sisters who are considering a place to retire we ask they consider our small ecclesia. The cost of property and cost of living in this Island location is comparatively low, and the climate moderate. For further information, please contact the undersigned. Also please direct any correspondence to the undersigned.

Tom Alexander

ORLANDO, FL

Our small ecclesia has been blessed. On June 25, 2011, Sis. Natalie Ross, daughter of Bro. Wilson and Sis. Betty Ross (Miami, FL), and Bro. Thomas Sanfilippo, son of Sis. Nancy Sanfilippo and Joe Sanfilippo (Orlando, FL), were united in marriage. We pray God will bless their union and give them many years of happiness.

On October 1, 2011, KRISTA DAVENPORT, daughter of Randy and Glenna Davenport, was baptized into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Krista grew up in the Christadelphian ecclesia, and has attended meeting for many years. We welcome her into the fellowship of Christ.

The following brothers and sisters have visited our meeting over the last few months, including: Phil and Jean Hale (Castleford, UK); Roger and Gail DiZefalo (Granite State, NH); Grahame Grieve (Ringwood, Aust.); Wilson and Betty Ross, and Kit and Ana Ross (Miami, FL); Julian and Sandra Baseley (Guilford, UK); Dave and Lori Pommer (Pittsburgh, PA); Stephen and Betty Lou Lewis (Largo, FL); and George and Vauldry Caesar (Bahamas). Many thanks to those brethren who exhorted.

Randy Davenport

SUSSEX, NB

We thank Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA) for his study on Corinthians at our Thanksgiving Gathering in October. Bro. Steve was accompanied by his wife, Sis. Sandy, one son, and nephew. We were also able to enjoy fellowship with other brethren during the weekend including: Michael and Ruth Buxton-Carr, Steve and Julie Snobelen, with Jerusha and family (Bedford, NS); Bruce and Pat Waite (Maine); Steve and Bret Harper, with Hayleigh, Rachel and family, Dan and Betsy Demarest and family, and Jason and Deb Harper and family (Meriden, CT); and Jim and Katie Boyko and family (Boston, MA). We also had fellowship with John and Jenn Luff (Cambridge, ON) in August, and. George and Ruth Jackson (Mississauga West, ON) in September.

We are looking forward to our Spring Study Weekend April 21-22, 2012, when Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of, "Hosea".

Cliff Baines

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias and from afar including: Brian and Lorna Luke, Ruth Olney and Peter Pullman (Brighton, South Aust.); Henry and Sharon Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Ken and Diane Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Dave and Nicole Wisniewski, and Dan and Ashley Robinson (Brantford, ON); Dan and Janet McDonald (Paris Avenue, OH); Dave and Eve Bearden (Austin Leander, TX); Amy Cousens (Cambridge, ON); Steve and Mindy Faver (Bozeman, MT); and Tim Edgecomb (Enfield, South Aust.).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Brian Luke, Dennis Bevans and Carl Newth (Reseda, CA), David Lloyd (Pomona, CA), and Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes. We also thank our Bre. Tim Edgecome, David Wisniewski and Ken Styles for their exhortations. We really appreciate our brethren speaking for us when they visit.

Our special thanks go out to Bro. Dave Wisniewski and Bro. Ken Styles for leading us in our Kids Camp studies on, "Elijah" this past June. Once again we had a wonderful week together with our young ones all having fun while learning the great lessons of God's servant Elijah.

We had an addition to our ecclesial family as our Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald became parents of Jacob Riley McDonald. He was born on June 3, 2011. This new little one in our midst lights up our ecclesia.

Tom Graham

THE BIBLE MISSION OF THE AMERICAS IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THE PLANS FOR TRUTH CORPS 2012, LORD WILLING.

The team will once again support the preaching activities in Guadalajara, Mexico, and then travel to Tobago, West Indies, to support the Mt. Grace ecclesia. A two week visit is planned for Guadalajara and at least one week for Tobago (July 14-August 4 approximately). This is an exciting opportunity for any brother or sister who is interested in preaching/mission work regardless of their age or station in life.

As in the past, the ability to speak Spanish is not a prerequisite for helping with the work in Guadalajara and English is the primary language spoken in the Caribbean. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and have been baptized for more than two years. There is no restriction on older or more experienced brothers or sisters. In fact, the CBMA would like to encourage anyone who is well grounded in Scripture, flexible, and outgoing to join the team, regardless of age.

