

THE CRISTADELPHIAN  
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# The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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## *The Hidden Rattlesnake*

*When I was a boy, our family lived on a farm. One spring, we killed 13 rattlesnakes in a brief period of time.*

*A rattlesnake can be easily destroyed if you know where it is and how far it can reach when it strikes. So my brothers and I never worried about the snakes we could see. We were genuinely concerned, however, about stepping on one whose presence we had not detected.*

*King Hezekiah was subtly "bitten" by a hidden temptation, not seduced by a gross and obvious evil. He allowed a measure of pride and self-reliance to blight his career. (2Chron 32:25, 31).*

*It's too bad that this otherwise good king marred his reign by this sin. We need to be on guard lest we allow pride to build up in our hearts until we, like Hezekiah, succumb to the wiles of the enemy. We may be prepared to stand against obvious invitations to sin that would besmirch our name, but we may not be ready for life's subtle temptations.*

*Beware of "hidden rattlesnakes" — they're the most dangerous of all!*

*Herbert Vander Lugt*

## Editorial

### A Son Called Laughter

*“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise” (Heb 11:11).*

The writer to the Hebrews clearly implies that Abraham was in fact “past age” to become a father (as does Rom 4:18,19).

*“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” (Gen 17:17).*

Is it possible that Abraham laughed, not a laughter of doubt, but of joy and hope based on faith (John 8:56; Rom 4:19)? And so the question may be one of amazed wonderment:

*“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).*

*“Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be’ [Gen 15:5]. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised” (Rom 4:18-21).*

Yet “against all hope”, Abraham “did not waver through unbelief”. It sounds like he must have known that, at the age of 99 or 100, he could not have children, and this despite the evident fact that his father has fathered him at the age of 130.

It may be surmised (and it can only be a guess) that:

- (1) Abraham had experienced some debilitating disease, and/or
- (2) he simply knew in his own personal experience what no observer could know — that, humanly speaking, he could no longer father children.

Although Abraham was not nearly as old as his father Terah had been when he was born, still he knew that, as far as he was concerned, he was “past age”.

Nevertheless he still believed God, against all the evidence of his own body. And the laughter (Hebrew “tsachaq”) of Abraham and then of Sarah — whether a joyful or a incredulous laugh, or something of both — found expression, when another year rolled around, in the naming of their infant son, “Yitzhaq”, Isaac, “Laughter”:

*“Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to*

*Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac ['Isaac' means 'he laughs'] to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (Gen 21:1-6).*

*"Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband," says the LORD" (Isa 54:1).*

The birth of any child can inspire, in its parents, the profoundest and subtlest of "laughter", the sheer joy of new life, the miracle and wonder of God's ongoing creative process, in which even humans may be blessed to have a part. The joy of recognition, at some level, that God has not yet given up on the human race, since He is still allowing new "entrants". The joy of looking at a future, and hoping for a future, of which the newborn may be a part.

I think something of all this was in the minds of the parents as they looked upon their son. And they named him "Laughter". As Sarah put it, "Everyone who hears will laugh with me!"

Can we laugh with joy that the old couple could still, by God's grace, have a special child of promise?

*"Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Gen 18:14).*

Going further, can we laugh with joy that, centuries later, a young virgin could, by the power of the Highest, conceive and bear a son who would at the same time be Son of man and Son of God, and that this would set the angels singing in the heavens?

*"For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).*

The baby born in the stable, and laid in the manger, had many names and titles. But surely one of his names is "Laughter" too! We should all laugh together, in joy that God is still "creating". In joy that He hasn't yet given up on the human race. In joy that, through His Son, he is still looking for new "sons" and "daughters" to be "born again" in Him. In joy that in times and places where no human power is sufficient to the task, God may still be working. And in joy that God's future is — through His Son — bright with a promise eager to be fulfilled!

Come on, everybody. Laugh!

*George Booker*

## **A More Perfect Union**

The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States has been memorized and recited by school children, practically since the founding of this country. It is a brief introductory statement of the fundamental purposes and guiding principles

which the Constitution is meant to serve. It contains a mere 52 words:

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Over more than 200 years, the principles embodied in these words have been the source for endless discussions and court decisions about the individual rights of the citizens of this country. What is justice for everyone? Does individual liberty have limits? Should the welfare of the whole supersede the welfare of the person?

The first purpose of the Constitution, as stated in the Preamble, is: “in order to form a more perfect union”. Often it is pointed out that, in the whole history of this country, there has never been a “*perfect* union”. For practically the first century, almost a whole race of people were systematically enslaved and generally abused by their “owners”; for many years thereafter, their rights were often denied by tradition, precedent, and clever manipulation of the laws by a white majority. During most of that time, tribes of native Americans were denied their civil rights as well as their property rights. As late as the Second World War, citizens of Japanese ancestry were rounded up and sent to prison camps.

It is true that the United States has never been a *perfect* union. But as time passed, many grievances were addressed and remedied. However, it's fair to say that a *perfect* union has never been achieved — and never will be — in this world.

Did the founding fathers expect to establish a “*perfect* union”? Not necessarily. More than Americans even today, those men understood that nothing in human life and endeavor is perfect, or can be expected to be.

They did not pretend to establish a “*perfect* union”. They presumed to establish a “*more perfect* union” — one that was an improvement upon what had gone before. And one that aspired to a greater degree of perfection — of justice, tranquility, and liberty — as time passed. The Constitution did not give a perfect solution to every injustice, or a perfect guarantee of every right. Instead, it gave a framework in which a “*more perfect* union” could develop.

Brothers and sisters, we should be instructed by this example. We do not have a *perfect* fellowship, or a *perfect* community, or any *perfect* ecclesias. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't strive for such things. But it does mean that, along the way, we can accept the challenge of becoming — and being — a “*more perfect* ecclesia”, a “*more perfect* family”. Each of us can become, every day, a “*more perfect* believer”. It won't be especially easy; nothing worth having or doing comes easily. The struggle is not just between the bad and the good. It is also between the good-enough and the could-be-better.

What can we do to “form a *more perfect* union”? What would Jesus do?

George Booker

## Exhortation

### “Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you” (1 Thessalonians 3:7)

#### Background

Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians contains references to a number of events that are recorded in the Book of Acts. That makes it fairly straightforward to identify when the Epistle was penned and what were the circumstances that surrounded its writing.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:2, the apostle makes reference to the shameful treatment that he received in Philippi. Acts 16:22,23 records how he and Silas were publicly beaten in that city and then cast into prison. (Of course, those events led to the conversion of the Philippian jailor and his family. And an ecclesia was formed.)

Paul traveled next to Thessalonica, which was about 80 miles southwest of Philippi. He preached in the synagogue for three weeks (Acts 17:1, 2). The result was that “a great multitude” of Greeks, “some” Jews, and “not a few” women from leading families believed (v 4).

Yet the apostle's preaching efforts were once again met with violence. Envy reared its head, and the unbelieving Jews started a riot (vv 5, 6).

The members of the Thessalonian ecclesia sent Paul and Silas away by night. They traveled 50 miles and came to Berea (v 10). Undeterred by what had happened in Philippi and Thessalonica, Paul and Silas began to preach in the synagogue of Berea.

How comforting it must have been to them to find a host of people who “received the word with all readiness of mind” and “who searched the Scriptures daily” (v 11). Many people from different backgrounds and all walks of life accepted the Truth (v 12).

But their good work was thwarted by the arrival of Jews from Thessalonica. Like a pack of wolves on the hunt, they had tracked down Paul and Silas. They quickly set about stirring up the people of the city and turning them against the Christian community (v 13).

The ecclesia sent Paul away. He traveled to Athens, which was 200 miles to the south. But Silas and Timothy stayed back in Berea (v 14).

After his safe arrival in Athens, Paul sent for Silas and Timothy to join him (v 15). While he waited for them, he gave his famous address on Mars Hill about the Athenians' Unknown God (vv 22-31).

Silas and Timothy came to Paul, although their arrival is not recorded. Their time spent together was not long. Paul was filled with godly concern about the wellbeing of the Thessalonians. So, before he departed for Corinth, he sent Timothy to

see how they were doing (1Thes 3:2). It appears that he sent Silas away as well, although there is no indication of where he went. It is possible that he returned to Berea.

By the time Timothy returned from his trip, Paul had moved on to Corinth and had begun his preaching work there. Acts 18 records the joy he experienced when he heard Timothy's report about the Thessalonian ecclesia:

*“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ” (v 5).*

The KJV rendering “pressed in the spirit” is quite literal. It is exactly the same translation as offered by Young's Literal Translation. However, it does not fully convey the sense of what Paul was feeling. The Greek word translated “pressed” is “sunecho”. It is a word associated with very strong emotion. Notice how it is translated in Luke 8, for example:

*“And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude **throng** thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45).*

Hearing of the faithfulness of his brethren and sisters in Thessalonica was an incredible motivator for Paul:

*“Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith” (1Thes 3:7).*

It energized him. And his preaching was quite successful: the chief ruler of the Corinthian synagogue and even his replacement were converted to the Truth. It is a compelling illustration of the tremendous impact that our faithfulness can have on others.

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, probably from Corinth, in response to the report that he received from Timothy about the faithfulness of the Thessalonians. Chapter 3 offers particular insight into Paul's relationships with the members of the ecclesia. It is a thought-provoking and exhortative illustration of God's ideal of what interactions among brothers and sisters should be.

### **Personal sacrifice**

In Philippians 2, Paul exhorts his readers to focus their attention on the needs of others and not just on themselves:

*“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NKJV).*

Paul's interactions with the Thessalonian ecclesia are an illustration of those words being put into practice.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:7, the apostle makes reference to the afflictions and distresses that he was experiencing. He is not specific about what was troubling him, but other parts of the New Testament provide insight into what was wrong. Acts 16 and 17 record the violence and near escapes he had experienced in Macedonia; Acts 17:32 notes that he was mocked after giving his address on Mars Hill. Then he moved to Corinth where he might have been quite sick. Some commentators interpret 1 Corinthians 2:3 as an indicator that Paul suffered from malaria dur-

ing his time there. Regardless of the exact nature of his illness, his poor health was readily apparent:

*“For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2Cor 10:10).*

Despite the many hardships that he was personally experiencing, however, Paul’s mind kept drifting back to his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. He was worried about their spiritual wellbeing. Even though his own difficulties were alleviated by the presence of Silas and Timothy, Paul put the needs of the Thessalonian ecclesia ahead of his own and sent Timothy to minister to them.

Paul writes that he dispatched Timothy to the Thessalonians when he “could no longer forbear” (1Thes 3:1). And he repeats the phrase in verse 5. It is evident that he considered Timothy to be extremely valuable to his ministry. Yet Paul preferred for him to be of service to the Thessalonians. His willingness to dispatch Timothy to aid them is an illustration of the self-sacrifice for one another that is one of the highest ideals to which we have been called.

## **Timothy**

Timothy’s name means “valued of God”. It was quite appropriate for him. He and the members of his family probably learned the Truth during one of Paul’s early visits to Lystra and Derbe, which are recorded in Acts 14.

Upon completing his preaching in that part of the world, Paul returned to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Council. It was a meeting of great importance. The details are recorded in Acts 15. There the disciples decided on the contentious issue of whether or not Gentile converts to Christianity had to be circumcised. It was determined that they did not, and the elders prepared letters to send throughout the Christian world to share their decision. They also appointed Paul, Barnabas and Silas, among others, to take the letters to the ecclesias (Acts 15:22, 23).

It was on that journey that Paul brought Timothy onto his team of missionaries. Timothy seemed ideal for the task. He was a young disciple with a good reputation, and he was half Jewish and half Greek (Acts 16:1, 2). Paul circumcised him and put him to work in helping to deliver the Jerusalem Council’s ruling on circumcision (vv 3, 4).

No details are recorded about Timothy’s activities in Acts 16 and 17. All we know is that he stayed with the apostle Paul throughout all of the hardships they endured. He remained faithful. That was, of course, not the case with all of the apostle’s traveling companions. (Demas, for example, forsook him, and the Truth: 2Tim 4:10).

The very fact that Timothy stayed with the apostle Paul throughout the trials they experienced made him of immense value. It is a lesson that should not be lost on us. Being constant in our service to God — attending memorial service and Bible class, praying, sharing the Word with those in and out of the ecclesia — can be a great source of strength to our brothers and sisters even if we do not do any specific thing that is worthy of special note.

A need did ultimately arise, however, for a service that it seems that Timothy was particularly suited to provide. The apostle Paul had need of someone “to establish” and “to comfort” the Thessalonians after his brief stay with them. He was particularly concerned that they would be steadfast in the face of afflictions. The Greek word translated “comfort” in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 is “parakaleo”, meaning “to exhort”. In fact, that is exactly how it is translated in Acts 14:22:

*“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Timothy had probably seen Paul do that. (Remember Acts 14:22 is about Timothy’s home ecclesia.) It is likely that he had witnessed Paul give the same message to his ecclesia about faithfulness through tribulation that needed to be given to the Thessalonians. And who better to give it than someone who had both heard Paul say the words and who had personally followed the instructions that were given? The Truth was quite young in the Roman world at this point. There were not many people who had endured trial for the Truth over an extended period of time. Timothy had. So, the Christians of Thessalonica would be more inclined to give ear to what he had to say.

### **The tempter**

1 Thessalonians 3:5 states that Paul had dispatched Timothy to Thessalonica because he was concerned that the “tempter” might have “tempted” them. The Greek word translated “tempter” is “peirazo”. Reflecting the views of mainstream Christianity, the People’s New Testament commentary writes, “The tempter is Satan.” Matthew Henry concurs; in commenting on this passage, he states, “The devil is a subtle and unwearied tempter, who seeks an opportunity to beguile and destroy us.”

