

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 73

February, 2010

No. 2

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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

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

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 5th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Copyright 2009, Tidings Publishing Committee. Reproduction in whole, or in part, without permission is prohibited.

Home page: www.tidings.org. Subscriptions, payments, and book orders may be done online.

Subscriptions

United States: \$24, Canada: \$32. Checks payable to *The Tidings* and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: \$39.** Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: \$39.** Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: R 140.** Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14.** Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingham, York YO42 4TB.

*“Like a bird that strays from its nest
is a man who strays from his home” (Proverbs 27:8).*

Sometimes when a great ship is far off in mid-ocean, a tired land bird will fall panting and exhausted upon the deck: the wings can beat no longer; the eyes glaze; and the eager wanderer falls and dies.

The true bird life is the life of the woods, of the carefully-woven nest, the mate and the brood and the fledglings. In the same way on those ocean liners — yes, and in many a weary bypath and lonely desert of the earth — may be found men who have broken away from the ties which formed their strength and their truer being, and now fall, faint and purposeless, to languish and to die.

For true human life is life with our fellows, in the diligent laborious house building, of the home, of the young, of the rising chicks who are to form the next link in the long chain of generations.

Robert Horton, Expositor’s Bible

Editorial

Different, But the Same

Let us imagine a group of men walking across the hills of Galilee. They all have beards, and wear robes that mark them as Jews. But there the similarities ends. Some are tall, some short; some are stocky and some slim. Some are young, while others are much older. Some are light-skinned, while others are darker.

As they come closer we see their faces. Some bear the accumulated evidence of lives lived outdoors; the wind and rain, and the relentless glare of the Middle Eastern sun, have taken their toll. Other faces are softer and paler; plainly they have not yet been exposed to the elements in the same way.

Now they are close enough that we may see their hands. As we might expect, we see the hands of fishermen, as well as the hands of clerks. We turn and walk alongside them for a while, listening. We hear the accents of “hillbillies” from Galilee, and then the cultured, educated language of Judah and Jerusalem.

Clearly they are all very different from one another. Yet they are all the same in a very important way: they are all walking with a purpose and they are all following the same leader — they are all putting their feet, one after another, into the very footprints of their Master.

Let's assume we take some time to know these men better. There's John, a young man who is naturally quiet and reserved. His clothes are well-made and expensive. He has the air of the upper class, of people who are used to being comfortable, going where they please, and getting what they want. We learn later than he is the son of a wealthy businessman, that he grew up in a family which entertained rich and important people, a family that owned vacation homes and employed a number of servants. But he isn't just a spoiled rich kid — the more we observe him, the more we perceive new depths: his mind seeks out the subtleties and hidden meanings in everything he experiences. He is studious and perceptive in ways that surpass his companions.

Then there's Peter. It doesn't take long to learn about him. For one thing, he'll tell you everything he's thinking, and compel you to listen. Older than John, Peter is 'working class', a coarse fisherman with a wife and family to support. He is not interested in the 'finer things' of life; he's never had them. Sometimes he curses, loudly, when things don't go to suit him. He has been known to pull out a concealed dagger and wave it around when he feels threatened. He is given to boasting about what he can do. In a group, he is usually the first to speak, and the first to act — a natural leader. We spend some time with him, and we come to see a man of energy and self-assurance. Sometimes these traits lead him into thoughtless mistakes. At the same time, we also see a man truly eager to do the right thing — even when his enthusiasm turns him into a bull in a china shop.

As the disciples walk in the footsteps of Jesus, do the young man of privilege and the rough fisherman walk side by side? How do they manage to smooth over their differences?

Then there is Matthew, a despised tax collector. He has grown rich by working hand in hand with the Romans. He was, in the eyes of many Jews, a hated collaborator with their worst enemies. His work has alienated him from the Temple services, and from all polite society. Good Jews consider him “unclean”, and treat him as an outcast. He has probably sought out associations among the other outcasts of Israel — he has been a “friend of sinners”.

Near Matthew there walks Simon the Zealot. In earlier days, Simon had been a zealous nationalist, a ‘freedom fighter’. Some would have called him a terrorist. But he considered himself ‘100% Jew and proud of it’. At one time he would have poured out the last drop of his blood for his beloved nation, and their dream of independence. He would have given his life gladly, if it could have brought about the deaths of detested Romans. Once upon a time he had cursed, with a passion, all ‘oppressors’, everything they stood for, and everyone who had anything to do with them.

As these men follow their Lord, do the ‘traitor’ and the ‘patriot’ walk together? How do they ever manage to work with one another?

There are also women who follow the Master, walking a bit behind the men. Their clothing marks them out as Jews also, but otherwise they are, likewise, quite different among themselves.

Let us imagine, again, that we can see the disciple Mary. She is a “bookworm”, a dreamer, always praying and meditating. Frankly, she is simply not very practical and not very mindful of others. Alongside her is her sister Martha. Martha is a capable provider, always thinking ahead and making notes, always busy in the kitchen and around the house.

Since we are still imagining, let us go one step further, and imagine that we can read the minds of these two sisters, and hear their thoughts.

There is Mary; what is she thinking?

‘It’s so difficult. Here I am walking along, trying to enjoy the beauty of the landscape, and the lovely features of God’s handiwork. I want so much to consider the flowers and the birds, and at the same time to remember the psalms and proverbs — the ones that speak of the beauties of the natural world as a counterpoint to the glories of God’s Word. But there *she* is, going on and on to herself while I have to listen — about where we are going to stop for supper, and what provisions will have to be made. Can’t Martha just give it a rest, and enjoy this wonderful day?’

Now we tune out the “Mary” frequency, and zero in on “Radio Martha”.

‘How can I even think about what needs to be done, while *she* is chattering on about this little blossom, and that silly bird? They’ve been flowering and fluttering since before she was born, but right now we need to think about food and shelter, and how to care for this group of men. If it weren’t for me and a few like

me, nothing would ever get done around here. Somebody has to think about such things! I love Mary, I really do... but if we all were like her, we'd simply starve in the wilderness.'

Was there ever tension among the members of this diverse group? Angry words? Heated arguments, followed by hostile silences? Of course — they were human.

In a sense, the group of men and women who journeyed with Jesus represent all believers in all ages. As they followed Jesus, not all at once, but along the way, they were molded into a “fellowship” — we might even call it a “follow-ship”! It was the Lord Jesus who bound them all together, in him. If men like Peter had spoken English, they would have chuckled at the happy coincidences of the words: first, the closeness in sound of “fellow” and “follow”, and then the fact that those who are in “fellowship” with one another have become “fellows” in the same “ship”.

When the storms of life battered that ship, or boat, as happened on the Sea of Galilee, it was the Master who calmed the winds and brought the boat safely to shore. Those who remained in the boat, the “fellows” in the “ship”, would be saved along with him.

When these men and women set out to follow Jesus, they did not leave their personalities and character traits behind them. Instead, they brought them along. They were who they were, lovely qualities along with less lovely ones. As they continued to follow Jesus, even their less lovely traits might be molded into useful tools which the Master could use.

A timidity, and a fondness for silent reflection, could — with the Lord's example — develop into a thoughtfulness for others, and an ability to teach them, to open up and explain “deep things” from God's revelation.

An excessive exuberance and zeal could — by trials and tests — be purged of its more selfish elements and its pride, and made to perform courageous service for the Lord, while supporting and strengthening others to do the same.

Spiritual thinkers and diligent workers — quiet ones and loud ones, modest types and pushy types — could travel side by side, each one giving the other something that might be lacking otherwise.

These men and women were bound together because, in spite of all their superficial differences, they had precious things in common (Acts 2:42-47). These included:

- (a) the apostles' teaching (which was Christ's teaching also);
- (b) the breaking of bread;
- (c) individual and collective prayers, for the same people and the same hope;
- (d) memories of wonders and signs which proved the truth of their shared beliefs;
- (e) a common care and support for one another through all the trials of life;

- (f) the same meeting place, where they might regularly see one another;
- (g) common meals and other times in the company of each another;
- (h) the resulting opportunities to talk of their united faith, and to encourage one another;
- (i) time together to praise God, by reading and exhorting and singing; and
- (j) the joy of periodically seeing new members “born” into their spiritual family.

These men and women shared the experience of traveling with, and hearing the teaching of, the Son of God. Together they saw the blind and the lame and the diseased made whole again, and even the dead raised to new life. From him they learned that the greatest of all miracles was not the healing, and not even the raising from physical death. The greatest miracle occurred each time a person of the world was raised from a spiritual death, through belief and baptism, to be reborn as a child of God. When they sang on such occasions, they knew that their voices were joined with those of the angels in heaven!

So we learn all this too.

Together, we have all embraced the hope of a Kingdom to come, when all wrongs will be righted, and life will be pure and peaceful and blessed, as God intended from the very beginning. Together, we have learned that there is no need to fret and worry, and to blame others — whether it be bosses or co-workers or parents or neighbors or politicians — when things don’t work out as well as we’d like. Together, we have learned that there is no need to scheme, nor to make excessive provisions for the future, because our Lord holds the future in his hand, and that future — and we ourselves — are all under his control.

By degrees, we come to see that the temporary, superficial things that divide us become more and more trivial. The glorious, eternal things that unite us become more and more important.

Today, some of us have more money than others. Some read one version of the Bible, while others set great store by a different one. Some read a little Greek, and some insert Hebrew names and titles into their Bible readings, while others have enough difficulty just reading their Bibles in English.

Some have very definite views about Last Days prophecy, while others hold very different views equally fervently. Still others wish both sides would preach the coming Kingdom of God in its simplicity, and leave it for the events themselves, along the way, to prove the rightness and wrongness of their predictions.

Some decorate Christmas trees every December, while others don’t even want to hear a mention of the holiday. Some are undisturbed by most secular things, while others try to avoid all things ‘worldly’.

Some are quiet and thoughtful; some are ‘touchy’ and easily angered. Some are idealistic; some are practical. Some are ‘strictly by the book’ brothers, while others always seek out ‘the spirit of the law’. Some are conservative traditionalists who hold fast to all the “old paths” and resist anything new. Some are liberal innova-

tors who campaign for openness and change, and want to “prove all things”, no matter the cost.

Even in some first-centuries ecclesias, Jewish believers, who kept the feast days scrupulously, looked across their meeting room to see “unclean” Gentiles, who purchased non-kosher meat from pagan temples, looking back at them.

In some ecclesias today, believers of equally varied backgrounds and opinions look suspiciously upon one another, even as they share the bread and the wine.

From the first century to the twenty-first, the need to rise above inconsequential differences, and find common ground in the eternal truths alone, has always been a challenge for Christ’s people.

We are different in so many ways, but in the most meaningful way we are, very much, all the same. We all follow the same Lord.

Believers must look to the power of Christ’s example to overcome the prejudice and fear associated with accepting people who are different. The unity displayed by following the same leader — despite those differences — will show who belongs to Jesus, and whom he counts as his own (John 10:14; 2Tim 2:19). Did he not say, “*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*” (John 13:35)?

George Booker

“What kind of people live here?”

The train pulls into the small town, and a man gets off. He approaches the old fellow sitting at the station, and says to him, “I’m thinking of moving to this town. Can you tell me: what kind of people live here?” The old fellow thinks for a moment, and then asks, “What kind of people lived in the town you came from?” The man, without hesitation, says, “Oh! They were a wretched lot — they were liars, and hypocrites, and wicked, wicked people. I was so happy to get away from them.” The old man replies, “You’d better get right back on the train then, because that’s the sort of people you’ll find around here too.”

The next day another train pulls into town, and another man gets off. Approaching the same old fellow, he says, “I’m thinking of staying in this town. Can you tell me what kind of people live here?” To which comes the response: “What kind of people lived in the town you came from?” This man says, “They were fine people — kind and generous, and neighborly... I was very sorry that circumstances forced me to leave.” The old man smiles and replies, “In that case, welcome to our fair town... that’s just the kind of people you’ll find here!”

(Author unknown)

Exhortation

Going on a Journey

Let me begin with a story from 60 years ago. It was early November 1949. “Yes, you can climb up there,” the man said. I peered up into the darkness. It was all blackness, except for a distant blob of dim white light. I put my hands and feet on the rungs, up and up — all was dark. It was an experience that remains etched in my memory of teenage years. One hundred feet, two hundred, more — straight up, the only light was that distant blob. Suddenly I was there. Stepping out through a hole on to a narrow ledge and gripping a rail, being greeted by a welcoming but lonely voice, but most of all, looking around me.

The view was identical on all sides. Nothing to be seen as far as the eye could see, except gray skies and endlessly restless gray seas. This was the southern ocean, the Great Australian Bight. Turning and looking right behind me there was something to see. I was high above the single huge smoke-belching funnel of a 28,000-ton ship.

