

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70

July, 2007

No. 6

Editorial — America the Beautiful	263
Exhortation — Responding To Tribulation, <i>Clive Drepaul</i>	268
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:	
(5) The “Old” is in the “New” Revealed, <i>Bob Green</i>	271
Bible Study — “A Broken Spirit”, <i>Colin Edwards</i>	274
Exposition — Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians:	
(6) God’s heritage and our inheritance, <i>Tom Barling</i>	277
Reflections:	
Famous Last Words:	
(10) Lot, <i>Chris Sales</i>	282
“Greater lov’d ye canno’ be!”, <i>George Booker</i>	283
Fruits from the True Vine, <i>Colin Cooper</i>	284
“I’m One of Those Stars, Sam...”, <i>Sharee Grazda</i>	287
Jesus’ Unlikely Conversions,	
(1) Simon of Cyrene, <i>Wesley Booker</i>	289
Letters — A “generation”?, Distractions, “Sprout” is here!	291
Bible Mission News — Guatemala; The search for Truth in	
South America — Argentina, Chili, Peru and Bolivia;	
Reflections on a short mission trip to Peru and Bolivia;	
Thisisyoubible.com website.....	293
News & Notices.....	301
Minute Meditation — The majority is not always right, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	308
Coming Events	310

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is \$20 in the United States, \$28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingham, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 3840. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

Forty years since June 1967

On June 7, 1967, the climactic day of the Six Day War, Israeli troops captured the Old City of Jerusalem, reunifying the city of David, Israel's ancient capital. This included the Western Wall, the only remnant left of King Solomon's Temple.

In divine history, some consider the 1967 date of equal importance with the 1948 date. In 1948 the State of Israel came into existence again after almost 2,000 years. And in 1967 Jerusalem, long trodden under foot by the Gentiles, was freed (Luke 21:24).

In his Olivet prophecy, our Lord told his disciples, 'When you see "the fig tree" [symbolic of Israel and Jerusalem] sprout leaves, then you will know that summer ["the kingdom of God"] is near' (Luke 21:29-31).

Finally, he told them, "This generation [that sees these things] will not pass away until all these things have happened" (v. 32).

Lately we have been discussing whether the "generation" mentioned by Jesus is 40 years, or 100 years, or 50 years (see this month's Letter), or perhaps simply an indeterminate, but relatively brief, period.

*It is clear we are living in momentous times. We should not **set dates** (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7). But we should **set ourselves...** to the task of being alert, and preparing ourselves, and others for our Lord's return*

Editorial

America the Beautiful

Katharine Lee Bates was born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1859. The daughter of a minister, she graduated from Wellesley College in 1880. For many years she was a professor of English literature at Wellesley.

She hastily wrote the first draft of *America the Beautiful* during the summer of 1893, which she spent teaching English at a college in Colorado. As she told the story, “One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pike’s Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse.”

The words to her famous poem first appeared in print in *The Congregationalist*, a weekly religious journal, for Independence Day, July 4, 1895. The poem reached a wider audience when her revised version was printed in a Boston newspaper in 1904. It was later set to the music of Samuel Ward’s familiar tune “Materna”, by which the hymn “God is our Refuge and our Strength” had been sung.

In 1926, a strong push was made to adopt *America the Beautiful* as the national anthem. But the older, more established *Star-Spangled Banner* instead won official status when, in 1931, President Herbert Hoover signed a bill. Even today, advocates of *America the Beautiful* continue to seek official anthem status for it.

Practically all of us will recognize Miss Bates’ first stanza. It is the stanza that is always sung:

*O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!*

On Memorial Day, or the Fourth of July, we have probably heard these words sung (or sung them ourselves) to Ward’s powerful, uplifting music — while imagining lovely vistas of blue skies, golden grain, and purple mountains. We are reminded of the lovely and rich land where we live. Maybe, if we are in a particularly reflective mood, we might actually pause and thank God for this country and its freedoms and its opportunities — even for the laws and institutions and traditions (and armed forces!) that preserve and insure the freedoms we enjoy.

In this editorial, I write to Americans, because I am an American. (However, I imagine that, with slight modifications, I could also be speaking to my brethren

in England, Canada, Australia, and many other countries.)

As Christadelphians, we do not vote, or serve in the military, or seek public office. This is because — in a spiritual sense — we are citizens of God’s coming kingdom and not of the United States.

But in a “this-worldly” sense, we **are** citizens of the United States of America (or Canada, or some other nation). To the nation of our “this-worldly” citizenship, that has given us many benefits and privileges, we owe certain things.

First of all, we owe obedience:

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right... Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:13,14,16,17).

To the “king” (that is, government, Congress, president, state, or governor) we also owe required taxes and revenues:

“Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities... because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor” (Rom. 13:5-7; cp. Tit. 3:1,2).

I leave it to each of you to ask the question (and answer it): “Do I, in my thoughts and words and actions, always **submit** to... do I always show **respect** for... do I always **honor**... the authorities?”

And... “Do we — as we should — make supplications... do we pray... do we intercede... do we give thanks... for all those in authority?” (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

In my experience, the above questions often meet with the reply: “Yes... **when** they deserve... obedience, submission, respect, and prayers!” But the above commands are not modified in such a way. Who are we to decide **for ourselves** when we will obey God’s commands, and when we just won’t bother?

We **should** give rulers and authorities respect (and all else as required) — not just when **we** think they deserve it, but always! Why? Because they have been “established”, or “ordained” (KJV), by God (Rom. 13:1). Because they are God’s “servants” (Rom. 13:4). And because disrespect for them is therefore disrespect for God!

How many of us know that Katherine Bates’ hymn has more than one stanza?

The first stanza should lead us to give thanks to God for the wonderful material blessings of this land in which we live, and for His providential arrangement of laws and leaders that have preserved our freedoms, and allowed a “brotherhood”

of peoples — of different races, with different religions and philosophies — to live together, generally, in peace. In the East, and in the Caribbean, poor peoples gather their few belongings into bundles, and set out in barges and rafts — trying to reach our shores, knowing they might perish in dangerous seas — all for the chance to live in America. Others wade across rivers and creep through deserts in the dead of night, evading border guards along the way, hoping they and their children can find work and education in America.

All this might be obvious — *should* be obvious — from nothing more than Miss Bates' first stanza.

But then she goes beyond these obvious things. In the following stanzas she writes words that are scarcely ever sung (or considered) today — and what a pity! For there is so much there that might exercise our minds, especially in spiritual things.

*O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!*

A nation like ours did not happen by chance. It was born in God's providence because many of our ancestors left settled lives and safe homes to come to a new world — where they hoped to be free to follow their consciences and worship the God of the Bible. We may question some of their particular beliefs, but we cannot question the sincerity that braved frightful ocean storms in flimsy vessels, faced devastating illnesses, and endured frigid winters with little food — so they could openly read their Bibles, and fearlessly teach their children its lessons.

Then they, or their children, or their grandchildren, left the little enclaves on the east coast and crossed mountains and grasslands and prairies, and finally mountains again, still searching for freedom. With “stern, impassioned” steps they marched on across a wilderness. Historians tell us that, toward the end of the era when great wagon trains trekked westward from Missouri to California and Oregon, one might have followed the thousand-mile trail of these pioneers by simply looking for grave markers... so many had died along the way. There were “giants” in the earth in those days, giants of faith and dedication. May God, today, confirm our souls in the self-control that enabled our forefathers to walk across a vast continent, step by weary step, looking for their “promised land”.

*O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness*

And every gain divine!

In the struggles of those who went before, we see lived-out parables of sacrificial love. Many died so that their brothers, their children, and others who came after might have a freedom that they themselves only saw “afar off”. Others struggled against injustices in society because their minds were enlivened by the dream that, one day, children of every color might join hands in fuller freedom. They all believed, in the words of Jackie Robinson (a “hero” and “pioneer” of another sort, who broke the “color barrier” in baseball), that “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.”

Surveying the lives of those heroes who have gone before, we begin to understand why the apostle Paul chose soldiers and athletes to exemplify the virtues of strong faith, reliability, endurance, and courage (2 Tim. 2:1-5). Where are men and women today — to whom faith and virtue mean more than life? May God refine the gold of *their* faith, until they learn to define all success not by the size of bank accounts but by whatever is noble and divine and pure and admirable and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

Miss Bates’ last stanza lifts us to a higher plane yet, and reminds us that America is (or should be) so much more than natural beauty and fruitfulness.

*O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
Till nobler men keep once again
Thy whiter jubilee!*

In his retirement speech, President Ronald Reagan spoke of America as a “shining city upon a hill”. He borrowed this phrase from John Winthrop, an early Pilgrim, who himself — as we probably all realize — borrowed the phrase from Jesus:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).

John Winthrop and, 300 years later, Ronald Reagan saw America as a beacon of light to the world. The Statue of Liberty that overlooks the harbor at New York is the visual representation of America as the shining city: Liberty is portrayed as a woman who holds high the torch of freedom, beckoning “your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”.

And so America has been, for so many refugees. Not a perfect light — what in this world *is* perfect? But it has been a great light, a light of hope for generations

of immigrants seeking liberty.

Jesus tells **us**: “In the same way, let **your** light shine before men.” As individuals, and especially as **the** ecclesia, whether local or worldwide, we can be lights too — not perfect lights, but lights nonetheless. May God shed His grace upon us, so that we may be like a “shining city on a hill”, lighting the way to the eternal city that will be truly “undimmed by human tears”:

“I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem... Now the dwelling of God is with men... He will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 21:2-4).

When that city is revealed for all the world to see, then will also be revealed a nobler race of men and woman than ever graced the earth before:

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when [Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

That “nobler race” — of glorified immortals with Christ — will keep once again a Greater Jubilee, celebrating a new and glorious freedom to the whole world — freedom from sin, freedom from death... and freedom to serve God with all one’s being:

“Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you” (Lev. 25:10).

It will be a “whiter jubilee” because the “fields” will be “white to harvest” (John 4:35, KJV), and God’s people will be bound in sheaves (Psa. 126:6) and gathered to Him in astounding abundance.

God has blessed us with a rich land, a rich heritage, and a rich hope. Whether we look around us, or backward, or forward, we rejoice in the vastness of His grace, “from sea to shining sea”, and “from the river to the ends of the earth” (Psa. 72:8).

But God has blessed us, not so that we can keep the “feast” all to ourselves (cf. 2 Kings 7:9). Rather, God has blessed us so that we might be strengthened, and confirmed, in our discipleship. He has blessed us so that we might be refined, and purified, and remade in His glorious image. He has blessed us so that we may shine forth like lights in a dark world (Phil. 2:15), like gleaming alabaster cities reflecting the One who is truly the light of the world (John 8:12), and calling men to him.

In speaking of the “fields white already to harvest” (John 4:35), “Jesus uses words which recall Isaiah’s language concerning the gathering of Zion’s children in the day of her exaltation: ‘Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these [i.e., the approaching Samaritans!] gather themselves together, and come to thee’ (Isa. 49:18). Even then the Lord himself was realizing the joy of sowing and reaping, and gathering fruit unto life eternal” (John Carter, *The Gospel of John*).

Exhortation

Responding To Tribulation

The word “tribulation” is not in common use today but, to those who read the Scriptures, it brings to mind the picture of great trials and anxiety. This is in accord with the dictionary definition: “Distress, suffering, misery, oppression, sorrow and trouble”. A comparison of some of the Scriptural usages of the word is an exhortation in itself.

As Paul and Barnabas retraced the steps of their first missionary journey, “they strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22, NKJ). Despite the terrible trials and suffering that the apostle Paul endured throughout his missionary journeys, he never failed in his attempts to strengthen his beloved brothers and sisters, exhorting them to hold fast to their faith in the volatile circumstances of those days.

Jesus Christ himself revealed to the apostle John that the path to the kingdom was not easy. John cried out in wonder as he viewed the amazing apocalyptic vision: *“Who are these arrayed in white robes? And whence come they?”* The answer was truly revealing: *“These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rev. 7:13,14). Through the grace of God, the immortalized saints had acquired their exalted state, but first they had been purged by ongoing trials and testing.

Catalogue of tribulation

In Hebrews 11 there is a profitable resource for the subject under consideration. There we find Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, each with a unique experience of trials and tribulations.

It was not a ‘cruise’ for Noah, locked up in the ark in a churning rising ocean enveloping the highest mountains.

Nor was it a ‘picnic’ for Abraham as he trekked for miles with his precious son who was about to be sacrificed.

Jacob had to leave home prematurely, to endure twenty years of oppression from the wily Laban. Then after Jacob returned home to his native Canaan, there was one misery after another. His daughter got into trouble, two sons committed genocide, Rachel died in childbirth, and her son — the favorite of his father — was lost and presumed dead!

Joseph made a trip to Egypt but not for a vacation. No, it was from the pit to prison for this young man. He endured suffering to the extent that, in some aspects, he was a type of the promised Messiah.

Towards the end of Hebrews 11, the writer states: “Still others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented... of whom the world was not worthy... they wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth...” (Heb. 11:36-38). The common factor of course in this chapter is the great faith shown by these stalwarts in extreme adversity.