The historical context, however, makes it quite clear that the apostle’s concern was the Jews in Thessalonica. They had demonstrated their determination to oppose the Christian community, and they had not hesitated to use violence in trying to achieve their ends (1Thes 2:18; Acts 17:5-10). Paul was worried that the faith of some in the fledgling ecclesia would wilt in the face of such opposition and that they would return to Judaism to escape persecution. It is a concern that appears throughout the epistles of the New Testament (e.g., Heb 12:4-8).

So, 1 Thessalonians 3:5 is a great passage to share with an interested friend. It shows that viewing “Satan” as the source of temptation can stem from an overly simplistic interpretation of a passage. And it is an example of how comparing verses across the Bible can unlock their meaning and add to our understanding.

### **Focusing on the positive**

Paul was thrilled with the good report he received back from Timothy about the Thessalonians (1Thes 3:6,7). What Paul states in just a few words of this epistle gives us a great deal of exhortation about our interactions with others, how they should be reflected in our conversations, and what (in general) our relationships with others in the Truth should be.

It is a characteristic of faithful men and women to rejoice in the good being done by others. For example, when John writes Gaius in his third epistle, he speaks of “rejoicing greatly” over the good that he heard Gaius was doing:

*“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth (3John 3).*

This verse shows that, when John talked to others about Gaius, he wanted to hear of the positive things that he was doing. And he wanted to know specifics: “Well, what exactly is Gaius doing?” The answer came to him that he was being hospitable to traveling preachers of the Gospel (vv 5,6). And when John heard this, he said that nothing gave him greater joy:

*“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (v 4).*

Nothing gave him greater joy. This was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and nothing gave him greater joy than to hear of the humble service of a brother in Christ.

Let us try, this week in particular, to bring this aspect of the beloved disciple’s life into our own. When we speak of others, let us focus on the good things they are doing. And let us talk about specifics. Let us do that so that the good things we hear will encourage us and challenge us in our service. And, more than that, let us, like John, rejoice greatly in what we hear — for the angels and our Heavenly Father are rejoicing as well.

### **Spiritual friendship**

Paul thanked God for his relationship with the Thessalonians and the joy it gave him:

*“For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?” (1Thes 3:9).*

In his statement there is a recognition that our friends are given to us by God. (Otherwise, why would he thank God for them?) And we are given as friends for the purpose of supporting one another in faith and bringing honor to God.

The apostle writes that he prayed “exceedingly” for the Thessalonians “night and day” (1Thes 3:10). His words demonstrate the tremendous importance Paul placed on prayer, and his understanding that we can extend a great deal of help to each other by praying for one another. Prayer is an especially valuable means of supporting our brothers and sisters who are physically far away from us, as Paul was from Thessalonica at the time this epistle was written.

Paul set himself, Silvanus, and Timothy as standards to which the Thessalonians should aspire in showing love to one another (1Thes 3:12). It is an indicator of how committed those three were to following in the footsteps of the Lord. The apostle’s words show how important our example is in our efforts to preach the Word.

The goal of Paul’s relationship with the Thessalonians was to prepare them for Christ:

*“To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1Thes 3:13).*

His words are a succinct statement and a compelling reminder of what the goal of our interactions with each other should be. Our relationships are a precious resource and one of the most powerful tools that God has given us for transforming our lives, as well as the lives of others.

*Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)*

## Bible Study

### To Speak Well of God: (4) We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us

In the previous article we concluded that the character of the Satan in the drama of Job is a personification of human pride; specifically hosted by the three friends of Job.

#### **Weaknesses of Satan as the Three Friends' Pride**

##### **Problem 1**

How does the conversation between God and Satan take place? By the same token, how can the three friends have knowledge of the events of the prologue? Surely if they knew of the conversation they would know why Job is afflicted, so the resulting debate would not occur. (This point alone is enough for some commentators to immediately reject an association between the Satan and the three friends.<sup>1</sup>)

##### **Suggested solution**

I understand the “conversation” between God and the Satan as a literary device. The following is suggested as an explanation:

The three friends “came to present themselves before the LORD,” the same way a modern believer might simply go to church. I’m not suggesting God is only encountered in a formal church setting, but it is a Biblical principle that God’s presence is heightened by a congregation of believers (Matt 18:19,20). It also neatly explains why the Satan appears in the presence of the LORD on a regular basis (Job 1:6; 2:1).

While ‘in church,’ the three friends bring their slanderous beliefs before the LORD — simply in their meditations. They see wealthy Job in the assembly and their blood boils with perceived injustice. God sees these thoughts as clearly as if they had been shouted aloud. His response to the jealous slander of Job is recorded in the text, but, I suggest, God’s words are not heard by the three friends. In other words, Satan is unaware he is in conversation with God, even as the conversation proceeds. This satisfies the essential requirement that the three friends have no knowledge of the ‘barter’.

This allows God to be in Heaven, and the three friends on Earth (as per Job 1:7) as the 'conversation' takes place. The 'conversation' is a poetic recapitulation of events; an attractive way to reveal to the reader how God works in human lives, bringing situations we need to experience to bear as He works to fashion more godly disciples from prideful sinners.

## **Problem 2**

How does affliction come upon Job from the Satan if the Satan is the three friends' pride?

### **Suggested solution**

I suggest the drama proceeds this way. The friends see Job and think: "How could God allow this injustice? Doesn't He see that the only reason Job is pious is because of all the material blessings He has given him?" God 'replies' — though the friends never hear the words — "I see what you're thinking. You think if Job loses his material possessions he'll curse Me? I have something to teach you. I'll empower your wicked thoughts and act on them. I will bring destruction on Job just as your wicked thoughts wanted and you will see, through the continuing righteousness of my servant, the type of God I am and what I am working to ultimately achieve." This demonstrates that God was the one who caused the affliction, but the Satan is the one who is to blame for the affliction arriving, exactly as the text demands (Job 2:3).

## **Problem 3**

When the friends hear of Job's catastrophes, they express heartfelt sympathy for him (Job 2:11-13). Why would they react this way if they had deliberately and consciously conspired to bring destruction against him?

### **Suggested solution**

The explanation I describe requires that humans be sufficiently complex as to harbor bitterness against a man, but then in the face of his suffering feel genuine compassion. It requires that evil thoughts within human hearts can be displaced by tragedy, or that contradictory thoughts can be in the heart at one time. The Joban tale bears out the truth of this, as does everyday experience. An example is seen explicitly in the case of Eliphaz the Temanite's comments: he flatly contradicts himself between 4:3-6 and 22:5-11. As a further poignant example we will also see Job's pain cause him to contradict himself when speaking of whether he wants God to be near to him or far away (Job 7:16-19; 29:2-6).

Human history details the veracity of this trend also. We are by nature schizophrenic creatures, harboring thoughts of ill-intent and love side by side, often for the very same person! It is possible for someone to be embittered against a work colleague, yet when that same colleague is involved in a significant road accident the bitterness vanishes, replaced with genuine sympathy and compassion. James reinforces this idea when he denounces the human mouth being used as a spring of both blessing and cursing (James 3:9-12).

I see a physical analogy in boiling food on a stove. One brings water to the boil over a flame and then plunges the (relatively cold) food into the boiling pot. Immediately the water ceases bubbling. But the source of the boiling is the flame beneath the pot and, unless that too is removed, it won't be long before the pot, even with the food in, is bubbling once again. I suggest we see exactly the same thing happening in the book of Job. The three friends harbor bitterness and resentment against Job, fueled by the flame of their own pride (the Satan). When disaster strikes Job, the shock is sufficient to submerge their embitterment temporarily in genuine care for their friend. All thoughts of willing destruction upon Job, either to see him abandon his faith or for any other reason, are gone — at least for now. And at no point do they realize there is a connection between their bitterness and Job's suffering. But the flame of their pride is still burning and so, slowly but surely, their slanderous evaluation of Job bubbles back to the surface as the debate proceeds.

## **Strengths of Satan as the Three Friends' Pride**

### **Point 1**

Most importantly, the interpretation of the Satan as the resident spirit in the three friends affects our view of who God is. If God is only wreaking havoc in the life of Job to prove that Satan is in the wrong, how capricious and heartless is this God! As if God were so insecure that He needed to prove He was right to anyone! God's destructive intervention in Job's life would then be reduced to a mere "cosmic experiment", as some commentators have labeled it.<sup>2</sup>

But with this interpretation, God can no longer be seen as capricious. God's Hand is now seen to be caring because, by the end of the book, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite are brought to salvation. God's 'entering into the barter' with Satan — or such is the literary device used to portray the interaction — actually results in God working an act of salvation in 'Satan's' lives. This now makes beautiful sense that God would get involved, because the salvation of any who could be saved, even whilst they opposed God, has always been His mission (John 3:16,17; Rom 5:8).

If there had been no salvation to gain from the 'barter', God would never have entered it, nor have entrusted such a heavy burden of priesthood to his faithful servant Job. With this interpretation alone, where the very opponents themselves are brought to salvation, the magnitude of both God's victory and the drama's poignancy are driven to the maximum! We also see how much trust God invests in Job to bear the necessary burden of suffering which finally results in the salvation that He is working in the lives of his three friends.

This is the Father I recognize.

### **Point 2**

Seeing the Satan as the three friends' pride means the book of Job now evidences great internal integrity. With traditional interpretations of the Satan as either an evil supernatural being, an angel of the LORD, or some unrelated human, he

disappears as early as chapter 2 and never returns. With this understanding, the Satan is a vital character who remains centrally present as the drama unfolds. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar are present in chapter 1, albeit under the nomenclature ‘the Satan’, with their thoughts distilled into the dramatic persona opposing God. Similarly, the Satan is present throughout the core of the book: in the debate with the righteous man, all the way to the closing chapter, where he is rebuked.

### **Point 3**

The Satan is rebuked by God (Job 42:7,8). With any other interpretation, the Satan gets away scot-free with his slander of Job and scorn of the Almighty. It is only with this interpretation that the Satan is rebuked by God; which is in common with the other interactions between God and Satan in the Scriptural record.

### **Point 4**

The interpretation of Satan as the three friends’ pride also makes the book of Job consistent with the rest of Scripture; identifying the enemy of God as the rebellious heart of man.

### **Point 5**

The Satan’s characteristics are evidently human:

(a) Satan is driven by jealousy of Job’s material wealth. Although his argument concerns the motivation for Job’s worship of God, it is evident that his awareness of Job’s wealth has prompted his objection. Would either an angel, or a Mephistophelean Superpower, posing his supernatural guile and strength in eternal battle with the Almighty, be likely to get all worked up because Job has a lot of camels? No. Jealousy of material possessions is an emotional response so preternaturally petty as to indicate a human origin.

(b) Satan is stupid! The entire basis of the Satan’s argument is that he is actually cleverer than God and has observed something which God has missed. The Satan argues that while God can only see the surface evidence that Job is a good man, God has missed the more subtle underlying reason of why Job appears to be a good man. This underlying truth, the Satan reasons, he alone is clever enough to see, and he patiently explains to God that this is because Job enjoys material blessings at the Hand of the LORD.

Is it credible that an angel of the LORD would be so arrogant to believe that he was cleverer than God? Of course not! History repeatedly testifies, on occasions without number, that it is we humans who guide our lives as if we knew better than God.

(c) The Satan describes his origin as “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7, KJV). The suggestion that the Satan is realized as proud men is a very natural interpretation of this fact. In fairness, angels can also be described behaving in very similar terms (Zech 1:10,11) but Peter’s education that angels do not slander righteous men (2Pet 2:11) has eliminated the possibility of the Satan being an angel.

It is relevant that the claim has a sense of pride about it. It speaks of having a worldly experience that others might not have: of having “seen a few things”,

having “been around a bit”, and therefore being in a position to make informed and accurate judgments. In a later article we shall postulate that Job is contemporary with Israel’s wilderness wanderings, which would resonate very naturally, even poignantly, with why the three friends might be described as ‘wandering to and fro’ in the Earth.

- (d) The Satan ‘shifts the goalposts’ when shown to be wrong. The initial barter between God and the Satan is whether or not Job would curse God if his circumstances were substantially afflicted. Job is destroyed on a material level, yet he does not curse the LORD (Job 1:20-22).

So Satan loses the barter. But, far from humbly admitting error, the Satan shifts the goalposts, asserting that, essentially, he is still right and if different criteria are applied then his rectitude, and God’s error, will be revealed (Job 2:3-5).

Again, shifting the goalposts when shown to be wrong is a behavior commonly associated with humans.<sup>3</sup>

- (e) Ultimately, the Satan’s delight is the downfall of a righteous man: or at least the revelation of one who appears to be godly as a hypocrite. Again, this trait is well exemplified by prideful human behavior. The bloodlust to expose an apparently righteous man, such as a prominent Christian figure, as a charlatan and a hypocrite, and to revel in the schadenfreude of every failure that is exposed, is one that resides quite openly in the human populace. We have only to glance at the nearest newspaper, or online political blog, to observe it.

I see the book now cast in a wholly new light. The poetic bulk of the book, the debate, is now intimately connected to the prosaic beginning and end. The majority of the text of Job, about two thirds, is him arguing with his three friends. This is a substantial part of the Bible: it’s about the same size as one of the gospels! Job is a righteous man: his three friends voice the spirit of Satan. So the core of the book now is seen as the struggle between a righteous man and Satan. This is of supreme relevance to the initial debate between the Satan and God! I find this quite a life-changing appreciation of the book of Job, as now it is relevant to my everyday internal struggles, as well as being a fascinating and timeless drama.

Interestingly, expositors seem to have come to the threshold of determining that the Satan was an office occupied by the three friends, only to fail to spot what they had discovered. Gutierrez noted that the opinions of Satan were invariably mirrored by the opinions of the three friends,<sup>4</sup> yet still took Satan to be a supernatural devil. Likewise Atkinson commented: “In effect what the friends have done is to continue the satanic assault on Job of which we read in chapters 1 and 2.”<sup>5</sup> I believe these are both highly pertinent observations which should have been followed to their natural conclusion: that the pride of the three friends forms the Satanic character of the drama.

