

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor • George Booker, Associate Editor

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The Will of God Prevails

This fragment was found and preserved by John Hay, one of President Lincoln's White House secretaries, who said it was "not written to be seen of men." These thoughts were expressed after discouraging days of personal sorrow and military defeats [in the American Civil War].

The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present Civil War it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party — and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true — that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His great power, on the minds of the contestants, He could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.

Abraham Lincoln, 1862

Editorial

Eye of the Needle

“And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt 19:24).

This saying of Jesus (also to be found in Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25) has received much comment and interpretation down through the ages. Two different explanations, or perhaps ways of sidestepping the parable, have been proposed. The first is that the word for camel is a mistake — that kamilos should be kamêlos, a rope, which is what some very late NT manuscripts have. The other is that there was a gate into Jerusalem called the “eye of the needle,” which was so narrow that camels had to be unloaded to pass. In both cases, this maintains the difficulty of the process, but negates the absolute impossibility. The second explanation, the gate into Jerusalem, is quite common in the pages of Christadelphian magazines as well as other commentaries.

Indeed, idea of such a narrow gate leads itself to a nice analogy, that you have to drop your burden of worldly goods in order to crawl through the entrance into the Kingdom. But this has two problems: firstly, I believe it destroys the whole point of the saying. And although the account of this gate has been around since the fifteenth century, neither archeological findings nor studies of ancient writings have found evidence of such a gate.

As we turn to the idea that instead of “camel” we should read “rope,” the manuscript support is very poor. So it seems most likely this idea was introduced to get around the apparent difficulty of the parable. To add a further difficulty to this saying, Luke uses a word for “needle” that is most commonly used for a surgeon’s needle, unlike the common term for needle used by Mark and Matthew.

So what is the point of the saying? The disciples clearly understood the true meaning. The camel was, at the time, the largest (as well as one of the ugliest) animal of those times. And a needle was the smallest common opening. So the impossibility is quite apparent, and the concept that the young man was quite unable to enter the Kingdom without shedding all his considerable riches was very clear to the disciples. It is not surprising that they responded with “Who then can be saved?”

Riches

Although addressed to a specific individual, the advice proffered by Jesus could equally well be addressed to the vast majority of my readers in North America. Certainly in terms of possessions, we almost all live a life of luxury that was true of only a tiny fraction of the population in the first century. We also see the a similar warning in the parable of the sower, where in Mark 4:19 Jesus says *“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”* Riches are indeed capable of deceit: it is part of the focus of the New Testament on the danger of riches. There is indeed

a common conception that money usually brings happiness. There is a saying that “I know money does not bring happiness — but I sure would like to try!” But in fact, according to American research¹, this is not so. There is a threshold effect: up to \$75,000 indeed an increase in income helps, as the worries of surviving tend to overwhelm many people. But above this level, any reduction in money worries are replaced the “keeping up with the Jones effect”. There are always people better off than you, to be envied.

We are warned in many places about the danger of riches. We are warned about the great danger of the love of riches in 1Tim 6:10 and Heb 13:5. In Matt 6:24 we are told “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” (The word *mammon* is simply the Aramaic word for riches, which somehow the KJV does not translate.) I think it quite revealing that the Wall Street Journal has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the USA, and its primary focus is on wealth accumulation.

So how should we apply this consistent message to ourselves? Are we to listen to the advice to the young man “*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*” Well I believe there are three main points:

- It is the love of money — not wealth itself — that is the problem. The mere fact of possessing riches is not necessarily bad, it is the unbridled desire for more, or the unreasonable impulse to hold on to every penny. The counsel of Scripture is to be content in the state you find yourself in — if that state does not inhibit you in your walk to the Kingdom. The mere fact of possessing riches is not the problem: it is the insatiable desire for more and more, that is so pervasive in our society, this is the problem. It is a parable of our society that in the USA the Wall Street Journal has the highest circulation of any newspaper.
- We can think of many examples of rich, but faithful, individuals throughout the old and new Testaments. Of Abraham, Joseph, and particularly in this context of Joseph of Arimathaea, who “*wrapped it [the body of Jesus] in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock*” (Matt 27:59). In so doing he fulfilled the words of Isaiah 53:9 “*And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*” Without the riches of Joseph, our master would not have been laid in this new tomb — a prerogative of the ultra-rich in the first Century.
- The essential point of the parable is that the rich man was trying to earn his salvation, without fully committing himself to the gospel. “*If thou wilt be perfect.*” Jesus knew full well that such a state was impossible for man. And this is why the answer of Jesus to the question of the disciples “*Who then can be saved?*” rings so loud. “*With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*” It is quite impossible for the rich in particular, and for all mankind in general, to obtain salvation simply by keeping the commandments, to obtain salvation by works. But, by the grace of God, we have the hope encapsulated in the gospel, irrespective of our wealth (or lack of it).

The Message of the New Testament

The consistent message of the New Testament is that there is only room for one focus in our lives. We cannot hope to obtain salvation if our lives are centered on anything other than the gospel of the Kingdom of God. And certainly we cannot serve God and strive for wealth at the same time. Now the rich man of the parable clearly attached more importance to his riches than truly following his Messiah. It is of value to note that in the gospel of Luke, the parable of the eye of the needle is preceded by the account of the prayers of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14). The publican's prayer of penitence was accepted, but the Pharisee's prayer of self-righteousness was rejected. So shall be rejected those who pride themselves in their possessions.

So we come back to the clear teaching of the parable: it is absolutely impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom, hence the question of the disciples. And this question is as relevant to ourselves as it was the rich man. With all our material riches, it is as impossible for us to enter as it was for him.

Who then can be saved? The answer was given to the disciples and to ourselves. Compared to many Christadelphians in Africa and elsewhere, the level of riches common to those in North America is almost incomprehensible, but these possessions can be more of a hindrance than a help. It is only through the grace of God that we, in all our affluence, can be saved. Our wealth is, indeed, a great hindrance in our walk towards the Kingdom. We tend, as humans, to equate possessions with righteousness, however much we try to deny it. But this is opposed to the message of our Lord in the parable here.

With God all things are possible, if we have faith in our Lord Jesus, and we accept his sacrifice in humbleness and in the recognition that earthly riches are of no value in our quest for the Kingdom.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *Want to be happy? More money won't tip the balance.* By Carolyn Butler. Washington Post, September 21, 2010

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1Tim 6:9).

"To become rich at the expense of other's loss is no real gain. The attempt cuts at the root of sound trade and true sociality. Hastily gotten will hardly be honestly gotten. The Spaniards say, 'He who desires to become rich in a year, at the half-year they hang him.' Mammon, which more than anything else men are tempted to think God does not concern Himself about, is given and taken away by Him according to His righteousness — given sometimes to His enemies and for their greater punishment, that under its fatal influence they may grow worse and worse" (R.C. Trench).

"Broad is the shadow of generosity" (Arabian proverb).

"The generous never enjoy their possessions so much as when others are made partakers of them" (W. Jones).

Exhortation

Idolatry

I want to start this exhortation with a true story. A while back I had a \$5 bill in my wallet. One Saturday, I went into a sandwich shop and ordered some lunch. They handed me a sandwich and I handed them the \$5 bill, thinking I had paid. As I started to leave, the young lady called out to me. For some reason she had tested the bill with one of those special pens and discovered that it was counterfeit! It looked like a \$5 bill; it felt like a \$5 bill; whoever gave it to me used it like it was a \$5 bill; but I wound up being the one to find out that it wasn't a \$5 bill after all. Obviously, I had to provide another means of payment and luckily I had some other bills in my wallet. It was strange: something that looks so much like a \$5 bill, isn't. It's fake. It's not real. It can't do anything that a real \$5 bill can do; in particular, it can't buy a sandwich.

Isaiah 44: An exhortation against idolatry

When we read Isaiah 44 we tend to laugh: no one could be so silly as to worship idols. But idols are just counterfeit gods, things that are acting as if they are God but are not. They are things you love, obey, trust, and serve. You act as if they can provide the same things that God provides, but in reality it is impossible for them to provide anything of the kind.

Let's put Isaiah 44 into context. The refrain, "*There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked*" divides the last part of Isaiah, chapters 40-66, into three portions, each with nine chapters: Isa 40-48 (Good News of Victory); 49-57 (Return from Death/Exile); and 58-66 (Triumph/The Triumphal Homecoming). The first of these portions, Isaiah 40-48, has seven sections:

- 40:1-31 Good News;
- 41:1-29 Yahweh's Lawsuit with the Nations;
- 42:1-43:13 The Opening of the Eyes of the Blind;
- 43:14-44:28 Forgiveness and Restoration (or Redemption);
- 45:1-25 Cyrus and the Universal Acknowledgement of Yahweh;
- 46-47 Yahweh and Babylon;
- 48 Hearing and Responding.¹

Each of these sections has a structure in which Isaiah first introduces a topic, then addresses a second related topic, then returns to conclude the first topic. In particular, the structure of the fourth section is:

(A) 43:14-44:5;

(B) 44:6-20;

(A') 44:21-28.

Repetitions that connect (A) with (A') include the following:

- "Thus saith the Lord, your redeemer" (43:14; 44:24);

- “Remember” (43:18; 44:21);
- “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions...and will not remember thy sins” (43:25; 44:22);
- “Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb” (44:1-2; 44:21, 24).

These repetitions act as topical bookends, tying topic (A') back to topic (A).

The middle topic (B) has to do with idols, and is introduced with a powerful expression of the uniqueness of our Heavenly Father:

“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isa 44:6-8).

The idols described in verses 9-20 provide a direct contrast:

“They that make a graven image are all of them vanity...Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?...The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms...The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house” (Is 44:9-13).

What is easily missed in our English versions is that the words used to describe the making of these idols are the same as the words used in topics (A) and (A') to describe God's making of Israel and the world:

Made (#6213, *ʾasah*, “to do or make, in the broadest sense and the widest application”): 44:2 made; v23 done, v24 maketh; 44:13 fitteth, maketh, v15 maketh, v17 maketh, v19 make.

Formed (#3335 *yatsar*, “to press through the squeezing into shape; to mold into a form”): 44:2 formed; v21 formed, v24 formed; 44:9 make, v10 formed, v12 fashioneth.

By using the same words in this way, the Spirit is indicating that those who make idols are trying to be like God, the creator of all things. They are trying to make for themselves something that can save them, something that can redeem them.

The silliness of such an endeavor is highlighted in the mockery that follows:

“He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth

down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god” (Isa 44:14-17).

We laugh at this. Such idols can do nothing. Their impotence is obvious. The idols have been formed from the residue, from the wood that is left over after some has been used to create a fire for providing warmth and for cooking. Such gods are obviously counterfeit. They can't do anything that God himself can do. When the time comes that you need them, they will not be able to help you at all.

It is clear that the minds of the idolaters are filled with confusion:

“They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isa 44:18-20).