There are lessons in this. We knew our destination, we knew the date of arrival, but we only had vague ideas of what to actually expect. There was no TV or DVD or sources of detailed information in those days. What really awaited us in Australia?

A journey to the Kingdom

There are some parallels with the journey to the Kingdom, especially the endless restless seas. There had been some massive multi-mile-long swells as we came through the Indian Ocean. The sea and the waves seemed huge; I would not like to have been in a small boat. But compare this to the spiritual journey; think of those who have no spiritual vision, and are not in a solid boat with a captain they trust and who knows his destination.

I was not aware of anyone else who climbed up here to the ‘crow’s nest’, as this lookout is known. I presume they do not need them now, as they have radar. But it has its lessons from the spiritual perspective. The world outlook, any distance ahead, is bleak for most people; the sports decks and the movies and entertainment rooms are the center of their attention. Today, with such an abundance of avenues for recreation available, this is now far more the case. Those with a higher view of life see the destination first; also, they see more readily the hazards they need to avoid along the way.

Our anticipation of life in the Kingdom is limited. We only have snapshots of certain things; the vast detail is still to be revealed by actual experience. Our unanticipated experiences when starting to live in Australia provide a crude illustration. For example, living in a house on a dusty unpaved road — our host pointing out snake tracks, ‘Don’t walk in the long grass, the snakes are venomous,’

he said. The next day a dead black snake hung on the wire fence! We suspended a ‘billy can’ by the gate and the milkman came and poured milk into it. Yes, life was very different.

Modern Israel

The most telling memory of the wider journey of life, both before and after 1949, was the brotherhood’s great excitement with prophecy fulfilling before our eyes. The United Nations voted that Israel should have a homeland in Palestine, so Israel declared itself a nation. War followed and the Arabs were unexpectedly (from the world’s perspective) humiliated. Many dramas followed. Were we on the threshold of the Kingdom? Nearly all thought we were.

It is now more than 60 years since those dramatic days. There have been many crises in the Middle East, but none that can be really tied down to specific prophecies, apart from the endless hatred of the surrounding nations as described in Psalm 83. Questions remain, particularly as to whether the times of the Gentiles are finally fulfilled — since the Arabs still control the sacred Temple Mount, the spiritual heart of Jerusalem.

During my life’s journey, like many others, I have often quoted the words of Jesus that men’s hearts will fail themselves for fear — a sure sign that Jesus is about to return. The cause of those fears have multiplied and changed. In my youth it was the atomic bomb, the invention of the much more powerful hydrogen bomb, the massive rockets that could send men into space and deliver nuclear war-heads anywhere in the world. For those with no spiritual vision, the future was very worrying. Russia and the USA were bitter enemies. As a result most people made no attempt to visualize the future with any confidence; few recognized the spiritual ‘crow’s nest’ that was available to them. Many of the less orthodox church groups had a field day of speculation about a “rapture” of the righteous while God destroys the earth.

The countryside has changed

What is of particular note as I look back on the journey is how selfish and self-centered people progressively became. “The most important person is *you!*” became the theme of many advertisements. It was such a contrast to my early memories as a child in the war years; people generally cooperated together in the face of uncertainties, shortages and common dangers. More than ever, we are now traveling through a strange uncharted world. However, the young in the Truth lack the memories to recognize the enormity of the changes. The world around them encourages them at every turn to focus on the transient things of life. What fresh and ever greater challenges to living a steadfast life in Christ await them and everyone else, if the Lord’s coming is still decades away?

Let us now look further back. There are comparisons and contrasts with the world of 2,000 years ago. Jesus was born in 5 BC or thereabouts; it was a time of much anticipation as the 70 weeks prophecy in Daniel had just about expired. We read the gospels and see the limitations to their expectations. Hopes were raised and dashed, then raised again. Recall the conversation on the road to Emmaus: “We

had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel.” The reality of the resurrection was the dramatic climax — but right up until the ascension their expectations were still uncertain: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.”

The words that are so full of meaning, and challenge us today, are the Master’s final command: “Go into all the world!” Is that just being completed now? He had said:

“This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).

Sixty years ago we had brothers and sisters in no more than a dozen countries; now they are in at least 120. All the countries of the world seem to be wired. Our reports on website responses and teaching opportunities are both exciting and a challenge. Our journey has taken a new turn.

There is, however, another perspective to our journey in these days. It was about 75 years from the birth of Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem. As I look back on the 75-year journey of my life and share my thoughts with those of my own age in particular, we note that we now live in:

- (1) a period of unprecedented material prosperity, as well as
- (2) a period of unequalled moral depravity.

The ‘seas’ of the world have never been so restless. Do we have a spiritual vision with all the answers? Obviously not, but the way ahead for us is to work with and for our Master as never before. With the whole world linked with modern communications, if we dedicated our energies to witnessing at home and abroad, there will be less and less opportunity for the ugliness of the world to attract and distract us. With this objective we will be up in the ‘crow’s nest’ and will be the first to cry, “Land ahead.”

If we stay down by the ship’s rail, the sea will look really fearsome, especially as the weather gets wilder. There, we are close to the roaring waves, with the spray getting in our eyes and our clothing getting soaked. As the sea gets rougher, the danger of falling overboard will increase. The Lord is our captain, though, and he has the fullest vision of the way ahead. He is not susceptible to the folly of trusting in the latest inventions of men, as was the captain of the *Titanic*.

We largely set the course of our lives when we are young, yet at the time we only partly realize this. If we did not set our course very well, we need the captain’s guidance even more. Sadly, I have seen far too many fall overboard. They did not realize in their youth how much their actions then were going to affect their futures. This is even more critical now; the world is so much ‘in your face’; its power to throw us off course is now enormous, and we may find ourselves swamped by a tsunami of immorality.

Facing the challenges

Yet the Bible pictures many comparable situations. How many rose to the challenge and had a vision from a spiritual crow’s nest?

Take the case of David. As a youth, his life was simple; he was a shepherd boy, but it proved to be an invaluable training ground. Psalm 8 may well have sprung into his thoughts then. He was a protector of the sheep in all kinds of dangers. He had no idea when he went to take provisions to his brothers that he was going to become a hero. His life was a learning curve of faith, and God used him when the time was ripe.

The apostle Peter, in his journey in life, had many learning experiences. Consider his visit to Cornelius and his challenge in conveying that particular knowledge to others. Peter still had to learn lessons of a different nature, as when Paul had to admonish him (Gal 2:11-14).

Our learning is lifelong and sometimes lessons have to be reinforced, as in the life of Jacob. We will only complete our growing up in the Kingdom. Reaching that destination depends on the reality of our efforts to keep growing throughout our journey now.

“O foolish Galatians!” Paul could write, “Who has bewitched you?” Are there situations that threaten to bewitch us? It seems there always will be wayward brethren who have their own agenda contrary to the word of God. It is a tragedy when such accuse each other and threaten to throw the ship off course. When those at the helm fail to follow the captain’s instructions, or change them, it is tragic indeed. What wisdom is needed to get back on the correct course without losing some overboard.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul reviews the journey the nation had traversed, the promises to Abraham, the Mosaic Law, and now the way that Christ had set them free. Yet, Paul was afraid he had labored over them in vain (Gal 4:10). We have to recognize that it is God’s will to challenge those who follow Him, to test their faith. No sailor ever learns to sail if the sea is always calm.

A new focus to our message

A key question! Does the direction of our witnessing need to change due to the changing seas our ship has encountered? The thrust of Paul’s ministry differed according to his audience and his perception of their needs, such as on Mar’s Hill. It seems to me that the audience has changed during my 60 years in the Truth; therefore the emphasis of the message has to change, although essential content does not. At the beginning the emphasis was more on learning and understanding the Truth correctly. But now the emphasis might shift somewhat to meet the challenge of a totally godless age. Around us is an anemic church environment that largely preaches a ‘Me’ gospel of present prosperity: ‘Accept Christ and be rich!’ Note how Paul challenges the Galatians:

“Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (5:7).

In this age of unprecedented material prosperity, coupled with unequalled moral depravity, it is one thing to *know* that which is true, and quite another to *live* a life that shows:

“...we have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to

which you were committed and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves to righteousness” (Rom 6:17,18).

With the current financial anxieties, it may be that the collapse of the ‘prosperity God’ will be a blessing in disguise — for those who worship in the Temple of Mammon. Violence is greatly increasing — every year becomes more like the days of Noah. Our witness ought to attract those who are revolted by the way of life around them — and we can do this by public proclamations as well as personal example. We should note that the many parables of the Master about the Kingdom were really about how to be worthy to be accepted into the Kingdom! Let us follow his example. It may well be that the level of response we get will become less and less, as was the experience of Noah and Lot. But we cannot be hermits living separate from the world, in our own little caves. Because the world is becoming such a dark place, we have to shine as lights in the darkness while the sea and waves roar. We will save ourselves by our efforts to save others.

We cannot walk alone; we must understand that in two senses. The first sense is that the Lord’s spirit is with us, and in him we move and live and have our being. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

“Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ So that we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what can man do to me?’” (13:5,6).

The second sense is the point Paul makes in Galatians 6: that we have each other and must help each other along the road. As this world grows darker and the “sea” even more tempestuous this factor is going to be as important as any other. What does Paul say to the Galatians?

“If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him (or her) in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (vv 1,2).

We must work on ourselves and each other to see that Christ is formed in us. The failure of many Galatians to do this is what gave Paul such anguish:

“My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (4:19).

The world is trying ever harder to be formed in us, and what is happening all too often is that we put aside a separate room inside our hearts — for that world! It may be hidden away, but it is there, and it will not stay hidden.

We do not think of it as “our worldly room”, of course. No one wants to compare themselves with Lot’s sons-in-law, who declined to go with him and the angels. But even Abraham thought at first there could be 50 righteous in Sodom. In the end he was content to think there must be at least ten there. Will this world get as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah?

Righteous Lot was “greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked” (2Pet 2:7), but our righteousness is not our own, it is from and through Christ. In accepting that wondrous fact, let us say with Paul, as we strive to complete the final stages of our journey:

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

As we partake of these emblems, let us think of restocking the rooms in our hearts so that Christ can more truly dwell there. This task can be a communal effort, a responsibility to help each other along the road, especially those who are more prone to stumble in the darkness, and who are not with us in our fellowship today. It is the responsibility of each one of us to help each other, for in doing that we help ourselves to complete the journey. There is light ahead, it is growing brighter. Oh what joy — and that joy in anticipation can be ours as we share this spiritual meal.

David Caudery (Dandenong, Australia)
(Bible quotes from ESV)

The Eagle in the Barnyard

An eagle had been captured when it was quite young. The farmer who snared the bird put a restraint on it so it couldn't fly, and then he turned it loose to roam in the barnyard. It wasn't long till the eagle began to act like the chickens, scratching and pecking at the ground. This bird that once soared high in the heavens seemed satisfied to live the barnyard life of the lowly hen.

One day the farmer was visited by a shepherd, who came down from the mountains where the eagles lived. Seeing the eagle, the shepherd said to the farmer, “What a shame to keep that bird hobbled here in your barnyard! Why don't you let it go?” The farmer agreed, so they cut off the restraint. But the eagle continued to wander around, scratching and pecking as before. The shepherd picked it up and set it on a high stone wall. For the first time in months, the eagle saw the grand expanse of blue sky and the glowing sun. Then it spread its wings and with a leap soared off into a tremendous spiral flight, up and up and up. At last it was acting like an eagle again.

Perhaps we have let ourselves be comfortable in the barnyard of the world — refusing to claim our lofty position as God's children. He wants us to live in a higher realm — to “seek those things which are above.” Like the eagle, it's not too late for us to soar to greater heights.

(Author unknown)

Bible Study

To Speak Well of God: (10) My Messenger Before Me

Elihu the Buzite is one of the most enigmatic characters in Scripture. Several expositors have postulated that Elihu's character is a later addition to the book of Job.^{1,2,3} Evidence offered in support is that Elihu does not appear in the prologue and epilogue of the book, where the drama between the characters is established and concluded; and, logically, where we might anticipate all the players to appear. Beyond this the reasons to exclude Elihu from the tale seem to be purely because the expositor cannot understand why he is there.

By contrast, we have reasoned that a newcomer is vital to release Job from the lonely corner he has backed himself into, by subpoenaing God, and we shall see a second vital reason for the presence of Elihu in what follows. There is no doubt in my mind Elihu the Buzite is an essential and original character.