Leadership for the team will be provided by the Link Brothers assigned to the areas to be visited. Bro. David Lloyd (Link Brother) and Bro. David Jennings will share the leadership of the team while in Guadalajara and Bro. Brad Butts will lead the team while in Tobago. It is hoped that this will be the arrangement for leadership in future years as the CBMA intends to use Truth Corps to a greater degree in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Inquiries should be directed to Bro. Brad Butts at wbutts@comcast.net or call (303) 984-4646.

A Subtle Form of Legalism

As the new Christian grows, he comes into contact with various philosophies of the Christian life. He can read books, attend seminars, listen to tapes, and get a great deal of information. If he is not careful, he will start following a human leader and accept his teachings as Law. This practice is a very subtle form of legalism, and it kills spiritual growth. No human teacher can take the place of Christ; no book can take the place of the Bible.

Warren Wiersbe

Minute Meditation

If God be for us

The biggest little word in the English dictionary must be the word “if”. “If” changes negatives into positives and positives into negatives. A verse in Romans observes, “If God be for us who can be against us?” Certainly we would like for God to be for us, but the little word “if” makes it clear that God may not be for us, and, in fact, He may actually be against us. God can change from the one to the other. How can this happen? It depends upon our obedience to His will.

For example, Solomon certainly had God for him when he was young and conscientiously obeying the commandments of God. Solomon’s father David admonished his son before he ever became king by saying, “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. “Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it.”

So that big little word “if” determined whether or not God would be with Solomon. God’s help depended upon Solomon seeking God. We know that in the early years of his reign, Solomon did seek God and God really was for him. After Solomon had built the temple as God had commanded him to do, “the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father”

But as we know, the story of Solomon did not end on this high note, for we read, “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.” “Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.”

“And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my

statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”

So now God, who was for Solomon, turned against him. The “if” is a very real if, and sadly, God will turn against us also if we turn away from Him.

Not only individuals, but the whole house of Israel forsook the Lord, with disastrous results. Isaiah speaks of the tender love of God towards Israel that ends so tragically. “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.”

We need to realize that God is only going to be for us if we obey Him. The LORD explains this principle very clearly through the words of the prophet Azariah to good king Asa: “And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”

The lesson we all must remember is that God wants to be for us and He is not willing that any should perish. But God also will not force us to love and obey Him. If we choose to forsake our God and his laws, then He will turn and be our enemy. This happened to King Solomon and the nation of Israel, His chosen people, when they refused to obey His commandments.

The apostle John tells us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” If we want God to love us and be with us in our lives, we must show our love for our God by obeying Him. Then the “if” of “If God be for us” will become a positive force for us. Jesus assures us, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

Robert J. Lloyd

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

This is the Bible viewpoint. As Christadelphians we resist the unscriptural idea expressed by ‘once saved, always saved.’ The danger arises, however, when we spend so much time disproving the false assertion that we become engrossed in the negative side of things. Then, when problems come, we may find ourselves suddenly trapped in an impotent pessimism, and forget the wondrous positive assurance of this verse.

George Booker

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

DECEMBER 2011

24-30 Third Ontario Winter Bible School, Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, ON, Canada. Theme: "The Faith that Works by Love". Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, AUS): "Jehoshaphat - The King who sought Yahweh with all his heart" and "The Spirit of the Law" (teens); Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Rugby, UK): "The Message of Nehemiah: Faith in the Face of Adversity" and "Building on the Walls with Nehemiah" (teens); Bro. Jay Mayock, (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "Loving our Neighbour: A Study of the Second Great Commandment" and "Reasons to Believe" (teens). Contact Sis. Barbara or Bro. Ron Kidd Apt.510, 110 Belmont Drive, London, ON, Canada N6J 4W3 (Tel: 519-690-0391; e-mail: rbkidd@rogers.com; or visit our website: www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

JANUARY 2012

7 Thousand Oaks, CA. Day with the Word will be held at the Union Hall in Camarillo. Bro. Tim Osborn (Okanagan, BC) will lead us in a study of the "Jubilee". Continental breakfast begins at 9:15 am with lunch provided. Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com.

28 San Diego County, CA, Annual Study Day, beginning at 9:30am. Bro. Bill Rawson (Exeter, UK) will be speaking on "Lessons from the Wilderness". Lunch will be provided. Contact: Bro. Kent Ellis, 619 818-6701 or ellisk@san.rr.com.

FEBRUARY 2012

6-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org Or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

APRIL 2012

8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes - Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). The main studies which will be complemented by a range of other meetings and activities. Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.

21-22 Sussex, NB, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.

21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's Annual Seminar "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

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