### Reflection

We may still ask: “But why conceal the truth? If the Satan in Job was the pride of the three friends, why doesn’t the prologue simply say so?” To me this encapsulates the beauty of the drama. To reveal the identity of the Satan slowly is to re-enact how the friends themselves discovered it. It’s plain the friends initially

thought themselves pretty good disciples of the LORD God; well-educated in the principles of truth and eager to expound them at any moment. How wrong they were. And by obscuring the Satan's (their) identity in the prologue, the text neatly retains the fact that the whole drama was a journey of discovery for them, to discover their true nature and ultimately appreciate the priest (Job) who brought them to atonement with the Father. Likewise it is a journey for us too, to discover both them as the Satan in the book of Job; and ourselves as the Satan in our own discipleships!

The three men were unaware that the disaster the LORD brought upon Job was a consequence of the embittered jealousy they held in their hearts. This suggestion, of a blindness that does not allow a man to see the destruction he wreaks upon the Earth, has clear Scriptural precedent. When David sinned with Bathsheba (2Sam 11), Nathan the prophet recounted his sin to him as a parable from the divine viewpoint (2Sam 12:1-4). Despite David's godliness, which doubtless far exceeds the three friends', he was unable to recognize himself within the analogous reconstruction Nathan presented. So in righteous anger he condemned the antagonist of the piece (vv 12:5, 6). Is David alone in possessing this spiritual blindness? I doubt it! He was one of the godliest men to walk the Earth, and logically this type of blindness will prove more severe in less godly men.

Thus I have no doubt Nathan could have reappeared before Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite and read them the prologue to the Joban drama verbatim, without any of them suspecting for one minute that they were the ones triggering the destruction that came upon Job.

Yet how easy it is to spot faults in others! I'm drawn to wonder how many times I have fallen victim to exactly the same blindness. How many times could a prophet in the LORD's service have come to my side and recounted to me in explicit detail the interactions of my life as the LORD saw them, only for me to fail to recognize I was even present in the retelling? How many times might I, as David at his most ungodly, have thunderously denounced the Satan of the parable, only to hear the words of a still, small voice intone:

*"Thou art the man."*

It's good cause for reflection.

*John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*

**Notes:**

1. E. M. Sponberg, "The Book of Job," 1965, private publication, 5.
2. R. Gordis, "The Temptation of Job — Tradition versus Experience in Religion," 1955, cited in N. N. Glatzer, "The Dimensions of Job," 1969, Schocken Books Inc., New York, NY, USA, 76.
3. I'm not trying to say that 'shifting the goalposts' is necessarily a wicked practice either, merely a human one. We see examples of good men 'shifting the goalposts' with God too: for example Abraham, when he beautifully champions the citizens of Sodom who are marked for destruction (Gen 18:23-33), and also Gideon, when he seeks to build his courage to attack the Midianite hosts (Jdgs 6:36-40).
4. G. Gutierrez, "On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent," 1987, Orbis, New York, NY, USA, 4.
5. D. Atkinson, "The Message of Job," 1991, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK, 63.

## Bible Study

### “Woven Together” (Psalm 139:13-16)

Three chapters, Matthew 1 and Luke 1 and 2, record the story of the “beginnings” of Jesus. Miraculous as this is, however, it is only the *outward* story. What about the inward story? What really happened?

It will help to consider Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV):

- (13) *For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
- (14) *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*
- (15) *My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,*
- (16) *your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.*

This is first of all David's description of his own “creation” by God. It is also descriptive of all our “creations” and — we believe — most especially and uniquely descriptive of Jesus's “creation”.

**Verse 13:** God Himself created the fetus, and guided its development in the mother's womb.

“Created” (NIV) is an intriguing word. The KJV translates “qanah” as “hast possessed”, but this rendering is incorrect. The NIV rendering of “created” (cp “didst form”: RSV and ASV) is confirmed by modern scholarship and study of the related Ugaritic (Syrian) texts discovered in the 20th century (see the various later translations of Gen 4:1; 14:19, 22; and Prov 8:22, where the same word occurs). These confirm a connection with another Hebrew word, “qanith”, which is now understood to signify “give birth to” or “create”.

“My inmost being” (“reins” in the KJV) is the Hebrew “kilyah”, literally the kidneys or inmost parts — meaning, figuratively, the seat of emotions. “The term was used for the innermost being, the soul, the central location of the passions” (NET Notes); our English equivalents might be “in my very bones”, or “in my heart of hearts”. The kidneys were viewed as the seat of human joy and grief (Psa 73:21), as well as the seat of moral character. As the Creator of this moral and ethical capacity in each of us (Psa 139:13), God examines it to determine each individual's attitudes and motives, and to determine the appropriate reward or punishment (Psa 7:9; 26:2; Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). Appropriately, the kidneys figured prominently in the offering of sacrifices upon the LORD's altar (Exod 29:13, 22; Lev 3:4, 15; 4:9; 7:4; 8:16, 25; 9:10, 19; etc).

In the second phrase of this verse, “knit” is the Hebrew “sakhakh”, meaning to plait or interweave, in this case with bones, sinews, and veins — like the similar alternate form “skhekh” in Job 10:11: “[Did you not] knit me together with bones and sinews?” (see all of vv 8-12).

“Knit me together”, along with the previous phrase (“You created my inmost being”), suggests the fantastic complexity of the human genetic code. David, even without the resources of modern investigation in the field of genetics, was awestruck as he contemplated the “weaving together” of the human fetus in the womb. What would he have said if he had known what is commonly known today: how the genes of two parents are “knit together” by God’s unseen Hand to produce, every time, an absolutely unique human specimen?

Many biologists, geneticists and physicians agree that biological life begins at conception. The Scriptures clearly teach that God places value on unborn life as sacred (Exod 4:11; Isa 49:1; Jer 1:5; Eccl 11:5; Matt 1:18; Luke 1:39–44; Eph 1:4). When one even begins to consider the complexity and diversity encoded into the DNA of the smallest fetus, from the very moment of conception, this conclusion is irresistible.

**Verse 14:** This verse, properly considered, induces wonder as well as humility. The wonder is obvious when one considers the details of the work itself. The humility occurs when one realizes that he or she is but one among billions upon billions of living creatures, over all of which the Creator has control.

**Verse 15:** The sentence structure of the NIV indicates that the first phrase of v 16 actually belongs with v 15; thus we have an ABBA structure — one in which the first and fourth lines are parallel, as are the second and third lines. This is illustrated by the layout below:

- (A) *My frame was not hidden from you*
- (B) *when I was made in the secret place.*
- (B) *When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,*
- (A) *your eyes saw my unformed body.*

The Hebrew “raqam” (“woven together” in NIV; “curiously wrought” in KJV) refers to “embroidery”, the intricate interweaving or stitching of various colored fabrics to produce a representation or picture upon the fabric. The same word occurs seven times in Exodus (27:16; 28:39; 35:35; 36:37; 38:18, 23; 39:29), where it describes the embroidered garments of the high priest and the embroidered curtains of the Tabernacle. (The KJV often uses the word “needlework”.) A related word “riqma” occurs 12 times. It specifically refers to embroidered fabric, in Judges 5:30; Psalm 45:14 (the “embroidered garments”; KJV “raiment of needlework”, of the king’s bride!); and Ezekiel 16:10, 13, 18; 26:16; 27:7, 16, 24. In two places it has to do with different colored semiprecious stones (1Chron 29:2) — for the Temple.

What about “in the depths of the earth”? Perhaps, as the margin puts it, this means “in the lowest parts, even the earth”. This could be an idiomatic way of emphasizing the contrast between God’s heaven and the human sphere of earth. (See how Ephesians 4:9 describes “the lower, earthly regions” as “the depths of the earth”.)

Then again, considering the parallel nature of the two phrases (notice the layout above), the “secret place” (the “womb” of v 13) is parallel to the “depths of the earth”. Read this way, the “secret depths” would be the darkness and seclusion of the mother’s womb, until quite recent times completely isolated from any inquiring or observation by humans.

Finally, these verses may picture the re-creation of life in the entombed Christ. The baby Jesus was first conceived in and born from a virgin **womb**. Later the crucified Savior was “reborn” from a “virgin” **tomb** — where no body had ever lain (John 19:41)!

**Verse 16:** Leaving the first phrase of v 16 where it belongs, that is, with v 15, we now have:

*“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

In other words, God saw the end from the beginning, even in the development of the individual fetus. Then, on the level of the spiritual creation (with Jesus Christ, and through him), God oversees the development of spiritual life, from beginning to end, by His all-encompassing providence. In the spiritual realm, His creative work has never ceased. In fact, He is at work unceasingly in the lives of every believer:

*“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).*

### **The Thread of Life**

We now turn our attentions to a description of the marvel of DNA, as it has come to be understood, at least superficially, in our own modern times.

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) reveals the remarkable wisdom of the Creator. Though David could scarcely have understood any more than the barest outline of these principles in his own day, he nevertheless described DNA quite well when he says:

*‘My frame was not hidden from you when I was created... knit together... woven together... in the secret place... in the womb’ (paraphrasing Psa 139:13-16).*

Sometimes called the “thread of life”, DNA is an amazing chemical molecule in the nucleus of each of our trillions of body cells. Although comparatively simple in composition, it contains the code of everything a person inherits and is a manual of all body structures and functions. It consists of a ladder-like chemical substance, in which the sides of the ladder are made up of alternating molecules of phosphoric acid and the sugar deoxyribose. The rungs between the strands are made up of four protein bases: adenine (A), thiamine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C).

Furthermore, the ladder is then coiled upon itself, forming a spiral effect, called a helix. Each individual helix is also intertwined and coiled together with other parts of the helix, very much as single strands might be joined into a much stronger thread. In turn, these threads are also “super-coiled” again and again, into

what we might think of as cords, and then into much larger cables. This whole arrangement is seemingly necessary to produce the required strength of what would otherwise be an infinitesimally slender single strand, and to enable the relatively long molecule to fit into a single cell's nucleus.

The many combinations of these four bases (A, T, G and C) make "the code of life". Thousands of these rungs or steps make a gene. Each DNA molecule contains about 20,000 different genes.

Some six billion "steps" of DNA in a single cell record each person's anatomical and physiologic blueprint. Each DNA molecule would be six feet long if stretched out. But it is tightly packed to fit and function in a smaller body in the center of the nucleus, called a nucleolus, measuring 1/2,500 of an inch. It doesn't just lay there, however. It bends and twists a billion times a second while its ladder sides "breathe" in and out. This dramatic dance allows each particle to make contact with the portion of the DNA molecule that gives it up-to-date instructions for making the proteins and enzymes which direct cell functions.

Each person's DNA is the same in every cell of his or her body. For instance, the DNA in a skin cell is the same as the DNA in a nerve cell or a muscle cell. In theory at least, each cell contains all the information needed to reproduce a complete human being. In practice, certain properties or functions of the DNA are turned "off" from one cell type to another. In other words, skin cells can't be an eye; lung tissue can't act as a muscle, etc.

Scientists are only beginning to understand the mystery of cell development after conception. The truly miraculous thing is how that first cell (and the small cluster of non-specialized cells that develops in the first few days after the egg is fertilized) multiplies into the trillions of specialized cells that make up a fully-formed human. At some point in early fetal development, the DNA in each cell decides that one cell will begin to make a heart, another will begin to make a finger, yet another a nerve cell, and so forth.

DNA also controls both the reproduction and the day-by-day function of all cells. Each adult body contains up to 100 trillion cells, millions of which die every second and must be replaced. For instance, cells making up the lining of the intestines live only a day and a half, white blood cells live about 13 days, and red blood cells live up to 120 days. The only exception to this death and reproduction cycle is in the nervous system, where nerve cells, if they die or are killed, are not replaced.

The "alphabet" of the DNA molecule is deceptively simple: it contains only the four "letters" mentioned above. But, like the binary code at the heart of computer systems, the DNA "alphabet" has been "programmed" to store, and exchange, in enormously complex combinations, all the instructions that go into the development of the highest forms of life.

DNA functions in a variety of ways, some of which are described below:

(1) Growth and development: From the moment of conception, the resulting DNA molecule determines the speed and time of each cell division. At first each new cell looks identical, but at a time determined by the DNA, cells begin to differentiate

and reproduce at different rates. By the third week after conception, most of the 600 types of specialized cells have begun differentiating themselves from one another. By the fourth week, the brain can be recognized, the heart and intestinal tract are being formed, the arm and leg stumps are visible, and the kidneys appear. By the fifth week, the two hemispheres of the brain are easily seen, and the heart begins pumping. By the sixth week, nerve connections are being made, the eyes and ears are well-formed, the mouth has taken shape, and the skeleton begins to form. By the seventh week, the teeth buds are visible, the stomach begins secreting digestive acid, and the fingers and toes are differentiated. By the end of the eighth week, differentiation into specialized cells is essentially complete. The remaining seven months is spent mostly in growing, not developing new tissues.

Not only is fetal development scheduled in DNA, but also the life cycle. When the child will be born and how soon it can be expected to crawl, walk and talk are all programmed. When puberty will occur, how soon men will begin to grow facial hair (or lose the hair on top), when gray hair will appear, and the expected length of life are also programmed. Environment and personal habits can influence some of these developments, sometimes significantly, but each person is programmed with an individual schedule inherited from parents.

(2) Unique characteristics: Each individual's DNA encodes the family and racial characteristics handed down for generations. These include skin color, height, shape of nose, eye and hair color, weight tendencies, and a multitude of other characteristics. Increasingly we see that many behavior patterns are also inherited, including personality types and the way we laugh or walk. Some people inherit tendencies toward heart disease, diabetes, or other chronic diseases. There have also been isolated, and studied, about 1,800 genetically determined diseases, such as sickle-cell anemia and Down syndrome.