We laugh at the people being described, because we think that we would never fall into this same trap. We could never make such carved idols or molten images and “fall down and worship them.” But we must ask: Are we really that different? After all, we do spend lots of time “bowed down” before the television, or movies, or the internet. We often spend time and money watching things that we ought not, tying our hopes for happiness on things that can never provide eternal blessings, learning to behave in ways that are often contrary to God's way. So are we really that different, or do we need to wake up to the exhortations of God through His prophet Isaiah?

Covetousness is idolatry

To make the point even stronger, we need to realize that Scripture repeatedly tells us that idolatry is more than just graven and molten images. For example, the ten commandments are framed by statutes against idolatry and covetousness:

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's” (Exod 20:1-5, 17).

These two commandments underlie the others and are tied together by the apostle Paul:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5); “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph 5:5).

Idols of the heart

Idolatry has to do with the heart. Ezekiel refers to “idols in the heart”, which are stumbling blocks of iniquity that separate us from God:

“Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself” (Ezek 14:3-7).

Jesus teaches us that our heart is where our treasure is, and that we cannot serve two masters:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:19-21, 24).

Similarly, in Romans 1, Paul ties idolatry to a sinful way of life and to a mind separated from God. First, he makes the general point:

“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom 1:19-21).

Then three times Paul highlights God’s proportional response to their sins:

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (Rom 1:22-24).

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom 1:25-27).

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom 1:28-32).

In each case, God “gives them over” to their sin of idolatry, which is called “*uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts*” (22-24), and “*changing the truth of God into a lie, and worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator*” (25-27), and “*not retaining God in their knowledge*” (28-32). The tie between a bad heart, bad thinking, and bad behavior is clear, and these are all outgrowths of idolatry, of trying to replace God with something else.

Counterfeit Gods

It has been cogently argued:²

- “The human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.
- “Anything can be an idol, and everything has been an idol. Most people know you can make a god out of money. Most know you can make a god out of sex. However, anything in life can serve as an idol, a God-alternative, a counterfeit god.
- “We think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. The greater the good, the more likely we are to expect that it can satisfy our deepest needs and hopes. Anything can serve as a counterfeit god, especially the very best things in life.
- “What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek

to give you what only God can give. A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, 'If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know that I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure.' There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is *worship*. If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol.

- "The Bible uses three basic metaphors to describe how people relate to the idols of their hearts. They *love* idols, *trust* idols, and *obey* idols.

"Is there any hope? Yes, if we begin to realize that idols cannot simply be removed. They must be replaced. If you try to uproot them, they grow back; but they can be supplanted. By what? By God himself, of course. But by God we do not mean a general belief in his existence. Most people have that, yet their souls are riddled with idols." What we need is a belief in the one true God of the Bible, and to put this belief into practice by living the Gospel. In that way, we can replace any of the idols of modern society by the reality of the True and Only LORD God.

Flee from idolatry

Of course, we must be forgiven of our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, but that alone is not enough. In addition, we must "flee from idolatry." We must "*turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven.*" (1Thess 1:9). Forgiven idolaters are still idolaters, and idolaters will have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. We must diligently search out all of the idols in our lives, we must aggressively leave them behind, and we must fill the void with the one and only living God. He alone raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. He alone is our Redeemer. He alone is the one who blots out our transgressions.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. See Michael Goulder, *Isaiah as Literature*, 2004.
2. See Timothy Keller *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters*, 2009. This section is largely based upon his introductory chapter: I recommend the whole book.

The Worst "Idolatry"

In some respects this may be the worst "idolatry" of all, that a man may make a "god" of himself: that he may think first and chiefly of himself, study his own interests and happiness, and love himself supremely.

It has been well said: "It is no difficult matter to keep from dead idols, but take heed that you worship not the living ones, and especially yourself; for as soon as you attribute to yourself either honor, or praise, or knowledge, or power, you set yourself in the place of God, and He has declared that He will not give His glory to another (Isa 48:11)."

W. Jones, Pulpit Commentary

Bible Study

To Speak Well of God: (17) Messiah's Victory

17.1 Foreshadowing of Messiah

17.1.1 The promise of Messiah from God's speeches

Mankind was promised redemption in Eden. God mandated — to one later described as Satan, no less! — that the Seed of a Woman would destroy him, yet the Seed would pay a price to secure that victory (Gen 3:14-15). The New Testament unequivocally teaches Jesus of Nazareth was that victor (Heb 2:14-15).

To this well-known teaching, the book of Job adds two revelations:

- Even a righteous man cannot defeat the Satan
- The Satan can be defeated only by the Word of God

Thus the book of Job thus plays a vital part in teaching us who Jesus is. When we see Jesus defeat the Satan in the Wilderness (Matt 4; Luke 4) his victory doesn't stem from the fact he is a righteous man. The book of Job teaches us, via the consistency of Scripture, that Jesus' victory occurs because he is the Word of God.¹

Thus even before we reach John's gospel's beautiful presentation of Jesus as the embodied Word of God, God's speeches in Job enable us to anticipate this. Indeed the Joban speeches insist upon it! How satisfying it is to be able to see the Scriptures weaving together these strands of revelation into one powerful message. And this in no way detracts from the impact of the revelation via John when it arrives, that those blessed to live in the first century were privileged to have the Living Word of God among them:

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:9-14).²

The differences between Jesus and Job are as sobering as the similarities. Jesus successfully fought off the wiles of the Satan where Job did not. We must not miss the dramatic differences in their ultimate mortal fortunes, either. Jesus was the "Job" who never received the temporal blessing of restoration in his mortal life. Jesus was burdened with the uncertainty and doubt that plague every human mind, yet was never blessed with the restoration in which his human nature could take courage. This underscores what a truly remarkable man Jesus was! And it also

has an intriguing implication for all those who would follow him. Since Jesus had everything taken from him — including the support of friends and family — we cannot follow a ‘winner’ or a ‘successful man’ in any human sense of the word; a beautiful, if subtle, rejection of the clamorously acquisitive world of man.

17.1.2 Temptation in the wilderness

Job, the righteous man, has been tempted in the wilderness by Satan. The parallel is striking.

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil”
(Matt 4:1).*

Table 17_1 details the comparison of the two trials.

Jesus’ experience	The book of Job
led by the Spirit	<i>The LORD replied, “...not one of the men... who disobeyed me... will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers... turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert” (Num 14:20-25).</i>
into the desert	<i>In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job (Job 1:1).</i>
to be tempted by the devil	<i>The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands” (Job 1:12).</i>

Table 17_1: Comparison of the settings of Jesus’ and Job’s Wilderness Temptations

In each case God directs a journey into the wilderness, resulting in a time of testing and revelation. We can extrapolate backwards to see what Jesus may have learned from the example of Job and, perhaps more importantly, can extrapolate forwards from the examples of both men to learn how we should be responding to the same combative assaults in our lives.

This foreshadowing supplies a further, fascinating reason why these events should have befallen Job. The book of Job now acts as a textbook for Jesus!³ A textbook instructing Jesus in resisting Satan; both the Satan without and the Satan within. Jesus learned obedience (Heb 5:8) and doubtless the Scriptural scrolls in which he immersed himself were a principal source of that education, along with prayer and the Spirit’s revelation. I think the wilderness temptation of Christ gives clear pointers of what Jesus learned from Job — both Job’s successes and his failures.

Jesus endured three temptations, reminiscent of Job’s triune Satan. We might be prompted to try and validate a one-to-one mapping between each of Job’s friends and each of Jesus’ temptations, but I do not believe there is profit or accuracy along that path. But there is value comparing the responses to temptation given by Jesus and by Job (Table 17_2).

	Jesus' responses to temptation	Job's responses to temptation
1	<i>"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:4 quoting Deut 8:3).</i>	<i>"Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2).</i>
2	<i>"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matt 4:7 quoting Deut 6:16).</i>	<i>"But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you" (Job 17:10).</i>
3	<i>"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matt 4:10 quoting Deut 6:13).</i>	<i>"I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live" (Job 27:6).</i>

Table 17_2: Comparison of the responses of Jesus and Job in their Wilderness trials

Principal points to notice:

- 1) Jesus prevails! (Matt 4:11) Even though the fullness of his victory comes later (strictly much later, in the Kingdom of God) we can see Jesus resist self-indulgence — the Satan — even here. God's speeches to Job: that only the Word of God can tame this Beast, teach us that Jesus' success proves he is the Word of God.
- 2) Jesus restricts his comments exclusively to quotes from the Word. Jesus was a highly intelligent and articulate man, able to outmaneuver even the cunningly planned sophistry of the contemporary intellects of the day: the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees (e.g. Mark 12:13-17; 18-27). Yet here he only quotes Scripture. I believe he is demonstrating the same truth the Father taught: that the Satan, proud human willfulness, can only be tamed by the Word. I further believe he has learned this from his reflections on the Joban tale; showing his obedience to the divine injunction: "Have you considered my servant Job?" Clearly Jesus had.
- 3) All three of Jesus' quotes come from Deuteronomy, which we established earlier is coincident with the time of Job (Article 5, Sep 2009). This strengthens the idea that the book of Job was on the Master's mind during the wilderness temptation! In fairness, Deuteronomy is also simply the time of Israel's wilderness wanderings; so the simple comparison between Israel and Christ in the wilderness could be the dominant influence on Christ's replies.
- 4) Jesus' and Job's first responses to Satan are similar, but thereafter they diverge. This is indicative of where Job began to fail. (These comments are in no way designed to criticize Job, however. Naturally we all fall short when compared with the Lord!) The critical distinction is that Job deliberately draws Satan towards him; Jesus pushes him away. Job is riled and, buoyed with the knowledge that Satan's arguments are vain, he's keen for combat. "Come on, all of you, try again!" he cries, knowing he has the beating of their reasoning, but dangerously blind to the infection of their prideful attitude. Jesus, knowing the nature of the Beast far better and, I suggest, educated by his careful reflection

on Job's previous stumble, refuses to engage the Satan. "Away from me!" his only comment. James later concludes: *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you* (James 4:7).

- 5) As a result of engaging the Devil of Pride, Job was compelled to speak of his own integrity: "*my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live*" (Job 27:6). By contrast Jesus, who shunned Satan, concluded: "*Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only*" (Matt 4:10). Having remained untangled from Leviathan, Jesus was free to speak well of God.

17.2 Did Job succeed or fail?

This is not a simple question and anyone could be forgiven for being unclear on this point.

On the one hand, the drama began with a barter between the Satan and God. God had backed Job to succeed in a certain matter, the Satan had proudly assumed he knew better than God. This would seem to be all we need to know to solve the question, for if Job failed, God was wrong. So Job evidently succeeded where God said he would.

But on the other hand: if Job succeeded, where do we see the supremacy of Jesus? Haven't we just said that Jesus succeeded where Job failed? Fourth century Christian expositor Chrysostom is convinced Job succeeded in resisting Satan where Adam did not.⁴ Martin Luther explicitly disagrees, saying Job: "talks, in his human weakness, too much against God, and thus sins amidst his sufferings."⁵ I concur with Luther: where would be the need for Jesus, if Job has gone before? Furthermore: if Job succeeded against the Satan, why does God upbraid him as one who darkened counsel with words without knowledge? Why have we suggested God saves Job from the jaws of proud Leviathan if Job resisted the Beast on his own? Job evidently failed to overcome the Satan.

