

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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The sweet fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15)

Two men were riding on top of a bus in London. As they came down a poor-looking street with a big factory on one side, they were halted, and they noticed the doors of the factory had opened and hundreds of girls were pouring out and making their way across the street to a lunchroom. Suddenly the air was filled with a sweet delightful fragrance. The visitor said, "Isn't that remarkable in a factory district here in London? Such a wondrous fragrance! It seems like the smell of a great garden. You would not think of finding such fragrance in this district."

"Oh, you don't understand," said his friend; "this is one of the largest perfume factories in all the British Isles, and these young people are working constantly among the perfumes, and everywhere they go the fragrance remains upon their garments."

If only we could live in such close proximity to our Lord — that the fragrance that graces him might saturate our garments and follow us wherever we go! So it might be said of us, as it was said of the disciples, that others "were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Editorial

What I Don't Know (Part 3)

Continuing with “what I don't know”...

5. *The secret, hidden things of nature and the world around me:*

“There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden. This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I’ve done nothing wrong.’” (Prov. 30:18-20).

A supersonic jet may leave a vapor trail behind it, but an eagle soaring through the sky leaves nothing behind. A snake may leave a trail in the sand, but none on the rock. Likewise, a ship on the sea leaves no trail behind it after it has sailed past.

A man seducing a maid leaves no evidence behind (or at least, he hopes he does not). And an adulterous woman is careful to hide her deeds.

I cannot know any of these comings and goings, unless I see it with my own eyes, or have other firsthand knowledge. But I *do* know that God sees all these things (He is “El Roi” — “the God who sees”: Gen. 16:13). He sees, He keeps a perfect record, and He judges rightly. One day, everything I need to know will be revealed to me. In the meanwhile, I can safely entrust everything I do not need to know... to the All-seeing, All-wise Judge. Thus I take comfort in what I can know, and also in what I need not know.

6. *What will happen to “the other fellow”:*

“Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them... When Peter saw him, he asked, ‘Lord, what about him?’” (John 21:20,21).

After the special post-resurrection meal at the Sea of Galilee, Peter follows after his Lord as they walk along the shore (v. 19). But for a moment at least, he turns back (v. 20). It is then he sees “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, John, “following them”. It is only after Peter sees John that he asks Jesus, “Lord, what about *him*?”

The first and most obvious lesson is this: if we will keep our eyes upon our Lord, we will have much less occasion to be distracted by what others do, or don't do.

Jesus had just told Peter something of the future, suggesting his death would be a difficult one — but one in which he would give a great testimony to the Lord whom he served. It is at just this point that Peter turns (is he thinking of going back? who can say?) and sees John. Having just been confronted with a painful trial in his own path, Peter — quite naturally — wonders, ‘What about this man John? How will *he* die?’

His question can sound very much like: ‘Lord, am I to be singled out, alone, for suffering?’

Which in turns sounds very much like: ‘Lord, I must protest! Is it fair for me to suffer so, when other disciples will not?’

Such a question as Peter asked — and the other, unspoken questions implied in it — ought not to be asked. There are certain things one does not need to know. Thus Jesus answered Peter:

“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me” (v. 22).

When we place ourselves in the Lord’s hands, we must not question what happens to us. Shall the clay say to the potter, ‘Why have you made me so?’ (cp. Rom. 9:20,21; Jer. 18:3-6). The hallmark of a true disciple is spending little if any time judging the actions, or evaluating or questioning the fates, of his fellow-believers: “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” (Rom. 14:4; cf. 1 Cor. 4:5). Rather, the best way for a believer to spend his time is in doing what *his* Master has told *him* to do!

The One to whom we may safely entrust our ultimate fate will surely do right by us in the interim — even if we don’t know why He chooses one thing for us, and something else for others. Even if we don’t know why intense and prolonged suffering is the lot of one disciple, while another enjoys many blessings with seemingly no real difficulties in life.

What I do know is... what my Lord chooses for *me* will be right!

There are many “things I don’t know”. The cure for any concerns or anxieties about present things (and future things), that I don’t know, is found in Christ’s words to Peter: “Follow me!” The sheep does not know everything the shepherd knows, but he follows the shepherd because he does know that the shepherd is his friend and his protector. ‘My Lord is my shepherd!... Surely I will dwell in his house forever!’

That is enough to know.

7. The things Job did not understand:

The things Job did not understand (Job 42:3), brought out under the strong argument of Elihu and the intense questioning of the Almighty, are things I do not understand either:

“Who can understand how [Yahweh] spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?” (Job 36:29).

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7).

“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? Surely you know, for you were already born!” (Job 38:16-21).

I can truly know, and understand, none of these things — for they happened long before I was born, or well out of my circle of observation and “control” (If indeed I have *any* control over anything). But here again, I can trust that God organized, directed, and controlled these things (and continues to do so) well, and suitably, and that He did not need (and does not need) my advice or help!

I can go to sleep at night, knowing that the foundations of the earth stand sure. And even if they do not, from my limited perspective, then that which will be shaken will only be removed temporarily, to give way to a surer eternal foundation, on which His Kingdom will be built (Heb. 12:26,27; cf. Psa. 102:26,27)! And that, when that day comes, He will remember me.

I can go to sleep at night, knowing that He keeps the gates of death and darkness. I need not fear. And even if those gates swing open to take me away while I sleep, I know that there is One who holds the keys of death and the grave (Rev. 1:18), and “What *he* opens no one can shut” (Rev. 3:7).

How many secrets of the universe would I trade for *that* knowledge?

(To be continued)

George Booker

***“I lie down and sleep; I wake, because the LORD sustains me”
(Psalm 3:5).***

*He who did keep me waking
Has kept me still through the dark, silent night;
And now I thrill — to greet once more the light.
His power unseen,
From sleep unlocked my eyes, with strength afresh renewed;
And I arise — with song of gratitude.
Thus, if death’s night at length
Should darkly close, and in my earthly bed, confined and deep,
I take repose — stiller, profounder sleep,
To know a yet more marvelous waking,
A fairer morn... may I with gladness say
I slept, but wake new-born — to brighter day.*

(Selected)

Exhortation

Learning to Pray Continually

Two of Webster's definitions for prayer are:

1. To ask or beg earnestly, to entreat, to supplicate as in the guilty rebel begging for mercy, and
2. To make or address petitions to the Divine being.

Now, I like this one. An old pagan definition was: the chanting of secret incantations with the hope of receiving a magical result!

These are pretty limited meanings compared to the Hebrew and Greek meanings in the concordance.

According to Strong's concordance, there are several Hebrew and Greek words that mean pray or prayer. In the Old Testament these words in various contexts mean: entreat, *burn incense*, be grieved, grace, sigh, whisper, meet, ask, ask another to intervene, commune, *meditate*, complain, *song of praise*, to request, bow, *petition*, and judge oneself.

In the New Testament these words mean: want, beseech, ask, interrogate, pray, wish, call for.

So we can see that the words for prayer are rich in meaning and encompass much more than what people today consider prayer to be.

How often do you pray?

At Bible school I asked several people, "How many times a day do you pray?" I wanted to see if there was any pattern by age, time in the truth, etc.? Did young people pray less because they were younger and less experienced? Did older, retired people pray more because they had more time and experience? And did working parents fall in between?

The answer is, No. The most common answer was:

- 'Five times per day: morning, evening and for the three meals a day.'

Other answers were:

- 'Three times a day.'
- 'I have so much turmoil in my life lately that I just don't take time to pray.'
- 'I hardly pray at all.'
- 'Many times a day.'
- 'I talk to God when I go to bed, and pour out all my problems in a conversation.'

Many said something like:

- 'When I have a "storm" in my life, I pray more.'

Likewise, when others felt blessed, they recognized the blessing was from God

and gave thanks in prayer. When life was running smoothly, people admitted to getting lax in prayer or not praying at all.

When we put that all together, it is clear that it becomes a circular pattern: when things are good, we don't pray as much. Then when storms come, we start to pray until things are better again. Then we get lax, and so on and so on. Just like the Israelites: when things were good, they ignored God and relied on self. Then, when they were punished by God, they repented, and God forgave them and they returned to Him. But later, they forgot their blessings, and thought they could rely on their own wisdom — and the cycle repeated itself.

Why pray?

Why pray? Do we suppose that God puts storms in our lives to get us to commune with Him more often? One brother said “Yes” to that question. Why does God want us to pray? In praying, we demonstrate our *love* for Him and our desire to be close to Him. What is the first commandment?

“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:29,30).

That includes *praying continually*. God also wants us to pray so that we will *search* our hearts, *judge* ourselves, *ask* for forgiveness, and tell the Lord what we are thinking and what we really desire.

In the beginning, Adam had two-way communication with God. This was a form of prayer. After Adam, men continued to speak with God in a two-way fashion. Because of sin, however, the intimate fellowship with the Creator had changed.

Abraham also communed directly with God. For example, “The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, saying, ‘Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward’” — and Abraham answered Him — “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?” (Gen. 15:1,2).

Here we have two-way communication.

God chose Moses to mediate His covenant with the children of Israel. Moses did this in a very literal way, coming down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. The people begged Moses, “Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exod. 20:19). The people wanted a mediator — they saw the power of God and were afraid to talk to God or hear from Him directly. They did *not* want two-way communication with God.

Kinds of prayers

Under the Mosaic Law, incense represented prayer. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to take a censer full of sweet-smelling incense with coals from the altar and go into the Most Holy Place beyond the veil, so that a cloud of incense would cover the mercy seat. In praying for help, David said, “Let my prayer be set forth as incense” (Psa. 141:2).

Prayer can also be in the form of psalms and music. The house of Asaph prayed in song continually before the ark for more than 500 years. David gave his psalms to Asaph so that they might “give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people, sing unto him, sing psalms unto him” (1 Chr. 16:8,9). In the Bible, there are psalms as petitions, praise, thanksgiving, meditation, confession, lament, and the like. When we read a psalm — any psalm! — in our Bibles, then we should be thinking of it as a prayer!

So far, we have sought to define what prayer is, and how prayer has evolved from direct communication to incense to song and psalms and meditation.

Now let’s jump forward to...

The Lord’s prayer

This is a relatively short prayer, but it is given as an example of how to pray. Nowhere is it recorded that the disciples prayed this exact prayer. It wasn’t intended to be *the* prayer, to be recited precisely week after week, as is done in many churches. Instead, it was to be a guide, giving the essential elements of a prayer. Prayers don’t have to be long, drawn out affairs to be effective.

In our service, brothers say prayers at different times for different purposes. There is the opening prayer, the prayer preceding the exhortation, the prayers for the emblems, and the closing prayer. As brothers, when we are called on to give a prayer, we are representing the whole ecclesia. We must keep our minds focused and give the asked for prayer — this doesn’t mean including everything we can possibly pray for.

The “long” and the “short” of it

The longest prayer isn’t always the most appropriate prayer. If the prayer is for the bread or wine and we mention *all* the elements of a general prayer, we may forget to give thanks for the bread or wine.

The longest prayer isn’t always the best prayer. A sister once said that, at mealtime, when all the food was warm and she was especially hungry, that would be the time when the praying brother would go on and on, giving his own exhortation instead of just giving thanks for the food.

The longest prayer isn’t always the most effective prayer. Occasionally, at a gathering for example, each brother seems to outdo the previous brother by praying longer! I have heard some very eloquent prayers. But we need to beware lest we become like the Pharisees, saying long prayers and losing the attention of the people. There is a time and place for short prayers such as at meals, and a time for more all-encompassing prayers like our morning and evening devotions.

“Mini-prayers”

I don’t intend really to tell you how to pray, but to encourage you to pray more often and commune with God on a regular basis. Even very short prayers like the Lord’s Prayer can be quite effective. What I suggest is to find triggers to instigate “mini-prayers”. For example, we’ve looked at other less “conventional” types of

prayer such as singing of psalms or hymns. So when you're driving to work, try singing a hymn — that is a way of communing with God. When you stop at a red light or get caught in a traffic jam — use that as a trigger for communication with God. Maybe a “mini-prayer” for patience would be appropriate at times like that, especially if you are worried about being late to work.

Here is my favorite: every time I take a shower, I “wash my sins away”. That is, I pray that my sins be washed away as I wash the dirt from my body. David prayed, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psa. 51:2).

Another suggestion: every time you open a door, think of the door that Christ opened for us, as Gentiles, so that we might be saved and so that we can now go directly to God in prayer. Or, when you walk out the door in the morning to confront the world, pray to be kept from temptation.