(3) Cellular activities: The cell is the basic element of life. All body functions are determined by a person's cells. Which substances will be synthesized within each cell is determined by DNA. As we think of the body's numerous activities, such as the hormonal functions of the glandular cells, the detoxifying ability of liver and kidney cells, and the movement function of muscle cells, we realize they are all dependent on the programming ability of DNA. Although each cell holds instructions for every cell in the body, it uses only the portion of DNA code needed for its own individual function. Thus DNA controls all aspects of our body's daily functions by instructing every cell in the body.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reviewing the passage in Psalm 139, we can begin to see the remarkable resemblances between David's 3,000-year-old words, on the one hand, and the observations of modern-day biologists using high-powered microscopes, on the other:

- (a) In David's "inmost being", even while "in my mother's womb" (v 13), there were "knit" (v 13) and "woven together" (v 15) increasingly larger threads upon which were "written" "all my days" (v 16)!
- (b) All this was contrived by God's hand "in the most secret places", and "in the depths" (v15) of the womb, where only God's eyes could have seen

it (v 16).

(c) And even before it had come to pass, “all (David’s) days”, “ordained for me”, were “written in (God’s) book” (v 16). The DNA is also God’s Book!

The phrases “knit together” (Psa 139:13) and “woven together” (v 15) suggest the careful weaving and the elaborate embroidering of fabrics, perhaps with various colors as well as pictures, by which Almighty God offered figurative messages to His people describing His purpose. In every feature of Tabernacle and Temple worship, there was embroidered, engraved, and written such expressions of God’s purpose for the earth and man.

Yet the most extraordinary man-made fabrics (even those of the Tabernacle and Temple) are absolute simplicity compared with the fantastic complexity of every human being who is born. What we may now begin to see in Psalm 139 is that, analogously, the Hand of God has embroidered or encoded, into the DNA of each child in the womb, the “message” by which it will grow and develop, and ultimately reach its full potential — physically and mentally. Furthermore, the same Divine Hand is at work in both the natural sphere, as much today as it ever was in the beginning. His natural creation, with its intricate and elaborate code, mirrors His spiritual creation — which, to this day, He is still working to bring to perfect realization in and through Christ.

To return to our original analogies, God is working every day to weave together the “threads” of our lives — some before we were even born. Have we ever wondered, perhaps, how we came to be born into a family where our parents or others had learned the Truth of the gospel? Or perhaps how we came, later, to be at a certain place at a certain time, so as to be introduced to Bible truth? Was it chance, or was it God’s providence?

From the very beginning, when Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb, his Father was working to create a Son who in every way would embody His glorious character. Every day since the Genesis creation, God has pursued His ultimate plan to fill the earth with His glory. In this sense, His creative work has never ceased; nor will it this side of the Kingdom.

From the moment your new life was formed in your mother’s womb, God was there, and working. Since then, every day of our lives, and every experience, is another thread that God is weaving into the tapestry of His finished fabric — a fabric that will adorn His eternal Temple.

(George Booker, Austin Leander, TX)

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*In 1953 James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the genetic structure deep inside the nucleus of our cells. We call this genetic material DNA, an abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid. The discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule opened the floodgates for scientists to examine the code embedded within it. Now, more than half a century after the initial discovery, the DNA code has been deciphered — although many of its elements are still not well understood.*

*What has been found has profound implications regarding Darwinian evolution, the theory taught in schools all over the world that all living beings have evolved by natural processes through mutation and natural selection.*

*As scientists began to decode the human DNA molecule, they found something quite unexpected — an exquisite 'language' composed of some three billion genetic letters... It is hard to fathom, but the amount of information in human DNA is roughly equivalent to 12 sets of The Encyclopaedia Britannica — an incredible 384 volumes worth of detailed information that would fill 48 feet of library shelves!... A teaspoon of DNA could contain all the information needed to build the proteins for all the species of organisms that have ever lived on the earth.*

*Who or what could miniaturize such information and place this enormous number of 'letters' in their proper sequence as a genetic instruction manual?*

Mario Seiglie

*The Good News: A Magazine of Understanding, May/June 2005*

### *The Weaver*

*My life is but a weaving  
Between my Lord and me...  
I may not choose the colors;  
He knows what they should be.  
For he can view the pattern  
Upon the upper side,  
While I can see it only  
On this, the underside.*

*Sometimes He weaveth sorrow,  
Which seemeth strange to me;  
But I will trust His judgment  
And work on faithfully.  
'Tis He who fills the shuttle.  
He knows just what is best.  
So I shall weave in earnest  
and leave to Him the rest.*

*Not till the loom is silent  
And the shuttles cease to fly,  
Shall God unroll the canvas,  
And explain the reason why  
The dark threads are as needful  
In the weaver's skillful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver  
In the pattern He has planned.*

*(Grant Colfax Tullar)*

## Bible Study

### Christ's Wilderness Temptations

The subject of Christ's temptations in the wilderness have been a source of concern as we struggle to understand how the Son of God overcame his human flesh. Many ideas have been proposed as to what actually happened in the wilderness, as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The "Christian" churches argued early on about this subject and endorsed many false doctrines as a result. The subject is of vital importance. We hope the following ideas may help establish the truth of the matter.

It has been said that a second person must have been present, tempting Christ with ideas, since 'the suggestions were evil suggestions, out of a carnal mind, and this could not possibly have been generated from the mind of Christ.' In other words, the thoughts were the thoughts of a carnal mind and Christ did not have a carnal mind. This position is based on the premise that 'Christ, possessing the Holy Spirit, would not entertain any thoughts contrary to the will of God.'

It is correct that Christ was indeed endowed with the Holy Spirit and did not entertain any thought contrary to God's will. The key word here is 'entertain.' One definition is: to take into consideration. It may be said that Christ did not take into consideration ideas contrary to God's will, but that does not mean that such thoughts did not, briefly, pass through his mind, only to be rejected.

A careful examination of the Scriptures regarding temptations in the wilderness and other places in Scripture will show that, indeed, such thoughts did pass through his mind. Temptation itself is not sin. Sin does not occur until one yields to that temptation, and that is what Christ never did.

We know that Christ was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). This means that he had the same mind as we have, feeling the same desires and fleshly impulses that we feel. This actually means that he did have a carnal mind, meaning: 'relating to the desires and appetites of the flesh or body' (*The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition*). To say otherwise is to deny the statements of Scripture (e.g., Heb 2:14). Also, James tells us:

*"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed"*  
(James 1:14).

In order for both James and the writer to the Hebrews to be right, Christ must have been "drawn away" by his own lust.

As a matter of fact, "lust" is not a bad word; it just has a bad connotation. The Greek word translated "lust" in James 1:14,15 is "epithumia". This same word is translated "desire" in Matthew 13:17:

*"Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see";*

Luke 22:15:

*“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you”;*

Philippians 1:23:

*“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ”;*

and 1 Thessalonians 2:17:

*“For we brethren... endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.”*

We can see from these references that the words “lust” and “desire” are used interchangeably. Which word was employed was dependent on the impression the translators wished to convey.

Let’s replace the word “lust” with the word “desire” in James 1:14; the translators have already shown this is a viable option. In fact the NIV takes this option, even though they also insert the word “evil”, which is unnecessary and potentially misleading. Making a similar substitution, we may read the verse thus:

*“Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own desire and enticed.”*

This reading has a very different feel. It now coincides with what John says about temptation in 1 John 2:16, that it is:

*“...the desire of the eye, the desire of the flesh and the pride of life.”*

All temptation must by its very nature be internal, regardless of what first stimulates the thought. The serpent in the garden reminded Eve of a fact regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But Eve and Adam, exercising their free will, yielded to the desire which arose from within themselves to partake of the fruit. The choice either to consider or to reject the thought presented by the serpent was theirs alone. The serpent had no effect on what decision they made. That alone was their responsibility. They chose to consider the idea.

The Gospels record three distinct temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. Only one (turning stones into bread) could credibly have been presented by a second individual. The second temptation requires us to believe that Christ passively accompanied an individual from the wilderness to Jerusalem and then went up onto the pinnacle of the temple, whereas there is no indication that Christ, physically, ever left the wilderness. The third temptation has the same difficulty. There is no place on earth where an external tempter would be able to take Christ and show him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. All these temptations must have been thoughts of the mind of the flesh, thoughts which passed through the mind Christ but were immediately rejected as not in keeping with his mission — to glorify the name of God.

Having a desire to do something is in itself not a sin. It only becomes a sin if that desire does not glorify God *and* if we allow ourselves to indulge in it:

*“When lust (desire) hath conceived it bringeth forth sin” (James 1:15).*

Christ’s greatest temptation came in the garden following the last supper. There we find him all alone in agony, sweating as it were great drops of blood. What

are his words?

*“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Luke 22:42).*

There was no one else present with him to suggest those words. They came from within. These are the words of a man who is having a tremendous emotional battle. Christ during his short life had seen many men being crucified. It was not a pleasant sight. Knowing this form of execution was to be his lot, he would naturally experience a battle between his flesh and the spirit. One of the strongest impulses of natural man is the desire to live. An animal, even one which is normally quite docile, when he is cornered, is extremely dangerous because he is battling for his life; he does not want to die. Christ, in the garden, was having to overcome the natural desire of all living creatures to live. He desired that the “cup” pass from him, but again, as he had done in the wilderness, he rejected the idea:

*“Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done” (Matt 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).*

His will was to live, but yielding to such a desire would not glorify God. No wonder he was in such agony, battling the fleshly desire to avoid a slow painful death and to live. We find at least twice he had to keep overcoming this desire to live, asking God to let it pass. But the spirit did prevail and the flesh was defeated. He was able to say, “I have overcome.” His desire to serve the LORD overcame his fleshly desire to serve himself. It was a difficult battle and it was fought entirely within the mind of Christ.

We too are constantly engaged in this same battle. We have a carnal mind, that is, a mind of the flesh. Christ had the same mind. Christ knows what we are going through, since he fought exactly the same battle. It is a continuous struggle, the mind of the spirit warring against the mind of the flesh. We must keep our focus on the end prize, God’s gift of eternal life, and remain steadfast in prayer, as Christ did, so that we can overcome the thinking of the flesh and be awarded the prize we so eagerly seek, a place in the Kingdom of God.

*John Pursell (Rogue Valley, OR)*

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*“Trials, temptations, disappointments — all these are helps instead of hindrances, if one uses them rightly. They not only test the fiber of a character, but strengthen it. Every conquered temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before” (James Buckham).*

*“The fear of man will keep a man straight in many things; but in times of temptation — when the eye of man has no bearing; when a man is left only to the power of his own heart — if the fear of God is not there, he will go wrong and depart from wisdom to his destruction. To ‘fear God and do His commandments’ is Solomon’s summary of the whole duty of man” (Robert Roberts).*

## Reflections

### A Disciple at Damascus, Named Ananias (Acts 9:10)

There was a task needing to be done. Someone was needed to do it. The master looked for someone. He found his man ready, willing, faithful. That man was Ananias. He was the right man in the right place at the right time; and God used him. The outcome was incalculable blessing.

Ananias is a most inspiring pattern of... godliness. To all those believers who feel that there is a disappointing sense of ordinariness about their life and surroundings, this man, Ananias, is a silver starlight of encouragement. He is mentioned only twice in the New Testament, in the ninth and twenty-second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles; and even in those two places he is only introduced in a rather incidental way.

Look, then, for a few moments, at this man Ananias, and see in him a sparkling gem of... discipleship.

We are told three things about him. First, he is simply called “a certain disciple”. He was neither an apostle nor a great preacher; nor does he appear to have been a leader or an official or even an outstanding personality. Likely enough we should never have heard anything about him had it not been for his figuring in Saul’s conversion. How heartening to know that God knew all about him! No depth of obscurity can hide us from His gracious gaze. “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.” Ananias is like some unknown star which for a brief spell reveals itself to the eye of the telescope and then forever disappears again. He was just an ordinary, humble disciple, who evidently sought to glorify Jesus by a consecrated life amid the unexciting usualness of customary Damascus ways and doings.

Second, we are told that he was “a devout man according to the law” (Acts 22:12). That is saying a good deal. See here his devotion to principle. He was so honest and religiously particular that he could endure the microscope where perhaps others of a more imposing outward profession would wince. He was principled to the last detail.

Third, Ananias had “a good report of all the Jews that dwelt there.” It is no small thing to have our character praised by those who strongly differ from us. Such a reputation as Ananias had is not gained in five minutes or nine days. It is evident that he was thoroughly well known in Damascus. He had been there a long while and was probably a native of the place. He was thought well of by those with whom he lived and worked and transacted business, and that, not for a week or two only, but month after month. Such men are grand sermons.

But look now at Ananias’s willingness. Think you it was an easy thing which the Master set his servant to do when he said, “Arise, and go into the street which is

called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus"? Be under no such impression... Was not Saul the most virulent and notorious oppressor of the Christians in all Judea? Had he not come to Damascus, even at this very time, on a blood-curdling excursion of anti-Christian persecution? Could such an Ethiopian ever change his skin? But the Lord said to him, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Without further demur, "Ananias went his way." He willingly obeyed!

Now see Ananias's faithfulness. In the obedience of Ananias there shines... loyalty... and humility. His... love is seen in his attitude towards Saul. He goes in to the arch-persecutor with the eloquently affectionate greeting, "Brother Saul!" Moreover, "he put his hands on him" — a very gracious act, for, whereas Saul had come to lay the hand of violence on Ananias, Ananias now lays the gentle hand of brotherliness on Saul! There is no trace of resentment in the entire demeanor of Ananias.