10.1 Is Elihu good or evil?

As for the moral character of Elihu, this is where the enigma peaks. He is arguably the most prominent character in the Bible about whom Bible scholars cannot even agree whether he is good or evil! The preponderance of verdict goes against him. Gutierrez takes a very negative view of Elihu, and attributes to him the poorest of motives: "He is no friend of Job, and his words will therefore be cold and distant. His purpose, unlike the original purpose of Eliphaz and his companions, is not to comfort, but to teach and pass judgment." Gutierrez goes on to label Elihu: "arrogant... conceited... pompous... impetuous... self-satisfied" within a few paragraphs of his analysis, although as a surprising caveat concedes that Elihu's analysis is more intelligent than that of the three friends.⁴ Atkinson takes a similarly dim view of Elihu, denoting him: "full of his own importance... pompous... patronizing" and even disagrees with Gutierrez that Elihu adds any value to the discussion.⁵ Balchin duplicates both views, stating Elihu is "no friend of Job" and "does not bring any fresh thought" to the discussion. He labels him "bumptious", "guilty of... arrogance", and "a pompous lad",⁶ while the triumvirate of Gordis,⁷ Dillard⁸ and Weiss⁹ all add "brash" to the list of insults.

In contrast some conclude Elihu is a good man. Ehrenberg perceives Elihu occupying the worthy station of "the advocate of God".¹⁰ Spongberg concludes similarly, seeing Elihu as a mediator between God and man.¹¹ McGee describes Elihu's role explicitly: "Elihu is preparing the way for God to answer",¹² a suggestion voiced two centuries earlier by Herder: "He prepares the way for the entrance of the divine Being", although Herder believes Elihu is not aware of his role.¹³

I too see Elihu as a good man. I do not see him as a type of Christ, as some have suggested.^{14,15} I feel this is not the correct understanding of Christ's role. Christ

is the Word of God (John 1:14), and the Word of God will most certainly appear in the book of Job, in undiluted form! I submit we should understand Elihu in the form of John the Baptist, the one who went before to prepare the way for the Word of God. His name means: 'God of him',¹⁶ or even 'He is God',¹⁷ the latter translation portraying Elihu as being not a character in his own right, but entirely representative of another. McGee similarly describes Elihu as the one who advocates for God¹⁸ for, although Elihu indicates the errors to which Job's anger has driven him, he does not condemn him.

A perpetual mystery is the absence of God's acknowledgement of Elihu. Balchin supposes this is evidence God has destroyed Elihu;¹⁹ but this is beyond what the text supports. Lovelock even proposes that God's rebuke, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2), is aimed at Elihu, not Job.²⁰ This is in error, however, since it overlooks the Scriptural proof: Job himself clarified that the rebuke was aimed at him:

*"You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know" (Job 42:3).*

10.1.1 Weaknesses of the theory of Elihu being an evil man

1. At the outset of Elihu's entry, all the negative analyses which accuse him as arrogant and pompous run into a significant problem: Elihu sat in silence throughout the debate (Job 32:4-6).

Is it the behavior of a pompous man to sit in silence, for weeks, while others speak? Does an arrogant man listen patiently while seven lengthy speeches and their rebuttals are presented to the assembly in which he sits? I find that highly unlikely! Even McGee, who ultimately concludes that Elihu is just another of the miserable comforters,²¹ concedes his surprise: "He hasn't opened his mouth so far, which is unusual for a young man."²² It defies belief that Elihu could have maintained silence through what we have conjectured was weeks of formal debate, if he were suffering from the many deficiencies of boastfulness that are so readily attributed to him.

2. Elihu was angry with the three friends.

Those who purport that Elihu simply reworks or continues the three friends' arguments have to explain what caused Elihu to be angry with them (Job 32:3). If Elihu duplicates the arguments of the three friends, why would he be angry with what they have said?

10.1.2 Similarities between Elihu and the three friends

I do not gloss over the potential weaknesses in interpreting Elihu as a good man. The fundamental concern is distinguishing him from the three friends. While I believe that the differences between Elihu and the three friends, listed below, are so compelling that they lend me peace of mind with my conclusion, there are apparent similarities of significance.

1. The apparent presence of the doctrine of retribution. Elihu says:

*“If [men] obey and serve [God],
they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity
and their years in contentment.
But if they do not listen,
they will perish by the sword
and die without knowledge” (Job 36:11,12; also 34:11).*

Elihu seems to apply the doctrine on the scale of one person and within the scale of one human lifetime, the two characteristic mistakes which the three friends made.

However, Job also offers commentary which looks suspiciously like the doctrine of retribution (ch 7), and we know that Job is accepted before God.

2. The apparent condemnation of Job.

*“Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost
for answering like a wicked man!
To his sin he adds rebellion;
scornfully he claps his hands among us
and multiplies his words against God” (Job 34:36,37).*

Here I note some mitigation. Elihu has not invented specific false accusations, such as Job oppressing widows and orphans, as the friends did. Nor has Elihu called Job a wicked man; rather, he likens Job's answer to the type of answer he would have anticipated from a wicked man. Before we dismiss this as hair-splitting, notice this is the same construct Job used when countering his wife's suggestion to 'curse God and die':

“[Job] replied, ‘You are talking like a foolish woman’ ” (Job 2:10).

No expositor castigates Job as condemnatory here, as if he called his wife a fool. Job said that she had answered in the same manner in which a foolish woman would have done, and the difference, which Spongberg also noticed,²³ is important. Elihu uses the same construct, saying Job was “answering like a wicked man”.

That said, it is not trivial to dismiss the issues in this section, which is why Elihu the Buzite continues to puzzle any diligent expositor. I determine my conclusion from seeing that the differences between Elihu and the three friends (below) to be considerably more compelling than the similarities. This is not an ideal conclusion, I would prefer to confidently rebut the similarities we appear to see between Elihu and the three friends independently of the consideration of the differences, but I do not find the resources to do so. Perhaps it is helpful to consider that in a drama in which one major theme is to demonstrate the justification of God alone, we are not likely to see any man presented without some degree of flaw.

10.1.3 Differences between Elihu and the three friends

In all, I offer ten reasons for seeing Elihu as fundamentally different from the three friends of Job, which subdivide into three categories:

- How Elihu speaks about the three friends
- How Elihu speaks about Job

- Most importantly, how Elihu speaks about God

In each of these categories he differs strikingly from the three friends.

1. Elihu consistently proclaims God as the source of life, justice and wisdom: any wisdom he possesses has come from God.

*“But it is the spirit in a man,
the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding”
(Job 32:8; also 33:4; 36:3).*

By contrast the three friends claim that they are the source of their own wisdom, through their own years of learning, and do not honor God with any recognition.

Eliphaz: *“What do you know that we do not know?
What insights do you have that we do not have?
The gray-haired and the aged are on our side,
men even older than your father” (Job 15:9,10).*

Zophar: *“I hear a rebuke that dishonors me,
and my understanding inspires me to reply” (Job 20:3).*

2. Elihu encourages Job to (continue to) praise God. I believe speaking well of God to be the central theme in the Joban tale, which places even more emphasis on this worthy remark of Elihu:

*“Praise God:
Remember to extol his work,
which men have praised in song” (Job 36:24).*

By contrast there is silence from the three friends on recommendations to praise God, which silence speaks volumes; especially as it sets in sharp relief their insistence that Job should recognize their own intelligence and rectitude.

3. Elihu does not share the same mindset as the three accusers. Elihu is angry at the three friends for their condemnation of Job (Job 32:3).²⁴

Indeed he explicitly rejects their arguments as worthless:

*“But Job has not marshaled his words against me,
and I will not answer him with your arguments” (Job 32:14).*

4. In fact, Elihu’s emotions are the same as God’s. Later in the drama we see that God is angry with the three friends and displeased with Job for focusing on his own justification rather than that of God’s. Elihu voices the same views (Job 32:3; 33:8-12).

By contrast, the friends are angry with Job because Job refuses to accept their arguments as valid, not because Job justifies himself rather than God.

5. Elihu confines his criticisms to Job’s statements, not his former life. (Baird makes this same observation.²⁵) Where Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar all commented on what Job had done in his past life, and at the same time attached random attributions of invented sins, Elihu does not. He does not refer to any of Job’s disastrous situations, implying he well recognizes that he can’t explain why they have hap-

pened. Elihu's criticisms are limited solely to the things Job has spoken, which base his justification on his own righteousness, not God's.

6. Elihu makes clear that he does not see himself as fundamentally elevated above Job. The only elevation Elihu will permit is that of God above all men:

*"I am just like you before God;
I too have been taken from clay.
No fear of me should alarm you,
nor should my hand be heavy upon you"* (Job 33:6,7).

By contrast the three friends do not sit alongside Job to speak well of God, but rather create barriers and distances between themselves and Job in their constructions of speech (Job 5:27; 18:2).

The sense of camaraderie that Elihu takes care to construct is helpful in allowing his corrective comments, which are contrastingly blunt, to be heard by Job.

7. It may seem a small point, but Elihu calls Job by name ten times during his dialogue, both directly in the second person and indirectly in the third (32:12,14; 33:1, 31; 34:5,7,35,36; 35:16; 37:14). By fascinating contrast, none of the three friends call Job by name even once! Given the length of their speeches, that is surprising indeed.

I believe using someone's name helps establish a sense of friendliness, camaraderie and respect. Learning at least someone's name, and therefore being able to address them personally in discussion, is a small step forward in establishing mutual respect and thereby trust. I believe this is the mark of respect which Elihu shows Job, and which the three friends pointedly do not.

8. Elihu wants Job to be vindicated, and explicitly says so:

*"If you have anything to say, answer me;
speak up, for I want you to be cleared"* (Job 33:32).

The friends don't call for this at all! Rather they condemn Job outright and called for his abandonment of sins he has not committed.

9. Elihu rightly reasoned that restoration from suffering comes at God's discretion, not necessarily at the eschewing of sin.

*"Yet if there is an angel on his side
as a mediator, one out of a thousand,
to tell a man what is right for him,
to be gracious to him and say,
'Spare him from going down to the pit;
I have found a ransom for him' —
then his flesh is renewed like a child's;
it is restored as in the days of his youth"* (Job 33:23-25).

The three friends wrongly reason that Job's salvation is essentially in his own hands, via the doctrine of retribution, where if he abandons the sins they assume to be present, God will be essentially compelled to restore his fortunes.

10. Elihu is not criticized by God.

At the end, God rebukes the three friends because they have not spoken of Him what is right. Yet there is no rebuke, nor even mention, of Elihu. This difference is of profound importance, because the single most important parameter in determining whether a man is good or evil is how God responds to him. The books of Kings and Chronicles illustrate this excellently. One can read of the deeds of two different kings, which seem to speak of almost indistinguishable lives. Yet the text pronounces, with the certainty only the Father can wield, that one is a good king and the other is evil. If nothing else, we learn to form our conclusions about a man primarily from what God says of him, if that information is available, and only secondarily from our own deductions from acquired evidence.

Applying this idea, therefore, we ask: If the arguments of Elihu are mere duplicates of the arguments of the three friends, and Elihu is as culpable as they, should he not be rebuked the same way? Is it even credible that God would serve three out of four identically culpable people the same judgment and frankly ignore the other? Surely not!

Yet one might counter: “But if Elihu were as innocent as Job, why is he not commended for speaking that which is right about God, as Job was?”

I will suggest an answer in next month’s article.

John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. D. Atkinson, “The Message of Job”, 1991, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK, 121
2. R. Gordis, “The Temptation of Job — Tradition versus Experience in Religion”, 1955, in N.N. Glatzer, “The Dimensions of Job”, 1969, Schocken Books Inc., New York, NY, USA, 82
3. J. Royce, “Studies of Good and Evil: A series of Essays upon the Problems of Philosophy and of Life”, 1898, in N.N. Glatzer, *Ibid*, 157
4. G. Gutierrez, “On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent”, 1987, Orbis, New York, NY, USA, 44-48
5. D. Atkinson, *Ibid*, 122,123
6. J. Balchin, “Sitting with Job”, 1998, Rhoswel Books, Oswestry, UK, 6, 54-58
7. R. Gordis, *Ibid*
8. R.B. Dillard and T. Longman III, “An Introduction to the Old Testament”, 1994, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 204
9. P. Weiss, “God, Job and Evil”, 1948, in N.N. Glatzer, *Ibid*, 184
10. H. Ehrenberg, “Job the Existentialist”, 1952, in N.N. Glatzer, *Ibid*, 94
11. E.M. Sponberg, “The Book of Job”, 1965, private publication, 104
12. J.V. McGee, “Thru the Bible Commentary Series: Job”, 1991, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, USA, 159
13. J.G. Herder, “Vom Geiste”, 1783, in N.N. Glatzer, *Ibid*, 146
14. E.M. Sponberg, *Ibid*
15. C.C. Walker, “Job”, 1935, Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply, Detroit, MI, USA, 21
16. J. Strong, “A Concise Dictionary of the words in the Hebrew Bible with their Renderings in the Authorized English Version”, in “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance”, 1997, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 13
17. D. Baird, “The Education of Job”, 2002, Stallard & Potter, Torrensville, Australia, 224; although I have been unable to ratify this asserted translation directly in a Hebrew text or concordance
18. J.V. McGee, *Ibid*, 157
19. J. Balchin, *Ibid*, 62
20. R.T. Lovelock, “Job”, 1957, The Christadelphian, Birmingham, UK, 87
21. J.V. McGee, *Ibid*, vii

22. Ibid, 156
23. E.M. Spongberg, Ibid, 14
24. This point is complicated by the fact many scholars agree that an earlier version of 32:3 read that the friends had condemned God, not Job. This is considered another of the Emendations of the Sopherim, which were discussed earlier. I have no expertise to deem these alleged emendations true or false, but I note it is hard to see where the friends have explicitly condemned God, yet plainly apparent where they have condemned Job. Fortuitously, the point is not of great significance to my arguments.
25. D. Baird, Ibid, 227

Bible Study

What the Qur'an Says About... (6) Life After Death

The Qur'an is very specific in its descriptions of resurrection, judgment day, punishment, and reward, but vague about the state of the dead and the place of reward and punishment.