Although it is very unlikely that any of us will be subject to similar tribulations, nevertheless, our individual problems can cause much heart searching and, at times, anxiety and pain.

The right attitude

What should be our response to tribulation? Jesus told his disciples: “In the world ye shall have tribulations but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Being cheerful does not mean delighting in the empty fun and frivolity indulged in by many ‘in the world’ when things are going their way. The Greek word is “tharseo”, meaning “take courage, be of good comfort”. In the vernacular, we would say “take heart”, or “put your mind at rest”.

A lovely example of the meaning “take cheer” is the sad case of the woman who had suffered from a gynecological condition for twelve years. Not only was the malady inconvenient and physically debilitating, but under the Law of Moses it was a barrier to worship. In faith, she touched the hem of the Lord’s garment in the belief that she would be healed: “But Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter, your faith has made you well’ ” (Matt. 9:21,22, NKJ). Jesus was telling this woman of faith to be comforted and to take heart, because her tribulations were about to be addressed by the greatest of physicians.

Blind Bartimaeus, as he called out to the Son of David to take pity on his condition, was told by the people standing near: “Be of good cheer. Rise up; he is calling for you” (Mark 10:49, NKJ). Witnessing the stressful cries of this pathetic sightless man and realizing that his loud urgent pleading was preventing him from hearing the Master’s response, some of the bystanders took pity and tried to calm him: “Take heart, put your mind at rest, the healer has heard you and wants you to approach him.”

When we are overwhelmed by troubles and in a state of panic, crying out to the Lord for help, we must try to discipline our minds in order to stop and listen for “the still small voice of God” (1 Kings 19:12). Whatever the turmoil, He is aware and patiently waits for us to approach Him. The psalmist put it so well: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psa. 46:10).

Courage and comfort

There are two classic examples of this kind of ‘cheerfulness’ found in the book of Acts.

Peter and the other disciples were punished by the Jewish council for preaching the Gospel. The wise advice of Gamaliel had been to leave them alone. Nevertheless, they were beaten prior to being released: “And when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:40-42). Comforted by the knowledge of God’s plan and purpose, they took courage and rejoiced in tribulation.

Secondly, Paul and Silas were severely whipped for proclaiming the message of the kingdom: “The magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:22-25). What a wonderful example of courage and peace of mind in the midst of severe trials and suffering.

Patience and joy

James, the Lord’s brother, gives another attitudinal response to tribulation, one of patience. He urges his fellow believers to remember the way the prophets had patiently coped with the ruthless treatment and cruelty meted out to them by Israel of old: “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.” Then James turns their attention to the patriarch Job in the same regard: “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:10,11, NKJ). “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:2-4, NKJ).

It is hard to be joyful and patient in the midst of tribulation; however, we can find strength by “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Our Savior coped by patiently focusing on the inexpressible joy that awaited him in his Father’s kingdom.

We all have anxieties and trials, but let the words of our brother Paul help clear our minds: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3,4).

*Clive Drepa
(Brooklyn, NY)*

*“Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil,
and let us see what we are made of” (Charles Spurgeon).*

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (5) The “Old” is in the “New” Revealed

One of the great strengths of our Christadelphian community is that we use the whole of the Bible as the basis of our faith and hope. We are confident that the Old Testament is inspired by God in the same way as is the New Testament. In reading the Old Testament carefully to hear what it is actually saying and in seeking to understand what God means, it is very important that we take into account how the Lord Jesus and his apostles explained these Old Testament passages.

Jesus often quoted the Old Testament to prove that his teaching was in harmony with God's will: “Go and learn what this means...” (Matt. 9:13); “Have you not read what David did...?” (Matt. 12:3; Mark 2:25; Luke 6:3); or, “Have you not read in the law...?” (Matt. 12:5). These are just a few of many examples of Jesus using the Old Testament as the benchmark of truth. The Apostle Paul speaks of the minds of the children of Israel being hardened and a veil remaining over their hearts in the reading of the Old Testament: “Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord (Jesus) the veil is taken away” (2 Cor. 3:16).

On the day that Jesus was raised, he walked with two disciples near Jerusalem. They did not recognize him until he blessed and broke bread and gave it to them as they ate together. Jesus had been showing them from the prophets that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer crucifixion and to enter into his glory. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Later that day, when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, “he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures” (Luke 24:13-49).

Thus, we find that both the Lord Jesus and his apostles open up for us the meaning of many Old Testament passages. In some cases, we should not at all have understood the meaning God intended without their inspired and enlightening words. Always, when searching for the meaning of the Old Testament passages, we must take into account the meaning Jesus and his apostles give them, and how they fit into the purpose of God revealed in Christ.

An illustration of the extraordinary import the apostles give to an Old Testament passage is God's word to Abraham in Ur (later repeated to him, to Isaac, and to Jacob): “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). The Apostle Paul says these words are “the gospel preached to Abraham beforehand”, and “the scripture foreseeing that God would justify (count as righteous) the nations by faith” (Gal. 3:6-8). How important these few words in Genesis 12:3 are!

The LORD repeated these words to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a slightly expanded form: “In your seed (singular) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”

(Gen. 22:15-18; 26:2-4; 28:10-14). The LORD called Abraham to be the father of a particular great nation, Israel. However, His purpose with that nation, as seen in these promises, was to bring blessing, through Abraham and his seed, to all families and nations of the earth. Israel was intended to be the channel of God's revelation of His call and purpose to all the other peoples of the world. As Paul would say of the advantage the Jew had, "Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1,2).

In the letter to the Galatians quoted above, the apostle explains that "blessing" (in the gospel God spoke to Abraham) means that God would justify, or forgive, and count as righteous all families and peoples of the earth. As we learn from Galatians 3 and Romans 3-6 in particular, this blessing of forgiveness is bestowed by God on all those, Jew and Gentile, who have faith in Jesus Christ — a faith expressed in baptism and in a life committed to his way.

Without these New Testament words, we could read in Genesis about this promised "blessing" without really understanding what God means. We might focus on Israel and the land as the essential elements of these promises. The Apostle Paul teaches us that the key point in God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the blessing (forgiveness in Christ) for all families of the earth.

Until Jesus and his apostles explain this meaning, we might read these promises without realizing who the seed of Abraham is. It is Jesus, himself, the Apostle teaches us, and Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Jesus. It is only to Abraham, together with this special seed, that the everlasting possession of the land is promised (Gal. 3:26-29; Gen. 13:14-16; 17:5-8; 26:3-5; 28:13-15).

The Apostle Paul explains in Romans that "blessing", the key word in the gospel preached to Abraham, means the forgiveness of sins. This blessing (which David describes so beautifully in Psalm 32) is promised by God to both Jews and Gentiles. It is not earned, Paul tells us, or bestowed on the basis of racial descent. It is granted by the grace of God on the basis of our faith in Him and in His Son as the savior 'who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). Paul continues in Romans 5:1-11, describing the peace, the rejoicing in hope, and the joy in God that this blessing of forgiveness brings to those who have hope.

The Apostle Peter speaks of this blessing too. To Jews in the temple at Jerusalem, he says, "You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:25,26). Here, Peter shows the full intent of God's gracious forgiveness. His intent goes beyond forgiving and not punishing our sins. His grace is meant to change us within so that we turn away from our iniquities (cf. Rom. 2:4; Tit. 2:11-14).

What did this promise of blessing for all families of the earth really mean? The answer is found in the Lord Jesus and in the words of his inspired apostles. It is a thrilling answer! It fully meets our need with a transforming grace, peace and

joy in the present time and a glorious hope for the future. In those simple words to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the full scope of God's gracious purpose for us in Christ is expressed.

It was very hard for Jewish disciples, including the twelve apostles, to accept this fundamental truth of the gospel. To faithful Jews, their necessary separation from idolatrous and immoral Gentiles was ingrained from birth and reinforced by eating only "kosher" food, observing the Sabbath, and carefully distinguishing between the ritually clean and unclean. For a Jew even to enter a Gentile's house or eat with him was unthinkable. Many Jewish disciples believed that Gentile converts must be circumcised (that is, must become Jews) and keep the Law of Moses. This issue (described in Acts 15:1-6) was addressed by the apostles and elders and the whole church at the conference in Jerusalem described in Acts 15.

There, the Apostle Peter recounted how God had chosen him to speak the gospel to Gentiles and had made no distinction between "us" (Jewish believers) and "them" (Gentile believers). The purifying of hearts through faith — not circumcision — was the basis of God's acceptance. That was true of Jews as well as Gentiles. "For", Peter adds, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we (Jewish believers) shall be saved in the same manner as they (Gentile believers)" (Acts 15:7-11).

In Acts 15:13-21 James described God choosing Peter to be the first to preach to Gentiles in this way: "God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." With this, James says, the words of the prophets agree; he quotes God's words by Amos (Amos 9:11,12).

In the days of Amos, both Israel and Judah had become militarily strong and their ruling class very wealthy. Yet, in God's eyes, the tabernacle of David, the house that He had promised to build for David, had fallen down. The kingdom was divided; all the kings of the ten tribes had been wicked; the kings of Judah a mixed lot; and only a remnant of their people were faithful to the LORD. God knew that this divided house would fall. Yet He promises to rebuild it (a promise now being fulfilled by Jesus Christ) "in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the Gentiles who are called by My name."

What does God mean by possessing the "*remnant of Edom*"? James, using the Greek language translation of Amos, says that the tabernacle of David would be rebuilt "so that *the rest of mankind* may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by my name" (Acts 15:17). Thus James tells what the LORD means in Amos. David's house will include Gentiles. In Christ, God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name.

Thus Paul, Peter, and James are inspired to tell us what God is actually saying and what He means by the words He has spoken "to us" in the Old Testament.

"The "Old" is in the "New" revealed.

(Next: Varying "weights")

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

Bible Study

“A Broken Spirit”

It should not surprise us to learn that the things people despise, God accepts. When a bottle or jar is broken, most of us would throw it away. Particularly in Western Europe, America and Australasia, where we live in a “throw-away society”, we take it for granted that when something is broken, instead of repairing it we throw it away and buy a new one. This is particularly seen with electrical goods — where it is often impossible to repair a damaged component, but quite easy to replace the whole item with a new one from the factory — this is what is called a built-in obsolescence. All of this breeds in us an attitude of mind which accepts, without question, that when something is broken it should be thrown away as useless.

However, Psalm 51:17 teaches us differently; “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” The very thing which man despises and rejects, God accepts and uses for His purpose. The human spirit seeks to be self-sufficient — to survive every crisis and ideally live forever without pain and suffering. However, human life is not like that — the Scriptures teach us clearly that we are sinful, dying creatures — that the human condition is one of frail mortality. We are taught that suffering has a purpose — to bring us humbly before the throne of grace — to be aware of our own insufficiency and frailty. In other words, to have our ‘spirit broken’, our independence challenged and our whole outlook changed.

When we realise our uselessness, when we know beyond any shadow of doubt that we are indeed broken and incapable of saving ourselves, then the Lord can use us. There is no hypocrisy with a broken heart, no pretence, no secrets, no hidden agenda, and no pride. In order to be broken in such a manner we may have to suffer and bleed and almost die before we may be taught the ultimate lesson. But do not forget; “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:6). When we have been broken and our own opinions have drained away then the Lord can fill us with his teaching and guidance. In this process we may well have been bruised and damaged. But remember, many flowers do not release their scent until they have been crushed! So likewise many people do not show their full potential till they have been crushed in the press of life.

When we think of the Apostle Paul and his difficulties and compare ourselves with him, we realise our problems are, for the most part, relatively insignificant. The full list can be read in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33: “In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”

The passage reads not only as a catalogue of privations and problems but also as a very personal record of the way in which the great apostle was humbled. The chapter ends with what must have been, at the time, the greatest indignity of all — the representative of the High Priest having to flee for his life in what was probably a laundry basket being let down the wall like a rag-doll on the end of a rope! In the following chapter he writes about his enduring problem, his ‘thorn in the flesh’. Whether this was blindness or malaria matters not; the point is that the Apostle Paul was being constantly reminded he was as frail as anyone else. Even when he challenged God, he was told, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Apostle had to learn, as we do, that God can only work with us when our human spirit is broken, when we are shattered and bend on our knees before Him in abject surrender. When we are weak then we can be strong by means of the Lord’s help. But when we are ‘strong’ because of our own supposed strength and ability, then in reality we are weak and ready to vanish away.

Remember the Lord himself had to experience pain and suffering before he could experience glory and exaltation. He was crucified through weakness, the weakness of the flesh, but raised by the power of God. Paul adds; “For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him” (2 Cor. 13:4). Weakness and failure and the recognition of such characteristics are vital prerequisites for acceptance by God. We therefore need to learn to use our moments of weakness and our times of failure in order to be acceptable to God.