So did Job succeed or fail? The resolution is simple: there are two distinct battles going on.

Battle 1: The Satan versus God. The Satan asserted that Job will curse God if his personal circumstances are adversely affected. God knows otherwise. (In analyses of the book, this is commonly referred to as 'the barter.') Job's persevering faith proves God the winner of the barter; and Job too can be said to have succeeded in this regard.

Battle 2: The Satan versus Job. The Pride of Man confronts Job with specious accusations. Job confidently dismisses the false accusations, but his accurate perception of his innocence and insistence on maintaining the debate derails him into the ditch of pride himself. Job was losing (had lost?) the battle against pride when the Word of God came to save him. Later the Word of God made flesh — Jesus — prevailed in the same battle, where even righteous Job had failed.

Interestingly in both cases God's Word is the only winner.

It makes sense that there are two battles. Since the Satan is the opponent of God, then, by its very nature, it had to attack God's faithful servant, too. Yet, such is the

nature of God that His victory is experienced as a blessing by all involved. Even those who hosted the Satan, the three friends, are brought to salvation through the priest Job; and Job himself is elevated to a position where he can serve God through motives other than fear.

17.3 Reflection

Seeing a scene like this, of Jesus' response to temptation, is strangely comforting. It assures me that Jesus really was a man like me, afflicted by temptations that he needed to resist — even run away from! These pictures render Jesus of Nazareth all the more accessible to struggling disciples like myself. For if the Son of God needed to flee temptations, how much more important is it for a lesser disciple like myself to give no mental headroom to the things that perennially threaten to draw me away from my Father? The world teaches “look but don't touch” is a ‘morally legal’ strategy. But the book of Job, from which I believe the Lord also drew strength and education, strongly refutes this. Job's drama teaches that to give mental space to temptations, just to engage with Satan, actually guarantees disaster. The bottom line: don't toy with sin. Don't live life on the cusp of right and wrong. We know we will continue to sin, alas, and can survive only through God's grace. But let's not abuse and blaspheme the grace of God by positioning our discipleship's walk right on the precipitous edge of what we believe to be acceptable, pushing every boundary to the maximum, living in the most morally dangerous way, so that collapsing into the crevasse of sin occurs a hundred times more frequently than if we had followed the Spirit's lead and pushed temptation as far away as possible.

Jesus never sinned, yet this is not sufficient to define obedience; obedience is much more. It gives me pause to stop and think: if I were asked: “In what ways am I obedient to God's will?” I might reply: “I don't murder, I don't commit adultery, I don't steal; therefore I'm obedient to God.” Clearly a much different answer is needed, because that's not what's at the heart of obedience at all. The concept of obedience is centered around actively facilitating the will of God, not just avoiding violations of His commands.

I find it very encouraging to think about the subject of obedience in this way. All too often ‘obedience’ is projected as a self-righteous maintenance of a sin-free lifestyle. I recall the Headmaster in school assemblies, when I was eleven, intoning the need for obedience — an obedience I was unfortunately poor in maintaining, but perhaps simply because the ‘prize,’ of obedience, as it was then described, wasn't that appealing. It was always expressed in a negative way: obedience is not breaking the rules, not doing bad things. But this Biblical understanding of obedience is completely different! This is the ‘obedience’ based on positive action; utilizing intelligence and ingenuity in the service of the God I already love. Obedience is designing new preaching courses that can still spark interest in God from a self-fascinated, ADD society. It can be expressed as pitching in at ground level to help the poor; even just playing with toys with an orphaned child. Obedience is combining resources thinly spread across the globe into a coordinated preaching, pastoral or praise effort. What a refreshing notion! For the first time, I'm eager for

the label of 'obedient,' because it challenges me in ways in which I am excited to respond. Obedience is a playground for the creative; and I want to play.

John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. Jesus continues to defeat the Satan after the Wilderness struggle also: shunning his powerful resurgence in Gethsemane (Luke 22), killing him in his own death on the cross (Luke 23) and completing the victory (for the battle is merely tied if both finish destroyed) in exiting the tomb in glorious immortality (Luke 24).
2. All References are from the NIV.
3. I am grateful to Norm Fadelle for provoking my thoughts in this direction.
4. J. Chrysostom in "A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church," in N. N. Glatzer, Ibid, 25
5. M. Luther, "Works of Martin Luther," 1932, VI, Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, PA, USA, 382

Distorting the Love of God

What the Bible says about the love of God cannot long survive in people's thinking if it is abstracted [separated] from the sovereignty of God, the holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the providence of God, to mention only a few nonnegotiable elements of basic Christianity.

The result, of course, is that the love of God in our culture has been purged of anything the culture finds uncomfortable. The love of God has been sanitized, democratized, and above all sentimentalized. This process has been going on for some time. My generation was taught to sing, "What the world needs now is love, sweet love", in which we robustly instructed the Almighty that we do not need another mountain (we have enough of them), but we could do with some more love. The hubris [arrogance] is staggering.

It has not always been so. In generations when almost everyone believed in the justice of God, people sometimes found it difficult to believe in His love. The preaching of the love of God came as wonderful good news. Nowadays if you tell people that God loves them, they are unlikely to be surprised. 'Of course God loves me; He's like that, isn't He?'

D.A. Carson

The kind of God who appeals to most people today would be easygoing in His tolerance of our offences. He would be gentle, kind, accommodating, and would have no violent reactions. Unhappily, even in the church we seem to have lost the vision of the majesty of God. There is much shallowness among us. Prophets and psalmists would probably say of us that 'there is no fear of God before their eyes.' In public worship... it is more characteristic of us to clap our hands with joy than to blush with shame or tears. We saunter up to God to claim His patronage and friendship; it does not occur to us that He might send us away.

John Stott

Bible Study

The Tower of the Flock and the Birth of Jesus

Bethlehem, a small town about four or five miles south of Jerusalem, along with its immediately surrounding area, has been the scene of some very significant births in Bible times:

- 1) Rachel (whose name in Hebrew means “ewe”, or female sheep) gave birth to her second son just before she died very near to “Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)” (Gen 35:19) and “Migdal Eder” (v 21). (Rabbinical tradition states that the single pillar which Jacob erected over her tomb, mentioned in verse 20, was modified and added to over many years to become what was later called “Migdal Eder”, the “Tower of the Flock”.) As she was dying, Rachel named her son “Ben-Oni” (“son of my sorrow”), but his father Jacob renamed him “Ben-Jamin” (“son of my right hand”) (v 18).
- 2) The great King David, the shepherd boy elevated to the throne of Israel, was almost certainly born in or near Bethlehem, the home of Jesse his father (1Sam 16:1,18; 17:12), as well as the home of his ancestors Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:11).
- 3) The prophet Micah, in predicting the advent of Israel’s Messiah, names the “watchtower of the flock” (Hebrew “Migdal Eder”) as the place to which the “kingship” will “be restored” (or “come”, KJV) to the “daughter of Zion”, or Jerusalem (Mic 4:8). In other words, one born at Migdal Eder or Bethlehem would rule from Jerusalem over the Kingdom of God. There is no mistaking that, by “restoring” or “coming”, he means the birth of the Messiah — since he speaks of the “woman in labor” in verses 9 and 10. This prophecy is clarified further in Micah 5:2-3: “*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.*”¹ The ruler to be born there would become the great Shepherd “*in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God*”, and “*his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth*” (v 4).
- 4) Later, in Jeremiah 31, the prophet sees a time when, after great trials, the LORD will save a remnant of Israel out of their captivity, including “*expectant mothers and women in labor*” (v 8). Meanwhile, “*the voice of Rachel*” will have been heard, in Bethlehem, “*weeping for her children... because they are no more*” (v 15). Nevertheless, the LORD says to those mothers who weep: “*Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded... They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future... Your children will return to their own land*” (vv 16-17).
- 5) Finally, of course, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem the town of David (Matt 2:1; Luke 2:4), as Micah had predicted (Matt 2:5-6). Luke records succinctly that he was laid in a “manger”, a corn crib or feeding trough there (Luke 2:7).
- 6) Upon hearing of the birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem, the old King Herod

the Great, evidently insane and delusional, tried to track him down. When he could not find him, he ordered the slaughter of all the male babies in or near Bethlehem. Not knowing exactly when the child was born, or exactly where, he decided to err on the side of ‘safety’: *“He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under”* (Matt 2:16). Matthew himself adds, quoting Jeremiah, *“Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more’ ”* (vv 17-18; Jer 31:15).

This brief survey yields the following chart:

Mother	Child, or children	Birthplace	Circumstances
1a. Rachel (“ewe”) gave birth to a son	Rachel named him Benoni (“son of my sorrow”)	Ephrath, or Migdal Eder, i.e., Bethlehem	The mother died in sorrow as a result of childbirth...
1b. But when Rachel died...	...his father named the boy Benjamin (“son of my right hand”)	Ephrath, or Migdal Eder, i.e., Bethlehem	...but the son survived to become a beloved son to his father Jacob
2. The wife of Jesse	David	Bethlehem	Youngest son, a shepherd later elevated to kingship over his older brothers
3 & 5. Mary (whose name means “bitter”)	Jesus, a great Shepherd	Bethlehem (Matt 2; Luke 2)	The Messiah, the Good Shepherd. Also, shepherds in the field nearby came to see him in the manger (Luke 2:8-20)
4 & 6. Unnamed mothers	Male children of Bethlehem (an unknown number)	In or near Bethlehem	The mothers survived, but their sons were slaughtered by Herod’s men

Parts of this summary we know very well, but other parts perhaps less. We notice particularly the emphasis on sheep and shepherds, as well as that somewhat mysterious place, “Migdal Eder”, “the tower, or watchtower, of the flock”. Naturally, we might ask: does this refer to a “flock” of “sheep”, watched over by shepherds?

Watchtowers in the Bible

In Bible times, “watchtowers” were built on city walls or on borders, from which watchmen might sound a trumpet, or send messengers, to warn of imminent danger, such as attack or invasion (Jdgs 8:9, 17; 9:46,49-52; 2Kgs 9:17; 17:9; 18:8;

1Chron 27:25; 2Chron 26:9, 15; 32:5; Neh 3:1; Psa 61:3; Isa 21:8; 32:14; 62:6,7; etc).

Other towers, probably less elaborate, were erected to guard vineyards or orchards from thieves (Isa 5:2; Matt 21:33; Mark 12:1). King Uzziah also had towers built for shepherds to watch over his extensive flocks (2Chron 26:10).

“Migdal Eder”, the “tower of the flock”, may have been a military watchtower in the first instance, so named because of flocks that already pastured in the area (1Sam 16:4, 11; Luke 2:8). Later, the same tower may have been taken over by shepherds, who used it as a lookout post from which they watched over their scattered flocks.