But if his Christian love is revealed in his attitude towards Saul, his loyalty is seen in his attitude towards his Lord. His first word, after saluting Saul is, "The Lord, even Jesus... hath sent me." Ananias would not let his expression of brotherliness toward Saul cause him to shrink from affirming the lordship of Jesus, even though that was the very thing against which Saul had been so madly fighting. So, after saying, "Brother Saul," he immediately proceeds, "The Lord, even Jesus... hath sent me!"

See here, also, this good man's humility. He did not intrude himself into his message. The very opposite was the case. His only reference to himself was the only one that was needful, "The Lord, even Jesus... hath sent me." He did not start explaining who or what he was. He was content to be the faithful anonymous messenger of his Master.

Admire, then, the exemplary faithfulness of Ananias; his Christian love, loyalty, lowliness.

This was the man God used; ready, willing, faithful! Yet just an ordinary, humble, obscure working man... Our Lord has a special pleasure, as he himself has said, in those of his servants who are "faithful over a few things."

*J. Sidlow Baxter*

## Wide as the Waters

The following quotations are from *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution it Inspired*, by Benson Bobrick:

"Next to the Bible itself, the English Bible was — and is — the most influential book ever published...

"In 1604, a committee of 54 scholars, the flower of Oxford and Cambridge, collaborated on the new translation for King James. Their collective expertise in

Biblical languages and related fields has probably never been matched, and the translation they produced — substantially based on the earlier work of Wycliffe, Tyndale and others — would shape English literature and speech for centuries. As the great historian Macaulay wrote of their version, ‘If everything else in our language should perish, it alone would suffice to show the extent of its beauty and power.’ To this day its common expressions, such as ‘labor of love,’ ‘lick the dust,’ ‘a thorn in the flesh,’ ‘the root of all evil,’ ‘the fat of the land,’ ‘the sweat of thy brow,’ ‘to cast pearls before swine,’ and ‘the shadow of death’ are heard in everyday speech.

“The impact of the English Bible on law and society was profound. It gave every literate person access to the sacred text, which helped to foster the spirit of inquiry through reading and reflection. This, in turn, accelerated the growth of commercial printing and the proliferation of books. Once people were free to interpret the word of God according to the light of their own understanding, they began to question the authority of their inherited institutions, both religious and secular. This led to reformation within the Church, and to the rise of constitutional government in England and the end of the divine right of kings. England fought a Civil War in the light (and shadow) of such concepts, and by them confirmed the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In time, the new world of ideas that the English Bible helped inspire spread across the Atlantic to America, and eventually, like Wycliffe’s sea-borne scattered ashes, all the world over, ‘as wide as the waters be.’”

\* \* \* \* \*

“With the Great Bible, the Scriptures in English finally achieved that official status Tyndale had envisioned for them when he died. By royal injunction... every parish church in England was to ‘set up in some convenient place’ a copy of the English Bible accessible to all as ‘the very lively Word of God.’ Throughout the kingdom, copies for public use and edification were soon chained to lecterns in the vestibules of churches — six of them in St. Paul’s Church alone.

“There were some constraints. The people, for example, were admonished ‘to avoid all contention and altercation’ in their discussion of Biblical passages and ‘refer the explication of obscure places to men of higher judgment.’ But they ignored such injunctions and yielded completely to their new, blissful sense of spiritual awakening and release. ‘It was wonderful to see with what joy the book of God was received,’ wrote an early biographer of Cranmer, ‘not only among the more learned sort and those that were noted for lovers of the reformation, but generally all England over among the vulgar and common people; with what greediness God’s word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Everybody that could bought the book and busily read it; or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves; and divers among the elderly learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read.’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

“To a remarkable degree, the translators had proved faithful to the Hebrew, to the Greek, even (in a sense) to the Vulgate, ‘for the rhythm of the English Bible, as it finally emerged,’ Sir Herbert Grierson noted, ‘owes not a little to the Latin of St. Jerome.’ At the same time, nine tenths of the words were of Saxon derivation, and the entire translation had a vocabulary of only 8,000 words. It fused Anglo-Saxon and Latin elements — the Latin, as one scholar notes, imparting stateliness and sonority to its diction; the Anglo-Saxon conforming to the Hebrew in homely vigor, concreteness and directness of style. In Anglo-Saxon, the translators captured the form of Hebrew superlatives, such as ‘Holy of Holies,’ ‘Song of Songs,’ ‘King of Kings,’ and ‘Vanity of vanities’; and the inverted phrase — ‘throne of ivory,’ ‘altar of stone,’ ‘helmet of brass,’ ‘man of war,’ ‘children of wickedness,’ ‘man of truth,’ ‘prisoners of hope,’ ‘rock of ages,’ ‘man of sorrows,’ and ‘Son of man.’ The learned and literary John Selden (an eminent 17th century lawyer, scholar and orientalist, with expertise in rabbinical law) once complained that the Bible had been ‘rather translated into English words than into English phrases. The Hebraisms are kept and the phrase of that language is kept.’ But that was precisely what gave it special dignity and strength.”

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“By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, the English public was the most literate in Europe — indeed, it had become ‘the people of a book,’ and that book was the English Bible. Its legends, histories, war songs, and psalms; its sacred biographies of the Hebrew fathers, who loomed as large in the imagined past as classical gods; the stern words of its mighty prophets; the infinitely illuminating parables of Christ; the life of Christ itself; apocalyptic visions — all were absorbed by the popular mind ‘unoccupied for the most part by any rival learning.’ However much the ruling powers might wish to direct the understanding of their subjects, no state or Church authority could any longer hope to force it in a mold. ‘Pandora’s box was open,’ as one historian put it, ‘and no power could put back the thoughts on religion that took hold of the minds of men.’ ”

(What a contrast to the 21st century! England now seems to rank among the most irreligious nations in the world!)

## Weary Years and Silent Tears

*God of our weary years,  
 God of our silent tears,  
 Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;  
 Thou who has by Thy might  
 Led us into the light,  
 Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
 Lest our feet stray from the places, Our God, where we met Thee;  
 Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.*

These words, written by James Weldon Johnson in 1899, in celebration of the birthday of Abraham Lincoln, served to open the benediction by Reverend Joseph

Lowery at the Inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20, 2009. A few moments later, he added this petition:

“With your hands of power and your heart of love, help us then, now, Lord, to work for that day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, when tanks will be beaten into tractors, when every man and every woman shall sit under his or her own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid, when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

For this Welsh-born, long-time resident of Canada, it has been impossible to avoid being touched by the emotion associated with the election and inauguration of the 44th President of the United States. Especially in light of the “weary years and silent tears” of generations of African-Americans, this historic development has enormous significance. The jubilant, hopeful, enthusiastic response of millions of Americans has evoked a generous and optimistic reaction from millions more in other lands.

Yet we remain conscious of the immensity of the multi-faceted tasks facing the new President, his fellow Americans, and indeed the peoples of all lands. One measure of this challenge was apparent in the unprecedented level of security precautions in effect on this occasion. The threat to the safety of America’s new leader reflects the dangers facing global society in general. In his Inaugural Address, President Obama described the situation: “*Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.*”

There was a time when victory in war was clear-cut and readily recognizable. But warfare has changed. In Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, military success is now less well defined and far more elusive. In the “War on Terror,” there is neither clear definition nor imminent prospect of victory.

The President offers stirring rhetoric, to be followed doubtless by specific actions. But ultimately the challenge is insurmountable. For mere mortals, it is futile, in the words of the benediction, “*to work for that day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation.*”

Niall Ferguson, author of *The Ascent of Money*, was interviewed for a November newspaper article. The topic was the global financial crisis. But Professor Ferguson framed this problem in a larger context:

“People seem to have forgotten that there is an Iranian government committed to a nuclear arms program that poses an existential threat to Israel. The nightmare scenario is conflict in the Middle East. Will Israel act unilaterally, and what will be the reaction to that? In ‘The War of the World,’ I said that there are three things that make conflict very likely: economic volatility, ethnic disintegration, and an empire in decline. You have all three in Iraq. When I first published the book, I went around saying, ‘Of course we don’t have the kind of economic volatility that they had in the 1930s. But it could come back. The other two ingredients are already there.’” The reporter concludes: “It’s not difficult to understand why Niall Ferguson’s study of history is making him lose sleep.”

January's conflict in Gaza, which generated widespread international condemnation of Israel's role, provides further evidence that "*violence and hatred*" will not cease until the return of the Almighty King to Jerusalem.

The same applies in our individual struggles against the forces of evil, both within ourselves and around us. President Obama spoke poignantly of those who "*endured the lash of the whip.*" Regardless of where we live, regardless of our ethnic background, regardless of the color of our skin, we all have a burdensome heritage of slavery. Sin is truly a cruel taskmaster. Striving to serve the Savior, while toiling in Sin's domain, we each in our own way mark the passage of these "weary years"; sooner or later, we shed our share of "silent tears." With what joy then we recall that, in the sight of heaven, we have been emancipated!

*"Thanks be to God... now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Rom 6:17,22, RSV).*

*"In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26,28).*

Thanks be to God, we have a Leader who can and will bring us and this troubled earth the healing, cleansing, and renewal for which we yearn. Following His divine inauguration, we will, by grace, witness the fulfillment of all the promises His Father has made.

*"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together; that men may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it" (Isa 41:17-20).*

This is our unshakeable hope. In the meantime, this is our prayer:

*Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;*

*Thou who has by Thy might*

*Led us into the light,*

*Keep us forever in the path, we pray.*

*Philip Jones (Calgary, AB)*

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*Before you can inspire with emotion, you must be swamped with it yourself. Before you can move them to tears, your own must flow. To convince them, you must yourself believe.*

*Winston Churchill*

## I Cannot Tell

I cannot tell why he whom angels worship  
Should set his love upon the sons of men,  
Or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers  
To bring them back, they know not how nor when.  
But this I know: that he was born of Mary  
When Bethlehem's manger was his only home,  
And that he lived at Nazareth and labored.  
And so the Savior, Savior of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,  
As with his peace he graced this place of tears,  
Nor how his heart upon the cross was broken,  
The crown of pain to three and thirty years.  
But this I know: he heals the broken-hearted,  
And stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,  
And lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,  
For yet the Savior, Savior of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,  
How he will claim his earthly heritage,  
How satisfy the needs and aspirations  
Of east and west, of sinner and of sage.  
But this I know: all flesh shall see his glory,  
And he shall reap the harvest he has sown,  
And some glad day his sun shall shine in splendor  
When he the Savior, Savior of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship  
When, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,  
Or who can say how great the jubilation  
When all the hearts with love for him are filled.  
But this I know: the skies will sound his praises,  
Ten thousand thousand human voices sing,  
And earth to heaven and heaven to earth will answer:  
At last the Savior, Savior of the world, is King.

*W.Y. Fullerton, adapted*

*"I cannot tell" may be sung as a hymn to "Londonderry Air" ("Danny Boy").*

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*"Do the little things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ who does them in us. And do the greatest things as though they were little and easy, because of his love" (Blaise Pascal).*

## Three Years, and Half a Year

Three years, and half a year — so short a space  
To listen to his voice and see his face —  
Yet, O incredible! those years unrolled  
Wonders the very world could scarcely hold.

Sometimes his words were hard to reconcile,  
As if he warned, prepared; but we would smile  
And put them from us as if we had not heard,  
With childish question or with heedless word.

Dead? Raise to life? We could not understand.  
He was the leader of our little band,  
Our friend, our Master, and so much beside —  
How further his great purpose if he died?

He was not always grave, nor we in awe;  
Only the golden present time we saw  
And it sufficed us, learning every hour  
New gifts of healing, and new words of power.  
We walked with him by Galilee, while he  
Trod the dark shadows of Gethsemane.

In those last days some high distinction grew,  
A strange, disturbing difference, and I knew,  
Yet without knowing, that the time was near  
When we should mourn, sometimes I seemed to hear  
A cadence in his speech as yet unknown,  
And in his eyes a look as though alone  
He heard his Father speaking to him there  
And loved to listen, yet could hardly bear  
The growing consciousness of all it meant  
To tread the fearsome path where he was sent.

This was his burden and his glory, borne  
As he alone could bear it, till the torn  
Last shreds of self dropped from him, and the clear  
Light of the spirit shone at last austere.

So passed our Lord through life, and made it sing  
And glow transcendent by his tarrying.  
Marred beyond all, and past all telling fair,  
So went our Lord to death.  
I am John... I was there.

*Edith Ladson*

## The Redemption of Man

The redemption of man by Christ Jesus has been tearfully contemplated, angrily debated, reduced to mathematical equations, abandoned as incomprehensible, and, sometimes, made a matter of scorn.

Some have thought that the Lord Jesus succeeded in placating a fiercely angry Deity and caused Him to turn His face toward us when hitherto He had been wrathful and unforgiving. Others have regarded redemption like a system of weights, pulleys and strings by which the redemption of man was, as it were, mechanically contrived. Yet others have taken it as a spiritual business transaction whereby the inestimable value of Christ's blood was paid to a being known as the Devil in order to secure the release of sinners from his evil grasp. Some have found it helpful to look upon Christ's death as substitutionary: that is, that Christ went to the cross instead of us, paying in this way the price for our personal sins. And some have regarded his death as a tragedy, an accident of wicked circumstances, and in no way of itself redemptive.

What is the truth? How can one find a way through this maze of speculation? As in everything else, there is only one sure way, and that is to let the Bible do the teaching and guiding, and to submit humbly to the discipline of this instruction.