Some observations:

- Suffering is the examination paper — it reveals what has been learned in the school of life.
- Pain is the anguish of the soul: when a man and his God are brought into the same room, man will either curse or praise, either count God as an enemy or welcome him as a friend and confidant.
- Suffering may be physical or mental, personal or collective.
- The recognition of weakness can bring a freedom, from trying to achieve the impossible, or from the bitterness of lost opportunities.
- Weakness and failure can allow us to embrace our brothers and sisters as real family and allow us to share our doubts and our faith... or it can force us to withdraw into a corner, alone and in despair.

These are just a few of the reactions to pain and suffering. The awareness of being broken can destroy, or it can be the opportunity to rebuild. It can be disaster or it can be triumph. It can be the moment of absolute desolation, or it can be the moment of truth.

It all depends upon how we react. Let us give some suggestions;

- Be honest with yourself. You might fool others but you cannot fool God!
- Whatever has happened cannot be changed — the past is history, not to be rewritten. Let us move forward into the future.
- Share the problems with other members of the ecclesial family, either the immediate family or other brothers and sisters at home or abroad.
- Look for the positive — how can I use this situation for the greater good?
- Time is finite — use it wisely. Look for things to do that can be achieved, and do them with cheerfulness and optimism.
- Anger and resentment do not help the healing process — the only person who suffers is you. Be magnanimous, be forgiving. In other words, ‘give and do not count the cost.’

This brings us to Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. In chapters eight and nine, Paul in his characteristic manner explains about giving to the Lord. Although he is primarily concerned with the giving of money, he is also concerned about an attitude of mind — an attitude of mind which is critical in order to respond correctly to pain and suffering;

1. The ultimate example: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (8:9). He had all things, but he suffered and died that he might obey his Father’s will and give us hope of everlasting life.
2. The principle for us: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give” (9:7). If we give our time, our energy and our opportunities — then the Lord will hear and see and give us more in return. Thus our poverty of spirit will become enriched and our empty soul filled.
3. “Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God” (9:11). If we are aware of the great blessings that have come to us because of our discipleship, we shall be strengthened and changed by our faith and fellowship.

A “broken and contrite heart” is a necessary prerequisite for discipleship. These are qualities despised by men but admired and cherished by God — because they allow Him to use men and women in His work. This is a first step in the creation of a world filled with His glory.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

Aeschylus was a Greek philosopher who, so far as is known, did not believe in the God of Israel. But his words about the meaning and use of pain are profound, even if we make allowances for his definition of “God”: “It is God’s law that he who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, so that despite ourselves and even against our will, wisdom comes to us by the awful grace of God.”

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (6) God's heritage and our inheritance

In the section of Ephesians 1 beginning at verse 11, we are confronted with a special and challenging task: Paul's thought is dense, and so many themes in the Old Testament and the New Testament converge here, that one can scarcely hope to exhaust all the riches of his teaching. Much could be added to what follows.

In verse 11, we need first of all to take note of the RV, which says the believers are God's heritage, and not as the KJV renders the verse: "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance". The "we" here is meaningful for Paul is now speaking of his own people, a conclusion confirmed in the following verse. The Apostle thus shows he was fully acquainted with the divine purpose as it initially embraced Israel. God chose in His wisdom and foreknowledge to work especially in the history of one nation, a truth many will not acknowledge. (However, this was no unconditional favouritism, for all the divine blessings are attended by that significant word "if": note especially in this connection the "if" in Exodus 19:5.) As for the word "heritage", we recall the song which Moses uttered towards the end of his taxing stewardship with the Israelites:

*"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the people
According to the number of the children of Israel.
For the LORD's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:8,9).*

But this is only one place where, in his final words to the nation he had led, Moses stresses the special blessings God had bestowed upon them as God's heritage among the nations; it is a subject to which he returns (see Deut. 4:20; 9:29). In this repeated emphasis he seems to be anticipating what Paul says to those who have an inheritance in the Lord Jesus. Circumcision was the seal God imposed upon all Israelites but, lest they should glory in this, he solemnly bids them to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts and to be no longer stiff-necked (Deut. 10:16), an exhortation repeated by Jeremiah (see 4:4), and echoed by Paul in Romans 2:28,29.

It may seem strange for the One who made the heavens and the earth and to whom all belongs (see, for example, Psa. 50:10-12) to work for so long through one people. At the same time they were answerable for their blessings, and if they fell into the trap of thinking the land belonged inalienably to them, they needed to be reminded by their God, "The land is mine" (Lev. 25:23).

Scripture makes it clear that Israel was only a part of God's purpose and the selection of Abraham, the father of the nation, was accompanied by this declaration:

“In thee shall *all the families of the earth* be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Here we find the very first mention of blessing in Scripture and we note it is associated with the call of Abraham. Furthermore, it was not restricted to the physical descendants of Abraham; rather, it was to embrace all mankind. Centuries later, the Jews who boasted of their descent from Abraham were engaged in a lively altercation with Jesus. In the discussion the Lord affirmed that the authentic posterity of Abraham were those who did “the works of Abraham” (John 8:39). The other attribute required in the true posterity of Abraham was faith, as the Lord declared when he was moved by the Roman centurion’s faith (see Matt. 8:8-13).

In Romans 3:1,2 Paul emphasizes the special privileges bestowed upon his people, but he was also well aware of their many failures. However, let us not forget there were happy periods in Israel too: Jeremiah, so much involved in denouncing his contemporaries, looked back to a time when Israel was holiness to the LORD, “the firstfruits of his increase” (Jer. 2:3). Then we think of the contribution made to our understanding of the Almighty by Moses, David and the prophets; the Lord Jesus was often guided by his unique insight into the Old Testament. The Psalms in themselves are a priceless treasury. Briefly then, it was only those Jews among Paul’s contemporaries who recognized the need to emulate Abraham both in their works and their faith who constituted a true and worthy part of God’s heritage. This is true for believers in all ages.

But if Israel enjoyed special privileges, it was incumbent upon them to contribute to God’s glory, a responsibility which they too often failed to discharge. It was finally their failure to revere God’s Son which led to the eventual loss of their special place in God’s purpose (see Matt. 21:33-43, especially v. 43), although in due time they will be restored (see Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:1,22-24).

Even as Paul affirms the eventual priority of his own people, he hastens to reassure his predominantly Gentile readers that they too had received “the word of the truth”, defined as the gospel of their salvation. This response by Gentiles to the proclamation of the Gospel was a great historical development which was gaining increasing momentum in the contemporary world, preeminently through the activities of Paul himself and co-workers like Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and Epaphras. There was a momentum about this which many orthodox Jews tried to arrest, but in vain.

As for the disciples in Colosse and the neighbouring ecclesias, the efficacy of their conversion lay in the fact that they had been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”. A seal served to authenticate, and in this case it was a mark of divine approval. They had received the unique status, in the Lord Jesus, of God’s spiritual sons and daughters, a status which has been considered above. On the matter of sealing, J. Strahan comments: “The seal was used at all times for the purpose of safeguarding valuable possessions: wine jars were stopped and sealed, rolls folded and sealed, doors closed and sealed... Property, security, secrecy, finality are the ideas suggested by the act of solemnly attaching one’s seal to anything.”¹

Particularly interesting in this connection is the vision of the redeemed who have the name of the Lamb and his Father written upon their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).

When the high priest entered the Tabernacle he always bore upon his forehead a plate of pure gold inscribed with the words: "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Exod. 28:36). This speaks for itself, being rich in symbolism. When king Uzziah, not content with his royal position, forced his way into the Temple and endeavoured to usurp the function of high priest, leprosy broke out on his forehead (see 2 Chron. 26:16-20). Then Ezekiel, in one of his visions when he heard the LORD GOD pronouncing judgement upon Jerusalem, saw that those who were to be spared slaughter had a mark placed upon their foreheads (9:4-6).

Both Paul and the apostle John indicate the unique status of those who have accepted the word of salvation in the Lord Jesus and thus constitute God's lot or portion among the nations. We first note John's witness to this in John 1:12,13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Surely this is a bold declaration that such have become true children of the Almighty, a great and precious truth which John confirms in his first letter: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are" (3:1).

On this same subject, Paul has much to say to the Colossians: "We have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love" (1:13), "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (3:3). Then to the Philippians Paul wrote: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20). There is something awesome about these declarations; it is difficult for a Christian disciple to grasp their full meaning and to live by them. But he needs to ponder them constantly, for they have the power to transform our mundane lives.

Fundamental to this process is the individual's response to the Word of God, a theme developed in Romans 10. There the Apostle shows with great clarity that it is not merely the enlightenment of the mind which counts, but the penetration of the heart: "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (vv. 9,10). It is then the response of the heart which matters for salvation.

The words of the Apostle echo in a most interesting way what Jeremiah had to say centuries before; he bore witness to Israel's failure to fulfill the conditions of the covenant God made with the Israelites in the desert (see Exod. 24:3-8). This failure created the need for a new covenant, and it is of this that the prophet speaks in chapter 31: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah... this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD; I will put my laws in their inward parts, and in their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (vv. 31-33). This is surely an anticipation of Paul's words for, alas, the enlightenment of the mind does not necessarily ensure a change of heart:

- (1) Ananias and Sapphira had conceived deception in their hearts (see Acts 5:1-10), and
- (2) The heart of Simon, who thought he could purchase the power to convey the Holy Spirit to others, was “not right before God” (Acts 8:21).

These reflections enable us to understand why later in Ephesians 1 Paul uses a curious expression, “the eyes of the heart” (v. 18).

While the disciple who holds the hope in his heart should rejoice in the privileges bestowed upon him, he knows he has received only an “earnest” of the full inheritance (Eph. 1:14). An earnest here means a preliminary payment but which in itself is a guarantee that the full sum will be paid; William Barclay makes these comments on the Greek term for “earnest”: “In classical Greek the word *arrabon*’ regularly means the caution money that a purchaser had to deposit and pay down when a bargain was struck... It was the first installment which was the pledge and guarantee that the rest would follow in due course.”²

The LORD God will most certainly honour His commitment to those who place their trust in Him. The redemption of our bodies, with its release from the present bondage of corruption, lies in the future when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven and changes our bodies into the likeness of his own glorious body (Phil. 3:21). However, we live now in the present with its limitations and temptations. We must accordingly draw upon the strength available to us in the Lord Jesus, in prayer and in the constant reading of God’s word. As already emphasized, what should exercise our minds is the awesome nature of the privileges we already enjoy in the Lord Jesus, and we should gladly and gratefully respond to them in love.

Paul knew full well how abysmal had been his own understanding of the divine purpose with mankind at large. Furthermore, when he had learned of developments in the Lycus valley, he was moved to pray for the disciples there. Epaphras had brought him news of the faithfulness of some (Eph. 1:15), a fact to which we referred at an earlier stage in these studies. These faithful ones were to be counted among the divine heritage; for them he did not cease to pray (v. 16).

It was Paul’s custom, as his own outlook was so positive, to give encouragement to all who were responding to God’s grace. At the same time, he possessed a sympathetic understanding of the difficulty any might have in appreciating the rich privileges they enjoyed in the Lord Jesus. He was moved, therefore, to ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, to grant them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It is this, surely, which is so fundamental: “And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou dost send, even Jesus Christ” (John 17:3). In asking his God to grant them wisdom, he reminds us of James: “But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraided not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith...” (1:5,6).

When Paul speaks of “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”, we are reminded of his monotheism. Then he proceeds to designate Him “the Father of glory”. A fine feature of Paul’s letters lies in the terms he employs to describe his God. This feature is prominent towards the end of Romans: thus in 15:5, he is “the God of

patience and comfort”; in verse 13, He is “the God of hope”, and in verse 33 “the God of peace” (see also 2 Cor. 1:3). Here now, he speaks of the “Father of glory”, the One who is the single source of all (cf. Rom. 11:36).

There is special significance in the reference to God’s glory in the present context. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament that glory can be associated with those faithful to their God:

- (a) When Caleb and Joshua tried to rally their fellows, the latter took stones to kill them but the LORD intervened: “The glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel” (Num. 14:10) and stopped the mutinous Israelites in their tracks.
- (b) The divine glory was visibly associated with Caleb and Joshua and served at the same time to protect them.
- (c) When the compassionate Moses intervened on behalf of his faithless people, the LORD did indeed forgive but He also declared that the earth would one day be filled with His glory (v. 21). This surely will be in the person of His Son and those associated with him.
- (d) The glory of the LORD was associated with Moses and Aaron when Korah and his fellows rose against them (Num. 16:19).
- (e) Stephen started his historic defense by referring to “the God of glory” (Acts 7:2) and as he was dying, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus himself standing on the right hand of God (v. 56).

A basic theme unites the Old and New Testaments, as is often the case. Indeed, the subject of glory is so fundamental in Scripture that it could be pursued at great length.

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul continues his prayer with what might appear at first an odd request on behalf of his readers: “that the eyes of their heart should be enlightened.” We have already seen how important it is that such enlightenment should reach the heart, our inmost being; our eyes are the medium of perception. We recall the Lord said to his disciples: “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear” (Matt. 13:16). In the present case (in v. 18) Paul’s wish is that the readers should understand the hope they can cherish, the riches of God’s glory of the inheritance in the saints. Thus we are reminded that the basic theme of this section is the inheritance to which Christ calls believers.