The location of Migdal Eder

The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says that Migdal Eder’s “exact location is not known”, but that “it has been associated with Khirbet Siyar el-Ganam, approximately 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) east of Bethlehem on a ridge overlooking the modern village of Beit Sahur.” (Other sources, mentioned below, say that this site is one kilometer, i.e., about 5/8 of a mile, east of Bethlehem.)

This site is described as a favorite tourist destination. One website² states that Eusebius (265-340 AD) called it “Tower Ader”, the place where shepherds received the announcement of Christ’s birth. The website also states: “Since 1859 the site of Siyar el-Ganam (the Sheepfold) has been preferred as the traditional site... This area, in the care of the Franciscans, was partially excavated in 1859... and extensively excavated... in 1951-52. These excavations revealed a vast monastic agricultural establishment, with presses, cisterns, silos and grottoes [natural caves].”

Later, this site seems to have passed under the control of the Greek Orthodox Church. On its website (www.greekorthodoxsf.com), the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem shows photographs and describes the Monastery at the Shepherd’s Field there.

Edersheim and the Tower of the Flock

To all this the noted rabbinical authority Alfred Edersheim³ adds other intriguing information.

Following is what he had to say about Migdal Eder. The references cited are from the Mishnah. Additional explanatory references and notes have been supplied by the present writer, and are set apart in brackets.

There is one passage in the Mishnah which throws... light on the Gospel narrative [meaning, in this case, Luke 2]... We know that, on the night in which our Savior was born, the angels’ message came to those who probably alone of all in or near Bethlehem were “keeping watch”. For, close by Bethlehem, on the road to Jerusalem, was a tower, known as Migdal Eder, the “watch-tower of the flock” [see Gen 35:21; also see Mic 4:8-10; 5:2-4]. For here was the station where shepherds watched their flocks destined for sacrifices in the Temple. So well known was this, that if animals were found as far from Jerusalem as Migdal Eder, and within that circuit on every side, the males were offered as burnt-offerings, the females as peace-offerings.



**At this tower, or a similar one,
Jesus may well have been born**

shepherds would be in the Temple, and meet those who came thither to worship and to sacrifice, that we perceive the full significance of what otherwise would have seemed scarcely worthwhile noticing in connection with humble shepherds: *“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds”* (Luke 2:17,18)...

We can understand the wonderful impression made on those in the courts of the Temple, as, while they selected their sacrifices, the shepherds told the devout of the speedy fulfillment of all these types in what they had themselves seen and heard in that night of wonders; how eager, curious crowds might gather around to discuss, to wonder, perhaps to mock; how the heart of “just and devout” old Simeon would be gladdened within him, in expectation of the near realization of a life’s hopes and prayers [Luke 2:25-35]; and how aged Anna, and they who like her “looked for redemption in Israel”, would lift up their heads, since their

R. Jehudah adds: “If suited for Paschal [i.e., Passover] sacrifices, then they are Paschal sacrifices, provided it be not more than thirty days before the feast” (Shekal. vii 4; compare also Jer. Kid. ii. 9). It seems of deepest significance, almost like the fulfillment of type, that those shepherds who first heard tidings of the Savior’s birth, who first listened to angels’ praises, were watching flocks destined to be offered as sacrifices in the Temple. There was the type, and here the reality... The small village-inn was over-crowded, and the guests from Nazareth found shelter only in the stable, whose manger became the cradle of the King of Israel.

“It was here [by which Edersheim seems to mean some shelter or stable for sheep, close by Migdal Eder] that those who tended the sacrificial flocks, heaven-directed, found the Divine Babe [the baby Jesus] — significantly the first to see him, to believe, and to adore. But this is not all. It is when we remember that presently these

salvation was drawing nigh [Luke 2:36-38]. Thus the shepherds would be the most effectual heralds of the Messiah in the Temple, and both Simeon and Anna be prepared for the time when the infant Savior would be presented in the sanctuary.

But there is yet another verse which, as we may suggest, would find a fuller explanation in the fact that these shepherds tended the Temple flocks. When in Luke 2:20 we read that “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God”, the meaning in that connection seems somewhat difficult till we realize that, after bringing their flocks to the Temple, they would return to their own homes, and carry with them, joyfully and gratefully, tidings of the great salvation. Compare here Luke 2:17,18, which in point of time precede verse 20. The term “diagnorizo”, rendered in the KJV “make known abroad”... does not seem exhausted by the idea of conversation with the party in the “stable”, or with any whom they might meet in “the field”.

Note that we cannot be positive about the place; in fact, we can be absolutely certain about the exact location of very few events in the Bible. Having said that, though, the circumstantial evidence and the relevant Bible passages surely point toward Migdal Eder, the Tower of the Flock, as the birthplace of Jesus.

The shepherds and the Tower of the Flock

It is stated that Migdal Eder was about one mile east of Bethlehem. It should be easy to accept small discrepancies in the reported distance between the village itself and the tower (sometimes said to be 5/8 of a mile, and at other times 1.5 miles) — given that, as time passed, it would have been difficult to determine exactly where the village stopped and the countryside began. Migdal Eder may have been considered as standing on the outskirts of the town, or more simply as part of the town because situated in its environs.

Sometimes the distinction between a village and a region seems unclear in the Bible. We may note that the village Bethlehem and the region Ephrath (or Ephrathah) occur as parallel place names in certain passages (Gen 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; 1Sam 17:12; Mic 5:2). But Ephrath and Ephrathah are names for a portion of land much greater than the size of one village, inhabited by a clan (Mic 5:2) or family of Judah, the “Ephrathites” (Ruth 1:2; 4:11; 1Sam 17:12; Psa 132:6). The Ephrathites kept sheep and raises crops in the fields. The Ephrathites seem to take their name from their matriarch, Ephrath, who married Caleb (1Chron 2:19); this family settled in and around Bethlehem, but in a somewhat larger area — perhaps as far north as Jerusalem. What we now think of as the royal family of Judah (Boaz, Jesse and David) were members of the Ephrathites, but presumably also lived very near the village of Bethlehem. As L.M. Luker puts it, “Bethlehem was a village locale within the greater expanse of the clan Ephrathah”⁴ This leads us to conclude, then, that a tower one or two miles away from a village might be considered part of the village.

Various Jewish commentaries actually discuss the work of the shepherds in and around Migdal Eder and Bethlehem. The shepherds were most likely Levites selected and trained for their special tasks, who reported to the highest Jewish officials connected with the Temple in Jerusalem. In addition to the duties of

watchmen, the shepherds supervised the birthing of the lambs that were destined for Temple sacrifice, and provided their care afterward.

The tower itself would be the place where the shepherds kept watch for predators and thieves who threatened their flocks. Underneath, in the lower level of the tower, or perhaps in a cave or grotto beneath it, there was a warm, dry area where ewes about to give birth were taken. Clean straw was provided, the shelter would be cleaned regularly and meticulously, and good fodder would be provided for the mother sheep, probably in cribs, troughs or mangers.

There, if everything went right, was where the Passover lambs were actually born. We are also told that, after they were cleaned up and checked for defects, the male lambs were wrapped in cloths to protect them from injury and contamination as much as possible. Only those with no flaw, defect or blemish would be suitable for sacrifice, and for the Passover meal (Exod 12:5). (This wrapping of newborns is sometimes done even today for valuable lambs, but not for religious reasons at all.) There, in the stables, they were sheltered and watched until they were old enough, and strong enough, to be allowed out into the pastures.

For up to one year after birth, the newborn males destined to become Passover lambs would be cared for, according to the Law of Moses (verse 5 again), until the time came for them to be delivered to the Temple.

Joseph and Mary at the Tower of the Flock

Here we start with what we know for certain, and go on to consider carefully how to fill in the gaps, recognizing that the results can be no more than educated guesses.

When there was no room at the inn in the town, then Joseph and Mary may have been directed the short distance to Migdal Eder, and its clean, comfortable stable, near the mothers with their newborn lambs. Was it coincidence (meaning, of course, providence) that brought them there when other possibilities had failed? Was there a guide who pointed the way to the best place for the delivery of a baby? Did Joseph, who possibly grew up nearby, have knowledge of Migdal Eder and its facilities? Or was it yet another angelic message to Joseph, one we are not told about, which led them to that special place?

Given the background described by Edersheim and the rabbis, we might assume that at all times there would be some shepherds on watch at Migdal Eder itself. These shepherds would assist the young couple, by showing them to a suitable place of privacy in the stables, and perhaps by finding a midwife to assist in the delivery.

Perhaps it is not a great stretch of imagination, then, to see the newborn babe wrapped in “swaddling cloths” taken from the shepherds’ stock for the care and binding of newborn lambs. Nor to envision the newborn babe laid in a manger or crib, one that would otherwise be used for the care and feeding of the sheep sheltered there.

We might also assume that the shepherds’ co-workers were out in the nearby fields, watching over other portions of the same flocks — all of them ultimately destined for Temple service, in one sacrifice or another. These would be the shepherds on

patrol who, when the time came, heard the angelic announcement:

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11,12).

With this background information, it is now perfectly understandable that, when shepherds of this place heard such an announcement, all they needed to know was that the baby and future Savior was “wrapped in cloths” (like the special newborn lambs they cared for) and “lying in a manger” (like the ones they kept for the mothers of the newborns). They were given just enough information to know exactly where to go — because it was their own headquarters!

On the other hand, if the shepherds who heard the announcement had no connection with Migdal Eder, it is not so easy to imagine how they would have been able to use those rather vague directions to find their way, over a distance of perhaps several miles, to exactly the right stable.

Conclusion

It is quite possible, then, that Mary would have given birth to Jesus, not just near the area where the Passover lambs were kept before they were taken to the Temple, but in the actual place where the Passover lambs were also born.

Thus, in a cave beneath the Tower of the Flock, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world. There she brought forth the baby who would be a “Ben-oni” (“son of sorrows”) — hence the bitterness implied in her name, as well as the prophetic words of Simeon at the Temple: “*A sword will pierce your own soul as well!*” (Luke 2:35). But the child would also be known as God’s “Benjamin” (“the Son of the LORD’s right hand”) (Gen 35:18). Born where shepherds watched their flocks, he would grow up to be the “Lamb of God” offered as a sacrifice for their sins, and ours, like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). But he would also be the Good Shepherd who would in turn lead his flocks to the green pastures of the Promised Land (Psa 23; John 10).

Like his ancestor David, he first would lead and protect a small flock, and then at last become the king to lead a great nation. Truly “*his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth*” (Mic 5:4). While many perish around him, and he perishes also, yet he will be raised from the dead, and cause all his people to return to their own inheritance (Jer 31:15-17). He will be the one, born out of sorrow and pain, and perishing in the midst of the same — but destined to sit upon his Father’s right hand and bring the promised comfort to all God’s people.