Everyone raised

The Qur'an has all people raised from the dead and required to give account to Allah:

“And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about (the fact) Allah will raise up *all who are in the graves*” (22:7);

“Do they not think that they will be raised again (called to account)? On a Mighty Day, a Day when (*all*) *mankind* will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?” (83:4-6);

“As to the dead, Allah will raise them up... There is not an animal (that lives) on earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and *they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end*” (6:36-38); etc.

Note the inclusion of animals at the resurrection. While the Qur'an has many favorable things to say about birds and beasts, it doesn't detail what happens to them at the resurrection.

The calling to account of every person who ever lived may seem unreasonable, as Mohammed did not come on the scene until 600 AD. We need to remember, however, that the Qur'an claims Mohammed was one of a long line of prophets which began with Abel and includes Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elisha, etc. (46:9; 2:136; 5:27; 17:55). All of these, according to the Qur'an, preached the revelations of Allah which included the law of Moses and the Old Testament, before it was corrupted by the Jews, and the gospel, before corrupted by Christians (5:44; 7:162). In fact, according to an author cited in an earlier article, Adam was also a major recipient of Allah's revelations:

“According to Islamic tradition, of all the 124,000 prophets sent into the world, only eight received ‘books’ or ‘pamphlets’ to share with their people. These books are 124 in number, with ten having been entrusted to Adam... one to Jesus, and one to Muhammad. Unfortunately, the first 100 have been lost... and the two (Old and New Testaments), other than the Qur’an that remain, have been tainted by falsehood, so that all that can be trusted now is the Qur’an” (Elass, *Understanding the Qur’an*, p. 97).

Given this view of the matter, holding everyone to account would seem to Muslims as a reasonable outcome of Allah’s supposedly universal presence and appeal.

Judgment day

While the day of judgment is referred to throughout the Qur’an, Suras 52, 56 and 69 contain fairly succinct accounts. The great day is said to be accompanied by tremendous physical cataclysms with all people trembling at the personal results:

“Then, when one blast is sounded on the Trumpet, and the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed to powder at one stroke, on that Day shall the (great) Event come to pass, and the sky will be rent asunder... that Day you shall be brought to Judgment; not an act of yours that you hide will be hidden” (69:13-18).

“Verily the Doom of your Lord will indeed come to pass; there is none can avert it; on the Day when the firmament will be in dreadful commotion. And the mountains will fly hither and thither” (52:7-10);

“And to every soul will be paid in full (the fruit) of its deeds; and (Allah) knows best all that they do” (39:70).

Divided into three classes

“And you shall be sorted out into three classes”:

1. “Those Foremost (in faith) will be Foremost (in the Hereafter). These will be those Nearest to Allah: In Gardens of Bliss: a number of people from those of old, and a few from those of later times” (56:10-26).
2. “The Companions of the Right Hand... (They will be) among lote-trees without thorns, among Talh trees with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another... and on thrones (of Dignity), raised high... a (goodly) number from those of old, and a (goodly) number from those of later times” (56:27-40).
3. “The Companions of the Left Hand... (They will be) in the midst of a fierce Blast of Fire and in Boiling Water, and in the shades of Black Smoke” (56:57).

Reward of the righteous

What the Qur’an says about the rewards for the faithful is clear on some points and ambiguous on others. As noted in earlier articles regarding Jesus and Jihad, some special cases are said to go straight to heaven at death. And in a couple of places the reward for all the faithful is said to be in heaven:

“(To the righteous soul will be said:) ‘O (you) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! You come back to your Lord, well pleased (yourself), and

well-pleasing unto Him! You enter, then, among My Devotees! Yes, you enter My Heaven!” (89:27-30).

In other places, the righteous are said to inherit the earth:

“The Day that We [angelic representatives of Allah] roll up the heavens like a scroll [i.e., judgment day] — even as We produced the first Creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfill it. Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): ‘My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth.’ Verily in this (Qur’an) is a Message for people who would (truly) worship Allah” (21:104-106; note also 39:74).

Overall, however, whether the location is heaven or earth, the Qur’an stresses the pleasures enjoyed by the faithful. We would call them fleshly pleasures; in fact, in some cases we might feel they suggest decadent indulgence. Evidently these descriptions have become an embarrassment to some western Muslims and they have opted to spiritualize them. But there can be no doubt about what the Qur’an actually says:

“They will be on thrones encrusted... Round about them will serve youths of perpetual freshness... with cups (filled) out of clear-flowing fountains: no after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication... and (there will be) companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes” (56:15-22);

“But Allah will deliver them from the evils of that Day, and will shed on them a light of beauty and of (blissful) joy. And because they were patient and constant, He will reward them with a Garden and (garments of) silk. Reclining in the (Garden) on raised thrones, they will see there neither the sun’s (excessive heat) nor excessive cold... And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver... And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness)... Verily this is a Reward for you and your Endeavor is accepted and recognized” (76:11-22);

“For the Righteous, is a beautiful place of (final) Return. Garden of Eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them... And beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, (companions) of equal age. Such is the Promise made to you for the Day of Account!” (38:49-53);

“In them will be (Maidens), chaste... whom no man or Jinn [the Islamic version of demons] has touched... and besides these are two other Gardens... dark-green in color... in them will be Fruits, and dates and pomegranates... [the righteous will be] reclining on green cushions and rich carpets of beauty” (55:56-76);

“He that works a righteous deed — whether man or woman — and is a believer — such will enter the Garden; therein will they have abundance without measure” (40:40);

“Gardens of perpetual bliss: they shall enter there, as well as the righteous

among their fathers, their spouses, and their offspring” (13:23); etc.

Such passages occur in many places in the Qur’an.

While there is much said in the Qur’an that would appeal to a resident of the Arabian deserts, there is nothing about ruling the earth in righteousness with Christ and the saints, and of course nothing about Jerusalem or the promised land, nor about a lovely oneness with God.

Punishment of the wicked

What the Qur’an says about the reward of the righteous is graphic. What it says about the punishment of the wicked is ghastly. As noted above, Class 3 goes to Hell. The only ones spared its fires are faithful Muslims. Jews, Pagans and Christians are specifically mentioned:

“Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers will you find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers will you find those who say, ‘We are Christians’: They listen to the revelation received by the Messenger (Muhammad)... they pray, ‘Our Lord! we believe; write us down among the witnesses...’ And for this their prayer Allah has rewarded them with Gardens... But those [Christians] who reject Faith and belie Our Signs — they shall be Companions of Hell-fire” (5:82-86).

Evidently, according to the Qur’an, Christians can stay Christians so long as they believe Allah is God, Muhammed is a true prophet, and the Qur’an is an inspired book. Otherwise we go to Hell.

Hell is for all who do not believe and practice Islam:

“And to every soul will be paid in full (the fruit) of its deeds; and (Allah) knows best all that they do. The Unbelievers will be led to Hell in crowd” (39:70-72).

Their pleas will be rejected:

“If only you could see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord, (saying:) ‘Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard: now then send us back (to the world): we will work righteousness: for we do indeed (now) believe.’ If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: but the Word from Me will come true, ‘I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together.’ Then you taste — for you forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you — you taste the penalty of Eternity for your (evil) deeds!” (32:12-14).

There is no let-up in the agonies of Hell:

“For them will be cut out a garment of Fire: over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), ‘You taste the Penalty of Burning!’ ” (22:19-22).

When their skins are burned off, they are given new skins so the agony can continue:

“Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise” (4:56).

One time we enquired of a hospital technician wearing the Muslim scarf what she thought of the horrors of Hell. She accepted them as true teaching and felt they were primarily intended to keep Muslims attentive to the ordinances of Islam. With a somewhat fatalistic shrug, she accepted that Allah would inflict such punishment and there was no use denying it.

State of the dead

This is another topic where the Qur’an is not particularly clear. In one place it speaks of resurrection from the sleep of death:

“The trumpet shall be sounded when behold! from the sepulchers (men) will rush forth to their Lord! They will say: ‘Ah! woe unto us! Who has raised us up from *our beds of repose?*?... (A voice will say) ‘This is what (Allah) Most Gracious had promised’ ” (36:51,52).

This statement indicates the dead are asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection. However, as we saw in the articles on Jesus and Jihad, special believers (e.g., martyrs) go straight to heaven, bypassing the Judgment Seat and currently enjoy pleasures requiring a body. Where the body comes from is not indicated. And there is reference to a barrier between the faithful and rejected which exists during the death state before permanent separation takes place at the resurrection:

“In order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected — By no means! It is but a word he says — Before them is a Partition, till the Day they are raised up. Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another!” (23:100,101).

Evidently this passage, along with one or two others, has led some Muslims to develop ideas that there is a purgatory similar to that in the Catholic religion.

Future of the earth

We have already noted that the earth suffers great calamities on Judgment Day. Chaos rules and the mountains are flattened. What happens after that is difficult to determine. The Qur’an does not speak of a rejuvenated earth as we find in the Bible prophets. So what the Qur’an leaves in the reader’s mind is that the afterlife consists either of the horrors of Hell or the blessings of the Garden of Paradise. These are the points of emphasis.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

(Next, Lord willing: What the Qur’an says about how to be saved)

*“Many folks want to serve God, but only in an advisory capacity”
(Unknown).*

Archaeology

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Famed archaeologist W.F. Albright called them the greatest archaeological find of modern times. When they go on display, they draw record-breaking crowds, such as 260,000 in Grand Rapids in 2003 and 390,000 in San Diego in 2007.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest extant copies of the Old Testament books, dating as far back as 250 BC. Before their discovery, the most ancient Hebrew Bibles dated to about the tenth century AD.

The first 45 years: 1946 to 1991

Near the end of 1946, a Bedouin boy happened upon the first seven scrolls in a cave at Qumran on the shore of the Dead Sea. At the time, no one realized the significance of the dirty old pieces of parchment, and they were treated accordingly.

Four scrolls (including the Great Isaiah Scroll, the centerpiece of the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem) were sold to the Metropolitan Samuel on July 16, 1947.* On November 29, 1947, Israeli archaeologist Eleazar Sukenik took an extremely dangerous bus ride to Bethlehem to purchase the other three from an antiquities dealer. He was bringing them back as the United Nations was voting to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. A few hours later, that transaction might have been impossible.

Sukenik wanted the other four scrolls, but the Metropolitan had realized they were of great value and was not ready to sell them. Years later, on June 1, 1954, the Metropolitan placed a small classified ad in the *Wall Street Journal*, offering “The Four Dead Sea Scrolls” for sale. Coincidentally, Sukenik’s son, the famous Yigael Yadin, was in the United States when the ad appeared. Negotiating secretly through an intermediary, Yadin purchased them. By July 1 all seven scrolls from Cave 1 were in Israeli hands.

Meanwhile, the Bedouin and archaeologists were exploring other caves around Qumran. Cave 4, discovered in 1952, contained the mother lode — almost 700 scrolls. In all, a total of 900 scrolls (222 of them Biblical) were found in 11 caves. For many years the scrolls from Caves 2 to 11 were stored at the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem. They have now been moved to West Jerusalem.

The first Scrolls were published in the 1950s and early 1960s. Then money ran out and politics took over. While fiercely guarding their monopoly, the editors published nothing.

This hiatus offered a heyday for conspiracy theories. Why were the Scrolls not being released? Was it because they challenged the very core of Christianity? In 1970, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, by John Marco Allegro, claimed that

the Scrolls showed Christianity developed from a fertility cult under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs. More recently, books like *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Isaiah Effect*, and others have shamelessly alluded to the Dead Sea Scrolls to support outrageous claims.

At last, in 1991 the monopoly ended. The Huntington Library in California opened to researchers its complete set of photographs of the Scrolls, forcing the Israel Antiquities Authority to lift its restrictions on their use.