Let us start by dismissing the notion that Jesus was pleading on bended knee to a God whose anger had caused Him to turn His face away from us. The secret of the cross is love, the love of God and the love of His Son. Whatever else we may have to consider, let us lay down this foundation: the motivating force for redemption is love:

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).*

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).*

*"The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).*

Love is the reason for redemption. Love flowed first from God, and therefore from the Son whom He sent into the world. Love cannot be and must not be reduced to law or considered in terms of rights and earnings. Love is above and beyond all considerations. Love owes nothing to any goodness or merit in us. Love comes from God who is "merciful and gracious".

*Harry Tennant*

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*"We can learn a lot about the spirit of sacrifice by observing that the only perfect man who ever lived did two things in quick succession: first he rode into the capital city in royal triumph, and then he set about washing dirty feet."*

*Unknown*

## A Welsh Girl and Her Bible

Nearly two hundred years ago [*now, of course, something over 200 years ago: Editor*] — 1784 was the precise date — there was born in an obscure village in Wales a girl whose zeal for the Word of God was destined to leave its mark on world history. Mary Jones' parents were poverty-stricken tuberculous weavers in Llanfihangel. Life was hard in that poor cottage and luxuries of the smallest sort unknown. But there was godliness.

From her earliest days Mary loved to hear the telling of Bible stories. It is difficult to know how accurately these were told by her parents, for there was no Bible in the house, and if there had been, no ability to read it. Nor, as she grew older was there opportunity for Mary to attend school. Llanfihangel had no school. But when she was ten, opportunity came to go to school at Abergynolwyn three miles away. Of course Mary had to walk. No school bus in those days!

And she was far too poor to own a pony.

She was a quick pupil, and before very long was being used as unofficial auxiliary teacher (unpaid) to instruct younger children.

All this time she had no Bible, but as her eagerness to know the Book grew so also did her determination to have a copy of her own. A relation of the family, Mrs. Evans Evans, who lived two miles away, had a Welsh Bible and was willing for Mary to go as often as she wished in order to read it. So, almost daily, Mary walked those four miles for the pleasure of reading the Scriptures.

But she must have a copy of her own! And this meant eager disciplined self-denying saving for a long time. She took on any additional activity which might add to the meager store of pennies she was setting aside. She chopped wood for old Mrs. Rees, she looked after the neighbors' children, she spent long hours hemming sheets. And it was a great day when Mrs. Evans Evans gave her three chickens, for even at the pathetic prices ruling then, eggs meant more pennies.

That first year's saving yielded the princely sum of one shilling! The next year, two shillings and seven pence — and Mary looked forward with shining eyes to the day when she would have a Bible of her own. But then her ailing father fell more sick than he had ever been, and what little money Mary was able to get had to go towards keeping the home going. However, she never relaxed her efforts or her determination. So it took six years of dedicated labor before there was money enough for that long-coveted copy of the Scriptures. But now there was the money, where to get the Bible? There was no bookshop within miles of Llanfihangel. Mary was told that Mr. Thomas Charles, a minister in Bala, would probably help her. So one day, with a little bread and cheese to help her on the way, she walked barefoot by lonely paths through the mountains more than 25 miles to the home of Mr. Charles. There, in the minister's study, tired, pathetic, strained, but eager as ever, Mary held out her money and asked for a Bible. "But I have only one spare copy," he said, "and that is already earmarked for someone else." But then he heard her story, and in his mind's eye saw her, dogged and footsore, walking those endless

miles through the mountains. “No matter,” he added, “you shall have it. Others can wait till I get a further supply.”

So next day, with a springy stride, Mary returned home with her precious Bible, pausing now and then to rest a while and to use the opportunity to read from the Scriptures, a lamp to her feet, a light to her path.

And there the story of Mary Jones ends. No more is known about her.

### **Her legacy to the world**

But not long after this, in 1802, at a meeting in London Mr. Charles told the story of Mary Jones and her Bible, and pleaded for the founding of a society to print the Bible in Welsh. The idea met with immediate approval. However, one member of the company, with more vision and faith than the rest, stood up and declared with passionate emphasis: “But I say, if for Wales, why not for *the world?*”

The proposal was taken up with acclaim. Two years later The British and Foreign Bible Society formally came into existence, with the avowed objective of making the Bible available in all the tongues of Babel. In 1814 the Bible Society of the Netherlands was formed. Two years later came the American Bible Society. Today they are the United Bible Society, operating on a massive scale with the financial help and support of Bible-minded people everywhere. How many millions of Bibles have been printed during that one-and-a-half [*now two*] centuries?

*“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations.”*

Mary Jones never had the slightest inkling of the mighty work her simple single-minded zeal for the Scriptures would set going. In this sophisticated, materialistic twentieth [*twentieth-first*] century, how many bring to the Bible a fraction of the reverence and zeal which took Mary Jones through the hills to Bala?

*Harry Whittaker*

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*I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.*

*Abraham Lincoln*

*I have known 95 of the world's great men in my time, and of these 87 were followers of the Bible. The Bible is stamped with a Specialty of Origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors.*

*W.E. Gladstone*

*It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.*

*George Washington*

*Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart.*

*John Ruskin*



## Bible Mission News

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Bro. Paul and  
Sis. Naomi  
Osborn with  
their children  
Abigail and  
Isaiah

### **Missionary Family Arrives in Quito, Ecuador!**

This is the Osborn family — Bro. Paul and Sis. Naomi, with their two children — Abigail who will be three on August 22 and Isaiah turned one on June 3. They are members of the Okanagan Ecclesia in BC, Canada. They arrived in Quito, Ecuador on May 21 for three or more years of missionary service, God willing. The purpose for showing you their photo is so that we have a visual of the family to make our prayers more powerful.

May I suggest that if a few of us could send them an email of encouragement in the next week or so, wishing them God's blessing on their commitment, and again after they arrive now and then, just to keep in touch — we are sure they would appreciate it. We don't have to send much — just enough to let them know that there is a council, a committee, linkmen and a brotherhood behind them — and of course that they will never be alone! For those of us who have moved somewhere away from close family, such as this move, there are a lot of emotions involved in leaving and a lot of unknowns about where we are going. When a few of us served as missionaries a number of years ago — it was expensive phone calls back home and the occasional letter (if it arrived!). Now we are blessed with many instant and inexpensive communication methods.

The Osborns are going to help a 20-member ecclesia that is fairly well-established, although with a number of members who have been baptized but a few years. The

ecclesia on their part is ready to welcome them and help them with the many changes and challenges that Paul and Naomi will face. There are two older couples that are prepared to be their grandparents!

The Osborns' help is needed with the youth. Most of the members are mid-40s to early 70s (one couple has been married about 50 years), so Paul and Naomi will pick up the good work that Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter did with the children and teens in recent years.

Paul and Naomi Osborn's email address is paulandnaomi@hotmail.com

*Don Luff*  
CBMA representative

## What Do People Want to Know?

ThisisYourBible.com (TIYB) has been in operation for nearly three and a half years. A critical feature of the site is that visitors can ask any question and will receive a response, generally within 24 hours. As you can imagine, with more than 300 questions coming in each month, this keeps the TIYB staff quite busy. Most questions have recurring themes, but occasionally, we receive questions that surprise even us. We've even had questions from church pastors that have asked us to help them with material that they are using in their church Bible classes!

So, when you look at all the questions we've received, which is well in excess of 3,000, what are the trends?

Since the primary focus for TIYB is **first principle** teaching, we suspected that this category of question would lead the way. It didn't. In fact, here's how the categories of questions ranked in numbers:

- Bible Study (asking us to explain a passage)
- Life Application (marriage and family issues, coping with poverty, addiction)
- First Principles (questions about primary Bible teachings)
- Questions About Christadelphians (who we are, how we are organized, what we believe)

As we saw this trend developing, we were reminded that one of the top ten downloaded pamphlets in our library section is "Christ in the Old Testament." This matches our experiences with seminars, where students are excited to see the multiplicity of connections, the echoes and foreshadowings, between the Old and New Testament. Indeed, this is a powerful message for Christadelphians to preach. It is not one that has a "crowded field" in Christendom.

While many people may come to TIYB with questions about first principle topics, a significant number have nagging questions they would like answered about how to accurately apply the Bible to their lives. Again, this is a huge opportunity, we believe, for Christadelphian teaching. Way too much garbage is being professed by Christendom — often mixing some Bible teaching with humanistic poison.

We believe that people are looking for true Bible teachings on how to live their lives. They'd like to see with their own eyes what God says, rather than "taking the word" of their local pastor or friends.

First principle teaching remains our core message. It is what defines our body and separates us from much of Christendom. It must be said that while first principle questions are third on the list, the rest of the site is all about first principle topics. So, no doubt, the majority of visitors to the site have first principle questions on their mind.

### **So what might we conclude?**

It is clear that those seeking Bible answers will have a more diverse appetite for questions than strictly first principle topics. Yes, our primary message is about Bible truth on the first principle matters. We need to continue to shout these truths from the roof tops! But we also need to keep in mind that men and women are fascinated with the Bible — just as we are. They are reading and finding stories or teachings that they just can't fully understand. In most cases, they have no body of believers, no study resources to fall back on. When someone personally discovers that Noah and his family were *not* in the ark for a mere 40 days, but more than a year, they are shocked and a little excited!

I've come to believe that the "gift" we can provide to students is helping them to fundamentally *apply the Bible*. It is the tool for understanding first principles, for working out the details of a Gospel account, or for better understanding the Divine standards for one's personal behavior at the workplace. I suppose it has always been the primary teaching of the Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminars. When students learn to apply what they read, it is a joy to watch and a cause for rejoicing.

So, to the ecclesial program committees out there — perhaps some food for thought. We all know that the Christadelphian message is not limited to first principles. The Word is to be applied to every part of life. It is Divinely-designed for mental and spiritual stimulation — in fact, it may very well be the best way a man can use his mind. May God bless us as we bring His living word to those with open and seeking hearts.

*Bro. David Jennings*  
*CBMA/CBMC North America*

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*William Tyndale first translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English, making a Bible for the common people. In 1535 he was betrayed by a friend, taken prisoner to the castle of Vilford, and continued to work on his translation. He was unable to finish his work because he was sentenced to die a heretic's death: strangulation and burning at the stake. On October 6, 1536 he cried out his last words, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!" and then he died. His prayer was answered within a year.*

## Touched by His Grace

*In the May issue, the San Francisco, CA, Ecclesia informed us that Bro. Julio Diaz was baptized into Christ. Sis. Marilyn Seago has written to us of the background and circumstances of Bro. Julio's learning the Truth, and his baptism.*

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).*

In these last days God is calling out people from the dark hidden places of society. Behind prison walls there is no hope unless a person is truly called. The prisons do have chaplains, but their doctrines are false and only lead to the darkness of the grave with no hope. When inmates are released, they often end up back in prison because they have no goal in their life and no vision. These prisoners need God's Word as their guidebook to life, and they need to know that God has a plan and a vision for them of His Kingdom. This gives these prisoners a hope.

In August 2004 we received a coupon asking for Bible Basics from Sotero Ceja in the Corcoran Prison. He received this coupon from another prisoner. We sent him the English version of Bible Basics. Then we received a letter from Julio Diaz of this same prison explaining that he was writing the letters for Sotero since he could only read and write in Spanish. He also asked if he could have a copy of Bible Basics. I answered Julio's letter and suggested that he have Sotero give him his English version of Bible Basics and we would send Sotero a Spanish version. We did this and the two of them studied when they could. Sotero and Julio did not share a cell together, and so they could only meet out in the exercise yard.

Julio would do his lessons and send them to me and often include Sotero's answers as well. Sotero wrote his answers in Spanish and, since I don't know Spanish, I had my daughter Anna help me with the translation. Julio and Sotero did very well with their lessons. When they were finished in 2005, they both they wanted further contact with the Christadelphians.

At one time I wrote to Julio about another inmate named Mark, who had a hard time letting go of the belief in a devil. He wrote me back:

“I was reminded about a time when Sotero and I were just starting out with the Bible course, another fellow inmate saw me reading the book (Bible Basics course) and told us that it was no good — something along the lines of ‘They don't even believe in the devil.’ That last statement actually attracted my interest more. I felt I had to keep an open mind, because there might be truth in something and if God is guiding me to the truth, I shouldn't be overlooking it.

“It certainly was different than what I was previously being taught, yet it did make sense and it all came together, backed up by lots of Scripture to make the point clear, while what I was learning before tended to confuse me. Then thoughts would arise about ‘Beware of cults,’ and such, something also engrained in my mind by listening to society, but then

there had to be some common sense in my inquiring, so I looked at the pros and cons...

- 'It's not like they're trying to steal my money.' (I ain't got none.)
- 'They're not trying to brainwash anybody to manipulate them.'
- 'They're not looking to send someone down the wrong path.'
- 'They're not extraterrestrials trying to eat our brains.' (My imagination ran wild with thoughts.)
- 'From the letters I've been receiving from Sister Marilyn, I see no evil intent, in fact there's more of a humility and a genuine interest in helping others learn the Truth.' "

(From Julio's letter of May 28, 2006).

Afterward, Julio wrote me that when Sotero was to be released, in September 2006, sometime during the night he was taken and deported to Mexico. Julio had written a letter for Sotero, in English as Sotero dictated in Spanish, in which he did give me an address in Mexico where he would be going. We wrote to this address, but received no reply. To this date we do not know where Sotero Ceja is, but he knows of God's hope and the return of Jesus.

On October 9, 2006, Julio Diaz was released. He went to live in Napa with his sister, where he decided to attend the local junior college and take art and basic courses. At this time I wrote to Julio and asked if he wanted to do the Exploring the Bible course, and he said he did. We did this by mail.

Then in January 2007 my husband Jim was scheduled to speak at the San Francisco Ecclesia, which meets at Marinwood in San Rafael, California. I found this was within the radius of Julio's parole limits. He could come to meet us and other Christadelphians there, and also attend a meeting. I called and he did come, bringing his sister with him. All the brothers and sisters were happy to meet Julio. He is a quiet young man of 30 years. This was the first time we ever met him. He learned about the mid-week Bible class and went to it. He started coming regularly. We would see him when the Northern Christadelphian ecclesias would get together for events like the Sunday school program or picnic. Julio told me that he brought his mother to meeting on Mother's Day, and she had told him to thank me for contacting him. She has seen a good change in her son.