When the time came more than 30 years later, this true Passover lamb would be brought to the City of the Great King, and to its Temple. The priests and leaders of Israel, try as they might, would be unable to find any fault in him. The Lamb without spot or blemish would be slain, and his blood shed on God’s altar. Then, as the Great Shepherd of the sheep, he would be brought back from the dead through the blood of the eternal covenant (Heb 13:20).

If so, how extraordinarily precise is the correlation between the type (the birth of the Passover lambs) and the fulfillment (the birth of Jesus). As precise, it seems, as the preparation and sacrifice of the Passover lambs is to his crucifixion.

How wonderful to think of this in connection with the declaration of John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming toward him:

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Now, with even greater Scriptural reason, we may well marvel, along with those shepherds, at the extraordinary circumstances of the birth of the Savior. For we know,

“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1Pet 1:18,19).

“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the feast... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:7,8).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. All references are from the NIV
2. See <http://198.62.75.1/www1/ofm/sites/TSbsites.html>
3. Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*
4. Anchor Bible Dictionary on “Ephrathah”

Alfred Edersheim

Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) grew up a devout Jew in Austria, with extensive training in the Torah (the Pentateuch), the Talmud (rabbinical commentaries), and the Mishnah (a collection of the earliest oral traditions of the rabbis). He was converted to Christianity by a Scottish minister, after which he continued his education at New College, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Thereafter, Edersheim put his training in both rabbinical law and New Testament theology to use in writing about the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law and the sacrifices, and Jewish customs and traditions in the light of the New Testament. His extensive scholarly works are still available both in print and online. They are known, respected and read by many Christadelphians:

- *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (in two volumes);
- *Old Testament History* (in seven volumes);
- *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*; and
- *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services at the Time of Jesus Christ.*

First Principles

True Baptism into the Saving Name of Christ

Baptism and belief essential to salvation

When Christ instructed his disciples *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”*, he also said *“he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:15,16). With such a clear statement, it seems irrational that there are Christians who do not regard baptism as necessary for salvation. In fact, from the same simple statement, it is equally hard to understand the thinking of those who reject the importance of knowledge and repentance prior to baptism, by practicing infant baptism or sprinkling.

Most commonly baptism is dismissed on the grounds that salvation is a gift of God to those who have faith. It is argued that baptism is “a work” and therefore those who insist on baptism are in effect teaching that salvation is earned. Of course the key to refuting this false line of reasoning is a correct understanding of why salvation is a gift. As sinners we are not worthy of salvation. Instead we are in need of forgiveness, which is described as the gift of grace in the book of Romans (chapters 3 and 5). This gift of righteousness does not preclude works of obedience but rather as James says, *“faith without works is dead”*, and again *“by works was faith made perfect”* (James 2:20,22).

Another reason some would dismiss baptism as important is because of verses like Romans 10:9, a verse which says, *“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* Taken in isolation this verse would seem to teach that only faith and confession are necessary for salvation. However a little study quickly shows that the baptism of adults, following careful instruction and belief, is the consistent pattern of the apostles in the book of Acts, as they diligently took the gospel to the ends of the earth.

In the city of Philippi, the jailor of Acts 16, spurred on by a great earthquake, asked of his prisoners: *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* The response of Paul and Silas was, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* In faithful obedience, we soon find him and his household welcoming the disciples into their home and being baptized.

In like manner, when Paul on the road to Damascus was humbled enough to ask a similar question of Christ, he was led into the city where he too was instructed and baptized. Earlier in the book of Acts, we find 3000 men who, upon hearing the truth of the gospel of Christ, followed the same steps (Acts 2:37-44). While, no doubt, there are other steps in the road to salvation, two of the first are belief and baptism.

Need for Rebaptism?

With a host of other proof verses to reference, it is not difficult to explain the im-

portance of belief and baptism to those with whom we teach the truth. However, it is not uncommon to encounter those who have already been baptized prior to contact with the truth of Scripture. Here we often find difficulty convincing them of the importance of being baptized again following a change in their beliefs.

In Acts 19, when Paul comes to Ephesus, he encountered a group that knew only of the baptism of John. These men were well aware of their position as sinners and of the need for repentance, but they were lacking a complete knowledge of the gospel message. Therefore, after further instruction concerning the life and death of Jesus, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

This Biblical precedent for being baptized a second time follows almost an identical event at the end of Acts chapter 18. Here we are told that there was an eloquent man, so mighty in the Scriptures that he was a diligent instructor of others. But again he was deficient in his knowledge. A faithful couple took him and “*expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly*”.

The case of Apollos and his interaction with Aquilla and Pricilla serves as a help as we seek to impress on would be servants of Christ the importance of preparation and study for baptism. It also reminds us of another prominent teacher who needed to be instructed more perfectly in the ways of God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, who came to him by night: “*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*” (John 3:10). The context of this gentle rebuke was that of Jesus’ teaching regarding being born again: “*Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” How appropriate it was when Jesus went on to explain to Nicodemus that those that come to the truth come to the light. Truly all those who would be born again, must first leave the darkness and come to the light of the knowledge of truth, being instructed in the way of God more perfectly.

One Faith, One Baptism

Scripturally speaking, it is appropriate to say that a person can only truly be baptized once. “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism*” (Eph 4:4,5). Previous baptisms, undertaken without a correct knowledge of the gospel, are really not true baptisms at all. Bro. John Thomas when he was baptized for the final time in February 1847, thereby making a clean break with other religious groups, wrote these words: “After a journey of 14 years, I had found the truth.”¹

Many times the initial hesitation about being re-baptized fades as a believer comes to see the number of key teachings that they misunderstood before coming to the truth of the gospel. However there are cases where despite admitting a significant change in beliefs, a contact is still hesitant to submit to the waters of baptism a ‘second’ time. In one such case, the concern expressed was that a person is baptized into Christ and not into any Christian group or church. Despite conceding to the wrong doctrines once held, our friend could not be convinced to be baptized again. While agreeing that one is not, in fact, baptized into “Christadelphia”, the fact is that re-baptism, if the previous baptism was on the basis of wrong doctrines, is important when it enables the individual to become truly part of the “one body”.

In this instance the words of Ephesians chapter four are once again helpful. Along with the “one baptism”, there is also only “one body”. When we are baptized into Christ we become part of his body. The New Testament has multiple references to the ecclesia, describing it as a building made up of believers who are “lively stones”, built up into a “spiritual house” (1Peter 2:5; also Ephesians 2:19-22). There is great importance to becoming part of a family which has Christ as its head. The New Testament is full of themes that speak to the importance of ecclesial life, themes such as: the unity of the body, the brotherhood of its members, and the breaking of bread. In addition to this there are numerous references to preserving and contending for the faith that has been delivered to us.

Change of Life

As a result of understanding the importance of truth before baptism, preparatory baptism classes have a natural emphasis on the teaching of first principles, as we insure that a candidate's immersion is a true baptism into the “one faith”. But this preparation should not be done without also teaching that baptism requires a change of lifestyle. The apostle Paul vividly describes baptism as the death of an old way of life: *“knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”* (Rom 6:6). Having put to death an old way of life, the new man comes up from the waters of baptism to walk in “newness of life.”

The present writer can well remember classes with an enthusiastic young man which went on for many weeks. After each session, my eager student questioned whether he had finally learned enough to be baptized. The doctrinal sessions continued on and were eventually followed by a number of evenings that could be best described as a summary of the commandments of Christ for a new life in Christ. Following the final session I excitedly announced that our preparation was over and asked my now close friend if he was ready to be interviewed for baptism. Much to my surprise, his careful response was: “I don't think I'm quite ready.”

The initial excitement of the truth gave way to a mature acknowledgement that baptism into Christ is not a mere academic exercise. Prior to baptism there may also be the need for significant changes to be made in one's manner of life, choice of friends or even one's employment. In another of his epistles Paul says, *“put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge”* (Col 3:10). The Greek word ‘renew’ carries the idea of ‘to renovate’. Anyone that has owned an older home can clearly identify with a renovation project; as one room is finished there is inevitably another which needs to be tackled. This concept is furthered by Paul when he said, *“the inward man is renewed (renovated) day by day”* (2Cor 4:16).

Bro. Harry Tennant in an article about baptismal instruction wrote these words under the heading “The Life to be Lived”:

“It is perhaps in this area, above all others, that interviews must change from what took place, say, twenty -five years ago. An examination of the Good Confession and the Christadelphian Instructor will show that the prime consideration was to ensure a sound doctrine as opposed to the

false doctrine that abounded in the very active churches and chapels of the nineteenth century world. There is still a need for sound doctrine but, to the same degree, we have to take heed to the almost complete collapse of morals in the twentieth century world.”²

More than ever before, we must be sure to teach that baptism into Christ involves sacrifice and dedication. Perhaps this is especially true when teaching our young children who have grown up in the truth from their earliest days. Having learned the first principles at home, in Sunday school, CYC and from attendance at public lectures and seminars they develop an understanding of the doctrines from a very young age. In these cases when they seek to be baptized at a tender age, it is imperative that we help them to understand the commitment which baptism demands.

Christ in Us

Our understanding of what baptism requires and what it represents is analogous to our proper understanding of the atonement. Both doctrines, when correctly understood, require action and obedience on the part of the believer. Christ's sacrifice was not a substitutionary sacrifice, but rather a representative one, requiring us to die unto sin. In like manner, our salvation does not merely rest on a confession of faith in Christ, but rather a participation in his death and resurrection as represented by complete immersion in water. Paul in Galatians puts it this way, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20).

While baptism is one of the most basic of all first principles, when understood correctly it is a vivid parable which illustrates the beginning of a new man, living in Christ. As a garment dipped in a dye comes out a new color, so we commit ourselves in baptism to becoming like Christ. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom 6:4). For those of us already baptized into Christ, there is an exhortation to examine ourselves to see if we are living up to our commitment. And if we are blessed to be explaining baptism to another, let us be diligent in explaining both the depth of commitment and the wonder of the blessings inherent in this important step towards salvation.

Dan Robinson (Brantford, ON)

Notes:

1. The Turning Point: Dr. Thomas' Confession and Abjuration, 1847, Peter Hemingray; The Christadelphian (1997) Vol. 134, Page 93
2. Instruction for Baptism(2): The Baptism Interview, Harry Tennant; The Christadelphian (1989), Vol.126, Page 447

Baptism without repentance is meaningless. A Jewish allegory pictures such a proselyte — one who is merely going through the motions, as it were — being baptized while still clutching a serpent to his bosom.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Challenges We Face: Age and Ability Differences in the Same Class

What suggestions can you offer to a Sunday school teacher whose class has a wide range of ages and abilities?