Proof the Bible is accurate

Now we know that the Old Testament we have today is 99 percent the same as the Scriptures that Jesus would have read. Before the Scrolls were discovered, this could not be said with certainty because the oldest texts were only medieval. Although they had been copied with painstaking care and reverence, critics could assert that they had been changed over the years, and no one could prove otherwise. The Scrolls offer proof positive that the Old Testament text is essentially the same today as it was over 2,000 years ago.

Most of the differences that do exist are trivial: for instance, spellings. (Compare the British “honour” to the American spelling “honor.”) Some Scroll readings add clarification or resolve textual difficulties. Bibles published in the last few years either use the Dead Sea Scrolls in the translation, or have marginal notes showing DSS readings.

The Scrolls have yielded parts of almost every book of our Old Testament, confirming their validity and accuracy — and refuting skeptics. Until last year, Nehemiah was missing, but a fragment has recently surfaced.

Esther is the only Old Testament book not found. The Essenes, who lived at Qumran, likely rejected Esther for a number of reasons. The most obvious are that it does not mention the name of God, and that it portrays the marriage of a Jew to an unconverted Gentile. The main reason, however, may be that it introduces Purim. A few non-Biblical scrolls present controversies about the Jewish calendar and the feasts. The Essenes observed only the feasts of the Law of Moses and did not recognize Purim.

The three books of which the most copies were found are Isaiah, Deuteronomy and Psalms. Amazingly, these are also the three books most often quoted in the New Testament. The Essenes were looking for the Messiah, so their favorite Scriptures were the same as those of the early Christians. Isaiah talks about the coming Messiah. Deuteronomy stresses the Covenant (the Essenes called themselves the Community of the New Covenant), and the Psalms center on David, whose throne the Messiah was to possess.

Insights from the Scrolls

Three versions of the Jewish Scriptures were found at Qumran: the Palestinian (the basis for the Samaritan Pentateuch); the Egyptian (ancestor of the Septuagint); and the Babylonian (which became the Masoretic text). All three were apparently equally accepted. Among the Biblical scrolls were a few Greek versions.

Our King James Version (also called the Authorized Version) is based on the Masoretic text. Where Scriptural quotes in the New Testament do not seem to match their Old Testament sources, the wording often matches the Septuagint. This shows that Jesus and the apostles recognized the Egyptian text as authoritative. One example is Isaiah 7:14, quoted in Matthew 1:23. Does it prophesy a miraculous “virgin” birth, or simply a “young woman” having a baby (as critics claim)? The Septuagint resolves the issue; the Greek word definitely means “virgin”.

There are hardly any differences between the Scrolls and the Masoretic Text, which is the basis for the KJV. These differences are not radical, and in no way undermine the accuracy of Scripture.

Take, for example, Psalm 145 (“I will extol thee, my God, O king”). This well-loved psalm of praise, with its 21 verses, is an acrostic minus the Hebrew letter “nun”. Acrostic writings use the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet sequentially to start each verse. Thus, they have 22 verses, or some multiple thereof.

The Septuagint adds a “nun” verse after verse 13, and so does the Great Psalms Scroll from Cave 11, completing the psalm. Current Bible versions include the missing “nun” verse either at the end of verse 13 or in a marginal note: “The Lord is faithful in all His words, and gracious in all his deeds.” The Psalms Scroll is a Babylonian text; these words must have disappeared from the Masoretic Text during later transmission.

Another example comes from Isaiah 53:11. The KJV reads: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” The wording is somewhat cryptic. What does this passage mean? How would the Messiah be satisfied by his own suffering? And why the odd expression “of the travail”?

Three Isaiah Scrolls have this verse, and they are all consistent. The ancient reading is: “Out of the suffering of his soul he will see light, and find satisfaction.” Seeing light, obviously, is a prophecy of Christ’s resurrection. No alleged Christian editor could have tampered with the words, because those scrolls date to at least 100 years before Christ was even born. Many modern Bibles use, or reference, this reading.

Surely the providential hand of God has been at work to preserve this marvelous library from the time of Christ. It has come to light in an era when the Bible — indeed the very existence of God — has never been more under fire.

Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON)

Note:

* “Metropolitan” is a title for an official of the Syrian Orthodox Christian Church, similar to a bishop: Editor.

This article is based on a November 2009 series of lectures in Ottawa by Dr. Peter Flint, Canada’s Research Chair in Dead Sea Scrolls.

Reference: *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, by James VanderKam and Peter Flint (Harper San Francisco, 2002).

History

“Making it clear and giving the meaning”: (1) Tyndale’s Dream

Back in the 16th century, there was a revolution. At its heart was the belief that people had a right to read the Bible in their own language, and not to rely on the authorities of the church to tell them what God required of them.

In England, one figure towers above all others in the story of that revolution. The Bible translator William Tyndale was driven by the conviction that the Word of God should be available to the common people in the language of everyday. Tyndale was passionate about that belief — so much so that, some 470 years ago, he gave his life to see it fulfilled.

Today, those of us who believe the Bible’s message to be as up to date and relevant now as it always has been, ought to acknowledge the debt we owe to Tyndale and his collaborators. The best way to do that is by doing what Tyndale himself would have wished: ensuring that the Bible we use in our reading, preaching and study, and the content of our worship, are in the language of the present day, accessible and clear to all.

That is not, of course, always the case. Ironically, it is Tyndale’s own language, the language of the 16th century, that has dominated worship and Bible reading through much of the intervening period. Let’s look first at how this language achieved such a dominant position.

Good news for the plowboy: the Bible in English

The England of the early 16th century was a repressive place for religion. The law forbade anyone to translate or even to read a version of the Bible in the common tongue without official permission.

But it was also a world ripe for change. The last half of the fifteenth century saw the invention of the printing press; the reflowering of learning — the Renaissance — in Europe, and the arrival in the West of many Greek scholars together with their manuscripts after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. For those who valued the Bible, a vital contribution was made by Erasmus, the Dutch scholar who recognized the errors of the Latin Bible then in use, the Vulgate, and in the early years of the sixteenth century prepared as accurate a version as he could of the Greek text of the New Testament. Some of his work was done in England, at Cambridge, though it was at Basle in Switzerland that Erasmus’s Greek Testament was printed and published in 1516. Although Erasmus made no attempt to translate the work into English, his preface reveals how he longed for others to do so:

“I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, trans-

lated into the common tongue, should be read by the unlearned... I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plow, that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveler might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them.”

Although Erasmus had left Cambridge by the time Tyndale arrived there around 1516, his influence on the young Tyndale is shown by a well-known story recounted in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Tyndale was disputing with a learned cleric who asserted: “We were better to be without God’s law than the Pope’s.” Echoing Erasmus, Tyndale’s answer was: “I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of Scripture than thou dost.”

Tyndale was as good as his word: using Erasmus’s Greek text as his basis, he published in 1525 the first printed English translation of the New Testament. Sadly, his work on the Old Testament — he translated the Pentateuch, the historical books, Jonah, and other fragments — was cut short when he was betrayed in 1535 and martyred the following year. But Tyndale’s genius lived on: as the Reformation created a climate more receptive to the Bible in English, it was Tyndale’s phrasing and wording that dominated later translations.

Tyndale, like Erasmus before him, longed that the Bible should be available and accessible in the everyday language of ordinary people. No church, no priest, no self-appointed authority should come between the sincere believer and the Word of God. It is to Tyndale’s lasting credit that his ringing phrases and genius of expression shaped the English Bible — indeed, the English language — through the centuries. It is largely due to him that the King James version, which follows his New Testament translation closely, has been such a remarkable and lasting success.

The genesis of the King James Bible

Particularly successful among the later Protestant translations influenced by Tyndale was the Geneva Bible, so called because it was the work of exiled Protestants in the Swiss city during the bloodstained reign of Mary, the Catholic daughter of King Henry VIII. Eventually published in 1560, it won wide acceptance in the England of the new Queen Elizabeth — for instance, it was Shakespeare’s Bible. But the Geneva translation, and particularly the marginal notes it contained, alarmed the political and ecclesiastical establishment. One note, on Exodus 1:19, pointed out that the Hebrew midwives were right to disobey Pharaoh’s command to kill male babies. Another note on Daniel 6:22 drew attention to Daniel’s disobedience to the king’s command, in order that he might obey God. Such ideas accorded with the strong Puritan movement in England, but went down badly with those who believed in the “divine right of kings”, and with the religious establishment which supported the compromise between Reformed and Catholic ideas that was (and to some extent still is) the Church of England. It was required by law that the Church’s services use the less popular but officially approved Bishops’ Bible of 1568.

One firm believer in the divine right of kings was, of course, James I. At his accession in 1603 the English Puritans had high hopes that church reform would bring the English church practice closer to the Calvinist, Presbyterian practice of Scotland, where James already reigned as James VI. But James was no Presbyterian, and the English bishops played on his concern for royal authority to encourage the new monarch to resist the Puritan lobby. As Alister McGrath and others have shown, there was much at stake for the religious life of England, and feelings ran high (see *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001). When James convened a conference of senior church figures at Hampton Court early in 1604, there was little on which he was inclined to give ground to the Puritans — James defended the Prayer Book against criticism, and resisted calls for the Geneva Bible to be authorized for use in Church of England worship.

James did find one proposal which he could support, however — the request from John Reynolds, an Oxford don and Puritan leader, for a new Bible translation. Here was a proposal that would defuse demands for the wider use of the Geneva Bible, while giving the Puritans something to show from the conference. The bishops, led by the ultraconservative Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London and later Archbishop of Canterbury, initially resisted the idea along with anything else that smacked of change. Seeing that the king's mind was made up, though, Bancroft changed his position. Backing the new translation, he saw to it that he would have a strong influence in selecting the translators and writing the rules that would constrain their work — and ensured he would have the opportunity to edit the final text.

Bancroft's rules were clear. The Bishops' Bible was generally to be followed, and altered as little as possible. King James' translators kept so closely to the preceding versions that they retained forms of English that were already becoming outdated by 1611 — the use of 'thou' instead of 'you', and 'his' as a possessive pronoun in place of 'its' are examples. No marginal notes, other than to clarify difficult words, were to be permitted. Traditional ecclesiastical words were to be kept — a key point, since they carried connotations convenient to the established Church authorities but gave misleading impressions to the reader. Tyndale had replaced several such words — 'church' by 'congregation', 'charity' by 'love', 'priest' by 'senior' or 'elder'.

The result of the work, the King James Bible of 1611 (there is no record that it was ever formally 'Authorized' by the king), was slow to win acceptance. Nonetheless over time it displaced the Geneva and other translations to take a unique place in the affections of the English-speaking peoples — so much so, that for many years it was the Bible, almost as if the prophets and apostles had written in the English language.

A language for today?

It was not until the latter part of the 20th century that the dominance of the King James Version was challenged by a succession of new translations. These took into account the huge growth in textual evidence, and while some were

'one-man' paraphrases, others sought to retain a high degree of fidelity to the original text and drew on large groups of scholars to produce each new version. Yet some Bible believers chose to keep to the KJV for worship and study, and the language of the KJV — in large measure the language of the 16th century with its characteristic 'thee' and 'thou' pronouns, and so on — continues to occupy a central place in the meetings, hymns, public prayers, and Bible talks of many of our congregations today.

Is this the right approach for believers today? Those who say it is point to three main reasons. We will look at them in the next article.

David Brown
davidbrown2000@hotmail.co.uk
(Knowle & Dorridge, UK)

The Bible's Divine Character

The Bible can never command or retain its place as the supreme mentor of human life unless its absolutely divine character is recognized. Its histories will never be studied as they require to be, or its hopes practically blended with the motives of human action, or its self-denying precepts adopted and acted upon in human life, where there is the least suspicion of the presence of a human element in its composition.

This suspicion saps confidence: and the lack of confidence leads but too easily to a neglect to which we are naturally predisposed. Society is a desolation today because of this.

The divine authority of the Bible is not recognized. If it were recognized, as it has been hitherto among the brethren, there would be that application to it in constant reading which would purify and ennoble with righteousness and hope.

Instead of this, it is regarded as a venerable piece of literary antiquity, good in its way, but not deserving of the first place in human life, and, on the whole, inconvenient and even hurtful, if it is put into that position. All confidence in it as the word of God has been undermined in the general ranks of society through the influence of learned but false theories.

A few have had that confidence restored, with the result of light and comfort and righteousness entering into their dark lives by the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation.

Robert Roberts

Reflections

“Make haste, O man, to live...”

My husband and I had met with the accountant days before. When she called to say our tax return was ready, I offered to pick it up.

Walking down the hall toward her office, I noticed her door was open. “Oh, good,” I thought, “she doesn’t have a client with her. I’ll be able to get in, get out, and be on my way in just a few minutes.”

As I got closer to the door, though, I heard voices. There were a man and a woman in the office with her.