Here's one we do every day: every time you take a drink of water, think of your baptism and thank God for the precious gift of having learned the Truth. Or think forward to the living waters that will flow forth from Jerusalem to heal the nations.

Pray continually throughout the day in little mini-prayers; they are as good as any long prayer. Each day before you do the Bible readings, say a mini-prayer for wisdom and understanding, just like we do before Bible class. By the way, just doing the readings every day is meditating on God's word.

Whenever you see or hear an ad for some new drug, or whenever you drive by a hospital or your doctor's office, say a mini-prayer for those who are physically or spiritually sick.

Every time you pass a church, pray for those who are spiritually sick.

What we all need to do is to figure out our own triggers that will remind us to commune, meditate, sing praise and pray to God, our Father.

When you look up at the moon and stars on a beautiful night, thank God for creating this universe some 16 billion years ago (according to the Science channel). He knew us before the foundations of the earth were laid and has been waiting for us to talk to Him for some 16 billion years — that is how long **He** has been thinking about **us**. Isn't it about time **we** think about **Him**?

Brothers and sisters, call home once in a while!

Jim Hagler (Austin Leander, TX)

*“No aspect of our life in Christ is more important than is prayer; a prayerless life is a godless life. Without prayer Bible study becomes mere academic exercise, fellowship mere social intercourse, preaching a kind of religious politics and life like a dusty imitation flower — lacking color and fragrance”
(Melva Purkis and Cyril Tennant).*

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (10) God's spiritual and eternal temple

Reconciliation

At the conclusion of our previous article we saw how Paul was stressing the unity, in the Lord Jesus, of Jew and Gentile. Now, in verse 16 of Ephesians 2, he pursues the same theme, using the word “reconciling”, as reconciliation is always a necessary preliminary for peace to prevail. Warring nations or factions have to abandon their enmity and recognize their common need for understanding and peace. The irreconcilable differences between Jew and Gentile had been done away by God in His grace, for, as ever, God had to take the initiative. In the case of those prepared to acknowledge their common need, their need to be reconciled to God, this reconciliation and sharing in a common salvation had been made accessible in the Lord Jesus, through his death on the cross. Understandably, the subject of “reconciliation” appears in Romans:

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (5:10, RSV).

That the initiative comes from God is made crystal clear in a passage to which we often refer:

“But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18,19).

With regard to the term used in Ephesians 2:16, Vine comments that this is a stronger form of the Greek term for “reconcile” (“apokatallaso”), and means “to reconcile completely”.¹ While this common salvation was created by the Lord upon the cross, its achievement was an historical process. Again the Book of Acts is invaluable in this connection. We have already seen in our study of “the fullness” of the Lord, how this was brought about by the preaching of the Gospel. The Twelve all played their part but the proclamation was spearheaded by Peter (see Acts 2,3). Initially this process was limited to Jews and proselytes. It was quite a momentous development, in which Peter, accompanied by six witnesses, played the vital role in establishing that salvation was now available to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:1—11:18). It was thus, and in no other way, that those previously far off, were brought nigh (see Isa. 52:7; 57:19). So “the one body” of Ephesians 2:16 came into being, and peace, the peace of sins forgiven, was made available to Jew and Gentile.

Peace

This unity in the Lord is underlined in verse 17 and Paul here uses “we”, thereby indicating Jews and Gentiles are now included. But all must remember this is a shared access and can become a personal experience only for those who demonstrate there is one spirit, the spirit which unites. If we truly belong to the Lord, then his spirit animates us. This all-important subject of unity is dealt with by the Apostle in detail in chapter 4:1-13.

Fellow citizens

We note the “we” of verse 18 is replaced in verse 19 by “ye”, as once more Paul addresses his Gentile readers. Now, in Christ Jesus, they are “no more strangers and sojourners” but “fellow citizens with the saints” and “members of the household of God”. It is fascinating to note how constantly the Apostle reminds former Gentile disciples never to forget how the divine purpose was connected with Abraham and his seed. The terms “strangers” and “sojourners” speaks of the former status of Gentile believers, and this Paul has already spelled out in verse 12 of this chapter. Now their former status has given way to a much more privileged one: they are no longer strangers and sojourners but enjoy full citizenship in God’s commonwealth. When we recall that Peter describes Christian believers also as “sojourners” (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11), we begin to appreciate how one form of citizenship is set over against another. In the great chapter on faith, Hebrews 11, we are told that those united by their faith in the God of Israel...

“...all died in faith, not having received the promises... having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (v. 13).

As for Abraham, he looked forward to the city whose builder was God (v. 10).

Paul’s position

We do well to remember the exceptional position of the Apostle when we consider the subject of citizenship in his day. He was certainly a member of the commonwealth of Israel and — to the astonishment of Claudius Lysias, who had paid a great price for his citizenship — Paul was a freeborn citizen (Acts 22:26-28). The Apostle had also acquired, through his faith and baptism, the privilege of belonging to the commonwealth of which the Lord Jesus was the head. This was what he prized above all, and he regarded all his other privileges as “but dung” (“rubbish”: NIV), so that he might truly win Christ (Phil. 3:8). There is a great lesson here for disciples of all ages: they need to have their priorities right.

Members of God’s household

Also in verse 19 the Gentiles are now declared to be members of God’s household. The Greek word corresponding to this expression is used only two other times in the New Testament, on each occasion in Paul’s letters:

- (1) In 1 Timothy 5:8, we read: “But if any provideth not for his own and especially his own household (‘family’: RSV)...”
- (2) In the other instance, the term is extended to embrace “the household of the faith” (Gal. 6:10).

This second is clearly the sense in Ephesians 2:19. The Gentiles have now been welcomed into God's own family. Briefly then, Gentile believers enjoy full and unqualified membership in the family, because, through faith, they form part of the body of the Lord Jesus. He is the firstborn in the family; all who wish to be members must be conformed to his image, for he is the image of God (see Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

The chief cornerstone

The expression "household" in verse 19 leads to the development of the concept of a building, and this is enlarged upon in verse 20. The edifice is erected "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets", thus stressing once more how the work of the Lord had been continued by his followers, and notably by the Twelve. What is especially interesting here is that the Apostle who had declared to the Corinthians: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) now refers to him as "the chief cornerstone". The passage in Paul's mind is Isaiah 28:16, quoted from the Septuagint, according to Robinson.² The other Old Testament reference is to Psalm 118:22:

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

This sense of wonder at what the LORD God was to achieve, and did achieve, in His Son must be echoed by all his followers. The Lord Jesus was well aware of the relevance of the Old Testament passages to himself; moreover, in the parable of the householder and his vineyard, he concluded with this prophecy:

"And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken in pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust" (Matt. 21:44).

Here, evidently, Jesus is evoking Daniel 2:34,35. While this points to the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus, the question now arises: in what kind of structure did the Lord Jesus become an all-important part, the chief cornerstone? In other words, who exactly constitute "the foundation of the apostles and prophets"?

Digression: Prophets and apostles

The question is important, and once more we are brought back to the concept of the fullness of Christ. If we pause to review the situation when Ephesians is being written, it is more than doubtful that a single person reading the letter had ever heard the Lord himself. In Ephesus the Gospel had been mediated by Paul (see Acts 19). In the case of the ecclesias in the Lycus valley, as we have discovered, it was the faithful Epaphras who had been the minister of the Good News (see Col. 1:7, 4:12). If we examine the occurrences of the term "prophet", we are led to a conclusion that endorses what Paul affirms in Ephesians. The examination of the New Testament, especially Acts and the epistles, reveals how important was the witness of the prophets in the new dispensation. We take note of Acts 15:32 where Judas and Silas (the latter Paul's companion on his Second Missionary Journey) are both designated "prophets". There are many other passages that could be called upon (see, for example, Acts 13:1).

The priority, however, is given by Paul to the apostles in Ephesians 2:20. As ever, Acts is here helpful; no other “apostle” comes to prominence until we reach chapter 6 and there we read about the selection of the Seven (see 6:1-6). Amongst these was Stephen, “full of grace and power” and he opens a window on a wider world, for which he paid a price, being the first of the Lord’s followers to be put to death. With the call of Saul of Tarsus and the admission of the Gentiles in Acts 10, the scene changes and the converted Saul, “the apostle to the Gentiles”, becomes a leading figure.

Back to the chief cornerstone...

What may seem a major digression has been necessary to understand why Paul — who understood perfectly the unique place occupied by the Lord in the process of salvation, and who in one place calls him the only foundation — changes the figure to designate him “the chief cornerstone”. On this matter, Armitage Robinson comments:

*“They [the cornerstones] are straight blocks which run up to a corner, where they are met in the angle by similar stones, the ends of which come immediately above or below them. These straight blocks are of great length, frequently measuring fifteen feet. The longest that has been found is described by Sir Charles Warren (in **Jerusalem Recovered**, p.121) in his account of the excavation of the southern wall of the sanctuary area. It measures 36 feet and 9 inches, and belongs to a very ancient period of building. It was such a stone as this that furnished the ancient prophet with his image of the Messiah.”³*

A new “temple”

The symmetry and stability of a building can be ensured only if each part fits in with all the others. Here the Apostle envisages the actual process of erecting the temple, for as it takes shape, it grows into a “holy temple in the Lord”. Why at this stage does Paul develop the figure of a temple? If we look back at verses 14 and 15 of this chapter, while he does not specifically mention the Temple at Jerusalem, it is clearly implied: the barrier that excluded Gentiles had effectively been done away in the Lord, and was to become history in AD 70. However, God’s purposes of redemption and salvation cannot be frustrated through the destruction of the works of men. As ever, our Lord is the primary source, using the figure, now to be extended by the Apostle. Early in the ministry, Jesus had said to the Jews, to their consternation and mystification: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). The hearers bridled at the thought of the destruction of their beloved Temple; who was this deluded man who spoke of restoring it in three days? Lest his readers should have problems in understanding the Lord’s words, John explains: “But he spake of the temple of his body” (v. 21).

This same figure is used with great effect by Paul himself, in writing to the Corinthians who needed to be reminded of the holiness of their calling:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy;

for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16,17).

This stern lesson is repeated in chapter 6:16-20. It seems to have been lost on at least some of the Corinthians, for Paul reminds them of this fundamental truth (see 2 Cor. 6:16). The moral corruption of the city appears to have influenced practices in the ecclesia; the temple on Acrocorinth was dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, with its cultic prostitutes. Corinth was well known in the contemporary world for its immorality.

Before leaving verse 21, we observe the expression “fitly framed together”, which reminds us of the detailed instructions given to the Israelites when the Tabernacle was being prepared. The observance of these instructions led to the Tabernacle being “one”: each component part executed according to stringent specifications formed one harmonious whole (see Exod. 26:6,11).

It is these great truths, so fundamental an element of the Christian calling, that the Apostle presents to his reader as he concludes this chapter:

“In whom ye also [Gentiles] are builded together for a habitation in the Spirit” (v. 22).

This, then, is no structure made by human hands destined to decay, but a permanent structure. Those who endeavour in love and humility to live according to the pattern left by the Lord Jesus will know the change which will make their corruptible body like that of the glorified Jesus. One day, in fulfilment of the divine purpose, this spiritual edifice will be revealed in all its beauty.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Notes:

1. See Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, McLean, VA 22101, p. 943.
2. J.A. Robinson, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, London, 1903, p. 68.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Editor’s Note: The “fitly framed together”, or “joined together”, and the “builded together” of the Lord’s holy temple (Eph. 2:21,22) have numerous connections with the tabernacle and temple — and the city of Jerusalem — in the Old Testament, through the Hebrew word “heber”, or “chever”, meaning “to join”.

According to *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, this Hebrew word “heber” is used often, in its various forms, for the joining together of the curtains of the tent of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:6-11; 36:10,11), as Bro. Barling notes above; as well as the joining of the two pieces of the ephod (Exod. 28:7; 39:4). Other forms of “heber” occur to describe the “joinings” or “fittings” (1 Chr. 22:3), and “couplings” or “joists” (2 Chr. 34:11) of Solomon’s temple. Another intriguing use is of the “joining” or “touching” of the wings of the four living creatures (Ezek. 1:9,11). (See also G. Henton Davies, “Tabernacle”, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:498-502.)