- 1) Recruit an assistant, a volunteer who is willing to help but may not feel that he or she can prepare lessons and teach. Plan and work together as a team. This can be as beneficial for the volunteer as it is for you, the teacher. It can be a great help for the children.
- 2) Separate the children from time to time in order to work with them on a more individual basis. This is one of the things that an assistant can free you up to do.
- 3) Involve older/more capable children as helpers (e.g., readers can read Bible stories to non-readers; advanced readers can become “reading buddies” with beginning readers; older children can help younger children with projects).
- 4) Schedule extra time to work with just the older/more capable children in order to challenge them at their level.
- 5) Schedule extra time to work with just the younger/less capable children in order to address their particular needs and interests.
- 6) Re: specific teaching activities.
 - a) Conduct activities that all the children can relate to when introducing a lesson (e.g., present an object lesson; tell a human interest story).
 - b) Use simple teaching methods for imparting information to the entire group. Use auditory, visual, and hands-on ways of presenting lesson material. Try to engage as many of the children as possible during lesson time (e.g., have different children read aloud; ask age-appropriate questions to specific children; draw out discussion with additional questions; find non-threatening ways to involve and acknowledge the more reticent child).
 - c) Reinforce the lesson with individualized activity sheets or other follow-up activities that are designed for specific children. An assistant can help you run these activities with the children.
 - d) Build an inventory of activities that the children can do on their own or in small groups (e.g., filmstrips, CDs/DVDs/videos, puzzles, Bible games, arts and crafts, supplemental reading, listening center activities). Allow time for the children to choose and carry out individualized activities that suit their interests and abilities.
 - e) Create age-appropriate, real-life application activities (e.g., What-would-you-do scenarios) based on lesson principles. Engage individual children in the activities that are best suited for them. Again, an assistant can help you run these activities with the children.

- f) Use skits and other group activities that involve all the children in appropriate roles. Older children may even want to help plan some of these activities
- g) Get parents to oversee follow-up activities that the children can do at home.
- 7) Make sure all children are included in the general activities and are made to feel a part of things. Foster an atmosphere of acceptance.
- 8) Don't allow differences to become 'put downs'. Address problems that threaten to detract from the well-being of the group. Head off 'superior' vs. 'inferior' behaviors within the class.
- 9) When problems arise, try to turn them to positive learning situations. Use Scripture (e.g., all must become "as little children" is a good lesson to remember when 'superior' vs. 'inferior' behaviors manifest themselves). Emphasize the need to get along with each other since this is an important real-life lesson.
- 10) Maintain a fair attitude toward all of the children. Children can 'read' the teacher's attitude toward them, and this can tell them as much or more than the lesson does. Enjoy all the kids!
- 11) Get older and younger children together for outings, picnics, etc., and try to foster good relationships outside class. This can carry over to in-class relationships.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

Your comments and additions to this list are invited.

Please send them to me at 2harps4u@gmail.com.

The Spiritual Order of God's Created Day

"And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day" (Genesis 1:5).

An alternate rendering is: "And the evening was, and the morning was, the first day." This is a traditional Hebrew expression, defining a literal 24-hour day (Exod 20:9-11). The natural order of the day, according to God, runs — not from light into darkness — but from darkness (first) into light. Here is a wonderful spiritual lesson.

The Talmud paraphrases this verse, to similar effect: " 'And it was evening': these are the deeds of the wicked. 'And then it was morning': these are the deeds of the righteous."

In the Talmud, another rabbi says: "We can explain this verse [Genesis 1:5] thusly: 'You should repent one day before you die.' But does a person know when he shall die? No! Therefore you should repent today, i.e., in this very evening and morning, because tomorrow may be too late."

In short, follow the pattern and the path laid out by the LORD in His Genesis creation. Take your own spiritual journey, in one day, from darkness into light. Then it will prove to be, for you, a new "creation" and the true beginning of the rest of your life.

Reflections

I am Abigail

Foreword

The life of Abigail and Nabal, recorded for us in 1 Samuel 25, is a brief account of an incident. So this story is just that — a story. It is based on Scripture insofar as 1 Samuel 25 tells us, but the rest of the story is filled out with what is hoped are reasonable conjectures. The reader is not asked to believe that this is exactly how it happened, but simply that this is how it may have happened. Bible quotations are from the NIV.

The Story Begins

As I looked upon his lifeless body, I was overwhelmed with such pity and sadness for both of us, but especially for him. What a wasted life! Nabal and I were married just a few years, but those years seemed like centuries. For us there had been no “happier times”. Mostly it was sullen days and drunken nights for Nabal, and days of fear and nights of dread for me.

Let me introduce myself. I am Abigail, widow of Nabal, now wife of David, recently anointed king over Judah and Israel.

My story is a short one, for my life is not of great importance as men usually count these things. I came into David’s life for a few short moments in time. Before that, I was, as I told you, Abigail, wife of Nabal.

I prefer to remember the time before Nabal, when I was the daughter of a poor family in a tiny village. Yes, in many ways my family was very poor, but my parents were also very rich. They were rich in their love of each other and their whole family, and in their faith upon their Heavenly Father. His ways were deeply ingrained in parents and children, and I imagine in my grandparents also, although I never knew them, since death claimed all four of them while I was very young.

My parents struggled daily to feed and clothe their growing children, but their knowledge and love of the one true God flowed easily from their lips as they pursued the common tasks of daily life. My mother constantly told us that *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”* (Prov 9:10).

She told us over and over again that God had set before us life and death, and that we must choose life. We must obey all the commandments passed down to us from God through Moses, to generation after generation of Israel; that we must love the Lord our God and obey His voice and cling to Him, for He alone is life and length of days in this land of promise.

Yes, my parents taught us diligently, talking of God’s ways at home, as we walked along well-trodden, dusty village paths, or before we lay down to sleep, or when

we arose early in the morning. His words were always before us, written not only on a doorpost or a gate, but also, more importantly, in our hearts and minds.

In the evening hours when mother was still busy with the little ones, father would take the rest of us and tell us fascinating stories of our nation's past. How we loved to hear him tell about the creation, the fall of Adam and Eve, the saving of Noah and his family by water, God's covenant of the rainbow, the call of Abram. The stories of Joseph, Moses, the plagues in Egypt, and Israel's departure from slavery came to life in my father's words, and then in our own little minds.

He would fill us with wonder and some fear as he told us of the giving of the Law to Moses at Sinai, and how the mountains quaked and smoked, and of how the heavens trembled with great thunder and crackling lightning. Then he would tell us sadly of Israel's faithless walk, their constant complaining about their desert life, their failure to enter the Promised Land, and finally their wanderings in that great and terrible wilderness.

How sad we were each time we thought of Moses' disobedience at Meribah, and of how he begged our Heavenly Father to allow him to accompany the children of Israel into that Promised Land. Sadly, we listened as father told us how Moses ascended Mount Nebo, viewed the chosen land, but never entered. We wondered where the angels of God had buried the great leader. How relieved we would be when it came time, by father's account, for Joshua to take the nation into the new land — a land of brooks of water, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees... yes, a rich land.

Once again father's stories would have us sitting, wide-eyed and on the edge of our mats, as our imaginations followed the stories of our judges: Ehud and the fat Eglon, Deborah and Barak, the hammer and nail of Jael, the reluctance of Gideon, and the God-given strength of Samson and of many others.

The stories were a wonderful part of my childhood, a way to remember our nation's deeds, a way to remind all of us and those of new generations of the magnificent ways of our God, the mighty God of Israel.

Apart from the stories there was also the well-kept traditions of the Sabbath and all the feast days. My parents remembered the commands and the details well, and I treasured the special times together with others who had the same strong beliefs and customs.

As I grew older, my family duties increased.

I, and later, my younger sisters learned much from my mother of the daily household tasks. There was the care of the younger ones, the cooking, the cleaning, the spinning, and the weaving. These tasks were ours... we had no servants to perform them; therefore I had to learn them well. My mother viewed a wise woman as a priceless treasure, and she was determined that I would learn the care of a household for a future husband and children. Not for us were the ways of idleness and foolishness; *"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised"* (Prov 31:30), mother always said.

But the evening hours were kept special for father's talks; now it was the younger children's turn to hear his stories. I must admit, I continued to listen as I did my chores, and I enjoyed seeing and hearing the excited responses of my brothers and sisters. After the little ones' time with father, I would sometimes listen in on the conversations of my father and his friends who stopped by to visit.

Saul and David

Many were the times when the talk centered on our king, Saul of Benjamin. What was happening, my father and his friends would ask, to Saul? Why was he so preoccupied with chasing his former army officer, indeed, his own son-in-law David, son of Jesse of Bethlehem, Judah? Saul was hunting David like a man hunts a partridge in the mountains, or like a dog hunts a flea, with a fierce obsession. Had Saul gone quite mad? What was happening to the nation while Saul chased throughout the land seeking David? Who was in charge? Was he not turning neighbor against neighbor as he begged for people to spy for him?

What was David's sin anyway? It seemed like there was no longer any help for Saul... from man or from the LORD. Samuel had retired from him. The priests of Nob had all been murdered by Doeg at Saul's command. There was no other prophet, no Urim or Thummim where Saul might inquire after the LORD. There was a famine in the land — not a famine of bread or water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. Indeed, some asked if Saul had ever really sought the Lord in earnest? Had not God taken His kingdom from Saul because of Saul's disobedience in the matter of Agag the king of the Amalekites?

Now, filled with rage and jealousy, Saul sought David's life because it had been whispered to him that David, not Jonathan, his own son, would be the next ruler in Israel. Apparently Saul's miserable life was made even more difficult because he knew that Jonathan and David had a deep friendship, a friendship bound together with a love of the God of Israel. We had heard the rumors that Saul had tried, several times, to kill David — and maybe his own son Jonathan also.

My father wondered how long such a pitiful condition could last... when would the day come that Saul would die, and David might become king and reestablish God's ways in Israel? There was so much that needed to be set right. On the national front alone, Israel was in deep distress: the Philistines were constantly making daring raids into Israel's towns and villages. This, of course, affected the economy of Israel: crops could not be harvested because of such raids; there was little produce in the markets; hard-working people had to borrow money they could not repay; highways were deserted; no one felt safe.

Some families had actually left their homes and villages to join David and his men in the wilderness. Stories came to us of what a difficult life it was, out there on the edges of the land — the life of a fugitive: scarcity, fear, constant moving from place to place, hiding in caves and valley recesses, posting lookouts. O Israel, what was happening to you and your king?

My father would remind his visitors of Samuel's words about the nation's desire for a king. Israel had wanted to be like all their neighbors; they had wanted a king to

fight their battles. Israel had, in my father's estimation, forgotten the LORD, their true King. Now they had their earthly king, who took their sons for his army, and their daughters for his cooks. This king took the best of their crops while they became his servants, all just as Samuel had said. But what, my father would ask, was Saul doing for his people? My father and his friends could only shake their heads in despair and pity for this sad example of a kingdom and its king.

Nabal Appears

Thus the conversations went, and thus life continued in our peaceful village. We seemed far away from David and his problems. So for us, day followed day, month followed month, and years passed in set patterns. Life was simple. And what could children know of their parents' concerns, about crops failing, or illness keeping father from work?