Disappointed, I sat down in a chair immediately outside the door to wait my turn — but not before I stood in the doorway for just a second, to make sure that all three people in the office knew I was there. “Maybe if they know I’m out here waiting, they’ll hurry,” I reasoned. I had places to go, things to do, and people to see.

I got busy making notes to myself about all the other errands I had to run that day. Occasionally I was distracted by the visiting woman’s high, tinkling laugh and the man’s deep mellow voice. “They seem to complement each other,” I thought. “He seems calm, dependable, level-headed. She sounds lively, joyful, and at ease.”

After I finished my notes, I started thumbing through a magazine about estate planning — certainly not what I wanted to read and think about on my busy day. I tossed that aside and impatiently wondered if I should leave and take my chances later.

Then, as if I had just really tuned in, I heard what the couple was discussing with the accountant. They had just spent the last month in Mexico for an unorthodox treatment of the woman’s rapidly progressing cancer. Traditional measures had so far proved useless against the invading horde in her body. “That woman has a terminal illness,” I marveled. “She sounds like someone who has the world by the tail, not someone who may leave it soon!”

Now my interest was piqued and I strained to listen, willing my hearing sense to go around that doorway and into that room so that I would not miss a word.

“You don’t know how to live until you’re dying,” the woman cheerfully continued. “This has been the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

What? How could she say that? She sounded almost excited that she carried around in her body something that was trying to kill her. Had the cancer affected her mind as well?

Then the man joined in the conversation. Together they explained how much their priorities had changed. No longer did they see money as a gauge of their

success in life, but as a means to enable them to fight for life and to share life with their children and other loved ones. No longer did they live every day like there were many more to follow, or put off until tomorrow what they could and should do today.

Instantly a Bible verse popped into my head. From Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, the man of God, I remembered verse 12:

“Teach us to number our days aright, so that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Quickly on the heels of that came the lines of a hymn:

“Make haste, O man, to live,
For thou so soon must die;
Time hurries past thee like the breeze,
How swift its moments fly!”

Was I permanently changed from that moment on, always counting my blessings, always doing today what I should not put off until tomorrow, having all my priorities straight?

I am still doing things to keep a pleasant home, a balanced checkbook, a clean car. I exercise, read, write letters, shop for groceries, cook. I nap. I pray.

But so often in the back of my mind as I do these things, all necessary to maintain an efficient, hospitable home and a balanced life, there is a nagging sensation... a still, small voice perhaps?

‘Is this the best use of your time?’

That is followed by, ‘What would you most regret leaving undone?’

What if my life was suddenly turned upside down, as that woman’s surely was, or worse — what if it suddenly came to an untimely end — untimely in my mind of course, meaning too soon for me to get done those things I always thought I had time to do... later.

In reality, we are all ‘dying’, as in getting closer to our demise every day, just like that woman. Perhaps we haven’t had a medical professional tell us so... haven’t received the news to make us focus... and prioritize.

That woman and I never met; I never even saw her face. She could not know then how she affected a stranger.

Changes I am making and hope to make I will not share with you. I do welcome your asking how I am doing with those changes. I welcome your asking because sometimes I forget to ‘Make haste, O woman, to live...’ The trivial, not-worth-a-row-of-pins minutiae of daily life can slowly but surely ease out, to the point of eliminating entirely, the vital, extraordinary, and priceless pursuit of living — as God and Jesus would have us live, every day, for them, with them, through them. If we live like that, are we not also living to the fullest for ourselves... and for others? How can we not be?

I have no way of knowing if the treatment in Mexico cured the woman of cancer, postponed the inevitable for some brief time, or was to no avail. She never mentioned God or Jesus, at least not in my hearing. Whether her attitude was influenced by her belief and trust in them, or whether she was just a very rational, thoughtful person who had come to accept her fate and was determined to handle it with dignity, I don't know.

May God allow the musings of a fellow pilgrim to so affect you — to “number your days aright... to gain wisdom... to make haste to live...” To have no reason to regret.

Sharee Grazda (Austin South, TX)

Bible School Prayer

Our Father in heaven, the Creator and Sustainer of all things; hallowed be Your name.

This morning we are blessed because it is a beautiful morning. We are blessed because we have all had a good night's rest and have become energized.

We are blessed because this week we have shared the Word with our brothers and sisters of like precious faith and have become synergized.

We are blessed because we have come from the far reaches of the earth: some of us from outside the states; many from within the states; still more from Texas and a few have come from nearby places. We have all been brought together for one reason: to discuss Your great and glorious Word.

Thank you, LORD, for small miracles!

Spiritually, we have also come from afar and from many different origins: many of us have grown up around the Truth and have been baptized into the Truth; others have been baptized into the Truth through a friend or family member. Still others have searched for the Truth and found it; others have not searched for the Truth, yet they still found it. Some of us are studying now — planning to be baptized into the Truth in a few years. And one of us from this Bible school has chosen to be baptized in a few days.

Thank You, LORD, for small miracles!

Some of us have come to this Bible school downtrodden and confused; some of us have been uplifting and have enlightened other brothers and sisters. Thank you, teachers.

Thank You, LORD, for small miracles!

This week we have become one body, so that each of us has had a role in the success of this Bible school. When “one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored we all rejoice with it” (1Cor 12:26).

Thank You, LORD, for small miracles!

It has been written in the Word that we have been made in Your image. This is a “tall” order — because we are of the flesh, and we fail often even though we try our best. But through our faith we believe that You are a loving and forgiving God and we will be redeemed!

Thank You, LORD, for small miracles!

We have come to know One who has overcome this flesh, Your Son, who was crucified, died, was buried, and was resurrected. He was a man who overcame the flesh, to give us hope.

Thank You, LORD, for miracles!

We have learned much, from our exhorters and teachers, about a time when the earth will be free from human suffering, and a time in which we will live in a sin-free world, when Your Son returns to set up Your Kingdom on earth! We ask to be a part of that plan — not from an arrogant stance of control and dominance of others, but from a humble one that allows us to be a small part of a great plan that rids the world of sin.

Thank You, LORD, for great miracles!

And yet, LORD, there is still much work we must all do. We realize we are accountable for our thoughts and actions. We realize we are not infallible and have often fallen short of what You have commanded. We hope that our interactions this week have energized us to work harder and to stay on the straight and narrow path that will allow us, through Your grace, to become a part of the Kingdom that is to come!

We ask You for and thank You for these things through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Rick Hackett (Houston North, TX)

Special Invitation

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

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
35th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 26-August 1, 2010.*

Main Speakers:

Bro. Jared Johnson — “Reading the Bible: Ways of Seeing”

*Bro. Dan Styles — “Paul’s First Letter to Timothy:
A Guide for Life in the Church”*

Bro. Rick Schaen — “A Plan of Acts-ion”

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

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

On Bible Prophecy

There is one thing which makes the study of prophecy of such immense practical importance. It is that we shall be on earth when God's judgments are executed.

Our Scriptural hope is to be caught up to meet the Lord, and so to come with him when he comes to execute judgment on the wicked. But we are surrounded by those principles, influences and systems, which are ripening to that maturity of evil which mankind will reach before those judgments come. God will judge them at the coming of Christ when they are fully ripe.

But has acquaintance with these subjects no tendency to keep us apart from such evils now? Surely it has; and that we might be so sanctified, or kept apart from evil, is one object God has in view in revealing these things to us.

It is not by exciting applications of prophecy to passing events that true edification is secured. The natural mind may feel the deepest interest in prophetic inquiries conducted in this way; but Scripture was not designed merely to instruct us as to what transpires in the arena of political factions, or to occupy our souls with such subjects. "Our citizenship is in the heavens." "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth." It is not with such contentions that God's revelation of the future concerns itself.

It forewarns us, in general terms, that wars and rumors of wars may be expected, till the scepter of universal dominion shall be wielded by the Prince of peace. But it is God's judgment, and the approaching climax of iniquity which renders it inevitable, about which prophecy instructs us.

And even as to this, it is because the church will be on earth, amid the desolations of the crisis which is so rapidly approaching, that she receives those revelations respecting it. The church is thus enabled morally and spiritually to judge those things now, which in their maturity of evil God will judge by the righteous retributions of His wrath.

There are three very distinct spheres on which the judgments will fall when the Lord cometh out of his place "to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity": Israel, the nations, and professing Christendom.

If we are to understand why judgment comes upon Israel, we must know what Israel's calling and testimony is, and how it has failed therein. If we are to discern the grounds of God's righteous judgment upon the Gentile nations, we must be acquainted with His past and present dealings with them, and with their conduct under their special responsibilities. So also, to understand the guilt of professing Christendom, we must know what the calling of the true church is, what is its testimony, and in what respects Christendom, while assuming the place and claiming the responsibilities of the church, has acted contrary thereto.

These are solemn subjects of inquiry. May our hearts be prepared for them. Much that is brighter remains beyond.

John Thomas (1805-1871)

Consider the Banana: An Object Lesson

A banana as an object lesson? Yes, indeed. If we let it, everything can become an object lesson.

I like my bananas; I have half of one every morning. But I like them just right, not too green, not too ripe.

Unfortunately, bananas have a very short shelf life. Stores have a hard time with that and a certain percentage of them must be discarded. (I know some like banana pudding made from overripe bananas, but that's not the same; that's another object lesson.)

From display case to dumpster, therein lies the lesson. I have a short shelf life too! Compared to Methuselah I'm just a short spit. (This expression derives from little boys trying to see who can expectorate the furthest.) But even Methuselah, with his 969 years, found his way to the dumpster.

So here I am. I have had my 'green' time, a time when I was learning what life in the presence of our Creator was about. I learned I was a man, perhaps with "honor, but I understood not". Therefore I was "like the beasts that perish" (Psa 49:20). I considered my ways.

And I will have my 'overripe' time (I'm not too far from it now) — when my desirability factor will wane until at last I will be taken out behind the market and disposed of.

I have had an 'optimum' time, the Lord be praised. I'm still in it, my body being all together (although there has been some gravitational slippage). My senses are still with me; I can still find Habakkuk.

This optimum time has been the longest, and it is in this phase that I am showing whether my life has been only an addiction to "the vain philosophies of men", or if I have been making some truly meaningful demonstration of manifesting the Lord in myself.

Banana I may be, but God made me, God called me, and God is saving me. For saints there will come a day when such issues will have faded away; in fact we are told that it will happen "in the twinkling of an eye" (1Cor 15:52). Our Hymn 388 says it so well: "We shall be like him, pure in heart and sinless..."

The next time you see a banana, "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth", and at each stage of your life. God created us, not in vain, but for a glorious purpose. Bananas are temporary — we can be eternal.

The Lord bless each one of you.

Uncle Raymus

"He who would have the fruit must climb the tree" (Thomas Fuller).



Bible Mission News

Lima, Peru

It was a pleasure to spend a week with our brethren and friends in Lima last November. Arriving early on a Tuesday morning, that evening we held the first of six public lectures to which our postal contacts had been invited. Over the course of the week a total of 17 different adult visitors attended at least some the talks. Each evening ended with lots of discussion and questions.



Sis. Jean
Hunter
and
students,
Gloria
and
Nahuel.

There is one lovely couple preparing for baptism, so during the lecture each evening, Jean gave a private class to the lady and their eight year-old son, who finds the study fascinating and loves to compete with his mom in answering questions! Another two people have asked to study for baptism, and so we will continue with them via mail, email and telephone classes. God willing, we hope to return early in the new year to baptize those who are ready.

Bre. Julián and César faithfully supported all the sessions even though Julián's wife, Katya was due to have a baby. He had to keep his phone on in case he got a call to head home or to the hospital! Shortly after we left they were blessed with the arrival of a healthy boy — their second son.

On Sunday, we had lunch with the brethren, the couple studying for baptism and their son. We then held the breaking of bread, also attended by another very interested friend. Following that another ten students (all men!) showed up for

the afternoon lecture. We were pleased to see that afterwards a number of friends exchanged phone numbers with Bro. Cesar and Bro. Julián so they could arrange to meet and discuss the Bible. As yet we have no permanent meeting place yet in Lima, but hope to look for a place to rent next year. With a couple more baptisms, we should have the beginnings of a viable ecclesia there.

Please keep the work in Peru and the rest of Latin America in your prayers. The CBMA also badly needs your financial support because as publicity proliferates via the Internet, opportunities to expand our preaching in the area are growing rapidly at a time when resources are shrinking.

*Much love in the Hope of Israel,
Jim and Jean Hunter*

St. Lucia — New Missionaries Arrive Safely!

Bro. Martin Webster (CBMC Linkman) reports that Bro. Arne and Sis. Emma Roberts and their children arrived safely in St. Lucia on December 15, 2009, for which we thank God. Bro. Martin was there to help them get settled, and met them at the airport with a couple of the local brothers. There was a leisurely ride to the house where they will be staying, and now they are settling in quite well.