An interesting reference to Jerusalem is Psalm 122:3, where the city is said to have been built, “**bound firmly together**” (v. 3, RSV). Jerusalem was of course where “the house of the LORD” was situated (v. 9), and where all the tribes of Israel came together to praise His Name (v. 4).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (3) Truth

*“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”
(John 8:32, NKJV).*

My grandfather, the late Bro. Angelo Buonadonna, in his youth, could only read and write in Italian. He became a Christadelphian almost 100 years ago by reading a book called *Guida Alla Vertia — Guide to the Truth* — by Bro. Gaetano Gariti. Bro. Gariti wrote this book in the early days of the 20th century as a teaching guide for the Italian immigrant community to learn all the doctrines of the “Cristadelfiani”. On the cover of this book is quoted the famous question raised by Pontius Pilate: “*What is Truth?*” — John 18:38 (actually Bro. Gariti’s book cites Giovanni 18:38!).

As Christadelphians we use the word *Truth* often in our discussions with each other, in Bible classes, in preaching and quite often from the platform on a Sunday morning. When we do so we are generally referring to our distinct set of beliefs. To outsiders this does on occasion seem patronizing and arrogant. Even within our own community we often don’t appreciate the full extent of what the Bible means by the word “truth”. The focus of this chapter is on this simple word *truth*, which expresses a concept loaded with profound meaning.

When Pilate raised this question he was hardly expecting an answer that would require 263 pages of closely spaced 10-point typescript — as is the case for *Guida Alla Vertia*. Though there is no punctuation mark in the Greek, the *New Testament in 26 Versions* indicates that virtually all English Translations take it to be a question, not a declarative statement. A famous painting by the Russian artist Nikolai Ge captures the moment when Pilate posed these words to Christ.¹ In this picture Pilate’s right hand is held out in a gesture meant to show dismissal. In English the sentence is given a question mark, but it easily could have been a declarative statement with Pilate not expecting any answer at all — in which case the translators should have put an exclamation point.



How was the question asked? Indifferently?

Clearly without being there, or having a video image of the encounter, it is not possible to be exactly sure *how* Pilate asked this question. There are certain things that reading a text cannot always tell us. The inflection of the voice, the wave of the hand (as the artist Ge imagined), or something similar... could have meant that Pilate was simply saying, dismissively, that “Truth” didn’t matter. In other words, he knew that the Jews had brought Jesus to him for political reasons and that the charges against him were all trumped up. In this case, the “Truth” of the accusations against Jesus didn’t matter one way or the other.

...Or philosophically?

On the other hand, Pilate could have meant it as a question in a deeper philosophical vein. ‘Is it really possible to have absolute certainty about anything?’ Or, ‘Can anything be proven beyond doubt?’ He might have said something like: ‘After all, there are many religions in the world, all professing to have the “truth”; what gives any one of them the right to the exclusive claim of having *THE* “truth”?’ Such protestations can be deeply disturbing and confusing especially to young people, who might hear a question like this posed at school or by their peers. Hence it is far from trivial to seek an answer to the question: “What is truth?”

In the modern world we have gone philosophically from Newtonian determinism to quantum uncertainty, whereby it is postulated that nothing can ever be exactly specified. In quantum physics there is a concept called the “Uncertainty Principle”. This theory removes the idea that the universe works like a perfect mechanical instrument. In its place one must instead deal with probabilities. It turns out that it is impossible to be sure of the position and motion of any object to an absolute degree of certainty, because the very act of measurement changes the state of that object.

Imagine, for example, that you have to shine a light on a particle to see where it is. The light beam itself has energy that can interact with the particle and disturb the very position and motion you sought to measure in the first place. Many philosophers have adopted this principle of physics and extrapolated it to mean that nothing in life can be absolutely certain. If that is true of Bible knowledge, then I am certainly wasting my time typing these words and worse, you are completely squandering your time reading this essay!

Two basic questions

With these thoughts in mind, let’s step back and consider two basic questions:

1. Does *Truth* really matter?
2. Is it possible to have absolute “truth” or complete certainty in the things of God?

Both of these queries have profound implications for our calling and ultimate salvation. We will attempt to give concise, but thoughtfully accurate answers to both of these questions.

I believe that the answer to the first is simple and straightforward. In fact the nature

of “Truth” seems to have been of special concern to the Apostle John, because he uses the word more often than any other Bible author (22 times). (The word “truth” is used, altogether, 222 times in the King James translation and nearly as often in the NIV — 214 times.) The key verse is:

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Free from what? The obvious answer is free from sin and death — “O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory!” (1 Cor. 15:55). Thus, unless you think overcoming the grave is of no consequence, one has to believe by these words that Bible “truth” is critical to our salvation. Without this “truth” we might as well eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die — and unfortunately that is the way so many people seem to live their lives. Grasping for all the wealth and pleasure one can greedily acquire in this life — with absolutely no thought of eternal consequences.

The answer to the second question should be equally obvious to a Bible student: “In (the) hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Tit. 1:2, NKJV). God cannot lie; thus what He has promised is certain. Furthermore, since He could swear by no greater He swore by himself, thus confirming the certainty of His promises (Heb. 6:13-17). Finally, He assured us of the *truth* of His promises, beyond any measure of doubt, by the resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:17). Thereafter Jesus revealed himself to reliable witnesses, so none should have any uncertainty as to the immutability of the Word of God.

The remainder of this essay will thus focus solely on answering Pilate’s question to assure ourselves that we fully appreciate — what is *truth*?

The first meaning of “truth”

The word *truth* actually has two possible meanings. The first idea that usually comes to mind is that *truth* defines what is correct versus that which is false. It contrasts honesty with lying. As the Apostle John wrote: “No lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:21). Thus as Christadelphians we consider the false doctrines of orthodoxy to be nothing other than lies. We also know that no liar will be in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 21:27; 22:15); hence, false beliefs on fundamental doctrines separate us from the grace of God and doom us to eternal destruction. The Scriptures emphasize over and over again the essential need for correct *true* doctrine — here are a few examples to prove this point:

- “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you” (1 Sam. 12:24; see also 1 John 2:21)
- “For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law” (Prov. 4:2, NKJV)
- “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16)

There can be no doubt from these passages that the doctrines, as expressed in the Scriptures, claim to be absolute *truth*. The apostle also tells Timothy that they provide the means of obtaining salvation. No matter how compelling other

precepts may be, if they contradict the doctrines expressed in the Scriptures, they must not be *truth* (Gal. 1:8). That is the ultimate test of whether or not a religious principle is one that we ought to heed.

The practical application

The contrast between what is false and what is honest also has direct implications with respect to our character. It is not enough to simply know a set of facts that make up true doctrine. *Truth* has to be our bond in the way we deal with everyone around us — “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). Sometimes one is tempted to tell a falsehood to hide one’s own sins. The cover-up is usually worse than the original offense, as we have seen so often in public life in recent years. It should not be so among us; to do a brother or sister an offense secretly, and then to cover it up under the cloak of confidentiality, is unethical no matter how you try to dress it up (cp. Deut. 27:24). Telling the truth is as important as knowing the truth!

The hallmarks of “truth”

The Bible has some built-in mechanisms to help us identify *true* doctrines. We will consider two of them, the first is “repetition” and the second is “consistency”.

The prophet Isaiah tells us, “The word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line...” (Isa. 28:13). True doctrines thus can be identified by the fact that we need not rely on some obscure verse or some esoteric knowledge of language to understand their meaning. They are principles that are mentioned over and over again, so that we have no doubt as to their veracity.

Consistency is the other important identifier of *Truth*. By this I mean that all the verses connected to a true doctrine should be self-consistent, with no contradictions. The insights given in the New Testament might expand on the spiritual significance of a teaching in the Old Testament, but shouldn’t contradict it.² Generally we end up calling such concepts *first* principles.

We can demonstrate the ideas of “repetition” and “consistency” guiding us to a *Truth* by taking a specific doctrine for example, the “resurrection of the dead”. Most mainstream Christianity has extremely confused ideas about this doctrine, and have wed it with the ancient Greek pagan idea of an immortal soul that lives on beyond death of the body. However, Bible teaching couldn’t be plainer. There are at least 42 references concerning the resurrection of the body (*at the last day*) and not a single one of them mentions anything about an immortal soul, or any sort of continuing existence after death.

Most of the verses teaching the *truth* on the resurrection of the dead are crystal clear. They range from the words of the prophet Daniel:

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2, NKJV).

...to those of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians:

“Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12, NKJV).

The apostle is already fighting the influx of pagan philosophy into the thinking of the early Church.

Some other definitive references to the *truth* concerning the resurrection of the dead include Job 19:25,26; John 11:24-26; John 5:29; John 6:39,40,44,54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and many others. Some of these references have been mangled by modern translations that have deviated from the more direct literal transcription of the King James Bible. Nevertheless, the overwhelming evidence derived from repetition and consistency makes most scholarly versions of the Bible suitable for teaching. I personally have used the KJV, NKJV, NIV, NEB, RSV, and even the Catholic Douay version of the Bible to teach the *Truth*.

The second meaning of “truth”

Now let us turn to the second meaning of the word *truth*, which applies equally whether we are considering ancient Biblical languages or modern English. The second possible meaning alludes to picturing what is perfect versus imperfect, or comparing something that is real versus something that is unreal. For example, we say that a line is drawn straight and *true* — or a sailor might set his ship’s course on a *true* heading. In this and similar expressions, we are not comparing honesty to lying. We are instead indicating that an object or issue is correct with respect to some standard. We find this second concept of *truth* used frequently in Scriptures. In this case it is also a matter of doctrine (i.e., teachings), but this connection may not always be readily appreciated. Some examples:

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Exod. 34:6, NKJV).

This passage speaks of the perfection of God; it is not comparing God’s honesty to that of liars. The LORD God is a standard of perfection, and that is the character we are trying to develop in ourselves.

Another example:

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deut. 32:4, NKJV).

Again the word *truth* is used to show that the works of God are a standard of perfection.

The most elegant example of this alternate meaning of the word *truth* is exemplified in the passage describing the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ ” (John 14:6, NKJV).*
- *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17, NKJV).*

Jesus is the way (*to the Kingdom*), and the perfect image of the character of God, the true image of the Everlasting God revealed in the flesh so that we could behold him with our own eyes and touch him with our own hands.³

As we have taken on the physical image of God through Adam, we must now put on the spiritual image of the Father through Christ:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NKJV).

It should be obvious from this passage that Jesus not only taught the *truth*, but he *was* the *truth*. His character is the Father’s character (John 12:45). His love, mercy, compassion and concern for us are the same as the Father’s, but now made manifest in the flesh. With Jesus the abstractions are gone and the reality of the new Adam purged from sin is revealed.

The practical application again

It should be the same in our lives — the *truth* must be not only in our minds, and spoken by our lips, but it must be made manifest in every action in our lives. The *Truth* must be revealed by our love for our spouses, our care and concern for our children, and for our brothers and sisters in our ecclesias. Indeed, it should be revealed by our love for all mankind (it is not possible to be a true follower of Jesus Christ and hate another human being). The *truth* is displayed by the labor we willingly do in the ecclesia, the things we do to help one another as the need arises, and the generosity with which we give our wealth and time to the work of the Lord. All of this is as much *truth* as are the facts that we believe embodied in our statement of faith.

I hope that we now appreciate that *truth* is correct belief in contradistinction to the lies of false religion, *and* that it is also a way of life after the pattern revealed by the character of our Lord Jesus. Without both of these meanings, understood and carried out, we cannot claim to have the *truth*.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. *What is Truth? (Christ and Pilate)*, 1890, by the Russian artist Nikolai Ge.
2. The New Testament reaffirms nine of the Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses and in most cases expands the spirit of that code. The only commandment not endorsed in the New Testament was the ritual of the Sabbath. Without fail all the major truths of the Old Testament are included in the New Testament; only the ritual of the Law was eliminated. Ironically, once the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, it also became impossible for Jews really to keep the ritual of the Law.
3. I mean this not only metaphorically, but also realistically — the way humans would prove the existence and actions of any historical person, i.e., through the testimony of reliable witnesses (1 Cor. 15).

“Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, but sincerity and truth were absent; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable fare” (Henry David Thoreau).

Bible Study

Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews:

(1) Faith and Understanding

Faith is spiritual sight, an understanding of that which cannot be seen literally, but can be perceived spiritually. We cannot see events taking place in ancient times, nor can we talk to people long since dead. But we can perceive the significance of the events of their lives, and we can contemplate the character of the hero or heroine. History can only be perceived by faith. It may be based upon fact, but ultimately it is understood by faith; in other words, it is a subjective interpretation of personal and public records.