In keeping with his efforts to bring his readers to an appreciation of what is even now available to them in the Lord Jesus, the Apostle invokes the thought of the “exceeding greatness of his power” (Eph. 1:19). Paul seems almost to be straining to find words adequate to open the eyes of his readers to a proper appreciation of the extent of their inheritance in the Lord Jesus. We hope to see in our next study how the supreme evidence of divine power lies in the resurrection and elevation of the Lord Jesus.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Notes:

- 1. W. Strahan, in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, T & T Clark, 1918, vol. 2, p. 465.
- 2. W. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*, SCM Press Ltd., 1955, p. 24.

Reflections

Famous Last Words: (10) Lot

Our last article looked at the words of Melchizedek to Abraham. We saw the wonderful type of the Messiah exhibited in this man, who as King-Priest blessed the patriarch and was given tithes by him. We look for the day when the Most High God sends His Son to the earth, and will “deliver his enemies into his hand.”

The last recorded words of Lot are: “Oh, not so, my Lord... I cannot escape to the mountains... behold now this city... let me escape thither...” (Gen. 19:18-20).

Poor Lot, he never really seems to understand the working of God in his life. God says, “Flee to the mountains”, and he comes up with a million excuses why this won’t work, and why his plan is better than God’s! God always knows best, and we have to trust Him implicitly and unquestioningly! Lot’s great plan is to flee to a small city to be safe. However, Lot later finds himself in danger in the city, and he has to flee to the mountains (Gen. 19:30). You can imagine the people’s reaction to the lone survivor of the Sodom and Gomorrah destruction!

What tragedy results from this! His daughters now despair of life (perhaps based on experiences in the city), and they manipulate their father into incestuous relations with them. How much better for Lot if he had gone to the mountains initially, as God commanded, trusting that God knew what He was doing and would work things out for good. Maybe if Lot had gone to the mountains first, he could have integrated into society later “when the dust settled”!

This incident also gives some interesting insight into the work of the angels. Lot’s last words are a request to the angels working with him, a request that they grant. We can see here that the angel listens to Lot’s request, and makes a decision to allow it: “See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing *also...*” (Gen. 19:21). Do we sense a little frustration in the angel’s words here? There is no indication that the angel had to get authority from on high to grant this request. The angel made this decision himself. Note that granting this request meant that Zoar (the little city Lot wanted to flee to) was spared from overthrow (v. 21)! Too bad the people of the city didn’t realize this — maybe they would have accepted Lot as a hero, not a villain! It would seem that the angels are given a job to do by God with certain parameters and guidelines to work within. Inside those parameters they have room to change plans and make decisions — they are *not* robots. Rather, they have to react to unexpected circumstances (like an uncooperative Lot).

But there are limits to the parameters. The angels could *not* destroy Sodom until Lot was safe (v. 22), and the moment Lot entered Zoar “the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven... and overthrew those cities and all the plain” (vv. 23-25).

The lesson we learn from Lot's "famous last words" is that we must accept God's will for us and obey His commands without question. "Thy will, not mine be done" and "God willing, we will do this or that" must be the hallmarks of a faithful believer's life. We must never doubt God by asking for our circumstances to be changed to suit our wants and desires. As the old saying goes, "Be careful what you ask for — you just might get it!"

"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).

Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON)

"Greater lov'd ye canno' be!"

In 1958, the great golfer Bobby Jones visited St. Andrews, Scotland, the birthplace of golf. Jones was more than 25 years past his last great tournament victories, and he was now beset with a terrible debilitating and crippling disease. But he had come to accept an award naming him a Freeman of St. Andrews. The small town, scene of some of his most memorable achievements, and a town which had adopted this quiet American as one of its own, was in effect granting him genuine citizenship, the first and only time they had extended that honor to an American since 1759. The only previous recipient had been Benjamin Franklin.

Mark Frost describes the scene in his book, *The Grand Slam: Bobby Jones, America, and the Story of Golf*.

Nearly two thousand crowded into the Great Hall at St. Andrews University. After the award was presented, Bobby Jones stood and walked to the podium. It was the first time he had walked unaided in a number of years. He spoke of his previous visits to St. Andrews, and the tournaments played at the Old Course. In each instance, he said, it had been the respect and affection he felt from the people of the town that meant so much more to him than trophies or medals or championships.

"And now I have this," he said. "I could take out of my life everything but my experiences at St. Andrews and I'd still have a rich full life."

He spoke of friendship and expressed with a full heart and his precise lawyer's language exactly how much that overused expression — "friend" — meant to him. The spiritual clarity of his emotions rose to meet the eloquence of his words, and in his steady gaze and warm, measured baritone Bobby reflected back to his audience the love he felt from them.

"When I say that I am your friend, I have pledged to you the ultimate in loyalty and devotion. In some respects friendship may even transcend love, for in true friendship there is no place for jealousy. When I say that you are my friends, it is possible that I may be imposing upon you a greater burden than you are willing to assume. But when you have made me aware on many occasions that you have

a kindly feeling toward me, and when you have honored me by every means at your command, then when I call you my friend, I am at once affirming my high regard and affection for you and declaring my complete faith in you and trust in the sincerity of your expressions. And so, my fellow citizens of St. Andrews, it is with this appreciation of the full sense of this word that I salute you as my friends.”

The speech was greeted by thunderous applause. As Bobby Jones left the hall, riding a golf cart up the center aisle to the exit, someone with a high tenor voice broke spontaneously into the lilting old Scottish folk song:

“Will ye no’ come back again?...

Greater lov’d ye canno’ be.

Will ye no’ come back again?”

Within a moment virtually every other voice in the hall had joined in.

Frost writes, “They reached out to touch Bobby and his family as he passed. This was a true valedictory, the sort of tribute seldom given or received while the person being honored still lives, made possible only if that person has moved past longing and pride and illusions of the self into the rarest wisdom... After [Bobby] and his family had left the hall, ten full minutes passed before any of the audience were even able to speak.”

Put aside the setting. Put aside even the man himself, along with his particular accomplishments, extraordinary as they were. But consider the thoughts of love and the expression — and exposition — of friendship that he shared with the people gathered in that place. Can there be a better exposition of the words of Jesus himself, when he said to his disciples: “I have called you friends” (John 15:15)?

Can we understand, and express, the full sense of this word “friend”? Jesus did: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Do our actions, as well as our words, truly reflect our “friendship” for *Jesus*? Let us say to *him*, in the words of the old Scottish song,

“Will ye no’ come back again?...

Greater lov’d ye canno’ be.

Will you no’ come back again?”

George Booker, Austin South, TX

Fruits from the True Vine

The record in John’s gospel — the last supper and the walk to the Mount of Olives — is interrupted by four chapters (John 14-17) in which Jesus talks to his disciples. In John 13:38 Jesus predicts Peter’s denial; then we have to wait until John 18 to read about Jesus going to the Mount of Olives with his disciples.

Surely at this moment in his life — with the crucifixion so close, and the impending excruciating pain that it would entail — Jesus must have considered these last words with his disciples to have been of prime importance. Therefore they must surely be a very necessary message to us also.

Part of this message Jesus felt was so important — for all disciples — is set out in his description of the true vine and the branches in John 15. Describing God's people as vineyards bearing fruit would not have been a novel idea to the disciples:

"I will sing for the One I love a song about his Vineyard:

My loved one had a Vineyard on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones

And planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it

And cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,

But it yielded only bad fruit" (Isa. 5:1,2).

"The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the House of Israel,

and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight.

And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed;

For righteousness, but heard cries of distress" (v. 7).

In John 15 Jesus uses the same figure of the vineyard but says in verse 5: "I am the vine and you are the branches." Moreover, he says in verse 1 that God is the gardener who cuts off the branches that bear no fruit. Remembering the importance that Jesus gave to these last words to his disciples, we have to ask ourselves: what is it that Jesus requires us to understand?

Who are the "clean" ones?

In John 15:3 Jesus says, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me and I will remain in you." Words such as these have led our community, in some cases, into an attitude similar to that of the Pharisee. The Pharisee went up to pray at the temple: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (Luke 18:11,12). The Pharisee was so deluded that he felt the urge to congratulate himself on being "clean", as though it were all his own doing!

But what Jesus meant by verse 3, and what is required of us if we are to remain in him, is described for us a bit further on: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love... My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (vv. 9,12,13). This is a repetition of what he told his disciples earlier in the upper room (John 13:34,35). Another aspect is given in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last."

Jesus felt it necessary to tell his disciples that he was the only true vine, and it was through "abiding" in him alone that they might be connected to God and His Kingdom (John 15:4). Only by abiding, or remaining, in the vine could they produce fruit that would last, nourished by that love they had seen in him.

The Samaritan

The quality of what Jesus exhibited and which is required by each one of us is, I believe, nowhere better explained than in Luke 10. We read here of the Good Samaritan, exemplified by Jesus and to be followed by us.

In the parable, a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. Both a priest and a Levite refused to stop to help him; but a Samaritan, a person despised by many Jews, not only stopped to help the victim but also took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he even left money with the innkeeper, and promised to give him additional money when he returned, if necessary.

The question for now is not whether *we* would have helped out to the same extent, but rather: what kind of person was the victim? Was he a robber, an evildoer or an adulterer — the sort whom the Pharisee of Luke 18 would have disdained? Was he a drunkard or a drug addict? If, in Jesus' story, the traveler had been a woman rather than a man, could she have been a prostitute or a woman of loose morals?

Closer to home, and in relation to our own ecclesias, is the one who “fell among thieves” a brother or sister who has not attended the meeting for some time, from whom we have withdrawn? Or is it a sister whose violent marriage ended in divorce and who has remarried a kind, gentle and caring man — but who is no longer, according to our view of matters, able to break bread with us? The answer is: we are not told *because to Jesus it did not matter*.

Paul exhorts us: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 4:32 — 5:2).

Bearing fruit

Jesus also tells his disciples, in John 15:16, to “bear fruit, fruit that will last.”

Elsewhere Jesus says, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37,38). Do we want to be vessels from which streams of living water flow? “By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (v. 39).

We shy away from the thought of receiving God's “Spirit”. But Jesus makes it quite plain that in order to bear *lasting* fruit, as commanded in John 15, we have to be connected with God's holy Spirit. How is this? If we remain in the True Vine, which is Jesus Christ, then the Spirit of God will work to produce in us the *fruit* of that Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness” (Gal. 5:22,23). These spiritual fruits come from God; they are fruits of the True Vine, and they cannot be produced by anyone who is *not* part of that Vine!

As we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, let us ask ourselves: do we manifest those qualities demonstrated by Jesus, and requested by him of his disciples immediately before he was taken to be crucified?

If we do, then his prayer for us will not be in vain:

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (John 17:24-26).

Colin Cooper (Barbados)

“I’m One of Those Stars, Sam...”

Our five-year old granddaughter, Samantha, is quite a girl. She is bright, funny, loving, curious, and generous. She brings us great joy just by her very existence, and we are grateful to have such a wonderful young girl in our lives.

One of her favorite things to do is lie out in the yard at night on a quilt, looking up at the stars with her daddy. A shooting star is something she has always wanted to see but she hasn’t seen one yet. Her voice is sad but hopeful when she quietly says, “Daddy has seen one, but I haven’t — not yet.”

This morning my husband and I rose early to watch the Perseids meteor shower, predicted to be very visible and active between 2 am and dawn. We stood together quietly on the deck, listening to the insect and animal sounds of a mountain night. Staring up into the northeastern sky, I thought about Sam, and I also thought about Abraham.

Abraham lived over four thousand years ago, on the other side of the world from me, and yet I feel I know him. I read the stories of how he loved and trusted God, how he treated his family and servants, his enemies and friends. I have a picture of him in my mind.

I thought of him because of what happened to him one clear, dark night out on the open rolling hills of Canaan (what we call Israel today). He had a visitor, a heavenly messenger, who told him not to fear, that God was his shield and his very great reward. Abraham appreciated that, I’m sure — what could be better? But Abraham admitted he was sad because he had no children, and at his death all his vast wealth and possessions would pass along to a servant in his household.

The angel then took Abraham outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars — *if* you can count them.” Then he said, “So shall your offspring be.”

How thrilled he must have been! Incredulous, too, because he and his wife had been together a long time and were very old, past the normal time for a couple to have children. He believed God, though, and God gave him credit for his honorable, respectful goodness and belief.

Though Abraham and his wife Sarah had to wait a long time to have a child together, they did have a son, Isaac, born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Isaac married, had two sons, and those sons had children. So God

kept His promise to Abraham that he would have children, grandchildren, and so on and on, even up until this day. His physical descendants through the promised son, Isaac, and one of Isaac's sons, Jacob, are the Jewish people today. His physical descendants through another son, Ishmael, and the other of Isaac's sons, Esau, are a part of the Arab nations.

God also promised Abraham that since he was faithful in leaving his homeland (in what is now Iraq) and traveling to the land of Canaan, as directed by God, that he and his descendants would inherit that land and possess it forever.