The Roberts family will be in St. Lucia for the next year or two giving support to the ecclesia there. The day after arriving, they were off to get driver's permits,

visitor visa extensions and bank accounts — all the usual things involved in moving.

Following their first memorial service, a business meeting was held to discuss preaching and ecclesial activity plans for 2010. The ecclesia numbers fifteen. God willing, a number of Bible Crusades are being planned, through which the ecclesia may be built up in numbers and in zeal for the gospel of salvation.

*Contributed by Sis. Jan
Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*



**Bro. Arne and Sis. Emma Roberts
and their children.**

El Salvador — A Wedding

On Saturday, December 19, 2009, there was a wedding in San Salvador. Sis. Claudia Elizabeth Sánchez Avila was baptized on July 17, 2009 as reported earlier in the Bible Missionary Magazine and the November Tidings. Bro. Edwin Chévez has been a member of the ecclesia for some time. Now they are husband and wife — what a nice way to end a year for the ecclesias in El Salvador.

*Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*



**Bro. Edwin
and
Sis. Claudia
Chévez**

ThisYourBible.com

We've been sharing with you over the past few months all of the exciting things that have been done to change the website technically and how it is being used. If you haven't had a chance to take a look at the website, please make it a priority. Check out how you can find the link to your own ecclesia by exploring the Contact Tab found at the top of the opening screen. Do you like how it looks? Is it complete, say if someone wanted to come to a week night class? Is there an inviting photo of the ecclesia and any of its activities? We will be working in the next few months to update some of the country pages and verifying or asking for additional information for the ecclesial pages as well.

Another way to use the website is to keep an eye on the monthly Survey Question, which you will see as soon as you open the website. We average **200-300** responses *each month* on the featured question, and most of the time almost double that amount take the time to go and read or download the pamphlet

associated with the question. I'm thinking these are good ideas for lecture titles and ways to follow up.

We haven't shared any statistics with you in awhile. There were two baptisms in 2009 directly related to website course activity or contact. We now have 559 tutors worldwide who are handling our active students. Just like any preaching effort there is a difference in how many you reach and how many actually respond. We are experiencing about a 25% rate of active students, and registered students are now over 13,000 from 140 countries in the world. That is a lot of students — and of course that doesn't count the ones who come to the site for a visit, pamphlet or question and don't register for the course.

We are getting lots and lots of visitors every day to the website — don't be left out, please take a look!

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC & TIYB Publicity*

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He never went to a college or university. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born.

He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the congresses that ever sat, all the monarchs that ever reigned — put together — have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that One Solitary Life.

James Allen Francis

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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: 519-837-9094,
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com
Website: 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

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

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

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

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

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

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 5th of the preceding month; please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We are pleased to report the baptism of one of our Sunday school students, SARAH HILL, on December 6, 2009. She is the daughter of Bro. Joe and Sis. Kathy Hill. We welcome, by way of transfer, Bro. Antonio and Sis. Susan Howell from the Manhattan, NY Ecclesia.

In November, our ecclesia hosted the Tidings Committee meeting. We welcomed the following visitors: Bro. Clive Drepaal (Brooklyn, NY); Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA); Bro. Toni Isaacs (Atlanta, GA); Bro. Brian McDonald (Pomona, CA); Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Bro. Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA); Bro. Jeff Wallace (Boston, MA); Sis. Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON); and Sis. Rose Madge (Milford Road, MI).

We also had our Fraternal Gathering in November at the HEB camp. We would like to thank Bro. Dennis Bevans for his classes on Daniel. We were glad Sis. Tiffany and his daughters, Haley and Courtney, could join him.

We have also welcomed the following visitors from other states or countries: Bro. Chris and Sis. Tina Hall (Reseda, CA); Bro. Scott and Sis. Cindy Nevers (Wachusett, MA); Sis. Wallesha Wallace and Sis. Blanch Wallace (Freehill, Jamaica); Sis. Mary Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ); Sis. Sandra Maggard (Denver, CO); Bro. Pierce and Sis. Holly Prater; Bro. Aaron and Sis. Molly McDonald (Paris Ave. OH); Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (S. Africa); Bro. Stan Newton and Sis. Kathy Atwood (Pomona, CA); Sis. Christine Parker (Morecombe, UK); Sis. Karen Cooper (Manitoulin Island, ON); Bro. Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Bro. Greg and Sis. Cindy Morgan, and Rachel Morgan (Kouts, IN).

We would like to especially thank the following visiting brethren for their words of exhortation: Clive DrePaul, Larry Beutel, Anthony Whitehorn, Scott Nevers, and Peter Hemingray. We would also like to thank Bro. Ted Sleeper for his class.

Fred Bearden

AUSTIN SOUTH, TX

Until further notice, the Austin South Ecclesia will be meeting in the homes of various members. Before coming, please call Bro. Geno Gottschall (512-750-3469) or Bro. Wesley Booker (512-291-0474) to determine the time and place of meeting.

Geno Gottschall

BRANTFORD, ON

The Brantford lampstand ended 2009 with sadness but also with joy. Our dear Sis. Mildred Kogut fell asleep in Christ on December 28, 2009, in her eighty-sixth year. She was born on May 19, 1923, and was baptized into the saving name of Christ on May 4, 1951, a lifelong member of the Brantford Ecclesia. Our love is extended to her family and we pray that our time apart will be short as we await the return of our coming king.

With gladness we rejoiced to see our ecclesial family grow by one more, as TREVOR SALISBURY, after a good confession of his faith, was baptized on December 31, 2009, at our year-end devotional. Bro. Roger Long was able to attend this get-together and we thank him for his words.

God willing, on April 24, 2010, we are looking forward to hearing a three-part study led by Bro. Roger Lewis on the theme of “Philip the Evangelist”. The first class is scheduled to commence at 10:30 am. Lunch will be provided and afternoon classes will be available during the second and third classes for children ages two to nine.

Michael Moore

CAMBRIDGE, ON

We rejoice in the baptism of ROB MACIVER on June 20, 2009, and we pray for God's blessing on him as he continues his walk toward His Kingdom.

We are pleased to announce, with the best wishes of the ecclesia, the marriage of Bro. Jochem Hale, son of Bro. Mark and Sis. Sylvia Hale (Hague), to Sis. Emily Puim, daughter of Bro. Tony and Sis. Lola Puim (Cambridge, ON).

We do welcome by way of transfer the following brothers and sisters: Bro. Nathan Badger (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); Bro. Jason and Sis. Amanda Longley (Mississauga West, ON); Bro. Dale and Sis. Rhoda Andrews, Sis. Joanne Cooper, and Bro. James and Sis. Deb Flint (Shelburne, ON); Bro. Johnnie and Sis. Beth Abel (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); and Bro. Fred and Sis. Alberta Hammond and their two daughters Sis. Hadassah and Sis. Lois (Georgetown, Guyana). We thank our heavenly Father for these many brothers and sisters and pray that we will be strengthened in our walk together.

Andrew Pearse

KITCHENER/WATERLOO, ON

The “Give Your Life a New Perspective” seminar was run in September and October 2009, with ten contacts attending the sessions. God willing, further seminars will be held early in 2010.

On the weekend of November 13-15, 2009, the Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia sponsored the annual Brothers' Weekend. Nearly 40 brethren from eastern Canada and the United States attended and were treated to excellent presentations followed by discussions. The theme for the weekend was “You are like Living Stones Being Built Up into a Spiritual House”. We thank Bre. Ken Curry and Gary Cousens for their work in the presentations and discussions. The weekend in 2010 is scheduled for November 12-14, 2010, God willing. Bro. David Lloyd will be leading the presentations and discussions.

We report that Bro. Fred Bouttell has returned to fellowship. We also report that Sis. Donna Jennings is no longer in fellowship.

Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Beth Abel find that it is much more convenient to meet at the Cambridge Ecclesia and have transferred their membership to that ecclesia. Sis. Melissa Robinson has moved and has transferred to the Orangeville Ecclesia. We commend them all to their respective ecclesias.

During 2009 we have appreciated the support of many brethren and sisters. We thank those brethren who have ministered the word to us.

Martin Webster

PARIS AVENUE, OH

The members of the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia as well as our satellite ecclesia in Columbus, OH have enjoyed fellowship with brothers and sisters from many other ecclesias during the fall semester of 2009. Words of exhortation were given by many of these visitors including: Bre. David Bearden (Austin Leander, TX); Lloyd Cooper (Manitoulin, ON); and Henry Ternent (Pittsburgh, PA). Bro. Dana Adams (Jasonville, IN) exhorted our Columbus group.

Our September study weekend was led by Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON) on the topic “The Deadly Sin of Covetousness.” Bro. Frank returned in December to lead us in a second study weekend on the topic “Contend Earnestly for the Faith Once Delivered.”

The ecclesia enjoyed fellowship at the annual picnic at Snyder Lake with visitors attending from Ontario, Pittsburgh and Atwood Lake. In November we rejoiced in the marriage of Sis. Katy Wuthrick (Avon, IN, but former member of Paris Avenue, OH) and Bro. John Mumaw (Kouts, IN).

The angels rejoiced when VICTORIA BATES, daughter of Bro. Jim and Sis. Cheryl Bates, entered the waters of baptism to put on the saving name of Jesus Christ. Two weeks later DEREK ELDER was also baptized and welcomed into our ecclesial family. Derek came to the Truth through friends in the ecclesia and special one-on-one classes arranged for him.

Bro. Josh and Sis. Kimmie Bates were blessed with the birth of son Joel in December. Bro. David Luff transferred to our ecclesia from Washington, DC, where he had been recently baptized, and is attending the satellite ecclesia we have in Columbus, OH.

This past summer the children and many adults were involved in the production of “Joshua,” a DVD presentation filmed in many venues around our area. A musical score and costumes helped to make this an enjoyable event that the entire ecclesia got to view one Sunday afternoon at a special program.

Currently there is a baptism class under way, as well as a seminar on prophecy and a preaching workshop. The spring study weekend will be held, Lord willing, March 13-14, 2010, with Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) leading us in a study from the book of Hebrews.

Jack Vogelgesang

WORCESTER, MA

In 2009, we were blessed to increase our members by the addition of Bro. Jason Millard who transferred to us from the Wachusett, MA Ecclesia and Bro. Deren Sanli who transferred from the Niagara Falls, ON Ecclesia.

We were also blessed recently by the baptism of our newest brother, JEREMY ROBIDEAU, son of Bro. Tom and Sis. Jennifer Robideau. May God bless him and guide him as we walk together into the New Year anticipating the soon return of our Lord Jesus!

Mark Fulmer

Bro. Charles Bilello

Bro. Charles Bilello passed away on December 1, 2009, just six months after his 100th birthday. He was a member of the Suffolk County, New York Ecclesia since his baptism

in 1987. He was the husband of the late Sis. Catherine Bilello. After her passing he taught another friend, Josephine Williamson, the Truth in the retirement village where he lived. She was subsequently baptized at the age of 83. He is survived by his sons Bre. John (Ann Arbor, MI) and James (Bayshore, NY); four of his grandchildren, all of whom have accepted the Truth, Bre. Andrew (Baltimore, MD), Peter and Matthew Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) and Karen Lombardo (Shoreham, NY). A fifth grandchild Bro. David Bilello predeceased him. He also leaves behind four great-grandchildren. Bro. Charles was a skilled craftsman by trade and was responsible for almost 40 years for much of the building and maintenance of the Selden Hall of the former Suffolk County Ecclesia.

John Bilello

Christadelphian Bible Camp Manitoulin Island

The Christadelphian Bible Camp on Manitoulin Island will be held this year God willing July 24-30, 2010. This year's theme is "Get Wisdom, Get Understanding: Forget it Not; Neither Decline from the Words of My Mouth." The speakers will be Bro. John Launchbury (Portland OR) speaking on the subject, "Living Proverbs"; and Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) speaking on, "The Time Will Come When They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine". Anyone wishing more information should contact Bro. Alex Browning, registrar at jabrowning@rogers.com; or by phone 416-284-0290.

Alex Browning

Meditational Piano Music CD now available

The third CD of meditational piano music by Sis. Julia M. Baines, entitled "A New Beginning", is now available at a cost of \$15.00 CDN; \$12.00 USD and 8.00 GBP plus postage. If you would like to receive a copy please contact Sis. Julia by email at christad@nbn.net.nb.ca or write to 8 Jordan Mountain Road, Mount Hebron, New Brunswick, Canada, E4G 1G7, or call 506-433-1728. The first two CDs, "Meditations of My Heart" and "On Eagles' Wings", are also available at the same cost per CD.

Funds from the CDs go to brethren and sisters in Mission areas (through CBM, CBMA, CBMC or similar funds).