The Letter to the Hebrews interprets the history of the people of Israel as foreshadowing the life and work of Jesus Christ in a particular way. Otherwise meaningless events, obscure personalities, and difficult passages are re-interpreted with new meaning and given a clarity that is achieved nowhere else. In other words, we have the privilege of being shown a method of interpretation we would not otherwise have seen. We begin our comments at the start of Hebrews 8, where we have a summary of the teaching already covered in the letter:

“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man” (Heb. 8:1,2).

These words relate the Old Testament to the work of Jesus Christ, along with this verse:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24).

In other words, the tabernacle, its design, its fittings and its furnishings were a giant visual aid to teach the people about the “real things in heaven”. This does not mean that there is a physical structure in heaven called “The Sanctuary”; however, it may suggest that there is a location where God dwells, where angels praise “the God of all creation” and where Jesus met his Father and dwells with Him. He is at the right hand of the Father as our high priest, a role made possible by his ascension into the heavens. The real things are, therefore, the ascension of Christ, his role as priest, and his return from heaven.

The terms “high priest” and “tabernacle” take us back to the wilderness journey and the past experiences of the Hebrews. The Most Holy Place was unoccupied except for the Ark of the Covenant, the top of which was a flat piece of wood overlaid with gold, deemed to be the throne of God. This place had a very important significance for the Jews: this was the place where the high priest, once a year on

the Day of Atonement, took the blood of animals and sprinkled it upon this, the “mercy seat”, seeking forgiveness for the sins of the people. This act foreshadowed the work of Jesus who gave, instead of the blood of bulls and goats, his own blood — his own life; and who, in a figure, took that blood into the presence of God to plead for forgiveness of believers’ sins.

In a similar fashion, all of the furniture of the Tabernacle, the work of the High Priest, and the various sacrifices had special meanings — it all foreshadowed the work of Jesus. It was all “a figure for the time then present”; it was a parable, teaching those who would understand its meaning, that Messiah had to suffer and die before he could be crowned with glory. The cross must precede the crown.

The past has therefore relevance for the present age, in order for us to understand the role and significance of Jesus. Each of the items had their significance and was considered to be “good”, but Christ was much better. In this Letter to the Hebrews, certain key words point the way to understanding the key messages:

Christ is better!

Better than angels	1:4
Better than priesthood	7:7
Better hope	7:19
Better covenant	7:22; 8:6
Better promises	8:6
Better sacrifices	9:23
Better reward	10:34
Better country	11:16
Better resurrection	11:35
Better thing	11:40
Better blood sprinkling	12:24
Better response by believers	6:9

And... Christ is perfect!

Perfect through suffering	2:10
Being made perfect	5:9
Go on to perfection	6:1
If therefore perfection...	7:11
The Law made nothing perfect	7:19
The son consecrated for evermore	7:28
Could not be... perfect as pertaining...	9:9...
A more perfect tabernacle	9:11
Never... made the comers... perfect	10:1
Perfected forever	10:14
Without us, should not be perfect	11:40
Author and finisher (perfector) of our faith	12:2
Spirits of just men made perfect	12:23

These terms show very clearly the way the writer to the Hebrews compared and contrasts the old with the new. Everything of the old was useful and instructive. Everything had a full and integral part to play in explaining the purpose of God, but it was neither complete nor perfect.

A tent by definition is temporary, made for a finite time and for a specific purpose. The Tabernacle was a temporary meeting place; the sacrificial and priestly system equally of short-term duration and value until he came who fulfilled all things.

Again, a summary makes the teaching clear:

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:11, 12).

Jesus was the real High Priest who entered into the real Sanctuary with a real sacrifice that saves real people from real sins!

All of these are perceived by faith — we were not there, but we can read about them, we can imagine them in our minds. Furthermore, we can study the details of the sacrificial system, the priestly roles, and the use of the items of furniture. By so doing, we can understand more clearly the work of Christ. However, it is the work of Christ that is important — his life, death, resurrection and ascension together with his return from the Most Holy Place in Heaven. As the writer says:

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)



Article

Women Committed to the Lord

Commitment to the Lord knows no gender. However, as the following thoughts were delivered at a sister's retreat a few years ago, the focus is naturally towards sisters.

Commitment is defined by Webster's Dictionary as “the state of intellectual and emotional adherence to some political, social or religious theory; a promise or a pledge”. The Oxford Dictionary offers “an engagement or involvement that restricts freedom of action”. A discerning brother added his suggestion: “a promise to follow through to the best of your ability with a decision which was thoughtfully made”.

Combining these thoughts and applying them to ourselves, we see that exposure to God's plan and purpose through the Scriptures caused us to think deeply

and eventually led us to baptism. We left the old way of life, with its unbridled instincts of human nature, and pledged to adhere to the ways of the Lord. The consequence of this commitment is that we are morally bound, dedicated to God and His purpose, and no longer free to indulge selfish inclinations or desires. To put it succinctly, we entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord and thereby committed our lives to following His will.

The experience of Israel

Israel made their commitment, after exposure to the will and purpose of God, through the dispensation of angels. God had clearly stated the premise upon which the relationship must be based: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” They gave their pledge: “All that the LORD has said we will do” (Exod. 19:6,8). Sadly, the commitment was too fragile to be sustained; the nation rebelled and failed to keep the covenant, thereby forfeiting the blessing of ‘rest’ in the Promised Land.

The writer to the Hebrews identified the problem: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19). We gain even more insight if we follow the writer’s rationale as he quotes liberally from Psalm 95 (which he attributes to David in Hebrews 4:7):

“Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest” (Heb. 3:7-11).

Not only were the Israelites unbelieving and disobedient, they caused the Lord God grief, because in the deep regions of their minds, they didn’t really know Him!

Ignorant to the ways of God

Here is a great paradox. When Moses enquired about God’s name and later asked to see His glory, that glory was revealed in the declaration of His character:

“And the LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exod. 34:6,7).

And so the very name of God — Yahweh — declared Him to be the merciful Savior whose purpose was to bring many sons and daughters to glory through the forgiveness of sins. At Sinai, the people heard the voice of God and received His laws. An angel who was a manifestation of Yahweh led the tribes, guiding and protecting them on the continuation of their journey. One is compelled to ask: how could they have been in ignorance of His ways?

Ignorance of the true purpose and will of God is a dilemma to be found throughout the Scriptures. Eli would have meticulously schooled his sons in the rites and rituals of the law, and yet the divine assessment is chilling: “They knew not the LORD” (1 Sam. 2:12). The young men failed to see that the law in the aggregate revealed that the merciful and gracious God would one day provide a perfect sacrifice for sin. Paul astutely summarized the many facets of the Law of Moses: “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ...” (Gal. 3:24).

The scribes and Pharisees were self-proclaimed experts of the law; nevertheless, their knowledge did not lead them to a recognition of their Messiah. Paul again with great insight identified the problem: “Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed...” (Acts 28:25-27).

It behoves us to pay close attention to the reasoning of the inspired apostle here, because he answers one of the tantalizing anomalies in the book of Isaiah. The actual quote from the prophet is:

“Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed”
(Isa. 6:9,10).

Now, why would the merciful God instruct Isaiah to shut the eyes and ears of the Israelites in order to prevent them receiving the saving message? The enigma is solved by Paul adding three words to the Isaiah quote: “...*have **they** closed*”! This was not a supernatural blocking of God’s words; the very action of Isaiah’s preaching caused a counter-reaction, whereby the people deliberately chose to close their ears and eyes, refusing to integrate the message. (Hardening the heart is another way this phenomenon is described.)

What about us?

Now comes the crunch: do we, who think of ourselves as spiritual Israel, really know God? An affirmative answer is vital because, in his poignant prayer, the Lord Jesus stated:

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Interestingly, the Greek word translated “know” here (“ginosko”) is also used in the Septuagint Greek translation of Genesis 4:1: “Adam **knew** Eve his wife; and she conceived.” To quote Bro. Mansfield in *The Cherubim*:

“In both cases, the word signifies a union between two parties that brings forth a new life. The natural union produces a child. The spiritual is the union between the human mind and the word, which is the living, active seed of God that can produce a child of God.”

Nicodemus, one of the Jewish rulers, had trouble grasping this concept when the Lord Jesus said to him: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Whereas Peter (who probably overheard the conversation) fully understood: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

For us the lesson is clear; having been born again spiritually through the Spirit-Word and baptism, we await the wondrous day when we will, in God's mercy, be physically reborn to immortality. We must nurture the precious seed of the word and allow it to develop from an embryo to the maturity of true daughters of God.

Difficulties in preaching

Part of our responsibility as sisters in Christ is a commitment to preaching. After 45 years in the truth, however, my experience is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to introduce the subject of the role of women, as defined in the Bible, to female friends.

I had trouble coming to terms with the issue 45 years ago. So I can imagine how it must be for those living in the society of today, where political correctness insists upon equality for women in every sphere. To them, the following Scriptural quotations are anathema:

"The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God... the man is the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:3,7,8,9).

We understand and accept the implications of:

"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14).

The woman was made to be a suitable and supportive companion for the male. Eve was deceived by the incorrect reasoning of the serpent and was the cause of her husband deliberately choosing to disobey the Lord's command. The consequence was that God in His wisdom decreed that, in the future, man must take the lead role and woman be in subjection.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of understanding, men have considered this situation a license to dominate and bully the female, leading to much abuse. On the other hand, the husband is required to pattern his behavior on Christ, who as head of the church gave his life for her. The husband must nurture, love and care for his wife as if she was his own body (Eph. 5:28). Only when both partners understand their different roles in love and respect can true harmony and happiness exist.

A quote from the past

A Bible student recently said, "That is all very well in the marriage state, but what about the inequality of women in the Law of Moses? I could not accept being a second-class citizen!"

Certainly the lady had a point, for clearly under the Law, women had a secondary role to the men:

- (1) The numbering of Israel applied to *males* only (Num. 1:2).
- (2) The Law of the firstborn: "Every *male* shall be the Lord's" (Exod. 13:12).
- (3) "Three times a year shall all your *males* appear before the Lord" (Exod. 23:17).
- (4) The seal of the covenant was imprinted in the flesh of the *male* (Gen. 17:10).
- (5) In cases of a vow, the female was assessed at a smaller value than the *male* (Lev. 27:2-7).
- (6) Purification time was longer after the birth of a daughter than of a *son* (Lev. 12:2-5).
- (7) Except in the case of the peace offering and the sin offering of the common people, the sacrificial offerings had to be *male* (Lev. 3:1-6; 4:28,32; 5:6).

The writer to the Hebrews states that the law foreshadowed things to come in relation to Christ. Thus, the truth being taught in the apparent elevation of the male is not to denigrate the woman; no, it simply emphasizes the wonderful fact that it would be "the man" the Lord Jesus Christ who would bring about salvation for both sexes.

Now for an interesting quotation:

"Of course, the modern school, with their 'new woman' racing hither and thither and posing in attitudes and relations for which she is unfitted by nature, will rebel against these divine appointments."

"The modern school" and "new woman" have a familiar modern ring about them. However, the passage was written by Bro. Robert Roberts in 1898, 109 years ago! Whatever would he think of the society in the twenty-first century?

Doubtless we live in a very different age from that of our sisters in the late nineteenth century, where the male was the breadwinner and, without question, the head of the family. Today, political correctness insists upon absolute equality of the sexes in every aspect of life. Irrespective of cultural changes, for us the Bible principle of headship remains constant: God, Christ, man, woman.

All one in Christ Jesus

In regard to salvation, however, everyone is equal and personally answerable to the Lord: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Most of us have been privileged to receive quality education. Let us resolve to search out the ways of the LORD in the quest to really know Him. Then using our skills, we can explain these things to women who will listen. May the LORD bless us in our commitment to honor His will and purpose and bring glory to His Name.

Patricia Bartle (Toronto East, ON)

Archaeology

Sepphoris and Jesus

We commonly think of Jesus, the child and the young man, growing up in the quiet countryside, the provincial backwater, of Galilee, amid the village life of Nazareth. Certainly, many of his teachings draw on pastoral and farm settings, and the simple lives of the poor.

But there is more to the background in which the Son of God grew up that may have influenced his life and his teachings. There existed, very near to Nazareth, a great urban setting: a metropolis in the middle of Galilee, only an hour's walk from the little village where Jesus grew up. This was the acropolis — the fortified and elevated city — of Sepphoris.

An article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*,¹ by Richard Batey, outlines the discoveries at Sepphoris, and points out connections between the city and the words of Jesus in the gospels. (Batey also wrote a book on Sepphoris entitled *Jesus and the Forgotten City*.) Portions of this article summarize Batey's work.