Now here is where it really gets interesting, because it directly relates to you and me. In about the year 50 AD, Paul wrote a letter to Christians who lived in Galatia, near modern Ankara, Turkey. He told them this amazing thing — that years and years later, generation after generation, Abraham was *still* gaining descendants, even those who were not physically his offspring. How could this be?

The promises were spoken to Abraham *and his seed*, Paul said, especially meaning Jesus, who lived two thousand years after his ancestor Abraham.

Jesus was a descendent from Abraham, through one of Abraham's great-grandsons, Judah. But Jesus did not marry and have children, so how does this connect with us?

We look to Paul again to explain what he meant. "If you have been baptized into Christ, then you have clothed yourself with Christ..." he said. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and an heir according to the promise."

To belong to Christ, we accept that he was and is the son of God who presented himself as a pure, living sacrifice, and that with his blood he purchased men and women for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. After baptism, symbolizing our regret for our shortcomings and recognition that we need to follow Jesus in dying to this life, we rise up joyfully to a new life.

Belonging to Christ, we are adopted into his family, and become heirs to the family promises. We become one of Abraham's multitudinous offspring — one of those many stars he looked up at so long ago, and marveled, "I'm going to have that many descendants — incredible!"

I have made that decision, to belong to Christ, and thus I am one of Abraham's children. And so, as I looked up at that brilliant, awe-inspiring sky this morning, I thought to myself, "By the grace of God and the love of Christ, I am one of those stars you love so much, Sam — your grandmother is one of those stars!"

Sharee Grazda (Pagosa Springs, CO)

"Look up at the heavens and count the stars" (Gen. 15:5).

"The God who could fashion so many worlds of wonder set in the depths of space had no need of hurry in the outworking of His plan. These stars which Abraham could not begin to count were all **God's**, counted and known individually by their names (Psa. 147:4)" (Harry Whittaker, *Abraham: Father of the Faithful*).

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions

There are many believers today who have come from the outside (and even some who were raised in Christadelphian homes) whom — if we could have seen them before their conversions — we might not even recognize as the same people we know today. Their conversions from a life of sin (in many different aspects) to a life of holiness — love of God, Jesus, the Bible, and their neighbor — border on the miraculous.

In these articles we'll look at some Bible characters whose conversions are similarly striking. All these men have this in common: they "saw the light" *when* they witnessed the sufferings and death of Jesus. Jesus was like no other man before or since. He was totally righteous throughout his life. But even that statement scarcely does justice to the time just before his death. Perhaps the word "noble" may describe him then, but even that description fails to adequately portray his character. Something in his actions and words during that time led to the most remarkable and unlikely of conversions.

(1) Simon of Cyrene

"A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross" (Mark 15:21). Probably Simon was a Jew who had come up from Cyrene (in northern Libya) for the Passover (or possibly he had recently moved to Jerusalem from Cyrene).

Comparing the four gospel accounts, it appears Jesus was too physically exhausted to bear the full burden of the cross all the way to Golgotha. (When one considers all he had gone through during the previous 24 to 48 hours, is there any doubt that he physically could not carry the cross that distance without help?) As this became obvious, a centurion compelled Simon to follow Jesus, carrying the cross for him.

Picture what happened here: Simon literally took up Jesus' cross and followed him. Then consider Jesus' words: "If anyone would come after me, he must *deny* himself and take up his cross and follow me." Quite likely, at first Simon was not at all pleased to do this. First of all, it was a precious hour out of his day at a very important time of the year. Secondly, it was — obviously — a very distasteful thing. And then, consider the jeers from many in the crowd. Wouldn't they be, in part, aimed at him for helping such a man as this? And yet — Simon must have thought to himself — 'I'm not the criminal being taken to execution!'

Nevertheless, Simon was soon to learn much about this man whom he was forced to follow. For he saw a man who, in his terrible extremity of suffering, did not flinch, and did not hurl curses at his executioners. He saw a man who even asked his "Father" (!) to forgive them. And finally he must have come to see that Jesus' God and Father had provided His Son as a Passover lamb for the sins of the world.

It may be taken as practically certain that Simon's conversion dated from this very day. Did you notice that Mark in his gospel mentions Simon's two sons: Alexander and Rufus? Why would he do that unless it would mean something to his readers — that is, that Alexander and Rufus later became Christians, and were in fact Christians at the time Mark set down his story?

Possibly Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33 as living in Ephesus while Paul was there. And Rufus may be the brother mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:13: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too." (The name "Rufus" occurs only in these two verses in the Bible.)

What is the most likely scenario? I'd suggest that Rufus and Alexander learned from their father Simon, who was so moved by his crucifixion experience that he became a believer in Jesus Christ. Almost certainly Simon's wife also learned and became a Christian; notice that she was such a lovely person that Paul could say that she was like a mother to him!

May we go even a little further, and imagine that Jesus spoke to Simon on the way, thanking him for his help? And in this process, and with the succeeding events, Simon's eyes were opened to the identity of this extraordinary man: that he was the Messiah!

The man compelled to go a mile with Jesus, went with him not only the one mile but a second as well (Matt. 5:41), and then also for the rest of his life.

(Next: Malchus)

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

Simon of Cyrene

*There is no mark of course, but I can feel
Here on my shoulder to this very day
The grinding weight where that rough timber lay
And left, an hour or two, its vivid seal.*

*I had no thought, no patriotic zeal,
That morning there a hero's part to play;
Only, I saw his eyes which, as he lay
Down in the dust, held mine in mute appeal.*

*"A curse on you, Roman dogs," I cried,
And never felt the lash the soldier swung;
Then we went together side by side,
My back bent double as we climbed the hill
To Calvary where on the cross he hung;
And I am proud to say I feel its burden still.*

(adapted, from Wadsworth)

Letters

A “generation”?

Dear Bro. George,

Reading in the March-April edition of *The Tidings* regarding “a generation”, we listened to a rabbi being interviewed. On being asked what “a generation” meant, he replied that “a generation went by the Jubilee years”, and he explained that the Jubilee [every fiftieth year] brought to an end the possession of Hebrew servants, the restoration of property, etc.

This seemed logical to us — and rather scriptural, don’t you think?

Much fraternal love in our wonderful Saviour’s Name.

A.W. Wright
(Australia)

Distractions

Dear Bro. George,

In response to Bro. Michael Atkin’s excellent exhortation (June, p. 216), please permit me to recount this experience:

At age 18, my high school sweetheart and I flew from Wales to Canada. We were newly married, a couple of energetic immigrants, with little money, but lots of enthusiastic optimism.

Our first few months were spent in a modestly furnished, two-room basement apartment. We shared a bathroom with the couple in the adjacent unit. We naturally expected our standard of living to rise. When we moved to a three-room, unfurnished apartment, we needed some furniture. My job in a department store afforded us the opportunity to open a charge account. So we purchased a bedroom suite: bed, bookcase-style headboard, chest and dresser.

A few weeks passed and we realize we have made a mistake. The credit payments represented a financial burden. Would my employer kindly accept the return of the suite, apart from the bed itself? Yes, they would, for full credit. Were we ever relieved! Our next stop was at a used furniture store. That experience taught us a lesson we would never forget.

Many of us are under financial pressure because we are striving to support a standard of living higher than what we can comfortably afford. We want; therefore we buy. This process generates an inordinate amount of stress. We may be investing more heavily in our houses and vehicles than in our homes and families. Not a good idea. Material possessions are of limited value. It is relationships that really count.

I had long known that truth in theory. In my 30s, I experienced its sad reality. There I was, living in a spacious home, in a desirable neighborhood, with an above-average standard of living, in a prosperous country... without a wife, and our two teenage sons without a resident mother. I had been far happier years earlier, in that tiny, two-room basement apartment.

Most North Americans enjoy a material standard of living higher than that known by 99% of the people who have ever lived, anywhere in the world. But we are not easily satisfied. Compare our living standards to those of our grandparents and great-grandparents. Are we more or less thankful than they were? More or less content? More or less stressed? Do we carefully distinguish between wants and needs? Or do we continually strive for that elusive standard of living always a step or two above our present level? That vain pursuit brings no lasting satisfaction.

If we can learn to be more content, to be more thankful, then our load of stress will be lightened considerably, and our service to the Master will be more acceptable.

*Philip Jones
(Calgary, AB)*

“Sprout” is here!

I just wanted to let you know that “Sprout” (a.k.a. David Jachin Mutter) was born at 5:09 pm on June 10. He weighed 7 lbs. 15 oz. and was 20 inches long. He and Julia are home from the hospital now and are doing great.

*Ryan Mutter
(Baltimore, MD)*

(See June issue, p. 242.)

Dear Sis. Julia and Bro. Ryan,

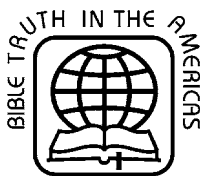
Congratulations! The birth of a baby is a miracle of life, and a mystery. It is also a gift from God, showing His continuing love for man, and His willingness to offer that love, once again, to a completely new life.

Your child is a special child, like Samuel or John the Baptist, who should be dedicated by righteous parents to the service of Yahweh.

May “Sprout” grow up to be a great tree, planted by the river of life, who bears fruit in season, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

George

“We have come to a turning point in the road. If we turn to the right, our children and our children’s children may very well go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word” (Charles Spurgeon).



Bible Mission News

Guatemala City, Guatemala

Eight years ago we landed in a Latin American country to begin two years of missionary work. A sister warned us that, once we spent time in Latin America, it would be in our blood forever. Feeling overwhelmed by the new situation ahead of us, the prospect of learning Spanish, and the completely different culture that surrounded us, we highly doubted that that could be the case. As we landed in Guatemala a few short days ago, we reflected upon her words as we felt the rising excitement of returning to this part of the world. The familiar smells, sounds and sights felt strangely like home, and in the few times we have returned to Latin America since our couple of years spent there, we have learned that yes... once you've lived in Latin America, it is in your blood forever!

We decided to travel to Guatemala for four short days to meet with the ecclesia and discuss ways to preach, and reach out to existing contacts who have yet to make personal contact with the Christadelphian ecclesia there. There are currently seven active members of this small lightstand. The ecclesia is young, with the first member having been baptized in 1995, and the most recent baptism being in December 2006.

The newest brother of the Guatemalan ecclesia impressed us greatly with his love and enthusiasm for the Truth. It is such a good reminder for us sometimes to see the energy and faith that emanates from one so newly baptized into our Lord's saving name. The day we arrived, this new brother (who is in his fifties) sought us out at our hotel, located in the historical district of downtown Guatemala. He walked us around the busy streets, explaining each building in detail, and helping us to orient ourselves. The architecture is breathtakingly beautiful in this old city, and full of history.

On Saturday afternoon, we met with the ecclesial members. We were thrilled that all of the active brothers showed up with ideas and visions for the future of the ecclesia. The brothers are feeling a bit discouraged at the lack of contacts that actually come to the lectures, or to seek more information from the Christadelphians. We discussed preaching ideas, among other things, and were delighted to hear how the ecclesia started, and how each member came to find the Truth. It was interesting to hear that every member had come to an understanding of the Scriptures by answering a small ad in the newspaper, and completing the correspondence course. Each one described vividly the excitement they felt at learning our different doctrines, and seeing clearly the Truth of the Bible. It was

especially touching when one brother began his story by saying, “I remember it was September 16th, the day I saw the ad for the Christadelphians...”

On Sunday we shared in the breaking of bread, followed by a class entitled “The Effective Preaching of the Apostles”, based primarily on the example of the establishment of the ecclesia in Thessalonica. The brothers were thrilled when four visitors, who had been invited by phone, showed up for the class.

After sharing a lunch of pizza and Pepsi, we headed back to the hotel with a brother as our guide. We decided to attempt the bus system, since it is always an interesting experience, and gives one a strong sense of the culture of the people. It is also a good way to tour the city and — at a cost of one quetzal (about 15 cents US) each — we couldn’t resist.

Our taxi picked us up Monday morning at 4:30 am to get to the airport. Along the way, we had a great conversation with our taxi driver, and by the time he dropped us off at the airport, we had his address in hand, and he says he will be eagerly awaiting the first lessons of the correspondence course!



Brothers and sisters of the Guatemala ecclesia

A couple of things became very apparent to us during our short stay. One: the young ecclesia in Guatemala consists of a solid group of brothers with a strong love of the Truth. And two: these brothers need help! The thing that the ecclesia could use the most at this time is a missionary couple to help out for a few years, in order to work consistently with the contacts, and help the brothers grow in their faith. Guatemala City is a large city of about 2.5 million. There are so many, many people... so many who have yet to hear the Truth of the Gospel, and the wonderful hope of the return of Christ!



The Guatemala Sunday School

Brothers and sisters, we have been given the pearl of great price — we are so blessed. Why is it that compared to other churches that are in darkness, we have so few that are willing to sacrifice a fraction of their lives in service to God in another country? Please consider giving some time to labour in His vineyard. It won't be long before Jesus comes back. Will he find us about our Father's business?