In August 2008 Julio asked for baptism, and the brethren of the San Francisco Ecclesia interviewed him. I had mentioned to Julio that whenever he decided to be baptized, I wanted to be there. When you do preach to prisoners, all you can do is teach the inmate and conduct a pre-baptismal interview. You cannot see an inmate get baptized; the prison chaplain is the only one allowed to perform a baptism, at the inmate's request, but the chaplain can do it whenever it is convenient for him.

On August 26, 2008, Julio was baptized in the San Francisco Bay by Bro. Jim Silars and Bro. Paul Campbell.



**Julio Diaz's  
baptism in  
San Francisco Bay,  
with  
Bro. Paul Campbell (L)  
and  
Bro. Jim Sillars, Sr. (R)**



**Bro. Julio Diaz with Sis. Marilyn Seago**

Bro. Julio has finished his courses at Napa Junior College, and has applied to San Jose State University. We heard he has been accepted and will be moving down our way later this year. Then he will be attending our ecclesia, the San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia. We are looking forward to having him at our meeting. He speaks Spanish, and will be helpful in our Spanish Sunday school class and with preaching.

*Marilyn Seago  
Prison Preaching  
(San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*

## Addresses for Bequests and Donations

**Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA)** supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://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](http://www.cbma.net) for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

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

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

Phone: 818-842-2868  
[jberneau@earthlink.net](mailto:jberneau@earthlink.net)

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

**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](mailto:christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net)

**Spanish language literature** is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947.  
Email: [jdhunter@gte.net](mailto:jdhunter@gte.net),  
Phone: 626-303-2222

**Agape in Action** provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2.  
Phone: 519-837-9095,  
Email: [agapeinaction@rogers.com](mailto:agapeinaction@rogers.com)  
Website: [www.agapeinaction.com](http://www.agapeinaction.com)

**Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas** funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. [www.cmadfa.com](http://www.cmadfa.com)

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

**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

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

**Christadelphian Care Line** provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. We now have Canadian charitable status. 866-823-1039

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

## News & Notices

(Please send in text-only News and Notices by the 10th of the preceding month, please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

### **HONESDALE, PA**

Bro. Kenneth Frisbie fell asleep in the Lord, March 3, 2009. He was our recording brother for over twenty years.

*Gerald K. Frisbie*

### **MENDOCINO, CA**

We were blessed with a new sister with the baptism of ROBBIE STAFFORD on March 4, 2009.

We have had a number of visitors from neighboring ecclesias in California and Oregon. We thank Bro. John Tom Hawksworth (Portland, OR) for his words of exhortation.

Bro. Everett Creekmore has been diagnosed with throat cancer and will be undergoing chemotherapy for a couple of months. Also, our dear Bro. Chon Vargas has prostate cancer and will be receiving treatment in the near future. We need prayers for health and comfort. We know that God listens to our prayers. We also pray for the day when all of His children will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and pain and sorrow will pass away.

*Debra Phenicie*

### **MILFORD ROAD, MI**

We warmly welcome by way of transfer Bro. Ben Beutel from the Wichita Falls, TX Ecclesia. We lovingly transfer Bro. Trevor and Sis. Sheila Snow to the Ringwood, Australia Ecclesia. They have been very instrumental in our vineyard and will be deeply missed.

As always, we are very appreciative of the many brethren and sisters who have visited our ecclesia over the past months. We especially thank Bro. Michael Livermore (Livonia, MI); Bro Kevin Mayock (Worcester, MA); Bro John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. Bob Jarvela (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. Duncan Movassaghi (Shirley, U.K.); and Bro Mark Newth (Royal Oak, MI) for their words of exhortation.

*Paul Sparacino*

### **ORLANDO, FL**

Our ecclesia has been blessed with many visitors this year. From out of state, we have had Bro. Richard Harrison, Sis. Sara Harrison, Bro. Kevin and Sis. Karin Hill, Bro. Ian and Nishla Neblett, Bro. Ed and Sis. Theresa Rivet, Bro. Tom and Sis. Vivian Thorp, Bro. Allan and Sis. Sandra Walker all from various ecclesias in Ontario. We have had, from Moorestown, NJ, Sis. Nancy Adams and Sis. Ruth Ellison. From England, Bro. Glen McDonald, Bro. Mike and Sis. Jan Ponting, Bro. Tim Ponting, Sis. Emma Ponting, Sis. Kay Padgett, and Bro. Bob Sheffield joining us in fellowship.

We extend our thanks to all those brothers who graciously exhorted.

*Randy Davenport*

## **SANTA BARBARA, CA**

We would like to apologize for not reporting the affairs of the Santa Barbara ecclesia for over a year. With the blessings of our Father, we have actively maintained our light stand in this area considering the average age of the members of our ecclesia. That being said, all of our elderly are doing very well.

It was with sadness that we remember the deaths of two of our members.

Sis. Beverly Woods passed away on June 22, 2008, at the age of 81 from lung cancer. Sis. Beverly had moved to Santa Barbara from the Olympia Ecclesia a number of years ago and prior to that lived in the Palm Desert California area. Her friendship, loving smile and attentive care to the brothers and sisters has been greatly missed.

Our Bro. Gail Trent passed away on July 31, 2008, at the age of 89. Bro. Gail was one of the founding members of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia and was most remembered for his ability to quote scripture and play the organ. His love for the scriptures and musical talents have been sorely missed.

Both our Sis. Beverly and Bro. Gail await the return of our Lord and Master when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

During the last few months of our Sis. Beverly Woods' life God gave us the blessing and opportunity to spend time with her son and family from New Zealand. Bro. Tim, Sis. Liz, Amy and Jesse spent many months comforting their mother and grandmother as she began to fail. During this time, Amy began studying for baptism.

After a good confession of her faith, AMY WOODS was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ on July 6, 2008, in the Santa Barbara Ecclesia. Sis. Amy has since moved back home to Cambridge, NZ, to be with her family. We wish our sister God's blessing as she works in his vineyard awaiting the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It was also with great joy that after many years, we welcomed back into fellowship our Sis. Tricia Andrews, the daughter of our Sis. Dorothy Woolridge. We are so happy to have our sister back with us.

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

Our Bro. Matt Walker transferred his membership to the Simi Hills Ecclesia on November 23, 2008. We pray God blesses him in his new ecclesia.

In April of this year, we welcomed by way of transfer from the San Francisco Ecclesia, our Sis. Wilma Hirst. Sis. Wilma is the sister in the flesh of our Bro. Floyd Elsas. Bro. Floyd and Sis. Wilma are both in their 90's and are now living together. They are both so enthusiastic for the truth and attend all of our ecclesial activities. Their youthfulness and love for the truth are a testimony to us all. We pray that Yahweh will bless them with many more years and the opportunity to witness His son's return.

This past year, we welcomed around the table of the Lord many brethren and sisters from the Southern California area. And from further away, we welcomed the following: Sis. Ashleigh Chu (New York); Bro. Martin and Sis. Jane Norris, and Bro. Ken Smith

(UK); Bro. Nigel Fletcher, Bro. Brian and Sis. Lorna Luke (Aust.); Bro. Jim and Sis. Marilyn Seagoe (San Francisco); Bro. George and Sis. Julie Garcia (Houston, TX); Bro. Tim and Sis. Liz Woods (New Zealand); Sis. Chantel Rivard, Bro. Gary and Sis. Shirley Smith (Canada); Bro. Mark and Sis. Aruni Seagoe, and Sis. Stacy Sue Wagner (Portland).

We would like to thank the following brethren for ministering to our ecclesia with Bible classes and the word of exhortation: Bre. Brian Luke, Martin Norris, Al Carlson, Jim Seagoe, Joshua Barrett, Ben Brinkerhoff, Ron Stewart, Jim Land, David Clubb, Nathan Blanchard, Ken Smith, Matt Jones, Geoff Smith, Bob Lloyd, Nigel Fletcher, Chris Stickney, Mark Seagoe and Michael Stickney. We would like to offer a special thanks to our Bro. Brian Luke for the study weekend on “David and Jonathan”.

It is our prayer that this will be the year of our Lord and Savior’s return: “Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

*Craig Stickney*

## **SHELBURNE, ON**

In the past few months the following brethren and sisters have transferred to other ecclesias: Bro. Bruce and Sis. Barbara Abel to Barrie, ON; Sis. Margo Maier to Hamilton Greenaway, ON; Sis. Lois Chippada to Hyderabad, India; and Sis. Mary Jane Styles to Livonia, MI.

Bro. Chris Sales, who may be contacted by email at christopher.sales@ugdsb.on.ca, has taken on the duty of Recording Brother. All correspondence should now be sent to him. Address details are in the CALS Diary.

*Graeme Wilson*

## **Camp Hashawha Family Bible Study Weekend**

The Washington, D.C. Ecclesia extends a loving invitation for all to attend our family Bible study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. The weekend is planned, God willing, for November 27-29, 2009. Bro. Ian Macfarlane of the Book Road, Hamilton, ON Ecclesia is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled “The Mind of the Spirit”. Contact Bro. Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org for additional

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*“The little letter to Philemon introduces us to two men. One is the writer, an old man in chains. Contrary to all outward appearance and though in prison, he was really free. Once, in his youth, he thought he was free, but he was really in chains to the law of sin. But when Christ came into his life he threw away his chains. Then, though in bonds, his spirit was as free as the winds of heaven. He was free to rejoice, and he was at peace.*

*“The other man is Onesimus. As a runaway slave, he escaped in the hope of finding freedom. He learned that the world was not as he imagined. His experience of earthly freedom was bitter: Rome’s streets were not gold, and the cobblestones were hard. Disillusioned, with empty pocket, in rage, he sought out the ecclesia in Rome. And where did he find true freedom? In the prison cell, from an old man in chains! He found help, sympathy, love and the Truth. From Paul the prisoner he found true freedom!” (Walter Draper).*

# Minute Meditation

## Faith and Works

*Faith alone saves; faith if it is alone never saves.*

Faith is important, as the book of Hebrews tells us, because without faith it is impossible to please God. It goes on to explain that if we want to have any part in the salvation God offers, then we must believe that God is and that He rewards those who seek Him. However, this paradoxical little saying, “Faith alone saves; faith if it is alone never saves”, also reaffirms the words of James: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

We must have faith, but faith is more than just expressing a fact or a feeling. The important thing to realize is that faith in God produces works. Our virtuous life or acts of kindness won't earn us salvation because salvation is the gift of God, and nothing we could ever do would be good enough to earn it. Nevertheless, without works, our faith is dead, according to James. So the saying is true. Faith does save but if faith is all alone it is dead. Our faith needs to be so strong that we eagerly serve our God with trembling and fear, working for our salvation, which means we work. However, the work we do is simply demonstrating how much faith we have in God, and it is not paying for our salvation.

There are two extremes that we want to avoid. One extreme is to say that we do not need to do anything at all, that Jesus did all that needs to be done. We may think that once we say that Jesus is our savior, then presto! we are saved! The book of Hebrews tells us that we must diligently seek God, and James makes it clear that works of faith are required. Paul warns that the reward of eternal life requires a lifetime of patient continuance in well doing.

At the other extreme there is a belief that we must work really hard in order to earn a place in the Kingdom, and that enough hard work can raise our score so that we qualify as being righteous. This point of view is also wrong. Paul tells us that there is none righteous, not one. Jesus criticized a ruler of the Jews for calling Jesus himself good because no man is good; only God is.

The truth lies somewhere between these two extremely wrong positions. Jesus tells us that if we love him then we should keep his commandments. Keeping his commandments does involve us doing things. It is no use saying we love Jesus and then sitting back and doing nothing, because then our words are idle chatter. If we truly have faith, and love our Lord, then that will cause us to want to follow him and obey him. Following him denotes action. We cannot follow anyone sitting down. So we all need to be up on our feet doing what we believe Jesus would want us to do.

Jesus gives us only one picture of the judgment seat, which is where each of us is going to be when we stand before him at his return. He describes those whom

he accepts as those who did kindnesses for others. The description makes it clear that saying we love Jesus involves being busy working to help others. The righteous were commended for visiting, feeding, clothing and caring for some of God's other children. The unrighteous were rejected for not doing those things. The cattle on a thousand hills all belong to God, so what can we give Him? We show our love for Him by caring for one another. Jesus cared for little children; he cared for those who were blind, deaf and lame. We do not have the power to heal, but we certainly can help those who need help. We also want to share our hope with those who have no hope and are unaware that they are outside the realm of God's merciful provision of a hope for eternal life. Just a kind word spoken to those grieving can make a world of difference in their lives. We do not need to look very far to find work we can do for the Lord. There are folks battling cancer, or facing job loss and financial ruin, or weighed down by the demands of daily living. Listening sympathetically as well as giving more tangible support when needed eases their burden and helps give them the balance they need to cope. Looking at our journey through the wilderness of life as God's training ground for the kingdom and sharing that view with those facing troublous times can help to put it all into perspective, and give them the courage to keep their faith and prayerfully persevere.

We won't be saved by our works, but we certainly will not be saved without them. Let us then resolve that we will say with Isaiah, "Here am I; send me." And then, let us be up and doing with joy the acts of kindness that show that we love God and His Son. Our faith will drive us to do what we can for our Lord and, while it might be called work, we do the work with joy knowing that God has blessed us by allowing us to serve Him.