What is left of the acropolis at Sepphoris rises 400 feet above the surrounding fields of central Galilee. The site in the early first century AD served as the capital for Herod Antipas, appointed by Rome as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. In 3 BC, a year after the death of his father, Herod the Great, Antipas began rebuilding Sepphoris, which had been destroyed by the Romans in an effort to smother a rebellion. Over the next several decades, Antipas created a thriving metropolis on the site. The remains of this great city have now been brought to light by archaeologists. Their excavations have so far uncovered four major buildings dated by associated pottery to the early first century AD, that is, to the time of Antipas' city. In addition to the theater, the work has exposed a large colonnaded building, a villa, and community ritual baths.

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14). Jesus' words come to mind as one stands on a ridge at the northern edge of modern Nazareth. Three miles north and 700 feet lower in elevation, stands a large hill that was the site of ancient Sepphoris. In the decades following the birth of Jesus, it was the chief city and capital of Galilee.

The view from Nazareth — one that Jesus, the boy and young man, could easily have seen — was described by Leroy Waterman, who excavated at Sepphoris in 1931: "Across the rolling uplands to the north the peak of snowy Hermon hangs like a fleecy cloud above the horizon; to the west, the blue Mediterranean shimmers under the afternoon sun like a vast molten mirror, while halfway between, in full view and only an hour's walk from Nazareth, lies the site of the city that at the beginning of the first Christian century reared its brilliant acropolis, Sepphoris, 'the ornament of all Galilee,' its capital and its largest and most ornate city, and at that time second only to Jerusalem in importance in all Palestine."²

Continuing archaeological excavations at Sepphoris are yielding evidence of a sophisticated urban culture that places Jesus in a radically different environment, one that challenges traditional assumptions about his life and ministry. The popular picture of Jesus as a poor peasant (growing up in the relative isolation of a small village of 400 people, hidden away in the remote hills of Galilee) must now be integrated with the newly revealed setting of a rapidly growing Greco-Roman metropolis boasting upwards of 30,000 inhabitants — Jews, Arabs, Greeks and Romans. Sepphoris — powerful, prosperous, peace-loving — was linked with other Greco-Roman centers on the eastern trade routes.

History of Sepphoris

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. 14:10; Mark 6:16; Luke 9:9), rebuilt Sepphoris after the death of his father, in 4 BC. For almost three decades following Jesus' birth, Sepphoris served as the capital of Galilee and Perea, a large territory east of the Jordan River. The proximity of Sepphoris to its satellite village, Nazareth, made contact between Nazareth and this influential urban center convenient and natural.

Following the death of Herod the Great, riots and rebellions flared up in several places throughout his kingdom. Sepphoris was a center of the uprisings in Galilee. The Roman governor of Syria, Quintilius Varus, ordered his legions to crush the rebels in Galilee. The Roman army, commanded by his son, attacked Sepphoris, captured and burned the city, and sold the inhabitants into slavery.³

When Antipas returned to Galilee from Rome in the spring of 3 BC, he selected the ruins of Sepphoris for his new capital. He launched a vast construction project that lasted throughout the life of Jesus. Sepphoris became the center for the government of Galilee and Perea. Political policy, military strategy, and economic regulation flowed from this seat of power. Influences from Sepphoris affected the people living in Nazareth as well as other satellite villages. Josephus tells us that Sepphoris was the largest and most beautiful city in the region.⁴

The city plan, laid out on the Roman grid pattern adjusted to the contours of the land, has all the elements typical of a Roman provincial capital — a main east-west street leading to the forum, Antipas' royal residence with its imposing tower that offers a breathtaking panorama, a 4,000-seat theater, baths, libraries, gymnasium, waterworks and public buildings.

Archaeological digs

Extensive new excavations began at Sepphoris in the 1980s. Aerial photographic techniques revealed long-buried walls and aqueducts. Ground-penetrating radar scanned a labyrinth of tunnels, cisterns, grain silos, wine cellars and storage chambers carved into solid rock deep below the debris of centuries.

Sepphoris boasted a formidable water supply system. A triumph of Roman engineering, its reservoir measured 541 feet long and about 22 feet high. Carved from a natural cavity in the limestone bedrock, it lies about a mile east of Sepphoris' acropolis. A surface aqueduct brought water to the reservoir from the

springs of Abel, three miles away, but archaeologists have not yet discovered the tunnel that took the water from the reservoir into the city. Built in the early first century to supply water for Herod Antipas' city, the reservoir continued in use until the fifth century.

Other underground structures at Sepphoris include a group of four connected chambers. These chambers originally served as cisterns; later they were used for dry storage.

The impact upon the Gospels

The more the site is studied, the more evident it becomes that Jesus lived in a Galilean culture much more sophisticated than previously assumed. To recognize this fact is to see the man and his ministry from a radically different viewpoint. Jesus in the Gospels was acquainted with the policies of kings, Antipas' government, tax collectors, wealthy landlords and poor peasants, as well as actors from the theater. All these characters assume significant new roles on the stage of an urban and cosmopolitan Galilee.

The ongoing construction of an influential Roman capital city so near Jesus' home in Nazareth redefines the carpenter's occupation in central Galilee. To erect Herod Antipas' new capital, many skilled workers from surrounding towns and villages came to Sepphoris and found employment. Artisans from Nazareth would surely have been among them.

Joseph and Jesus knew of the construction of the new capital, and would surely have been acquainted with artisans and other workers employed on the site. "Very likely 'carpenter' as applied to Jesus meant not simply a worker in wood but one who labored at the building trade in general, and it requires no [great] imagination to picture the youthful Jesus seeking and finding employment in the neighboring city of Sepphoris. But whether or not he actually labored there, his presence in the city on various occasions can scarcely be doubted; and the fact of such contacts during the formative years of his young manhood may account for attitudes and opinions that show themselves conspicuously during his public ministry."⁵

Of course, no visit by Jesus to Sepphoris is recorded in the Gospels, but then the gospel accounts leave many of Jesus' activities unreported — especially those of his teenage years and twenties. After Jesus became prominent, Antipas sought to kill him (Luke 13:31). Sepphoris would not have been a safe setting in which to proclaim the coming kingdom of God. However, the Gospels do tell of Jesus' travels throughout all the cities and villages of Galilee and into Phoenicia, as well as journeys through Samaria to Jerusalem in Judea. It is difficult to imagine that Jesus grew up looking at Sepphoris and never visited the capital or met the people living and working there. Even casual contacts with the capital would have given Jesus firsthand knowledge of Greco-Roman city planning, architectural design and sophisticated engineering technology — as well as the cosmopolitan citizens.

Kings

References to kings occur in a number of parables and sayings of Jesus. Was Jesus' understanding of kingship influenced by knowledge of Antipas' policies and rule at nearby Sepphoris? From prison John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one anticipated by John's ministry, or should they look for someone else? Jesus tells them to report to John the healings Jesus performed (Matt. 11:2–6). After they depart, Jesus asks the crowds what they had gone to see in the wilderness: "A man dressed in soft raiment?" Then Jesus alludes to the ease and luxury characteristic of Antipas' lifestyle. "Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses" (v. 8). Herod the Great built palaces in Jerusalem and Jericho, as well as in the fortresses at Masada and Machaerus. Antipas erected royal palaces at both Sepphoris and Tiberias. The luxury and ostentation of the Herodian court was legendary, and no expense was spared to create its atmosphere of conspicuous affluence.

One of Jesus' followers was Joanna, the wife of Antipas' steward or "treasury secretary", Chuza (Luke 8:3). She followed Jesus about Galilee in the company of several other women, who together helped to finance his travels (Luke 8:3). Joanna was certainly one person who could have told Jesus about the splendor in which Antipas and his court officials lived. The excesses and extravagances of the royal family stood in sharp contrast to the conditions of the poor peasants dwelling on the land. Jesus alludes to his own homelessness: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58).

Jesus appears to have been acquainted with Antipas' banking policies carried out at Sepphoris. Once Peter asks Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answers, "No, seventy times seven!" (Matt. 18:21,22). Then Jesus relates a parable about a king to illustrate the nature of forgiveness (Matt. 18:23–35). The king wanted to settle accounts with his debtors. One man brought before him owed the king the staggering sum of 10,000 talents, which in today's currency might run into tens of millions of dollars. Such a sum was astronomical, even for a king like Antipas, and many of Jesus' parables contain tremendous exaggerations. But such a parable certainly suggests that Jesus was at least aware of the "high finance" practiced by the royalty of the Roman Empire.

In another incident, Jesus asked what king contemplating a war against another king would not first counsel with his military strategists to determine if with 10,000 soldiers he could repel an attack, although outnumbered two to one. If his army is judged inadequate and defeat is likely, the king will send ambassadors to negotiate a peace treaty (Luke 14:31,32). This specific reference to a king planning a military campaign is significant. Given the strategic location of Galilee and Perea, which served as a buffer between Rome and both the Parthian empire and the Nabatean (Edomite) kingdom, Antipas was preoccupied with maintaining his military strength. In typical Herodian fashion and with considerable success, he sought to stabilize his realm with a strong and efficient army.

Jesus' saying reflects an awareness of the military planning and preparation that kings must continually make to secure themselves against aggression. Jesus encourages his followers to be careful, to count the cost, and to be willing to pay the price that the security of God's kingdom requires. "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

The references to kings in the parables and sayings of Jesus portray him as one whose cultural horizons are far wider than those of a remote Galilean village. The references to a king point consistently to the concept of the king's sovereignty over his subjects. He determines their economic fortunes, freedom and slavery, and life and death (Matt. 18:23-35; 22:1-14; 25:31-46). The king's judgments at times are harsh, but at others they are tempered with mercy; in either case his authority is never challenged. Such an understanding of kingship may well reflect — among other things — an awareness of Antipas' rule from Sepphoris and Tiberias. Antipas represented the vast power of the empire in his territories. Jesus uses the figure of the king as an unquestioned authority to point toward God's sovereignty over creation, and to exhort his disciples about the seriousness of life for those seeking God's coming kingdom.

The realization that Jesus grew up in the shadow of Sepphoris, a great Roman capital city, casts new light on the man and his message — light that changes the perception of Jesus as a simple peasant of Galilee. The people to whom Jesus proclaimed his message of hope and salvation — Jews, Greeks, Romans and other Gentiles — were struggling with life's meaning in a culture where Jewish traditions and Greco-Roman urban values collided. Jesus' teachings reflect an awareness of city life shared with his cosmopolitan audience, and he addresses human issues that are quite contemporary. To grasp this idea is to see Jesus as one who knows *our* world as well.

Incidentally, the cosmopolitan culture of Galilee increases the probability that Jesus spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. Present-day debates among New Testament scholars are changing from the question of *whether or not* Jesus spoke Greek to *how well* he spoke Greek. Careful study of the Greek text of the Gospels has led more recent scholars to conclude that a number of his teachings were composed originally in Greek rather than Aramaic.

The theater

At some point during the reconstruction of Sepphoris, Antipas probably built the great theater. This would be consistent with the wave of first-century theater building that gripped the Roman world, as the provinces tried to imitate the sophistication of Rome.

Appropriate for a capital, the theater at Sepphoris was a large one, with a stage 156 feet wide and 27 feet from front to back, and with seating for 4,000 (the same capacity as the theater in the great port city of Caesarea). Archaeologists have found the front and back walls of the stage, but not the floor; hence the floor was probably made of wood that decayed long ago. This raises the interesting possibility that Jesus and his "father" Joseph, being carpenters, may even have

helped build the stage.

Some of Jesus' teachings strongly suggest that he had firsthand knowledge of the great theater at Sepphoris, and the plays that were staged there. Jesus seems to have disapproved of the theater, for he often used the term "hypocrite" (which originally denoted an actor, or a pretender) to rebuke those whose religion was a pretense. Jesus uses some form of "hypocrite" about 20 times (Matt. 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13,15,23,25,27,28,29; 24:51; Mark 7:6; 12:15; Luke 6:42; 12:1,25; 13:15; 20:20). By contrast, the words appear in Paul's letters only twice (Gal. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:2) and in Peter's letter only once (1 Pet. 2:1). In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus warns, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them... do not be like the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:2,5).