*Dan (and Ashley) Robinson
CBMA Linkman, Guatemala*

The search for Truth in South America — Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia

On May 11, 2007, we began a trip that would take us to four countries in South America for a period of 18 days. Bro. Robert Alderson (Auckland, NZ) and I met in Santiago, Chile, and we continued from there to Córdoba, Argentina. We were met at the airport in Córdoba by brother Rubén Barbosa. He took us to his house, where we were warmly welcomed by his wife Roxana and their two children, Milena and Juan Segundo. There is a four-member ecclesia in Córdoba consisting of Bro. Francisco Gilardoni, Sis. Julia Leonor Reynoso, Sis. María Teresa Suarez, and Bro. Rubén. Bro. Hugo Petrilli (from Rosario, Argentina) also regularly visits and supports the ecclesia in Córdoba. The ecclesia organized a series of special lectures on Saturday and Sunday (May 12th and 13th), which about four visitors

attended each day. This was disappointing since ads were placed in the newspaper and the 300 correspondence contacts were also invited. We organized an extra session with the ecclesia and a few interested friends for Monday afternoon, on “How to get around the Bible”. We really enjoyed the fellowship and hospitality of this small ecclesia.

We left Cordoba on Wednesday, May 16, for Santiago, Chile, to spend two days with the three-member ecclesia and a few of the serious contacts. The ecclesia is comprised of Bro. Bernardo Soto Raimil, Sis. Gisella Pintado Moeira and Bro. Richard Castillo Hernández. We met every day and enjoyed a breaking of bread, Bible readings and studies. Brother Bernardo manages a small data processing company, and the ecclesia uses his office for their weekly meetings.

From Santiago we went to Lima, Peru, on Friday, May 18, for three days of special lectures. We were met there by Bro. Brad and Sis. Susie Butts (Denver, CO), along with Bro. Bill Link, Jr. and his son Bro. Ezra Link (Baltimore, MD). They travelled with us for the next 11 days to provide tremendous support for activities in Peru and Bolivia.

The postal contacts in Peru have shown great interest during weekend hotel meetings and special lectures in the last two years. Special lectures were held Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings (May 18-20) in a hotel conference room in Lima, Peru. An average of 17 visitors attended every night — at least 15 were there every evening! There is a sincere desire to understand the Truth of God’s Word. By the end of Sunday evening we had been asked repeatedly when we were going to establish a “church” in Lima, so they could attend.

The Butts’ and Links’ help was invaluable and greatly appreciated by Robert and me. The fact that their first language is English and all work was done in Spanish did not prevent them from helping — smiling, greeting, getting attendees’ names, handing out refreshments and helping find Bible quotations did not require Spanish, especially since notes were handed out prior to each talk as a guide. The added blessing was that Bill Link served on the CBMA Spanish Truth Corps program during 1977-1978, some 30 years ago, and still was able to handle himself quite well in Spanish. The other three (Brad, Susie and Ezra) had all studied some Spanish in the past and this at least gave them a sense of what was being said — plus smiles go a long way in communication!

On Tuesday, May 22, we flew from Lima to La Paz, Bolivia — the highest capital in the world at 3,600 metres [11,000 feet], with the airport at 4,100 metres [12,500 feet]. The city looks like it is literally built in a bowl-shaped crater on the moon! It is breathtaking in more ways than one — the scenery is absolutely unique (arid moonscape surrounded by snow-capped mountains). The air is quite dry and with less oxygen content than we are accustomed to (due to the altitude) so that any activity is a task in itself. Although the scenery is spectacular, it did not compare with the fellowship, courtesy and hospitality demonstrated to us during every day of our six-day visit. The six of us stayed at an inexpensive efficiency style “apart-hotel” which means there is a fridge and a stove, etc. Thus we could prepare a few meals ourselves during our stay.

There are five members in the young ecclesia: Bro. Freddie Monrroy, Sis. Roxana Ramos (temporarily in Spain), Sis. Laura Avila, Bro. Martin Mostacedo and Bro. Victor Hugo Fernández Montaña. There are also six contacts who attend almost all activities, and by their attitude and consistency you would think they were members. One additional bit of good news with regard to the future in La Paz: Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles (Newcastle, AU) will be arriving there in July, God willing, as missionaries to assist the ecclesia and help further the work in this country.

The first evening together with the members was a sample of what happened most days, depending on our schedule — the daily readings together in the afternoon or evening, along with good discussion.

Correspondence course contacts had been invited to the special lectures held on Friday and Saturday evenings (May 25th and 26th) at the ecclesial meeting place. Ads were also placed in the newspaper, and we hand-billed about 5,000 invitations on Wednesday morning with Freddie and Laura. The turnout to the lectures was similar to Lima, very encouraging — an average of 16 visitors, as well as the four members and the six regular contacts. One thing that was quite noticeable about the visitors was their courtesy and friendliness. They would greet us when they arrived, and they also took time to say good-bye when they left.

The results of the trip were many and positive. The team of six from other countries worked well together — enjoyed fellowship, developed friendships that will be lifelong and did our best with God's help to encourage ecclesias and further the Lord's work in several countries. By the end of the trip, we all commented about the hospitality we received — not only from brothers and sisters and contacts, but also from hotel staff, taxi drivers and the list goes on! We felt welcomed and at the same time exhorted.

May God guide the Word of the Kingdom to fall on good ground. Many individuals who attended the special lectures are frustrated with the deception of the churches and have studied for years on their own developing a good general knowledge of the Bible; they have a genuine thirst for Truth. A number of follow-up trips are in planning stages for the rest of the year. We need to continue to strengthen the young ecclesias in Córdoba, Santiago and La Paz. Please pray for God's blessing on all our activities around the world.

Donald Luff
CBMA Latin American Committee

Reflections on a short mission trip to Peru and Bolivia

After arriving late at night at our hotel in Lima, we awoke, not to an alarm clock, but to the sound of ceaseless honking horns in the street below. As we gazed over the balcony wall we saw a city already alive with pedestrian and automobile traffic, the latter comprised mostly of small taxis. We were in the heart of historic downtown Lima, about halfway between the Plaza de San Martín and the Presidential Palace.

This was the first of four days in Lima joining Bre. Don Luff, Robert Alderson, Bill Link, Jr. and Ezra Link (Bill's son) to give Bible presentations to an interested group of contacts. We were excited about the prospect, but also a bit apprehensive since neither Sis. Susan nor I speak Spanish.

Our fears were soon dismissed as we met a most friendly and warm group of Peruvians who were genuinely interested in Bible study. They all greeted us with smiles and enthusiasm, and some even with a hug and a kiss! We were impressed with their attention to Scripture and questions at the end of the presentations. Many of them made extensive notes and several lingered for up to an hour to discuss Bible topics with Don and Robert.

The same core group of 15 to 18 visitors attended subsequent lectures! Many shared their email addresses and want to maintain contact with us. Several said they would meet with us regularly if there were a Christadelphian "church" in Lima. And, as far as our concern regarding the language barrier, well, some of the students could speak English —and our smiles with a little sign language seemed to take care of the rest! We were excited then as we continued to Bolivia, not only to work with contacts, but also to see the small ecclesia that was founded there about a year ago.

Being inland and much higher in the Andes Mountains, La Paz has a temperature that is much cooler; however, the oxygen there is harder to come by! We were greeted by a sun-filled morning, however, which highlighted the unique terrain of La Paz, with massive and snow-covered Mount Illimani dominating the landscape in the distance.

Again there was a great turnout for the public talks. The small meeting hall was filled to capacity on two consecutive nights. The small ecclesia consists of just a few members, including Martin, Laura, Victor Hugo, Roxana and Freddy. While all are in need of support and encouragement from the brotherhood at large, these brothers and sister energized us with their enthusiasm and warm hospitality. Again, the language was not a barrier as Bro. Martin, Sis. Laura and Bro. Victor Hugo speak English quite well, and Bro. Freddy was most patient with us as we smiled and gestured.

With such a small ecclesia, how do they manage? Well, we must mention regular visitors such as Eva, Aleyda, Milton, Nelida and Patricia. These all are Bible students as well and attend the scheduled activities of the ecclesia. If we hadn't known that they were visitors ahead of time we would have assumed that they were brothers and sisters! They greeted us warmly on every occasion, and took part in preparation and clean-up for the hall and refreshments! While a lot of work awaits Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles when they arrive for a long-term missionary assignment in July, a rewarding and spiritually strengthening experience awaits them as well.

As we are home now, Sis. Susan and I reflect not only on the "blessings" we have in this country compared to the developing countries of Peru and Bolivia, but also on the enthusiasm for God's word that both our brethren and the contacts

demonstrated in these distant lands. We are motivated once again to value God's truth, to spread the news of His plan to this troubled world, and to support our brothers and sisters in their walks.

May the day be soon when our Lord returns and we are united with those of like precious faith, wherever they may be whether far or near.

Brad Butts (Denver, CO)

Thisisyourbible.com website

There are incredible things happening with the website and we feel the richness of our Lord's blessing on the work. Each month we are thankful to have more than 5,200 "unique" visitors. These visitors view more than 70,000 pages of content! Brother Mike LeDuke, the webmaster for the site, coordinates the answering of more than 200 questions each month that are submitted to the site. Brother Mike is careful to answer each person's question within a 48-hour period.

The site is growing in number of visits, but also, we are highly encouraged by the number of students now on correspondence courses. In May we had another banner month — with 445 new correspondence course enrollments! Since we feel that this is the most effective relationship we can have with site visitors (getting them on a course with a Christadelphian tutor), we are thrilled. In the last two months, we have had nearly 750 new correspondence course students, since the inception of the site in January 2006, we've had more than 3,200 new students. If our current rate were to stay flat, we'd anticipate over 5,000 new correspondence course students this year alone!

We have also been blessed with a significant interest in our Christadelphian (CMPA) pamphlets we make available online. We have had almost 29,000 pamphlets downloaded. Many of these downloads are connected to the "Provocative Question of the Month" that we feature on the front page. In June, for example, we are featuring a question about the importance of Israel in God's plan. These questions seem to draw new visitors to our site and they are then directed to the pamphlet that specifically deals with the question.

There have been five baptisms coming directly from the website outreach and, beginning next month, we'll provide a profile of those being baptized along with a picture so you can get to know them.

Want to help?

- Visit the website — www.thisisyourbible.com — to find out what it's all about.
- Become an on-line tutor.
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia.
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper.

Jan Berneau

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 on-line 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.

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

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.

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 86, Deland, IL 61839-0086.

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.

Christadelphian Heritage College donations may be sent to; Christadelphian Heritage College, c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1.

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing, Inc. publishes this magazine and other works on the truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

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

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

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.

Christadelphian Care-Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039.

Alcohol Help Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

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.

News & Notices

BEDFORD, NS

Recent visitors have been Bro. John and Sis. Cloe Cave; Theo and Luke (Acocks Green, Birmingham, UK); Bro. David Pearce (Sussex, NB); and Sis. Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC).

You are invited to our study day, Saturday, October 20, on Daniel 7, with Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, Aust.) at Grand Lake, Oakfield, NS, from 1:30-7:00 pm with supper included. Contact Bro. Michael Carr at 902-820-2532 or by email at buxtoncarr@hotmail.com.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We thank Bro. Brian Luke for his ministrations at the end of April. Our ecclesia was uplifted with the word and encouraged on our journey to the kingdom. We enjoyed the company of many brethren and sisters during this time.

With sadness we report the falling asleep in the Lord of Bro. Bill Adkin on May 3, 2007. Bro. Bill was born June 25, 1941, and was baptized February 25, 2002. Bill searched for the truth on his own for years and came to an understanding very similar to Christadelphians. He walked into the Brantford hall one Saturday while it was being cleaned and asked about the truth. He registered for a seminar and was baptized with conviction! He had experienced health problems for a number of years. Our prayers are with his wife, Shelly.

Jonathan Bowen

DOHA, QATAR

Bro. Ben and Sis. Elissa Brinkerhoff have returned to California. There still remains a baptized couple, Bro. Santos and Sis. Saby as well as a few interested contacts who would enjoy hearing from Christadelphians if you visit Doha. If you are traveling to Doha please contact Sis. Sandra Hracs at sandyhracs@hotmail.com for further details.

Steve Hracs

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are happy to report the baptism of ADAM PHILLIPS, the son of Bro. Daniel and Sis. Robin Phillips, on May 13, 2007. We thank Bro. Adam's grandfathers, Bro. Warren Phillips (Meriden, CT) and Bro. Tom Davis (Pomona, CA) for their words of exhortation and encouragement at this wonderful occasion. Many of Adam's family and friends witnessed his baptism. We pray that God will bless our new brother on his walk to the kingdom.

The Mid-Atlantic Fraternal Gathering was held at Cherry Hill, NJ, on May 19-20, 2007. We thank Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) for his study, "Road to Atonement."

In recent weeks, we have been blessed by many visitors: Bro. Warren and Sis. Dorothy Phillips (Meriden, CT); Bro. Tom and Sis. Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Bro. Mark and

Sis. Fiona Guscott and Bro. Andrew and Sis. Kay Powell (Castle Hill, Sydney, Aust.); Sis. Elise Bailey (Georgetown, Guyana); Bro. John Stoss (Moorestown, NJ); and many members of the New York and New Jersey CYCs.