Julia Baines

Southwest Christadelphian Bible School

God willing, the Southwest Christadelphian Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerville, Texas, U.S.A., July 11-17, 2010. The speakers are Bro. Devon Walker (UK): "God's Places of Refuge", and teen class "Go on, press the reset button". Bro. Matt Norton (AUS): "The Return of Christ", and Bro. Michael Ashton (UK): "God's Compassion on Jerusalem — Prophecy of Zechariah", and teen class "David's Fugitive Years". Registration will be available when our new website is up and running. The website address will be forthcoming. Registration information can also be obtained by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367.

Jeremy Wolfe

Truth Corps: An Opportunity to Preach

Truth Corps presents a great opportunity for young brothers and sisters over the age of 18 to take part in the preaching activities of various host ecclesias during the summer of 2010. Four to six weeks are spent in outreach work and fellowship with a team of

dedicated young people in a program designed to build up personal confidence in presenting the gospel message to others. Interested? Apply now to Bro. Brad Butts at wbbutts@comcast.net.

We are also urgently seeking the help of brothers and sisters to help in the work as team leaders. This work may be especially appealing to those who have been on Truth Corps previously. It is anticipated that leaders will be required for a two to three week period. Two weeks in July are planned for the Ecclesia in Guadalajara, Mexico. In view of this Team members or leaders with Spanish speaking ability would be helpful, but not required. Please contact Sis. Myra Lucke as soon as possible at mlucke@shaw.ca if you are interested in helping this year or if, Lord willing, you would be available in the future.

Bob and Diana Stodel

Winfield Bible School

Winfield Bible School will be held, Lord willing, August 21-27, 2010. Our theme is "Forgive Me, Lord, for I Have Sinned". The speakers will be Bro. David Lloyd (US): "Only Forgiveness", Bro. David Billington (Canada): "Who will Ascend the Hill of Yahweh?", and Bro. Roger Lewis (New Zealand): "Lessons from the Pastoral Epistles". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 or donzantingh@hotmail.com. Accommodation: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-278-0343 or h_jcawston@shaw.ca. Generally there are two classes scheduled for the morning and one in the afternoon, with teachers for all ages from kindergarten to adult. There is a library for purchasing books, a choral group to join, and time for recreation. Recreation facilities available include: swimming pool, water slide, volleyball court, basketball court, mini golf course, horseshoe pitch, trampolines, swings, and an extensive grass playing field. The setting is peaceful, secluded, and overlooks Okanagan Lake. It is a place to be enjoyed by all age groups regardless of physical condition. Some of the accomodation is air-conditioned, wheel-chair accessible, and includes supervised dorms for teens, private rooms for couples, families, etc. plus electrical hook-ups for recreational vehicles.

Helen Cawston

Ozymandias

*I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings,
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Minute Meditation

Be Wise and Listen

Cary Cavitt says in *Six Attitudes That Bring out our Best*, “I never learn anything when I am talking. It is only in listening that true learning can occur.” Larry King agrees, saying, “I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”

We must close our mouths and open our ears to learn. We can get into so much trouble for talking when we should have been listening. Once we have said something, it is out, and we cannot hit a delete key and have it go away. The way to keep from sinning by saying things we ought not to say is to stop and think before speaking. We can blurt out in anger something we will regret for the rest of our lives, as did Moses. He became exasperated with the children of Israel and said words that kept him from entering the Promised Land. The Psalmist tells us, “Because they provoked his (Moses’) spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” We need to remember Solomon’s advice, “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.” Solomon’s father David prayed, “Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.” Even casual conversations are important. Jesus warns, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.”

Saying nothing is so much better than saying the wrong thing. Dorothy Nevill advises, “The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing in the right place, but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.” Abraham Lincoln is often quoted as having said, “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to open one’s mouth and remove all doubt.” His words echo the words of Solomon, who said, “Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise: and he that shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”

When we must speak, we want to say the right thing. How do we know what would be best to say? By listening and learning beforehand so that we choose our words carefully. We may agree with the importance of listening, but how many of us put it into practice? James tells us, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” Erma Bombeck once commented, “It seems rather incongruous that in a society of super sophisticated communication, we often suffer from a shortage of listeners.” We need to listen more and say less. Solomon tells us: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Even nature teaches us by giving us two ears and one mouth: perhaps we ought to listen twice as much as we talk.

When we are talking, we are not learning. Why is it important to learn? What should we want to learn about? Learning can be an aimless accumulation of facts, as we read in the book of Ecclesiastes: “Of the making of books there is no end,

and much learning is a weariness to the flesh.” True wisdom comes from learning about the ways of God. God is looking for people who are eager to hear His word, and the reward is eternal life in the age to come for those who hear the word of God and obey it. The prophet Isaiah tells us, “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.” So many people pray to God but never listen to Him. God tells us through the words of Solomon that He will not hear our prayers if we fail to read our Bibles. The exact quote is: “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”

James calls the tongue “a world of iniquity”. He goes on to say, “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” We need to make it a #1 priority in our lives to try to tame this tongue of ours. If only we would realize every morning when we wake up that, “Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.” Let us listen to the Lord as He speaks to us through the pages of His book, and let us listen to each other, for we never learn anything when we are doing the talking.

We sing in one of our hymns, “Oh! Give me Samuel’s ear, the open ear, O Lord, alive and quick to hear each whisper of thy word: Like him to answer at thy call, and to obey thee first of all.” May we like Samuel have our ears open and listening for the words of God so that we learn the godly wisdom that will lead to a reward of eternal life in the kingdom of our Lord.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

FEBRUARY 2010

5-7 Ladore Youth Weekend in Waymart, Pennsylvania. Bro. Nathan Lewis (Los Angeles, CA): “At the Foot of the Cross.” See www.cyccamp.org for more details or contact Bro. Ryan Mutter 202-437-0641

13-14 Saanich Peninsula, BC Study weekend. Bro. Nathan Badger: “Judges 1-5: Let those who Love Him be as the Sun”. Classes are Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, and exhortation. Contact Kevin and Rebekah Hunter bible@christadelphia.org for details

21-26 Palm Springs Bible School Bro. Peter King (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God’s Word. To register, contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2010

13-14 Paris Avenue, OH Spring study weekend at the ecclesial hall. Our speaker will be Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI)

20-21 Victoria, BC Spring study weekend. Bro. Andrew from West Yorkshire will be leading the weekend on "The Way to the Holiest" For further information contact Hebrews@csll.ca.

27-28 Baltimore, MD Study weekend with Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA): "Second Chances: Lessons From Peter". Saturday, 2 pm, supper served. Sunday 9:45 am, fourth class 11 am, Memorial service, lunch served. Contact Sis. Judy Schneider, 410 609-0336

27 New England Little Disciples Gathering. A day at the Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA with classes for children ages 4-12. Pre-work is expected ("Abraham" workbook available shortly). Contact Sis. Tammy Rundle nelittledisciples@hotmail.com, 781-829-4410. Fees \$15 per person, \$50 family maximum. Financial aid is available. The website is www.nelittledisciples.com

27 Spring Seminar and General meeting. Sponsored by the Christadelphian Caring Network of Canada. Toronto East ecclesial hall on Cosburn Ave. Speaker: Bro. Dan Richard (IL): "Operation Lost Sheep". Starting at 10 am. Register with Bro. Bill or Sis. Jennifer Lawrence 519-822-8500 lostsheep@caringnetwork.ca, website www.caringnetwork.ca

APRIL 2010

10 Boston, MA 19th Annual spring study day. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman Street, Stoughton, MA. Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON): "He Whom Thy Brethren Shall Praise — Study on the man Judah and his transformation". Registration and coffee at 9:30am. Classes begin promptly at 10 am with two classes in the morning, lunch provided, and two afternoon classes starting at 1pm. Contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at 781-837-8865 or jimsullivan@aol.com.

10-17 Florida Christadelphian Bible School The speakers will be Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX) and Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD)

24-25 Baltimore, MD/Washington DC Gathering and study day. Washington ecclesial hall, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD 20783. Speaker: Bro. Paul Schlicher (Moorestown, NJ): "Pondering Stuff Unmingled". Begins Saturday at 1 pm, and Sunday at 10:30 am. Contact: Bro. Bob Kling 301-498-5245 or rkling@computer.org.

24 Brantford, ON Study day. Bro. Roger Lewis: "Philip the Evangelist". Begins at 10:30am. Lunch provided. Afternoon classes for children two to nine.

MAY 2010

7-9 Vancouver, BC Sister's weekend. Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, BC. Sis. Eileen Henthorn: "Faithful Worship in Serving". Cost \$180. Deposit no later than March 1. For further information contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau yvonne2001@shaw.ca

21-23 Men in the Truth Camping Weekend Lake Cachuma, CA. Subject: "Real Men Don't Lie". No charge. You can buddy up with someone if you don't have camping equipment. Contact Bro. David Lloyd davidrlloyd@earthlink.net

21-23 Sussex, NB CYC Spring Camp. Bro. Nathan Badger: "I Know Who You Are — The Holy One of God!". Contact Bro. David Pearce for more information and registration dpearce@nb.sympatico.ca.

22-23 Prince George, BC Fraternal gathering. Speaker: Bro. Dev Ramcharan "My heart is inditing a good matter". Contact: Bro. Rod Massey 1masseyrd@gmail.com

JUNE 2010

11-13 New York, NY New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat. Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX): "Trials, Trouble, Time, Triumph!". For registration information, please contact Sis. Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 or email averilpsm23@juno.com. Register early since capacity is limited

20-25 Bozeman, MT Bible Camp located at Bro. Paul Bottomley's property. Bro. Stuart Pearce (UK): "New every morning"; Bro. Mark Giordano (VA): topic to be announced. Contact information at bozemanbiblecamp.com. For registration and accommodations please contact Bro. Steve Faver sfaver@unitedagencies.com or 406-388-3378

20-26, California Christadelphian Kids Camp "The Apostle Paul". Teachers are Bre. Richard Morgan and Nathan Lewis. For children ages 9-16. Registration by Feb. 28, 2010. Registration forms online at kidscampcalifornia.com. Information from Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

JULY 2010

11-17 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School will be held at Schreiner University, Kerville, TX. Speakers are: Bro. Devon Walker (UK): "God's Places of Refuge, Teen class: "Go on press the reset button"; Bro. Matt Norton (AUS): "The Return of Christ"; Bro. Michael Ashton (UK): "God's Compassion on Jerusalem — Prophecy of Zechariah", Teen class: "David's Fugitive Years". Registration will be available when our new website is up and running. The website address will be forthcoming. Registration information can also be obtained by contacting Bro. John Clubb at (940) 636-0412; jclubb4081@aol.com; 1612 Douglas, Iowa Park, TX 76367.

17-25 Eastern Bible School Connecticut College, New London Connecticut. Theme: "Heirs According to the Promise". Bro. Michael Owen (Seaton, UK): "Hosea: The Unfailing Love of God" (adults) and "Growing Through Experience: The Letters of Peter" (teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Galatians: Salvation by Grace" (adults) and "God's Wonderful Plan of Redemption" (teens); third class: A series of six one-day study topics focusing on major challenges that affect our walk in Christ today. For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501 or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website www.tecbs.org

24-30 Manitoulin Island Bible Camp Theme: "Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth." Speakers are Bro. John Lauchbury (Portland, OR): "Living Proverbs" and Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine". Contact Bro. Alex Browning, registrar jabrowning@rogers.com or 1-416-284-0290

25-31 Western Christadelphian Bible School. Held in Corbett, OR. More information is available at www.menchabibleschool.org. Contact: Sis Jane Szabo, registrar, szabojj@peak.org

AUGUST 2010

7-13 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catherines, ON. For information contact David Brierley at david.brierley@sympatico.ca 416-236-5295, www.nfcbs.com

21-27 Winfield Bible School Theme: "Forgive Me, Lord, for I Have Sinned". Bro. David Lloyd (US): "Only Forgiveness"; Bro. David Billington (Canada): "Who will Ascend the Hill of Yahweh?"; Bro. Roger Lewis (New Zealand): "Lessons from the Pastoral Epistles". Registration: Bro. Don Zantingh 250-545-5988 donzantingh@hotmail.com

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
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com Accommodations: Bro. Harold Cawston 250-278-0343 h_jcawston@shaw.ca. Classes for all ages. Recreation facilities include: swimming pool, water slide, volleyball court, basketball court, mini golf course, horseshoe pitch, trampolines, swings and an extensive grass playing field. The setting is peaceful, secluded, and overlooks Okanagan Lake. Some of the accomodation is air-conditioned, wheel-chair accessible, and includes supervised dorms for teens, private rooms for couples, families, etc. plus electrical hook-ups for recreational vehicles

NOVEMBER 2010

12-14 Kitchener /Waterloo, ON Brother's weekend. Bro. David Lloyd will be leading the presentations and discussions.