"James Strange pointed out... that the Greek word translated 'street corners' ('platoon') is plural of 'plateia' or colonnaded street. The main street of Sepphoris is referred to as 'palatia' in rabbinic sources... Strange translates the passage in Matthew as, 'And when you pray, you must not be like actors, for they love to stand and pray in [public] assemblies and on the corners of the [colonnaded] streets to be seen by people.'" ⁶

The beautiful theater constructed by Antipas at Sepphoris was the newest and the nearest to Nazareth. However, there were several other theaters in the areas where Jesus traveled. Almost a decade before Antipas was born, his father Herod the Great built the lavish theater at Jerusalem as part of his preparation to celebrate the Actium sports and games in 28 BC. This celebration honored Octavius' victory over Anthony and Cleopatra. Herod the Great acquired a reputation as a theater builder. He erected other theaters at Jericho and Samaria. During his public ministry, Jesus traveled in these areas (Mark 10:46; John 4:3–6), because they were on the two main pilgrimage routes between Galilee and Jerusalem. Herod built a theater in his port city of Caesarea, and even constructed another in Sidon, just north of his kingdom, as a sign of friendship toward these neighboring peoples. Jesus also traveled in the district of Tyre and Sidon, that is, Phoenicia (Mark 7:24,31; Matt. 15:21).

Note: See the picture of the theater at Sepphoris on the inside back cover.

Playing at dice

Dice, found at the site of Sepphoris, are very similar to first-century AD Roman dice known from other sites. Their faces exhibit the same arrangement of numbers as on a standard modern die (that is, faces opposite each other always add up to seven). Playing at dice must have been a popular entertainment among Roman troops. Almost certainly those who "cast lots" for Christ's clothing at his crucifixion used such dice (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24 Luke 23:34; John 19:23,24; Psalms 22:18).

"Sounding a trumpet"

When Jesus' disciples made charitable offerings, they were not to seek honor and public acclaim by, figuratively speaking, "sounding a trumpet" in the synagogue or streets — like an actor whose dramatic entrance on stage is announced with a

trumpet's fanfare. "Sounding the trumpet", an expression comparable to "blowing your own horn", probably refers to the rams' horns that were blown on various significant occasions — such as fasts — in Jewish religious observances.⁷ Such gifts should be privately made so that the left hand does not know "what the right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:3,4).

"When you fast," Jesus instructs his hearers, "do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matt. 6:16). It was customary during a religious fast, as an expression of grief or sorrow for sins, to dress in sackcloth, tear one's clothes and place ashes on the head. This appearance, accompanied by a long and somber face, was an open display of fasting. The comparison appears to be with the tragic actor who makes up his face to portray dramatically the agony of his character.

Conclusion

Quite possibly, many more aspects of culture and life in and around Sepphoris influenced the thoughts and words of Jesus Christ. We do well to understand the world in which he lived, and to recognize, not just how much that world differed from our own, but also how much it resembled our own.

The carpenter of Nazareth was a man who knew the world of his day, all of it, who saw it for what it was — passing by, observing it, and studying it.

The man Jesus saw the great palaces, the great power, the great military might, the great wealth, the great "learning", the great technological achievements, and even the great theaters and entertainments of his world.

Finally, and conclusively, he rejected its values, its wealth, its pretense, and its façade of prosperity and conspicuous consumption.

Assessing it all with a keen spiritual insight, he turned and walked away, telling his disciples: "Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:6,8).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes

1. May-June 1992, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 50-62.
2. Leroy Waterman, *Preliminary Report of Michigan Excavations at Sepphoris, Palestine, in 1931* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1937), p. v.
3. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 2:56; *Antiquities of the Jews*, 17:271ff.
4. Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, p. 232.
5. S.J. Case, *Jesus: A New Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 205f; and "Jesus and Sepphoris," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 45, p. 18.
6. Richard Batey, a personal conversation with James F. Strange, cited in *Biblical Archaeological Review*, May-June 1992, Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 62.
7. Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew, Part I* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1976), pp. 98f. Cited by Batey in his BAR article.

Reflections

Struggles Within the Home and Heart

“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

It is only through trials and tribulations, through persecutions, through pressures of every sort — in short, through struggles within and without — that we all, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, may come at last to God’s glorious Kingdom.

The Scriptures comfort us with the fact that even devoted men and women of God were not by any means exempted from the ‘military service’ of the trial of their faith. They were often pushed (driven) by God Himself *to the very limit of their respective levels of endurance* in places where ‘the test can break the best!’ They struggled until they could endure no longer and were compelled to cry out to the ‘author and finisher of their faith’, who was keenly aware of their true limitations and who alone was able to deliver them from ultimate disaster.

Sooner or later we are brought to that point that is *especially prepared to develop our spiritual fighting skills*, so that we may be made ready to serve the Master better.

Consider the inner and untold wrestling of Abram (his name later changed by God to Abraham), the man who was called ‘the friend of God’ (2 Chron. 20:7; Jam. 2:23). He sought to obey the call of the LORD to leave his “country, kindred, and father’s house” in Ur of the Chaldees and go into a land he had never yet seen (Gen. 12:1-3). Scripture says he left (by faith) not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8)! This may sound easy to accomplish today, but remember, there was no “World News Today” to be checked on TV, or internet connections to be called up to assure him of the way! He was pinning his conviction on something in which there was no tangible evidence (Heb. 11:1).

One reason we may believe he did not have quite so easy a time, despite his trust in God, rests with the record in Genesis 11:31: “**Terah took** Abram his son... and went forth into the land of Canaan”, as though Terah was responsible for the migration. Perhaps this betrays the fact that even though Abraham was asked to “leave thy father’s house”, he simply could not bring himself to leave his father. Does this diminish the reputation of faithful Abraham? Certainly not! There is better reason to believe Abraham badly wanted to *save* his father as well, and daily preached the gospel of salvation to him while giving him the place of honor, as culture and custom demanded in those days, of leading the family out. Even if we today are aware of our loved ones’ reluctance to share our hope of the gospel, would we not do our best to save them from the impending disaster of the times?

We are told in Genesis 11:32 that Terah did not reach Canaan, as he died in Haran (a stop-off point along the fertile Euphrates trail), at the age of 205 years.

Was this because he was too old to continue the journey? That is unlikely. Let's take another look:

Terah was at least 70 years old when he fathered Abraham (Gen. 11:26) and therefore at least 145 when Abraham left Haran at age 75 (Gen. 12:4). Since Terah was 205 years old (Gen. 11:32) when he died, this means that Abraham left him in Haran about 60 years before his death!

But if Abraham so cared for his father that he could not leave Ur without him, why did he leave him in Haran? This must have been a rather painful decision for him. Perhaps the answer lies in one or more of the following suggestions:

1. Terah and his entire family had come out originally from Ur in the southern Euphrates region. Easton's Bible Dictionary tells us Ur was "the largest city of Shinar or northern Chaldea, and the principal center of the country as well as the center of political power". Therefore Terah would have been accustomed to a sophisticated city life and relatively high standard of living. *The prospects of resuming a dangerous cross-country journey across the unknown, void of regular comforts, might have taken its eventual toll on his level of social tolerance.*
2. Ur, we are told in Scripture, was a land steeped in idolatry. Abraham was, no doubt, daily preaching a gospel of the one God of heaven and earth. There is no reason to believe Terah embraced this view. If Abraham had indeed tried for years to get his father to leave Ur in the first place, one can well imagine *how much harder it might have proved to get him to accept that this one God Almighty actually spoke to him personally and gave him eternal promises!* (Furthermore, this kind of thinking places a son above his father in spiritual importance — a concept stranger than fiction in those days.)
3. Stephen, in his defence before the Sanhedrin Council (Acts 7:4), seems to complicate matters when he categorically states that Abraham moved on from Haran "when his father was dead". Assuming that the age calculation outlined above is correct, how can this be accounted for? Some scholars have put this down to Stephen erring under the stress of the trial. However, this need not be so, for when Terah failed to resume the journey with Abraham, he was surrendering a share in the only hope (an inheritance yet unseen) by which he could be saved into God's new world (Rom. 8:25). *Therefore he effectively died spiritually in Haran when Abraham decided to move on without him!* In any event, God had originally commanded Abraham to leave his "country, kindred, and father's house". God knew Terah's heart beforehand, that he was not committed enough to completing the journey and was more likely to keep Abraham back from the Covenant He gave to him.

The lesson confronting us today is this: at some point *we* may have to face the heart-wrenching choice of moving on to complete our God-appointed journey to His Kingdom *in the light of other temporary but compelling options*. Our choice carved out of such struggles helps to define our true identity and ultimately our eternal destination!

In Christ, we burned our return tickets to Ur and Haran when we declared plainly at our baptism that we are seeking a better country — God's coming Kingdom.

Therefore we will no longer stall, nor attempt to return to the world we have publicly forsaken. “Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God.”

David Andrews (Arima, Trinidad, West Indies)

Jesus’ Unlikely Conversions:

(4) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

“Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there” (John 19:38-42).

Let’s consider Joseph of Arimathea first. He was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin council (Mark 15:43). We are told that he “waited for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51). John adds that he was a disciple “secretly, for fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). Why not openly? There’s much evidence that if he were to have “come out” for Jesus and his claims, he would have lost his position on the Sanhedrin.

So what had happened in the meantime for Joseph to take such a bold step? I suggest that, in all likelihood, he had come to believe that Jesus would rise from the dead. And how had he become convinced of this? Was it the events of Jesus’ so-called “trial”? As a member of the council, Joseph would have witnessed the following (Luke 22:66):

- a. Jesus, when he was forced into speaking, was logical, calm, and eloquent.
- b. In response to the question of his being the Messiah, he admitted, without hesitation, that he was.
- c. Jesus told them that they would witness his kingship when they would see him (the Son of Man) sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). In this Jesus cited the familiar Old Testament prophecies of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.
- d. The so-called “evidence” of his criminal deeds was manufactured simply to convict him. There had to be a semblance of order at the trial or mob rule would have set in. And who better to speak up for order and justice than Joseph and Nicodemus? (In Luke we are told that Joseph had not consented to their counsel and deed, and that he himself was a good and just man: Luke 23:50,51.)

In the case of Nicodemus, he was *the* Teacher of Israel (John 3:10, RV), which probably meant the president of the Sanhedrin. Earlier he had come to Jesus *by night* to learn from him (John 3). At that point in time, he would not have wanted to do anything to hurt his social standing. If it had become known that he had sought an audience with Jesus, his reputation might have been damaged. How ironic: he, *the* teacher of Israel, sitting at the feet of an unschooled carpenter!

When we next read of Nicodemus in John 7, he is protesting against the Pharisees' attempts to bring Jesus in: "Does our Law condemn anyone, without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" (John 7:51). And the Pharisees' sharp response is: "Are you from Galilee too? Look into it and you will find that a prophet does not come from Galilee" (v. 52). So the clear implication is that Nicodemus was no longer head of the Sanhedrin and was becoming more of an "outsider", while still technically being a part of the council. In John 12 we are told that among the chief rulers, "Many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him lest they be put out of the synagogue. For they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (vv. 42,43). And this, for a time, was Nicodemus and probably Joseph.

Yet now, in regard to both Joseph and Nicodemus, they had found their faith when others had lost theirs. And their conversions were almost complete when they went, side by side, to Pilate to request the body of Jesus. If it were not for Joseph's wealth and high social position, he likely would not have gotten an audience with Pilate. But he did, and Pilate was more than willing to give them Jesus' body.

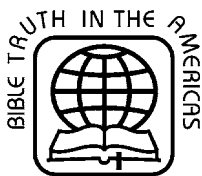
Notice the contrast between Pilate's willingness to cooperate with Joseph and Nicodemus, and his opposite reaction to the chief priests' protest of the notice fastened to the cross — "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews" — "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:22).

Joseph and Nicodemus took the body; washed it; wrapped it in linen, applying myrrh and aloes that Nicodemus brought to the body; and then carefully laid it in Joseph's tomb.

Now what is almost undeniable about Joseph and Nicodemus is this: by taking a stand with a crucified Jesus of Nazareth, by going to the side of a man that their own counsel had condemned to death, *they could not go back!* This meant a drastic change in their lifestyles, major sacrifices to become Christians themselves. Nevertheless, I think without a doubt this is what they did. And so again, we have before us two unlikely conversions (from the world's point of view) — all brought about because of the beauty of Jesus' character, because of their logic in deciding what they must do, and through their courage and faith to do it.

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

"They who are lavish in their promises are often short in their performances" (Scottish proverb).