Sunrise followed sunset, harvests followed plantings. Babies were born; the aged died. There were feast days, solemn occasions, festivals, and weddings. Most parents seemed eager to have their eldest sons or daughters marry and start families. I attended a number of weddings for my friends. But for me there seemed to be only friends... no one young man in particular. And my parents did not seem too inclined to rush me into marriage. At times I was content, but at other times I felt an uneasiness about the future. Sometimes it loomed dark and fearful ahead of me.

Then one day, he appeared in our village. It was not the first time he had come. This time, we were told, he had come looking for more servants. His name was Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, son of Jephunneh... a very wealthy man of Maon and Carmel. He had enormous flocks of sheep and goats, well-maintained vineyards, much land, and by far the grandest house in this area of Judah. He lived well. But those whom he hired were heard to mutter about his mean disposition and stingy ways. He worked his servants long hours with little pay. His whole way of life seemed to have changed, it was whispered, after the loss of his wife and son.

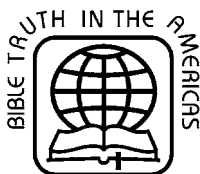
I saw him when I was visiting with some friends at the well. He stared long and hard at us, as he slowly passed by. His eyes traveled from girl to girl, woman to woman, examining each of us. I felt uneasy. At last, he turned to his head servant, spoke and then continued into the village on his business. The uneasiness I felt remained, like an ache in my body, long after he was gone. I tried to shrug it off, but something deep within me warned of grief to come. My friends and family laughed at my negative thoughts, so I ceased all mention of the incident. After all, Nabal was gone... wasn't he?

To be continued...

"The removing of stones [i.e., hard work] with a wise man is better than the drinking of wine with a fool" (the Assyrian philosopher Ahikar).

He who provides for this life but not for eternity is wise for a moment but a fool forever.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.



Bible Mission News

Guyana

Bro. Berry and Sis. Elaine Williams, Eccles Ecclesia



We spent an afternoon with Bro. Berry and Sis. Elaine reminiscing about the old days and how the ecclesia in Agricola (later to become Eccles) was formed and how she came to be baptized some 50 years ago. As she bounced one of her six great-grandchildren on her knees, the story unfolded. We remembered that the Barrows (Bro. Allen and Sis. Stella) had started the ecclesia but now we heard the rest of the story. It began with an open air

meeting held near a rum shop, then it moved under Bro. John Small's house. These were exciting times in Guyana with Bro. Harry Whittaker and Bro. Will Watkins holding town hall meetings which were often packed. Bro. Bert Donovan, Elaine's uncle, heard one of these talks and was so impressed that he was determined to return "no matter if rain is falling we are going!" He was later baptized. Elaine accompanied him to a talk on Armageddon that Bro. Allan Barrow was giving. She left that with the conviction that she wanted to be in the Kingdom. She went on Sunday and heard Bro. Hugo Mitchell give one of his fiery exhortations. She went back home somber. She stayed away two weeks and realized she could not stay away. She began an earnest preparation for baptism and was baptized in May 1960. She has never turned away from the path she committed her life to despite tragedy and trial. Her son Peter fell asleep in the Lord in his 20s after less than two years of marriage. It was a sad time and a difficult one for many in the ecclesias in Guyana. Through that and many other things, Elaine remained faithful. She raised her children in the Sunday school without the spiritual support of her husband. However, there was great joy when he became baptized in 1982 and continues steadfast in the ecclesia. Most of the Eccles Ecclesia is made up of two extended families: Williams and Joseph.

Bro. Eric Joseph, Eccles Ecclesia

Bro. Eric Joseph is another patriarch of the Eccles Ecclesia and one of the few survivors of his generation in Guyana. He is 89 years old and very frail. They were the ecclesial elders who we knew in the days of our youth when we resided in



Guyana. We were only able to make a brief visit to Eric as he is bed-ridden with failing kidneys and overall weakness. He still has his big voice and bright winning smile. A couple of his sons and grandsons have that same smile. Eric is blessed to be surrounded by his children and grandchildren helping to care for him and keep him company as he has never stopped missing his beloved Alice who fell asleep in the LORD some three years ago.

Sis Neisha Haniff, New Amsterdam Ecclesia

Sis. Neisha is now the oldest surviving member of New Amsterdam Ecclesia. This last March our beloved Bro. Vernon Yearwood fell asleep in the Lord having attained the ripe old age of 95. He was an inspiration to us and a loyal friend over many years. We used to visit Sis. Nanny (Sophia Hamilton) and Sis. Rose Klass when Sis. Bibi Rupenarine or her faithful husband would make the arrangements for us. All those are asleep now awaiting our Lord's return. So this year it was only Neisha. We were delighted to find her **much** improved over last year when she was completely



bed-ridden, weak and confused. This year was a remarkable improvement and we much enjoyed our breaking of bread service with her and singing of hymns. She smiled and was participatory and responsive to our ministrations. We look forward to more years ahead of visits, if our Lord remains away and God gives us health and strength to continue our service there.

Sis. Lorraine Mitchell and Sis. Glancy Spence, Georgetown Ecclesia



Sis. Lorraine and Bro. Hugo Mitchell were our confidants, our advisors and our friends while we lived in Guyana. Bro. Hugo died of liver cancer several years ago. It was a severe blow to the Georgetown Ecclesia especially, but also everyone in Guyana. Sis. Lorraine has carried on courageously and with constant faith and dedication

to the service of the LORD. Each year we look forward to our visit with her and her sister Glancy. Both are octogenarians. The story of Lorraine's contact with Christadelphians and how she came to be baptized is an amazing story. Although

Christadelphians have been in Guyana since the mid 1800's by 1912 they were reduced to a tiny group of about eight who met in a small chapel in the garden of one of the members, Sis. Kathleen Howard. After learning the Truth from Bro. Roland Smith (UK) and helping him to discover Christadelphians in Georgetown, Lorraine traveled to the UK in the mid 1950s and pleaded for brethren to come to Guyana and preach. They came. The willingness of that generation of brethren to preach and to establish the CBM in England led to the establishment of ecclesias in Guyana and elsewhere in the Caribbean. Lorraine remains strong in spirit and looks for opportunities everywhere she goes to share her faith. She is a fervent preacher.

Submitted by Ted and Delores Sleeper

Fraternal Gathering in Panama

During the month of August, Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from New York and Bro. Don and Sis. Miriam Luff from Ontario visited Panama, supporting activities in the Panama City and Colon Ecclesias. Bro. Clive gave a number of study classes and exhortations during their 17 days stay and the Luffs were in Panama for a week. This trip coincided with the arrival of Bro. Kenson Fortune from Haiti, along with his wife and daughter (see article on this matter in last month's issue).

On Friday, August 13th, advertised public lectures were held in the Colon ecclesial hall with 10 visitors in attendance. This type of activity had not taken place in Colon for a number of years and it was quite encouraging for the members — a full hall! Two talks (English and Spanish) were given due to the dual-language nature of the city. A fraternal gathering for both ecclesias was held near Panama City on



Panama/Colon Fraternal on Saturday, August 14th — great day!

August 14th at a place called Vera Cruz — an economical, small resort facility — there were about 45 of us and we had the whole place to ourselves! There was a banquet room that served as a dining room for our meals and a study room for one of the adult classes. The other adult class meet outside under a covered area, like a small pavilion. The children also had classes in the open-air as well. We had other



**Left to right —
Sis. Nishla and Bro. Ian Neblett and their
daughter Nylayah, and Sis. Michelle
Neblett (Ian's sister) from Michigan (in
Panama for the summer).**

**The Hall has been completely painted
inside and out, awning over entrance door,
plus attractive wall/enclosure at street/
property line, with small and large gates.**

activities during the day, including the use of a medium size pool. The two meals provided, the spiritual food, and the recreation all made for an enjoyable day — we all went home content and tired! Both ecclesias enjoyed the fellowship of a joint breaking of bread and Bible class at the Panama City hall on Sunday, August 15th.

We were pleased to see Bro. Ian and Sis. Nishla Neblett in Colon, who moved to Panama this year from Toronto, Canada (see photo). They are living with her parents — Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers. They have started a CYC on Friday evening and are working at increasing the Sunday school. Ian is learning Spanish and using his new skills in ecclesial activities. Sis. Michelle Neblett from Michigan, USA, (Ian's sister) was visiting in Panama for most of the summer and a big help in many areas — including taking care of Ian and Nishla's seven month old baby girl — Nylayah! These two couples and the Colon Ecclesia have provided much needed assistance for the Fortune family.

We pray for God's continued blessings on these two ecclesias of about 13 members each.

*Don Luff
CBMA Linkman*

How much we need the older ones! They are there, at the meeting, week after week, often not in the best of health. They encourage us by their presence. Like Moses, they stand higher on the "mountain" and see more clearly the promised land. We too see the promised land, through their eyes.

George Booker

ThisisyourBible.com

Preaching in Arizona and Russia

An Amazing Journey

Jim Vath lives with his wife Joy and three kids about 75 miles outside of Phoenix, Arizona. Jim started the Exploring the Bible on-line course in March of this year. He was, from the outset, an exceptional student and asked really good questions. Finally, we agreed to talk by phone and I was able to hear about his really quite incredible journey to find the Truth. Before I share his story with you, let me give the good news. On Sunday, August 8th, Jim was baptized by the Glendale, AZ ecclesia.



The story of his journey is one that really demonstrates the love of God and providence, as well as how TIYB can play an important role.



Jim and his wife, Joy, have studied with many churches — the Mormons, the JW's and several local community churches. In each case, he and Joy both felt that there were some teachings that just didn't make sense. At that time, they were living in Ely, Nevada. Ely is a small mining town in Central Nevada, with a population of less than 5,000. One day, Joy asked James to go with her to the local library, where she was going to return some books. He really didn't want to go, but she "persuaded" him to come along. So, while she was checking the books in, he went over to the bookshelves in the religious section and found a copy of Bible Basics. Mind you, there were no Christadelphians anywhere around that small town — some brother or sister had placed the copy in the library years before.

So, he checked the book out. He proceeded to read through the book in its entirety and look up all the references. He was convinced this was the Truth and he was excited about it — though his wife was a little hesitant to pursue yet another church. He didn't know really how to get in touch with Christadelphians, so he just made a note to himself that he should find them at some point in the future.

When they moved to the Phoenix area Jim decided to do a Google search for Christadelphians and guess what he found? TIYB.com came up and he registered for the course. I was privileged to become his tutor, and also for his wife, Joy.

Joy is very serious Bible student and is also considering baptism. The Phoenix brethren have been wonderful in meeting with Jim and Joy, inviting them to meeting and getting to know them. Jim requested an interview for baptism and gave a good confession of his faith. You might imagine how happy I was to receive a call inviting me and Sis. Mary Kay to his baptism.

We often correspond with many men and women that are with us for the course and then determine not to make any real changes to their religious practices. However, it is so motivating when one does respond that it only makes you want to sign up to tutor more!

I was thinking about this man's quest for the Truth. Who would have expected that small community library in Nevada to have Bible Basics? How thankful I am that TIYB came up on the Google. The strategy for TIYB is to work with our students and then connect them to brothers and sisters nearby to cement the relationship and complete the needed teaching. The Phoenix brethren certainly did just that.