We are encouraged by all the members of the Echo Lake CYC whose many activities are marked by their spirituality, enthusiasm and energy.

As of May 1, 2007, the undersigned became Recording Secretary of the Echo Lake Ecclesia. Please address all communication to David Link, 25 Hanover Place, Wayne, NJ 07470, or email at Dlink44131@aol.com.

David Link

EDMONTON, AB

Our Father continues to bless our lightstand in Edmonton. We rejoice with the angels and joyfully announce the baptism of our friend SHERRI BROBERG on May 12, 2007. Sherri's first contact with the Truth was through her brother, (Bro.) Darryl Sacher of North Battleford, SK, who had discovered the Truth himself. After attending many Bible seminars, Sunday school classes, Bible classes and baptismal classes, Sherri gave a good confession of her faith and took on the saving name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray our Heavenly Father continues to bless her walk to the Kingdom.

We would like to announce the Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal is to be held in Edmonton, God willing, on October 6 and 7, 2007. Bro. Dana Kohlman of the Calgary Ecclesia will lead the weekend. Anyone wishing to attend can contact Sis. Linda Ikle at 780-406-2920 likle@telus.net or Bro. Jerome Toronchuk at 780-453-1412 jeromet@telusplanet.net.

We commend our Bro. Theo and Sis. Joy Readman, by transfer, to the North Battleford Ecclesia in Saskatchewan. We greatly feel the loss but know they will be appreciated in their new home ecclesia. We look forward to their visits while we await the return of our Lord.

We also wish to congratulate our Sis. Crystal Readman and Bro. Nathan Bartholomew in their marriage this past September. We commend our Sis. Crystal to her new home with the Vernon Okanagan Ecclesia. May God bless their new life together in the Lord.

We wish to thank all those who ministered to us over the last year. As a small ecclesia, we appreciate any and all visitors who come to fellowship with us.

Jerome Toronchuk

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Albert Bruce fell asleep April 13, 2007, having been ill for some time. He had been a member of the Glendale, PA, Ecclesia, now disbanded for a number of years. Bro. Albert for the most part lived in isolation.

Any brothers or sisters or Sunday school scholars who are traveling through our area are most welcome to attend meeting here.

Gerald Frisbie

MANITOULIN ISLAND, ON

We would like to thank all of the visitors we have had over the past few months from all around Ontario and the United States. We look forward to the visitors we will see over the next few months with the summer and the Bible camps. We would particularly

like to thank all of those brethren who have exhorted us during their visits.

This past March was our Annual Young People's Weekend. Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak) brought to us classes relevant to young and old alike about the moral challenges facing us in the last days. We would like to thank Bro. Ken and Sis. Diane for all of their work, as well as all who travelled from Southern Ontario and Michigan to join us for a wonderful weekend of fellowship around God's word.

We would also like to thank Bro. Dave Noble (North Industry, OH) for his efforts at our spring study day in April. All of the members of our ecclesia were lifted up by his ministrations and the fellowship we had with him, Sis. Amy, and their daughter, Sis. Anna-Lee. God willing, Bro. Tim Young will be leading our fall study day. For details please contact Bro. Dave Wilson.

Our ecclesia rejoiced with Bro. Matthew Cooper on his marriage to Sis. Michelle Clubb of the Detroit (Royal Oak) Ecclesia on May 25, 2007. We welcome Sis. Michelle and look forward to sharing her enthusiasm as we walk together toward the Kingdom.

Joe Cooper

ORLANDO, FL

With sadness we announce the falling asleep of two of our members: Sis. Edna Scott and Bro. John Green. Sis Edna was the wife of Bro. Charles Scott, who died many years ago. They were the parents of Bro. Isaac Scott, a loving son and a valued essential member of this ecclesia. She enjoyed singing hymns and was a very loving person who constantly had encouraging words for the brethren. Bro. John was a quiet brother who worked in a supportive role. He was one of the original members of the Baltimore, MD, Ecclesia. He later moved to Largo, FL, and then to Orlando. Bro. Green did the audio-taping for both the Baltimore and Largo ecclesias. He was also with the audio-video team for both the Mid-Atlantic and Florida Bible schools. He leaves a void as a source of wisdom, guidance and direction in matters of Scriptural truth.

We report that our Sis. Ruth Smith has relocated to Massachusetts since the death of her husband, Bro. Stan Smith. Bro. Stan and Sis. Ruth came to the Orlando area many years ago with Sis. Ruth's mother, Sis. Jesse Forrest. Sis Ruth needed to be closer to family support, and now it is hoped that she will be able to attend her original home ecclesia as often as possible. We pray for our heavenly Father to continue to bless her always.

We have welcomed around our Lord's table the following brothers and sisters: Trevor and Ruth Deedman, and Andrew Meredith (Sunderland, UK); Robert Terry (Reading, UK); Andrew and Sarah Gill (Knowle and Dorwich, UK); Simon Deedman, Kelly Deedman, and Lucy Cooper (Kings Norton, UK); Alice Patrong and June Neblett (Toronto East, ON); Michael and Veronica Porterfield (Norfolk, VA); Lynette Chan and Brenilda Dale (Brooklyn, NY); Jack and Jay Collister (Verdugo Hills, CA); Donald Clark (Orange County, CA); Alan and Chris Mills (Spalding, UK); Annette Milne (Brampton, ON); Dave and Lynn Wilkins, James Wilkins, Natasha Wilkins (Cannock, UK); Howard and June Brooks (Sutton Coldfield, UK); Adrian Harvey (Redditch, UK); George and Joy Butler (The Villages, FL); Neal Kaplan and Emehla Soriano (Reseda, CA); Michael Savy, and Cameron and Tiara Graminie (Westville, South Africa); Al and Sandra Walker (North Bay, ON); Luis and Vanessa Sobers (Colon, Panama); Cory and Krystel Cabril, Brian and Sharon Adams, and Bob and Norley King (Washington, DC); and Maria Jordan and Hannah Stanford (South Barbados).

Grateful thanks to all the brethren who gave wonderful, instructive and uplifting words of exhortation.

Sam Strunk

PETERSBURG, VA

We thank the following visiting brethren for their efforts toward study weekends and gatherings: Bro. Andrew and Sis. Louise Taberner and family (Boston, MA); Bro. Peter and Sis. Shirley Weller, and Bro. Des Manser (Aust.); Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen and family, and Bro. David and Sis. Nicole Wisniewski and family (Brantford, ON); and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON).

We appreciate visiting speakers and their families including: Bro. Ryan and Sis. Julia Mutter, Bro. Bill, Jr. and Sis. Carol Link and family, and Bro. John Woodward and son, Chase (Baltimore, MD); Bro. Peter Evans (Aust.); Bro. Hal and Sis. Stephanie Gibson, and Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC); and Bro. Brian and Sis. Joyce O'Grady (NZ).

Other visitors that we have been blessed with include Bro. Tom and Sis. Miriam Brittle and son, John (Washington, DC); Bro. Ezra Link (Baltimore, MD); Bro. Dan Minion (Meriden, CT); Bro. Greg and Sis. Stephanie Gergle and son, Jordan (Raleigh/Cary, NC); Bro. David Porterfield and Bro. Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA); Bro. Curtis Brittle, Bro. David and Sis. Davida Mutter (James River, VA); Bro. Jon Perry (Milford Road, MI); Bro. Matthew Link (Washington, DC); Bro. Bruce and Sis. Barb Abel (Shelburne, ON); Sis. Rachel Wilson (Cambridge, ON); and Sis. Nancy-Jean Markwith (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). We were also pleased to welcome Sis. Penny Keeting (Toronto Ossington Ave., ON); Bro. Scott Mezza, Sis. Lauren Burns, and Bro. Matthew King (Richmond Chapel, VA); and Sis. Ann King (Richmond Hall, VA).

Surely the angels rejoiced, as did we, in witnessing a wonderful confession of faith and assisting CONNOR KERR in her baptism into Christ, on January 14, 2006.

Changes in membership have occurred as follows: Bro. Aaron King has transferred to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia, and Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura have transferred to the James River, VA, Ecclesia. Sis. Suzanne Scott, now married to her recently baptized husband, and Bro. Ty and Sis. Shannon Elsea have resigned for various reasons from the Petersburg Ecclesia and the Amended Fellowship, and joined the Richmond Chapel, VA (Unamended) Ecclesia.

Our outreach efforts have included a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar in Spring 2006, and a three-lecture series on "The Middle East Crisis in Light of Bible Prophecy" in Fall 2006. These were publicized by leafleting conducted during the Young People's Gathering.

God willing, Petersburg plans include the Young People's Gathering led by Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON) on October 6-7, 2007 on the subject "Joseph".

Dave Kerr

SAN DIEGO, CA

Lord willing, from June 6 to September 26, 2007 our mid-week, Wednesday, class will rotate among member homes. There is no class on July 25, 2007. Visitors should call ahead of time to find the site of each week's class. Here are several numbers to use. Ellis at 858-674-5645; Schlottman at 858-549-8606; or Jane Tunnell at 760-746-1751.

Howard Schlottman

SPRINGFIELD, MA

Since our last correspondence we have enjoyed the fellowship of Sis. Barbara Ryan (New York); Bro. Jason and Sis. Debbie Cicero (Meriden, CT); Bro. Bob Egles (Stoughton, MA); and Sis. Katie Setkewich (Stoughton, MA). We sincerely appreciate the exhortations by Bre. Cicero and Egles.

We welcome the transfer to our ecclesia of: Bro. Richard and Sis. Elizabeth Schenk from Sarasota, FL, and Sis. Ruth Smith from Orlando, FL.

We are continuing our seminar follow-up classes and currently have six interested participants. We pray that these efforts will bear fruit.

Clarence Wrenn

Advancement of Scripture Knowledge Atlantic

For a number of years there has been talk of forming an ASK group in the Atlantic provinces to assist the needs of the brethren and sisters here and to coordinate the outreach programs of the ecclesias in the area. A number of meetings have taken place starting in September of 2003. At the October 21, 2006 meeting, a formal constitution and mandate for ASKA was voted on and approved by all members present. The participating ecclesias are St. John's, NF, Sussex, NB, and Bedford, NS.

Our mission statement is as follows: Advancement of Scripture Knowledge Atlantic, referred to hereafter as ASKA, is a representative group of the Christadelphian ecclesias located in Atlantic Canada that meet under the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. The mission of ASKA is to provide a service of coordinating activities and assisting the ecclesias with the resources needed to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God in the Atlantic provinces. In addition, ASKA is in a position to provide opportunities to support ecclesias and isolated brethren and sisters, by promoting or coordinating activities for fellowship, edification, and learning in the word of God.

Committee meetings take place in an Amherst, NS, hotel facility three times a year where representatives of Sussex and Bedford are able, via video link-up with St John's, to conduct an active exchange of ideas and experiences. The meetings have greatly served to bring about a real sense of regional cohesiveness and fellowship in this area of our Lord's vineyard. We pray that our heavenly Father will continue to bless the work in Atlantic Canada, so that others may know of the wonderful hope He has held out to those who would hear and believe.

Any correspondence should be directed to the secretary on behalf of the committee: Bro. Michael Carr, 120 Viewmount Drive, Head of St. Margaret's Bay, NS, B3Z 2G2. He may also be emailed at buxtoncarr@hotmail.com.

Christadelphian Hymns

A new website is available at www.christadelphianmusic.org.

It contains the music to all 438 Christadelphian hymns lovingly recorded by Bro. Peter Clausen (Cleveland, OH, CGAF). Ecclesias without a pianist can download these hymns for use in worship services and other activities. Individual brothers and sisters may also enjoy downloading the music for their listening enjoyment. Please feel free to direct any questions to Bro. Jeff Gelineau at jeff@gelineau.org.

"From Eden Lost to Eden Restored"

Three Region study weekends — "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose" — will commence in New England October 6, 2007.

The correct basis for prophecy was revealed at the foundation of the world, where God established the framework on which the entire prophetic structure hangs. When this is grasped it becomes a benchmark against which all prophetic views can be tested and measured.

This series will provide detailed, convincing scriptural proof for our prophetic expectations in the context of this framework, and an update on exciting current events in several areas that are consistent with our understanding.

The objective of our weekend is to send brethren home thrilled with the soundness of our prophetic understanding, moved by the signs of the times, and determined to prepare for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ with even greater fervency!

The presenting brother will be Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ). The weekend will be presented in three successive regions as follows:

- (1) October 6-7, 2007, New England: contact Bro. Joshua McInturff at joshandtiff@gsinet.net or 603-774-6237
- (2) October 13-14, 2007, New Jersey/New York: contact Bro. Jonathan Link at Jonlink@optonline.net or 973-633-8534
- (3) October 20-21, 2007, Williamsburg, VA: contact Bro. Jordan Canady at jordancanady5@hotmail.com or 804-365-8512

Manitoulin Island Appeal

The Bible Camp committee wishes to thank the North American brotherhood for their generous donations last year in response to the appeal that appeared in the September issue of *The Christadelphian Tidings*. \$30,000 CAN was raised allowing for the completion of phase one of the construction of a new classroom in time for use at the 2006 camps.