Bible Mission News

Lima, Peru

It was a pleasure to meet again with our interested friends in Lima for nearly a full week in September. Taking the convenient direct flight from Los Angeles, we arrived at 4 AM Tuesday. Talks had been scheduled in the conference room of our downtown hotel for every night from Tuesday to Saturday and for Sunday afternoon. We were reasonably pleased to welcome nine visitors to the first class until we discovered that none of them had received the mailed invitation, of which 400 had been sent! They had seen only the one sent by e-mail, which meant that most of the contacts hadn't known of our coming. There seems to be no explanation of the problem, since a more recent letter sent to Lima to "test the waters," so to speak, arrived in five days. Fortunately Jean was able to remedy the problem in part by assiduous use of the telephone and so attendance picked up dramatically, hitting 21 on Saturday. In all, 33 different adult visitors came out during the week, and a number of them participated enthusiastically in all six days of talks.

One of our most zealous students, whom we had never met before, described how he had come to start reading his Bible. Though aware of many shortcomings of the Roman Catholic Church, he had continued to attend Mass regularly for want of a better alternative. Then one Sunday morning two months before our visit he awoke thinking "Jesus is not God." Going to his computer, he typed that phrase (in Spanish) into a search engine, having decided to investigate the first site that appeared. That turned out to be the Spanish-language Christadelphian web site www.labiblia.com and he spent the rest of the day reading the material on the site, fascinated. He had had no idea there was such a thing as a non-Trinitarian Christian community. When his wife asked him if they were going to Mass, he said that what he was reading was more important, and so she decided to follow him. They have never returned to the Catholic Church. The lovely thing about the story is that his wife is equally enthusiastic about Bible study and his mother also attended nearly all the classes.

There are a number of others who wish to be baptized as soon as possible and so we hope, God willing, on our next trip to program several sessions of baptismal-preparation classes.

Lima is a huge city with a very young population. There is a great deal of unemployment, or, more accurately, underemployment — many people trying to make a few cents selling candy or trinkets in the street, for example. Many of our students cannot afford the \$2.00 airmail postage to send their Bible course

answers back to us, so on our next trip we hope to set up a system whereby they can return them locally, to be forwarded to us in the US.

God willing, Bro. Robert Alderson and Bro. Don and Sis. Miriam Luff will carry out a further four days of classes and follow-up in Lima at the end of October. We thank God for the interest and the spiritual growth of all our friends there. We pray that, if it be His will, there might soon be an ecclesia in the city.

Jim and Jean Hunter



Here is a shot from the Saturday evening when we had our best attendance. The couple on the left front is Dr. Jorge Velasquez and his wife Magdalena, and the other couple is Dr. (in law) Eduardo Bustamante and his wife Coile. The three people down the right side are Jaime's wife Adriana and his two daughters; his son is at the extreme left of the second row.

Thisisyourbible.com Website

September was an exciting month for the website. It seems that summer is over and people are getting back to business. We had the highest number of pamphlet downloads ever in September — 3,956 — which is more than 600 over our previous monthly high. There were also over 805 Minute Meditation readings, almost double what we had in our highest month before. For the first time ever we exceeded one million hits in a single month — 1,207,999!

The best news of all, though, is a huge increase in Bible students, 796 who signed up on the system (643 of those are actually taking correspondence courses). At this rate we certainly could use some more tutors.

As examples of the continued growth, the site was advertised in Barbados, and the students have been coming in thick and fast — as have the questions and DVD orders! In June, there were 29 students. The current count is 383. Barbados is now second only to the USA for total number of students. Our South African

brethren and sisters are also doing well. In June they had **100** students, but as of today that number is at **244**. ***It pays to advertise!***

Now for the next baptismal story, promised last month. This was a good example of the partnership that can bear fruit between our various CBM organizations, their students and the website. The student **Pasobsuk Tuktukwon Jirondorn**, who lives in Thailand, was a long-time correspondence student of the ACBM. He found the website and began a detailed discussion over several months on his key questions. He was baptized in December 2006 at a Bible camp in Penang, Malaysia. Of that gathering he said, "I get an impression of love of our brethren in the Christadelphian family. We have a few Christadelphians in Malaysia, with one family and five singles, and they live in different areas. We are alone but we try to contact and encourage each other."



Want to help?

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com)
- Become an on-line tutor; we need your help!
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website. Below is one example of a newspaper advertisement:

FREE BIBLE STUDY COURSES ONLINE

How often have you wished that you could read and understand the Bible for yourself? This course is designed to help you gain the security and comfort that comes from knowing and understanding The Bible for yourself. You can complete the lessons at your own pace and use a personal tutor as required.

This course is entirely FREE.

A BASIC BIBLE STUDY COURSE DESIGNED FOR EVERYONE THAT:

- Follows the Bible story from Genesis to Revelation
- Clearly sets out the teachings of the Bible
- Explains the Bible's correct historical setting

- Sets out God's plan and purpose with the earth
- Explains the teaching and work of Christ
- Provides keys to interpreting Bible prophecy

Take this course online at www.thisisyourbible.com

At this site you can also acquire free information, links to other Bible information sites and get prompt answers to your Bible-related questions.

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

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

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

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 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

We welcome by transfer from Victoria, BC, Sis. Sarah Bennett. Her many talents are our assets.

Recent visitors have been Bro. Brad and Sis. Deb Goodwin with children, Joseph, Hannah and Megan, and Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson (Sussex, NB); Sis. Anne Hancock (Tunbridge Wells, UK); Sis. Jane Miles (Cambridge, UK); and Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). We thank the brethren for their uplifting exhortations.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We are pleased to welcome to our area Bro. Glenn and Sis. Megan Abel (Petersburg, VA), Sis. Hadassah Mindorf (Niagara, ON), and Bro. Dean and Sis. Andrea Bailey (Vernon, BC). These brothers and sisters and their families will be attending the Brantford Ecclesia regularly, and we look forward to enjoying fellowship with them.

We commend in love by transfer our Sis. Jolene Budden to the Surrey, BC, Ecclesia as of September 16. Sis. Jolene has helped in many areas over the last five years, including teaching at CHC. She will be greatly missed. We pray for God's richest blessing on her as she returns to Vancouver.

We thank those who supported the recent CHC garage sale fundraiser which raised close to \$2,000 for the school. The school remains in need of financial assistance as announced in the 2007 CHC appeal. Contributions may be sent to "The Brantford Christadelphian Ecclesia" earmarked for the CHC.

Daniel Billington

CRANSTON, RI

We are very pleased to announce that, since our last report, we have witnessed another of Adam's race, ANTHONY MILIA, JR., answering the call of the gospel. He confessed his belief in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, and was baptized on July 8.

The undersigned has resigned as recording brother of the ecclesia. Assuming these duties is Bro. Raymond Entwistle. All correspondence should be addressed to Bro. Ray at our ecclesial hall address, 2104 Cranston St., Cranston, RI 02920, or at his home address, 184 Fairway Dr., Attleboro, MA 02703.

Craig S. Nevers

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

We are pleased to report the baptism of FRANCISCO CASTILLO on Saturday, September 23. He has attended regularly for several years. Bro. Dennis Paggi of California first did a review with him earlier this year, and his studies have been

ongoing since that time. Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson spent four weeks in Guadalajara strengthening the ecclesia and supporting the preaching efforts from August 27 to September 23. During this time period, Bill and Francisco had regular studies preparing for Francisco's baptism. There are now ten brothers and two sisters in the ecclesia in this city, and there are a number of interested friends who attend on a regular basis.

We also report that the ecclesia moved to another rental facility nearer to the center of the city. It is one block from a park where a number of major bus routes converge, as well as an underground train station. God continues to bless the work in this city in many ways.

Don Luff

HOUSTON NORTH, TX

We welcome, by transfer from Houston West Ecclesia, Bro. Dave and Sis. Judy Gadberry, and Bro. Melo and Sis. Amy Montalbo with their three daughters.

Also, please note that our dear Bro. Ken, Sis. Dorothy, and Bro. Seth Langston have transferred to the Denver, CO, Ecclesia. We will miss them but look forward to visiting them too!

Bro. Brad and Sis. Anne Bennett had their second son, Brady, born on August 4.

It is with great sadness that we report that our dear Sis. Jerusha Young fell asleep on August 4. Please keep the Young family in your prayers. She will be missed by our CYC and the ecclesial families here in Texas.

Stan Isbell

LOMPOC VALLEY, CA

Since our last report to *The Tidings*, we have been blessed with the visits and fellowship of many brothers and sisters around the Memorial Table of our absent Lord. We are especially grateful to those brethren who led our Bible Classes and favored us with words of exhortation, and to our brother David Cooper, who led our 33rd annual Bible study weekend earlier this year.

We are excited to be able to announce the plans for our 34th annual study weekend, to be held, God willing, March 15 and 16, 2008. Our scheduled study leaders are Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON). Between the two of them, they will lead us in an "Up Close Look At Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled In Our Time".

Since our seating is limited, we are asking that all who plan to attend please send \$25 per person to: Ron Stewart, 275 Oakwood Circle, Lompoc, CA 93436. Please make checks payable to Lompoc Valley Ecclesia. We recommend that those looking for accommodations for Friday or Saturday night please call the Lompoc Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-240-0999 for available rooms and rates.

We are pleased to welcome, by transfer to our ecclesia, Bro. Ron and Sis. Melody Magness. We look forward to many times of fellowship with them, as we help each other toward God's glorious Kingdom.

We are saddened to announce the falling asleep in Christ, on September 8, of our

Sis. Margery Burnett. Sis. Margery had been in the truth for over 78 years, during which time she had been a member of five different ecclesias: Pomona, Los Angeles, Dana Point, San Luis Obispo, and Lompoc Valley. She is especially remembered in the Los Angeles Ecclesia in her role as a very effective Sunday school teacher. Our sister's sleep will be short, as we confidently expect the soon return of our dear Lord to this earth.

Ron Stewart

LONDON WEST, ON

It is with sadness that we report our Sis. Helen Boyce fell asleep on July 1. Our sympathies are with Bro. John Boyce in his loss. On September 15 we held our annual fraternal gathering; we thank Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK) for his ministrations. We rejoice in the marriages of Bro. Nathan Meaker to Sis. Melissa Short on August 11, and Sis. Danielle Winter to Bro. John Birney on October 6. We pray for God's blessing on them as they begin their new lives together, as heirs of the grace of life. We welcome by transfer Sis. Joyce Lausch (Manitoulin Island) and Bro. Bill Scott (Tillsonburg). We also transfer Sis. Nicole Winter to the Kamloops Ecclesia, and commend her to the love and fellowship of the brethren and sisters there.

Please note that, effective October 21, 2007, the London West Ecclesia has relocated to 101 Wistow Street, London, which is situated just west of Oxford Street and Highbury Avenue. If additional details are required, please contact the undersigned at 519-666-1534 or e-mail Bro. Colin Meaker colinmeaker@hotmail.com.

Ron Kidd

LOS ANGELES HISPANIC, CA

Sis. Norma Alvarado married Bro. Nassib Shankour of the Verdugo Hills meeting on July 29. Sis. Norma has now transferred her membership to that ecclesia. May God bless them in their walk to His kingdom.

With sorrow we report that Sis. Ligia Nunez passed away unexpectedly on August 16 at the age of 68. Sis. Ligia was the first contact ever to attend our meetings here in Los Angeles and the first to be baptized. She awaits the return of our Savior and the resurrection.

Sis. Martha Cerrillo and Bro. Salvador Rivera have both transferred to the ecclesia in Guadalajara, Mexico, where their support for the preaching effort is greatly appreciated.

Outreach work continues with postal courses and weekly public lectures, and there are seven or eight interested friends attending meetings regularly.

Jim Hunter

MAPLE RIDGE, BC

Our little ecclesia has been growing since our last update, with several births as well as a baptism. We thank our Heavenly Father for the safe arrival of a daughter, Lois Ruth, to Bro. Dan and Sis. Ruth Osborn in September 2006, as well as a son, Josiah Michael Edward, to Bro. Mike and Sis. Deborah Hart in May 2007. We rejoiced at the baptism of DANIEL CHADWICK, immersed into the Lord Jesus Christ at Kanaka Creek on May 26. Our new brother has been attending youth and ecclesial events for the past two years, and we pray the Father's blessing as he begins his new life in Christ.

We held our second annual youth gathering, led by Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Orangeville, ON), in February; and our third annual West Coast Prophecy Day, led by Bro. David Wisniewski (Brantford, ON), in May. Both events were very helpful in focusing our minds on the coming of our Lord, and we thank both brethren for their studies.