*Robert J. Lloyd*

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### *"What is that in your hand?"*

*To each believer God gives a special gift. Centuries ago, God asked Moses, "What is that in your hand?" "Nothing but a rod," he replied. But it became the Divine symbol of authority and power when used as God directed.*

*And to Dorcas the same question could have been asked: "What is that in your hand?" "Just a needle, Lord" — but the garments she fashioned there-with are still remembered ages later as the epitome of good works that are pleasing to God.*

*Or to David: "What is that in your hand?" "Only a sling!" Only a sling? Perhaps you are serving God in obscure places with feeble tools, and thinking that your labor is insignificant. Take courage. Look in your hand, and use what is there for His glory.*

*(Unknown)*

# Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

## JULY 2009

- 3-6 Central Saskatchewan** Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Australia): "The King's Manifesto of Life". For information/registration contact Sis. Laura Jackson, RR#1 Stn. Main, North Battleford, SK, 306-246-4808 or t.jackson@sasktel.net
- 5-11 Southwest Bible School** Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bre. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON); Mark Vincent (Boston, MA); Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK). Registration information available at [www.planofgod.org](http://www.planofgod.org) or contact Bro. Fred Bearden, 2204 Downing Lane, Leander, TX 78641 or 512-259-4631
- 11-18 Manitoulin Island** Family Bible Camp. Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA): "We Would See Jesus"; Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Road, ON): adults: "Mine Eyes Have Seen the King" and teens: "Challenges For Young People in the Truth." Contact Bro. Rick Sales [ersales@explornet.com](mailto:ersales@explornet.com) or by phone at 519-925-6847
- 15-19 Guyana Campaign** New Amsterdam Hall. Five nights of Gospel proclamation on the theme, "The True Gospel Explained". Followed by a weekly "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminar", Wednesdays: July 22, 29, and August 6. Same venue. Please contact Bro. Ted Sleeper [tsleeper@astound.net](mailto:tsleeper@astound.net) or Bro. Joe Badlu [jbadlu@aol.com](mailto:jbadlu@aol.com)
- 18-26 Eastern Bible School** Connecticut College, New London, CT. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "My Heart is Inditing a Good Matter (The Lord in the Psalms)", teens: "Galatians", Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Studies in the Gospel of John", teens: "The Joy of Bible Study", Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "Suffering: Man's Problem/God's Problem", teens: "Marriage and Relationships: God's Way". For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers, [cindy.nevers@tecbs.org](mailto:cindy.nevers@tecbs.org) or [registration@tecbs.org](mailto:registration@tecbs.org).
- 19-25 Pacific Coast Bible School** Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Michael Ashton (Shirley, UK): "John the Baptist"; Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW): "The Life of Lot"; Bro. Gary Cousens (Cambridge, ON): "James". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau [mail@gelineau.org](mailto:mail@gelineau.org) or 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065, or Bro. Gary Patterson [garympatterson@hotmail.com](mailto:garympatterson@hotmail.com), or visit [www.californiabibleschool.org](http://www.californiabibleschool.org)
- 25-31 Manitoulin Island** Christadelphian Bible Camp. Theme: "All the Earth Shall Be Filled with His Glory". Speakers: Bro. Michael Ashton (Birmingham, UK): "Turning the World Upside Down: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles", and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Meditations on Creation". Contact Bro. Alex Browning, registrar at [jabrowning@rogers.com](mailto:jabrowning@rogers.com) or 416-284-0290
- 25 - August 2 Midwest Bible School** Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Matthew Blewett (South Africa): "On the Road with the Ark"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "Job: The Spirit of a Just Man Made Perfect"; Bro. Matt Norton (Australia): "The Return of Christ". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 [mike.live@gmail.com](mailto:mike.live@gmail.com) or visit [www.midwestbibleschool.com](http://www.midwestbibleschool.com)

## AUGUST 2009

- 8-14 Niagara Falls Bible School** Brock University Campus, Ontario. Adult classes: Bro.

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Finances — Lessons from Scripture about Money"; Bro. David Smith (Sunderland, UK): "The Family in Genesis". Teens: Bro. Lloyd: "Lessons from Daniel"; Bro. Smith: "The Moral Maze — Finding a Way Through". To register and for information see [www.nfcbs.com](http://www.nfcbs.com) or contact Bro. David Brierley [david.brierley@sympatico.ca](mailto:david.brierley@sympatico.ca) or 416-236-5295

**8-15 Guyana** Caribbean Youth Camp. Speakers: Bro. Gideon Drepaul and Bro. Tyrone Smartt. For more info contact Bro. Jerrold Joseph [jj\\_joseph56@yahoo.com](mailto:jj_joseph56@yahoo.com) or Bro. Ted Sleeper [tsleeper@astound.net](mailto:tsleeper@astound.net)

**29-4 Sept. Vancouver Island** Bible Camp. Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake. Adult speakers: Bro. Mark Giordano (USA): "The Kingdom of God Applied", Bro. Erik Sternad (USA): "Elijah — a man like us", Bro. Tecwyn Morgan (UK): "Malachi My Messenger". Teen speakers: Bro. Dave Garnand (USA): "Jesus' Challenge to You and Me", Bro. Giordano: "The Earth Series — Bible Apologetics", Bro. Morgan: "Paul the Preacher — From First to Last". Registrar Sis. Wendy Johnsen, #7-3855-9th Ave, Port Alberni, BC, V9Y 4T9, Canada; [wendyjohansen@yahoo.ca](mailto:wendyjohansen@yahoo.ca), 250-724-0501, fax: 250-723-9321

## SEPTEMBER 2009

**5-6 Victoria, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Tecwyn Morgan. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen [tec@csll.ca](mailto:tec@csll.ca)

**12 Hamilton Greenaway, ON** Fraternal Gathering. Wildwood Manor Ranch, Georgetown, ON. Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON): "Joseph — I Seek My Brethren". 2:00 pm, picnic supper at 5:00 pm.

**13-18 Adult Study Week** — The Bible School with a Difference! Wildwood Manor Ranch, Ballinafad, ON. Topic of Study: The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ, Part #1. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings, 6 Stodola Drive, Brantford ON N3R 6J5 ([bobnjoy@vif.com](mailto:bobnjoy@vif.com)) 519-754-0902, or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster, 63 Bradbury Crescent, Paris ON N3L 4E2 ([mjwebster@vif.com](mailto:mjwebster@vif.com)) 519-442-0544

**18-20 Bozeman, MT** Fall Fraternal. Bro. Garth Maier (East Texas, TX): "Signs of John's Gospel". Contact Bro. Steve Faver (406) 388-3314, [sfaver@unitedagencies.com](mailto:sfaver@unitedagencies.com)

**19,20 Paris Avenue, OH.** Study Weekend. Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON)

## OCTOBER 2009

**9-11 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal Weekend. Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON) "Jacob: From Jacob to Israel — The Process of Purification." Classes from 1:00 pm Saturday (including children's) with dinner following. For information and full program contact Bro. Dan Orsetti at (604) 514 4704 or [dorsetti@telus.net](mailto:dorsetti@telus.net).

**10-11 Edmonton, AB** Edmonton-Calgary Fraternal. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "The Bible Vs. Evolution". Children's classes will be offered. Please contact Bro. Jerome or Sis. Coralie Toronchuk at 780-453-1412 or [jeromet@telusplanet.net](mailto:jeromet@telusplanet.net)

**10-11 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving Gathering. Speaker: Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. Please contact Bro. Cliff or Sis. Julia Baines at 506-433-1728 or [christad@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:christad@nbnet.nb.ca)

**11 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Fraternal Gathering. Bro Jerry Hirst (Marinwood, CA) will give the Sunday school lesson and exhortation. We will meet at the Belmont Senior Center located in the Twin Pines Park in Belmont, CA, beginning at 9:30am. Lunch will be provided. Contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover at 650-260-2694 or [ragover@aol.com](mailto:ragover@aol.com)

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**17-18 Lompoc Valley, CA** 35th Annual Study Weekend. Lompoc Grande Hall, 435 North "G" Street, Lompoc, CA. Study Leaders: Bre. Ron Kidd (ON) and Paul Billington (ON): "Days Of Creation, Confirming Our Faith In God's Word". Please send a \$25 registration fee to Ron Stewart, 275 Oakwood Circle, Lompoc, CA 93436 (805) 733-5577. Limited seating. Please register early.

**NOVEMBER 2009**

**7-8 Victoria, BC** Fall study weekend. Bro. Andrew Jackson (North Battleford, SK): "Peter — A Brother Transformed". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen [andrew@csl.ca](mailto:andrew@csl.ca)

**13-15 Kitchener-Waterloo, ON** Brother's Weekend

**27-29 Washington, DC** Family Bible Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Ian Macfarlane (Book Road Hamilton, ON): "The Mind of the Spirit". Contact Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, [rkling@acm.org](mailto:rkling@acm.org).

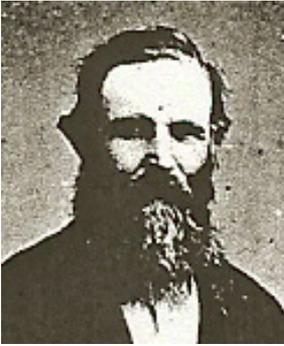
**JANUARY 2010**

**16-17 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Weekend with the Word. Speaker and topic to be announced. Contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover at 650-260-2694 or [ragover@aol.com](mailto:ragover@aol.com)

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# History

## John and Elizabeth Reith



**John Reith as he looked in 1877, a few years before his baptism into Christ**

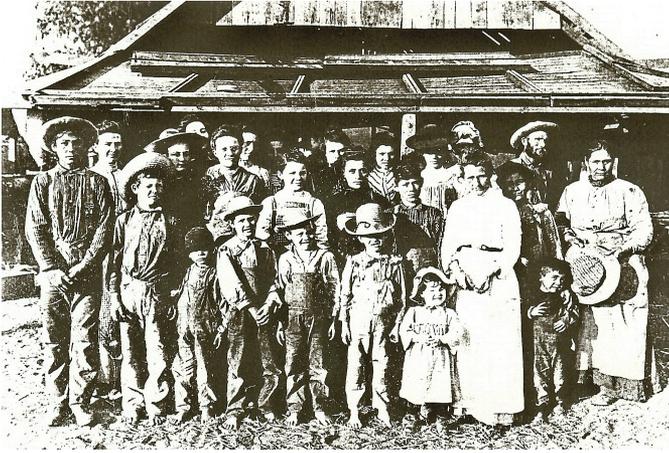
Few tragedies are as hard to understand as the death of a vibrant young person. But the hand of God can move in our lives in ways we might not expect or even desire, and it has the power to bring salvation through circumstances like sickness and death that to us might seem senseless. Such was the case in the baptisms of John and Elizabeth Reith, early Ventura County Christadelphians who were brought to see God's truth by the death of an enthusiastic 27-year-old brother named John M. Armstrong.

The story actually begins in Scotland where, at age 18, John Armstrong was baptized in Glasgow on October 3, 1875.<sup>1</sup> Eight years later, Bro. Armstrong emigrated to Santa Barbara because, like many before him, he was hoping the warm Southern California climate would have a positive effect on his failing health.<sup>2</sup> As he left Edinburgh and steamed to America, Bro. Armstrong would already have been well acquainted with several brothers and sisters living in the Santa Barbara area, particularly Robert Strathearn and Helen Shiells. In fact, Sis. Shiells was John Armstrong's aunt.<sup>3</sup>

The exact details of what happened after John Armstrong reached Santa Barbara have been lost, but his arrival would result in the baptisms of John and Elizabeth Reith in 1884. Apparently young John Armstrong was quite sick when he arrived in America, for he died the following year. Before his death, Sis. Shiells lovingly cared for her ill nephew, as reported by Sis. E.B. Cornwall over 20 years later in the 1908 *Christadelphian* as she spoke of Sis. Shiells' "large-heartedness to all, especially brethren and sisters, and those of her home country, who came here in search of health, she tenderly nursed, among whom was her nephew, our dearly-loved brother John Armstrong..."

Helen Shiells apparently recruited the help of Elizabeth Reith, a resident of nearby Ojai, California, to help her take care of Bro. Armstrong. Why Elizabeth came to be his nurse is a mystery, but as his own life was ending, Bro. Armstrong brought life to her and her husband John. Robert Strathearn had the following to say about this on the occasion of John and Elizabeth Reith's baptisms: "Sis. Reith was one of those who ministered to the comfort of our beloved brother Armstrong during his illness. He, in return, helped them to the possession of the pearl of great price. He greatly desired their salvation, so you see his labour in coming to this far-off land has not been in vain."<sup>4</sup>

It's not surprising Marian connected the preaching effort with bearing fruit because the Stocks were living on a large ranch north of Moorpark at the time, where they grew and sold apricots. Even today, over 100 years later, the beautiful canyon they lived in is still entirely agricultural and filled with orange, lemon, and avocado trees.



**Apricot pitters on the Stocks ranch about 1903. Note the early Ventura County Christadelphians in the photo. Future Christadelphians, David and Ruth Stocks (Robert and Marian's children) have been circled.**

Marian wrote to the Christadelphian magazine in 1905, mentioning a new preaching effort in Ventura County. “We were able to get a hall, rent free, in Somis, a small village, six miles from our ranch, and Brother Irwin gave three lectures there... As we expected, the attendance of strangers was very meager; but those of us who could attend were much edified. Brother Irwin did not bring the Pomona ecclesia tent outfit this time — it is laid up for the winter — but brought his ‘black-board’ cloth, which he fastened up outside the one store in Somis, printing dates, subjects, and places in white chalk, and very beautifully he can do it.” She also mentioned that their daughter, Ruth, was baptized at age 13. That same year her husband, Bro. Robert Stocks, “gave... a very acceptable and edifying address at the Lord’s table”<sup>14</sup> in Los Angeles.



**The store where Bro. J.T. Irwin led a Ventura County Christadelphian preaching effort in Somis, CA, in 1905.**