Tidings readers will be aware of a new camp being planned for this summer, God willing, thereby utilizing the facilities for an additional week this year. In spite of this, overall registrations continue to grow for each of the 2007 camps.

Recently the appeal was widened to include all Australia, NZ, and UK ecclesias listed in the ALS diary. The committee wishes to thank our overseas brethren for the \$15,000 CAN raised to date, towards the \$75,000 CAN needed to complete phase two of the expansion of the main meeting hall.

The main pavilion was designed 34 years ago to seat comfortably 150 to 200 people, and it has served the camp attendees well over the years. However, registrations for Kid's Camp, Family Camp and Youth Conference this year all easily exceed this capacity.

Any additional assistance an ecclesia or an individual brother or sister could render to the camp towards this project would be greatly appreciated. If you are able to help, please send your donations, made payable to the "Christadelphian Bible Camp", care of: Bro. Brian Carrick, 9 Sir Raymond Drive, Scarborough, ON, Canada M1E 1C1. He may be contacted by email at lcarrick@rogers.com.

Canadian brothers and sisters who donate will be issued a receipt for income tax

purposes. Donations made by cheque in foreign currencies can be deposited directly into the camp's bank account without charge. The Bible Camp committee looks forward to hearing from you.

Alex Browning

New England Bible Study Weekend

God willing, a Bible study weekend is planned at Barton Center, Oxford, MA, for November 9-11, 2007.

The adult speaker for the weekend will be Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON) on the subject, "Samson: Strength out of Weakness". There will be separate classes for the teens. Teen teacher and subject will be announced later.

The Barton Center is a beautiful location with a new conference center in which the classes are held. There are two different types of accommodation. Dorm accommodation is in log cabins containing approximately 18 beds (no bunks) with some privacy. Cabins typically have two or more bathrooms that include showers.

There are private rooms in the main lodge that are set aside for husband and wife couples on a first-come, first-served basis. These rooms require a tuition surcharge, as we do not use these to their fullest capacity. There are washbasins in each room and very good bathroom facilities at the end of the hall.

Meals are prepared and served by volunteers attending the weekend. This offers a great opportunity to help out in loving service to each other.

Cost for the weekend will be \$106 per person double occupancy in the conference center building. Cabin costs will be \$86 per person for adults and \$76 per person for young people ages 12-19.

Day registrations are only accepted if we do not exceed the total number of attendees that we can hold in the dining room and main hall. God willing, notices and registration information will be sent out in late August to previous attendees and nearby ecclesias.

We look forward to another spiritually rewarding weekend around the word of God in fellowship with our brethren, sisters and young people.

For further information please contact Bro. Craig Nevers at craignev@cox.net; or Sis. Judith Nevers at jnevers@verizon.net.

Judith Nevers

New USA Christadelphian Sunday School Union Materials Distributor

You can now order Sunday school lessons from CSSU and have them sent from within the US. CSSU has a website: www.cssu.org.uk.

When you enter the site, enter your information and it will format the site according to US prices and will send the order to Karen. Karen will send the order according to your preferred shipping method.

CSSU materials are developed and published in the UK and offer a variety of lessons, quizzes, color books and other age-appropriate materials. Karen carries a fairly complete inventory of the most commonly ordered and used items. Order soon to have your materials for the upcoming year. If you have any questions, please email Karen at karencssuorders@yahoo.com; or phone her at 503-641-0760.

Sis. Marjorie Shaw

Our sister Marge Shaw, age 87, fell asleep in the Lord on February 10, 2007, after a long illness. "Auntie Marge" devoted her life to the care of others in and around the Detroit area, both the young and elderly, and was always present to lend a helping hand. Now asleep, she awaits the Lord's return and the establishment of His glorious Kingdom when sorrow, pain and death will pass away. May we all share her prayer that we be reunited soon with our loved ones.

Bro. and Sis. David Shaw

Minute Meditation

The majority is not always right

Giordano Bruno said, "Truth does not change because it is not believed by a majority of the people." To this William Penn would agree, for he said, "Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it."

Prior to Columbus discovering America, people believed that the earth was flat. Thinking so did not make it so. What everyone believes is true can be wrong, and the belief in a flat earth is one example. It can be really dangerous to agree with the beliefs of the majority, for in most things important the majority is wrong.

For example, think how many people lived on the earth at the time of Noah. One mathematician has calculated it to be one billion, thirty million people, using the genealogy in Genesis 5 to draw his conclusion. The number of people was about the same as the population of the world in about 1830, which is a lot of people compared to the eight who entered the ark. All those people ignored the preaching of Noah, probably dismissing him as a crackpot religious fanatic, and all those people were wrong — and as a result they all died.

Consider how many of the children of Israel actually entered the Promised Land at the time of the Exodus. If there were over 600,000 men who left Egypt under the command of Moses, there must have been at least an equal number of women. That would make one million two hundred thousand. Then if they had an average of only two children each, we could add another one million two hundred thousand, bringing the total to at least two million four hundred thousand. Now, of those that were numbered, only two, we are told, entered the Promised Land. Those two, Joshua and Caleb, tried unsuccessfully to convince the vast majority of the people of Israel to go on and possess the land with the help of God. Joshua and Caleb were right, for they knew that God would bring them in successfully. The rest of the people, the majority who doubted, were wrong. Those who were wrong all died, paying with their lives for their error, just as those who were wrong in the time of Noah did.

It can be dangerous to be wrong. We cannot assume we are in the right just be-

cause we are in the minority, but we certainly do not want to support our opinion because it agrees with what the majority thinks.

So how do we find out what is right on any given subject? We must let the facts speak. When it comes to salvation, the facts that are necessary to be believed are all in God's inspired word found in our Bible. We dare not change, ignore or add to what God has said.

The closing words in Revelation contain this warning: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

We need to understand that we need to be right when it comes to believing what God has commanded, no matter who or how many tell us differently. There are so many churches yet only one truth because people down through the ages have done what was right in their own eyes. Solomon tells us, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The fact that there are billions of people alive today who believe that man does not really die but simply makes a transition of some sort does not make it so. People who disregard the commandments in the Bible as being old-fashioned and unnecessary will pay for their error just as those in error did at the time of Noah. We must be willing to stand up for what is right in spite of the opposition we receive from the vast majority. We want to be like Noah or Joshua and Caleb, who were preserved because they were faithful to the Truth.

Isaiah tells us, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." For this reason we must adopt the same attitude as did those in Berea so long ago when they heard Paul speak to them. We are told that "the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Notice the Bereans did more than just read the Bible — they examined the Scriptures, and they did it every day. They carefully examined to make sure that what Paul was preaching to them was true. Let us be like them and check that our beliefs are true to the scriptures. We should not be discouraged when everyone around us believes the opposite of what the Bible teaches because they haven't bothered to check.

How do we deal with all those people around us, our neighbors and co-workers, who have false beliefs and are convinced that they are correct? Here is Paul's advice as to how we should conduct ourselves: "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

JULY

8-14 Southwest Bible School, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Romans: The Gospel of Salvation" (adults), and "Prophets After the Exile" (teens); Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "David: From Sheepfold to Palace" (adults), and "Daring to be Different" (teens); Bro. David Styles (Shelburne, ON): "The Ecclesia of the Living God: The Pillar and Ground of the Truth" (adults), and "Does It Really Matter What We Believe?" (teens). Contact Bro. Joe Hill, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739-1580; joehill@io.com. Forms at www.planofgod.org

14-20 The NEW Manitoulin Family Bible Camp Manitoulin Island, ON. Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Orangeville, ON): "Challenges of the Lord"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "Job — The Spirit of a Just Man Made Perfect". Contact Bro. Mike Moore 519-756-0175 michael.l.moore@rogers.com

14-22 Eastern Bible School, Ascutney Mountain Resort, Brownsville, VT. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Wonders of the Kingdom"; Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "The Two Sauls"; Bro. Michael Hughes (Hamilton, NZ): "The Message of the Miracles". Contact Bro. Peter Dixon peter@tecs.org

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

21-29 Midwest Bible School, Hanover College, IN. Bro. Peter Forbes (UK): "Romans: The Gospel in a Nutshell"; Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "Titus"; Bro. Roger Lewis (NZ): "The Sign of the Prophet Jonah". Contact Bro. Lee Livermore, 7323D Chapel Villas Lane, Indianapolis, IN 46214, 317-271-1568, email llivermore@hotmail.com

28-August 4 Manitoulin Bible Camp Theme: "I am the Light of the World". Bro. Jeff Johnson (Glenlock, Australia): "We are all one in Christ Jesus"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "Discourses in the Gospel of John". Contact Bro. Alex Browning jabrowning@rogers.com 416-284-0290

28-August 4 New York Family Camp Lake Taghkanic, NY. Theme: "Today's Youth; Tomorrow's Ecclesia". Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaal yerubbaal@yahoo.com

29-August 4 Western Bible School Menucha Conference Center, Corbett, OR. Bro. Simon Dean (Bishop's Stortford, UK): "Power in Weakness (2 Corinthians)"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (North Saanich, BC): "Forgiveness and Reconciliation"; Bro. Kyle Tucker (Midlothian, VA): "Fasting". Contact Sis. Jane Szabo szabojj@peak.org

AUGUST

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catherines, ON. Bre. John Roberts (UK), Mick Roberts (UK), Mike LeDuke (Ontario). For information please contact Bro. David Brierley 416-236-5295 David.Brierley@sympatico.ca

12-18 Ojai, CA Kids Camp, Camp Arnaz for Christadelphian children ages 9-16. Bre. Jim Cowie (Australia) and David Wisniewski (Ontario, Canada). kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island, BC. Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Studies in John's Gospel"; Bro. John Launchbury (Portland, OR): "Principles of Salvation"; Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "In the Beginning"; Bro. Peter Niven: "Singing and Praise". Contact Sis. Wendy Johnsen 250-724-0501 wendyjohnsen@yahoo.ca

SEPTEMBER

1,2 Victoria (BC) Fraternal gathering. Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Isaiah — Prince of Prophets". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

8 Hamilton Greenaway, ON Fraternal gathering, Wildwood, Georgetown, ON. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "The Challenge of Holiness — What Does God Require?" Starting at 2 pm; bring your own picnic meal for supper at 4:30 pm.

9-14 Adult Study Week. The Bible school with a difference! Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 1-7. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings bobjoy@vif.com 519-754-0902 or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster mjwebster@vif.com 519-442-0544

12-16 London West, ON Fraternal gathering week. Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "Ecclesiastes — Wisdom for Today". Programs will follow. For further information contact Bro. Dave Birchall 519-668-7081 dalefinancial@rogers.com

15,16 Washington, DC Study weekend. Bro. Steve Petrou (Toronto West, ON): "It's All Greek to Me — Lessons from Biblical Greek". 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD. Saturday 1 pm, Sunday 9:30 am.

28-30 Bozeman, MT Study weekend. Bro. Dennis Paggi (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Potter and the Clay: God's Hand in the Lives of Believers". Contact Bro. Steve Faver 406-388-3314 sfaver@unitedagencies.com

OCTOBER

6 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering, Copetown Community Centre. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, Australia): "The Last Days of the Apostle Paul". 12:30 to 5 pm, three talks and dinner. Contact Bro. Mike Moore 519-756-0175 michael.l.moore@rogers.com

6,7 Petersburg, VA Young people's gathering. Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Joseph"

6,7 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend New England. Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose". Contact Bro. Joshua McInturff joshandtiff@gsinet.net 603-774-6237

6,7 Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal Edmonton, AB. Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB). Contact Sis. Linda Ikle 780-406-2920 likle@telus.net or Bro. Jerome Toronchuk at 780-453-1412 jeromet@telusplanet.net

12-14 Ventura, CA Sisters' retreat. Sis. Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC). Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Registration deposit for \$50 non-refundable

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

13,14 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend New Jersey/New York. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jonathan Link jonlink@optonline.net 973-633-8534

20 Bedford, NS Study day on prophecy. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, AU). Grand Lake, Oakfield Community Hall, NS 1:30-7:00 pm (supper included)

20,21 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend Williamsburg, VA. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jordan Canady jordancanady5@hotmail.com 804-365-8512

26-28 Camp Kawartha Kawartha Lakes, ON. Senior CYC young people's weekend. Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "James". Contact Bro. Darryl Rose darrylrose@rogers.com

NOVEMBER

9-11 New England Bible Study Weekend Barton Center, North Oxford, MA. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "Out of Weakness Made Strong: A Study in the Life of Samson". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craigneve@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net

13-18 Galilee Bible School Kibbutz Ma'agan, Israel. Bre. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Walking in the Footsteps of the Master". Contact Sis. Betty Lou Lewis Liat727@aol.com 727-744-1872

23-25 Camp Hashawha Westminster, MD. Family Bible study weekend. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ): subject TBD. Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org 301-498-5245