We are glad to report that Bro. Kevin Skinner has been restored to fellowship, and is now meeting with the Vernon, BC, Ecclesia.

Edward Hart

NANAIMO, BC

I have taken over the duties as recording brother for the Nanaimo Ecclesia. Any correspondence can be directed to me for Nanaimo either at eevans@shaw.ca or 250-754-5830.

Eric Evans

ORLANDO, FL

We are happy to announce a new addition. Jessica Rachel Garan was welcomed into the world by her loving parents, Sis. Dawn and Bro. Daniel Garan, on June 27. Psalm 17:3 reads, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him."

We also give our best wishes and rejoice over the union of Sis. Nishla Sobers and Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East). The marriage took place on July 21, in the Gamboa region of Panama. Sis. Nishla Neblett has since transferred from the Orlando Ecclesia to the Toronto East Ecclesia. May their marriage be enriched with love and blessings as they walk together as one in the Lord.

Since our last ecclesial reports we have enjoyed the fellowship of the following brethren and sisters: Bro. Bob and Sis. Martha Holley (James River, VA), with their grandchildren, Alex and Zachary House; Bro. Bill and Sis. Jennifer Rinard, with their children Victoria, Jordan, Elizabeth, and Rebecca; Bro. Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY); Sis. Jan Reese (Largo, FL); Bro. Erik Denson (Orlando, FL); and Sis. Emily Tingle. Our thanks to all the brethren who enriched us with their words of exhortation and their fellowship.

Randy Davenport

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

On a recent trip to El Salvador I was able to spend considerable time with Sis. Alejandra Guzman who is gravely ill with cancer. During the visit she was able to sit and chat for a number of hours at a time, but has since grown weaker. We ask for your prayers for our sister and her family. Sis. Alejandra has been one of the leading sisters in the meeting in San Salvador, and her sickness has greatly affected everyone in the ecclesia.

The brethren and sisters are preparing for the Bible school at the end of the year. They are expecting about 100 to attend, and it is always the highlight of the year for everyone. The ecclesias continue to function well and are active in their preaching and Sunday school work.

Jim Hunter

SHELBURNE, ON

We are happy to report the baptisms of ALEXIS DAVIS, daughter of Sis. Trish Davis, on August 16, 2006; JOSIAH SALES, son of Bro. and Sis. Chris Sales, on September

14, 2006; JOEL THOMAS, husband of Sis. Irene Thomas, on April 18, 2007, and PAUL DAVIS, husband of Sis. Trish Davis, on August 12, 2007. Our best wishes are with all, especially the latter two families as they walk together towards God's kingdom united in purpose.

With sorrow we report the death of Sis. Marjorie Hewer on December 1, 2006, after a painful illness. Her husband, Bro. Charlie Hewer, has since transferred to the Hamilton (MacNab) Ecclesia to be closer to the rest of his family. Bro. John Abel has transferred to the Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia. Bro. Walter and Sis. Tricia Lovato have transferred to the Orangeville Ecclesia. We commend them all to the loving care of their new ecclesial homes. Sis. Joanne Cooper has returned to us from the Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia, and we are happy to have her with us once more. Sis. Lois Abel has transferred back from Hyderabad, India.

On April 12, our ecclesia hosted a study day on "The Importance of our Statement of Faith — Clause 24", given by Bro. Frank Abel. On June 2, Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON) gave a special lecture in the Shelburne library on "Jerusalem — 40 Years in Jewish Hands". Several interested friends attended.

Sis. Mary Jane Abel was married to Bro. Paul Styles (Livonia, MI) on September 15 with the best wishes of the ecclesia.

Bro. Frank Abel is now Recording Brother. All correspondence should be sent to him at 195306 East Luther Amaranth Town Line, RR #1, Grand Valley, ON, L0N 1G0 fabel@conestogac.on.ca.

Graeme Wilson

SHENANDOAH VALLEY, VA

Our Heavenly Father continues to bless this little meeting in the valley of Virginia. We have had many visitors, and a number of those brethren have encouraged us with words of exhortation. We are blessed to have a close relationship with the Washington, DC, Ecclesia. They regularly send speaking brethren to give us healing words.

We are located along Highway I-81 in the northern part of the Shenandoah Valley. We encourage any travelers passing through to contact us for a visit. We like having visitors.

It is with great pleasure that we announce the baptism of JEFFREY JENSEN into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ on July 16, 2006. Bro. Jeff is the husband of Sis. Ruth Jensen, the father of Julia and Jaclynn Jensen and the son-in-law of Bro. Craig and Sis. Diane McInturff. We pray that God will bless Jeffrey's walk to His kingdom.

It is with sadness we announce the falling asleep of our Sis. Nancy Davison Conover Sauer. Sis. Nancy was born in Richmond, VA, in the fall of 1924; she was baptized in February, 1947, at the Washington, DC, Ecclesia. She moved to the valley in the 1970s. Sis. Nancy was the wife of Bro. Elmer "Whitey" Sauer

Our contact information is as follows: Rec. Bro. David Anderson c/o 161 Star Tannery Road, Star Tannery, VA 22654-1942; or Bro. Craig McInturff 540-877-3178 toolman@visuallink.com.

Please call ahead for meeting, Sunday school, and mid-week Bible class information.

David Anderson

TULSA/JOPLIN, MO

We would like to announce the baptisms on September 15 of DAN and TAMIE BRENDER. We joyously welcome this lovely couple into the household of faith.

God willing, our ecclesia will hold a study weekend November 10-11, 2007, in Joplin, MO, led by Bro. Roger Long entitled "From Upper Room to Resurrection". For more details and housing accommodations, please contact Bro. David Perry at 417-782-2213.

We have enjoyed the company of a number of brethren and sisters in the past month, including Bro. John and Sis. LaDonna Clubb (Wichita Falls, TX); Bro. John and Sis. Lindsey Billington, and Bro. Paul and Sis. Sally Billington (Brantford, ON); and Bro. Garth and Sis. Kerry Maier (Tyler, TX).

Jonathan Sabo

WASHINGTON, DC

It was previously stated in the July issue of *The Tidings* that Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura had transferred from the Petersburg, VA, Ecclesia to another ecclesia. The correct information is that they transferred to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia.

Cory Crabill

WORCESTER, MA

We are pleased to announce our newest member, Bro. Dale Long, who transferred to our area from the Springfield, MA, Ecclesia. His new address is 88 Perry Street, Unit 280, Putnam, CT 06260. We look forward to our walk together with him to the kingdom.

Our Sis. Ruth Jorgensen has settled into her new job after graduating from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. Her new address is 5362 Horseshoe Lake Road, Batavia, NY 14020. We pray God will watch over her in her new endeavor.

Mark Fulmer

Ann Arbor Thanksgiving Gathering

The Ann Arbor Ecclesia is planning our annual Thanksgiving Gathering to be held this year on Sunday, November 25, at the North Campus Holiday Inn in Ann Arbor. Our guest speaker this year is Bro. Karam Ram (Birmingham, UK). His topic is "Who are you?" The central theme of this talk is getting brothers and sisters to think about holiness and what that means in practice. The afternoon talk will be on "The Great Commandment". Lunch will be provided, and the day promises to be one filled with spiritual food and good fellowship.

Anyone needing more information or direction can contact Bro. Paul Elliott at 248-449-7063.

Ecclesial membership does not make one a "Christadelphian" any more than owning a piano makes one a musician.

Minute Meditation

Your Attitude

Your attitude, more than your aptitude, will determine your altitude. This short pithy saying means that your attitude is more important than how talented you are, when it comes to being able to fly high, that is, be successful, in whatever you are doing. Sports teams look for more than raw ability when they are choosing their players. Lou Holtz, a famous football coach, observed, “Ability is what you’re capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do, and attitude determines how well you do it.”

We all have some ability. Especially when it comes to our service for the Lord, we have talents God has given us to use. We are to share the good news of the kingdom with others, to spread cheer by visiting the sick and sad, to send cards, to train up the young in the fear of the Lord, to encourage and uplift our fellow brethren. Everyone is capable of doing many of these things, but some never get around to doing any of the things that they could do. And some do them half-heartedly. If we want to hear those words, “Well, done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord,” then we need to change our attitude towards using our time and abilities in serving our Lord.

We need to be motivated to get started. Without being filled with the desire to serve, any abilities we have to serve will never be used. We must work at making sure our attitude is right, that we love our God and are so thankful for the beautiful world He has given us, His guidance and care in our lives, and the opportunity for salvation and eternal life in the kingdom. Then we will be motivated to use our God-given abilities to serve Him.

Paul exhorts us, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

Jesus had more ability than any man who has ever lived, but it was his attitude rather than his aptitude that caused him to make the supreme sacrifice he did for us. We want to cultivate the same attitude that our Lord Jesus Christ had — he selflessly dedicated himself to serving his God and taking care of the needs of others. He had unlimited ability and supernatural powers, and he used them not to serve himself but to serve others.

When Jesus was tired and hungry, he preached to the woman at the well in Samaria. When the news came about the death of John the Baptist, the disciples went off to mourn quietly, while Jesus, instead of sending the people away, had compassion on them and spent the day teaching a multitude. When the disciples were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest, Jesus got down on his knees in front of them and washed their feet. At the time Jesus was facing death

by crucifixion. Even while he was suffering, he was thinking of others rather than himself, and made sure the apostles escaped arrest and that his mother was looked after. Peter tells us, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."

God is looking for this attitude in us. Do we think about serving God before we think about serving ourselves? Do we put the needs of others over our own wants and needs? Do we, as Paul exhorted, consider others better than ourselves? Obviously there was no one alive who was better than Jesus was, but he did not think about what he wanted — but what was the will of God and what was best for his followers. Even when Jesus had not eaten for forty days and forty nights and was starving, he would not perform a miracle to satisfy his own needs. Yet, when he saw the multitude who had missed only a few meals, he had compassion on them and fed them lest they should go away faint, and collapse along the way.

Human nature tends to think first of itself, but the Lord's teaching is to think first of what God would have us do, to care for our brethren and sisters and to forget our own wants and desires. This approach goes against all that is natural, but just doing what feels natural is living like animals and not as brethren and sisters of the Lord.

Paul tells us, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." We believe we are Christ's. Then we are to crucify the flesh. Our own affections and lusts must be put down so that we can serve God and serve others. Let us make sure that we have done so, that we are filled with zeal and the motivation to use our abilities to serve our God and care for others. Remember Paul's instructions: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Robert J. Lloyd

"A man will sometimes say to himself — indeed we have heard it openly suggested — that as David was forgiven his sin, and it is evident that God makes much allowance for human weakness, surely we in these days shall be excused for doing such and such things.

*"These fleshly reasoners fail to perceive that by the very fact of their indulging such reflections they move the transgression of fleshly weakness into the category of deliberate despising of God's law. If David, previous to his transgression, had deliberately reasoned the matter out and concluded that since God had shown mercy in other cases, it might be worth while to undertake the risk of sinning, we should never have heard of him as an example of rectitude. In all probability he would have been treated with the severity shown to other despisers and willful transgressors of the law" (Islip Collyer, **Conviction and Conduct**).*

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

NOVEMBER

3,4 Kouts, IN Fraternal gathering, Woodland Community Center, Portage, IN. Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Men Who Changed the Church". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

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

10,11 Largo and Sarasota, FL Study weekend, Largo Ecclesial Hall in Largo, FL. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Seven Key Events in the Life of Jesus". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill waltodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197

10,11 Tulsa/Joplin, OK Bible study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (UK): "From Upper Room to Resurrection". Contact Bro. David Perry 417-782-2213

10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Garden of the Lord". To help with catering or to arrange accommodation, please contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net



The Theater at Sepphoris
Martha Cooper
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16-18 Seattle, WA Youth Conference. Bro. Kevin Styles: "Maintaining Our Spiritual Compass in the Last Days". Contact Sis. Rebekah or Sis. Abby Cooper seattlecyc@gmail.com

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): "Lessons for Future Kings — Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel". Contact Bro. David Fertig hashawaha@cox.net 703-644-6311

DECEMBER

7-9 Worcester, MA CYC Weekend. Bro. James Diliberto (Echo Lake, NJ): "The Tabernacle: Lessons for Young People in the Wilderness of Life". Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams aaronmacadams@hotmail.com 978-502-9690

JANUARY 2008

26 San Diego County Ecclesia Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words that Mean a Lot". 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH

29 - April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Bumps along the Road of Discipleship"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "First Principles of Prayer"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltdodrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net