So, I wanted to share this story with you. Sometimes in the Truth we feel works are being done, but the results of that work may not be experienced immediately, or by us personally. When it actually happens it drives home the reality that the LORD is working with us and using both our website as well as our feeble attempts as preachers to call out a people for His Name.

*Submitted by Bro. Dave Jennings
CBMA North America Preaching*

From Nigeria and Russia to TIYB.com and the East Europe Bible School Mixed In

I am delighted to tell you about our new brother, Omoh Akin. He is from Nigeria, but is doing a degree in tourism at a university in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Omoh registered onto www.thisisyourBible.com in October 2009 and gradually completed the CBM 18 Lesson and Exploring the Bible Courses. His answers were very detailed, supported by numerous Bible quotes. In January 2010, he attended the Youth Week in Moscow and shortly afterwards he mentioned that he would like to be baptized. He has been the most regular East Europe participant in David's fortnightly Exodus class, via Skype.



Bro. Sasha Ignotov and Bro. Omoh Akin

He travelled alone by train from St Petersburg to Kazan for the East Europe Bible School last week, a journey of some 20+

hours each way. While there, he attended the Foundations Class, which focuses on Bible first principles. His Bible knowledge is excellent — often he was calling out the answers to questions in English before the question had even been translated!

He was interviewed for baptism by Bre. Nigel Patterson and George MacDonald, with Sis. Kathryn Pierce witnessing. He told us that he was baptized by full immersion at around age 19 in his church back in Nigeria (Apostolic). He made a conscious decision when he moved to Russia to investigate Bible teaching in more detail for himself and to step back from the churches. In the course of his studies, he realized that the Bible didn't teach many of the things he'd been told.



He was re-baptized in the nearby lake by Bro. Sasha Ignatov, witnessed by more than 40 brothers and sisters from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Moldova. (Bro. Sasha was also a student via the website, baptized two years ago now....it's great to see this building momentum.)

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, TIYB
Publicity*

on behalf of Sis. Kathryn Pearce, TIYB Tutor

The Thread and the Cup

Life hangs by a thread.

A simple snap and we're dead.

All of our money, fortune and fame:

That same little thread holds it again.

*We think we are secure in the strength of our might,
When we have not the power to last out the night.*

*Our fate and our destiny are guided for sure
By the Giver of rules; **we** make the detour.*

*If only we realize it is not by our wits,
That we survive, even prosper, but because **He** permits.*

*It's only a thread that holds us up,
But a thread is like steel, when we've drunk from the cup.*

*The cup of life made available to all.
Life hangs by a thread, but secure from a fall.*

Author unknown

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

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

ANN ARBOR, MI

As happens from time to time, the publication of ecclesial news slips a bit. So the following is catching up on more than three years of activity. During that time we had many events in which we rejoice.

In 2007, we joyfully witnessed the baptisms of SAMANTHA and JACLYNN BECKERSON, twin daughters of our Bro. Phil and Sis. Linda Beckerson, and the baptism of NATASHA WILSON-BLAKENEY who came to an understanding of the truth through her diligent search of the Scriptures. Sis. Natasha now lives in South Carolina but remains one of our members. During that same year we celebrated the marriage of our Sis. Rachel Ladd to Bro. Jason Goodlander of the Avon, IN, Ecclesia. Sis. Rachel is now a member of the Avon Ecclesia. During the year, we appreciated the visit of Bro. Karam and Sis. Trixie Ram (Handsworth, Birmingham, UK). Bro. Karam spoke at our fraternal gathering. We also welcomed the arrival of Bro. Edgar and Sis. Erica Rodriguez from Iowa along with Arianna and Armando. They have been dynamic additions to our ecclesia. Late in the year, Bro. Tim Stinchcomb transferred to the Denver, CO Ecclesia. We miss him and wish him God's blessing in his new situation.

In 2008, we welcomed by transfer Sis. Annette Ammons, Sis. Christy Michaels and Bro. Seth Michaels from the Milford Rd, MI Ecclesia. On the other hand, Bre. Joe Robinson and Chris Newth transferred to Denver and Bro. Billy Edwards to Massachusetts. We wish them God's blessing in their new locations. Our gathering speaker was Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK), who was accompanied by his wife, Sis. Pauline.

In 2009, we rejoiced in the baptisms of SHANE STUCKLIK, son of Bro. Alton and Sis. Beth Stucklik, and of JOEL IFILL, son of Sis. Val Ifill. Bro. Joel has since transferred to the Los Angeles, CA Ecclesia. During the year we enjoyed a study day by Bro. Anthony Oosthuizen (Durban, South Africa), who was accompanied by his wife, Sis. Pat, and the ministrations of Bro. John Warner (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) at our gathering. In October, Sis. Samantha Beckerson married Bro. Matthew Jackson of the Detroit Royal Oak, MI Ecclesia. Sis. Samantha is now a member of Royal Oak.

To date this year, we have witnessed the baptisms of TRUDY STUCKLIK, daughter of Bro. Alton and Sis. Beth, SARAH HARDAKER, daughter of Sis. Andrea and John Hardaker and ADAM IFILL, son of Sis. Val Ifill. Our dear Sis. Irina and husband, Alex, Andronikov, who have been with us for 11 years, have moved to Tuscon, Arizona, but Sis. Irina remains a member here. Early in the year, our Sis. Martha Robinson was married to Bro. Chad Monahan. They have settled in South Carolina. Bro. Joel and Sis. Diane Siegler have rejoined our meeting after moving back to this general area from British Columbia, Canada. Bro. Edgar and Sis. Erica Rodriguez and family have moved back to Iowa City where Bro. Edgar is again working for the University of Iowa. They continue as members and we're seeing them fairly often.

During this period, several of our parents were blessed with the birth of healthy children. On October 5, 2008, Bro. Jon and Sis. Becky Gore welcomed Benjamin to their family; on January 9, 2009, Micah Styles was born to Bro. Dan and Sis. Nicki Styles

and on April 10, 2010, Ariana was born to Sis. Natasha and Schcoby Wilson-Blakeney.

Every year we have combined with the other area ecclesias for a vacation Bible school which has steadily grown in numbers. The last couple of years it has been held at the Livonia hall and has attracted attendance from friends of our families in that area. It is turning in to an interesting outreach effort. We have also continued with Bible seminars at varied locations in the area. Wherever they have been held the results have followed a similar pattern of excellent attendance at the first series with gradually diminishing attendance at the follow-up sessions.

Dan Styles

BRANTFORD, ON

We had no greater joy than to witness the baptisms into Christ on August 18, 2010, of DAN JENNINGS and SARAH THOMAS, and their marriage in the Lord on September 24, 2010. We rejoice with Bro. Jim and Sis. Shirley Ann Jennings now seeing all of their children walking in the truth, and to see this new brother and sister now joined as heirs together in the grace of life bearing the Master's name

Mike Moore

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We are pleased to announce the marriage in the Lord of Sis. Lisamarie Cromie and Bro. David Galloway and pray that they will be a help to one another as they seek His kingdom.

We commend Bro. Paul and Sis. Roxana Chalifoux and daughter, Sophia, to the love and care of the Edmonton, AB Ecclesia.

We welcome Bro. Peter and Sis. Maggie Stonell who have transferred from the Hamilton Book Road Ecclesia. We also welcome Bro. Jim and Sis. Aileen Scott who join us from the Shelburne Ecclesia. We are very thankful to our heavenly Father for the much needed help that these two couples will bring to our ecclesia.

Tom Thorp

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

We are happy to record the marriage on August 28, 2010, of Bro. Rick Taylor and Sis. Sue Pynn of the St. John, NF Ecclesia. We pray that the Lord will bless their new life together. Sis. Sue has moved to Ontario and we welcome her as a member of the Kitchener-Waterloo Ecclesia.

We are sorry to lose the company of Bro. Steve and Sis. Cheryl McKay who have transferred to the Cambridge Ecclesia to gain the benefit of the Sunday school for their growing family. Their work among us was greatly appreciated and we shall miss their company.

Martin J Webster

MENDOCINO, CA

Over the past several months we have had the good fortune to have several brothers and sisters visit our meeting. Our dear Bro. Marco and Sis. Joan Dondero came in July to give us words of exhortation. In August, Bro. Eric and Jenny DeVortriede (Coachella, CA) came down to visit and we enjoyed Eric's words on "Love". We have

had several friends come for meeting as well as one man, Don Moser, who had been coming to our Bible class on Wednesday for the past two years. Rosie Cedarholm and her fiancée Aram have come to visit and I had a bridal shower this past week for her attended by our ecclesial members and friends. Sis Allison Cedarholm has been up several times and Bro. Louis Cedarholm also. Mandy Cedarholm and her baby boy, Alexander, were in attendance this week also. Sis. Gail Walker's sister, Betty McGlade who is ninety, came to meeting and enjoyed the day.

Over the summer Sis. Gail Walker and myself made our way to Idyllwild as did Josiah and Sis. Naomi Gaston. It was a great camp as always and a big thanks to all of the body which year after year give so generously to make it such a memorable experience.

The Gaston family and Bro. Tom Hawksworth traveled to Mariposa several times these past summer months to visit their family and friends. The Bainbridges invited the ecclesia and friends to celebrate Bro. Jacob's birthday and meet his very special lady friend Alicia. Sis. Betty Walters made the trek to Oregon to see her daughter and family.

We have begun rebuilding our studio which burned down several months ago. The process has been challenging, but as a body of God we have prayed for direction and worked together. Lord willing, it will all come together and be a benefit for our ecclesia.

Our Sis. Anne Creekmore underwent hip surgery, and is doing wonderfully. Sis. Edris Robinson has had a few setbacks and has to rest more, but with Bro. Everett's constant care and the loving care of her family, she is doing quite well. As always, she makes every effort to attend meeting and class each week. God bless her. We send our thoughts and love until the Lord Jesus comes.

Debra Phenicie

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

Our dear Sis. Freda Tarling fell asleep in her ninety-first year, having attended meetings regularly to the week before her passing. Sis Freda will be missed, having been a long-time pianist at the meetings in Vancouver from the late 1930's at the IOOF Hall until well into her eighties. While having her own share of humanity's burden, Freda was to the last always cheerful and a source of encouragement to us all.

Art Bull

NORFOLK, VA

The Norfolk Ecclesia has been blessed with a few baptisms recently: JORDAN McKEE, JAY PITTMAN, MATT STURGEON, AL STURGEON, SUQUOIA MOSBY, ERIC LANGE and JESSICA PITTMAN.

Following are current transfers we are happy to receive: Sis.' Colleen Uiga from Simi Hills, CA and Sarah Telles from Pittsburgh, PA. Additionally, we welcome and commend into fellowship Bro. Roger and Sis. Leah Anderson, and Sis. Kelly Dumas from Richmond Chapel UA Ecclesia, and Bro. John and Sis. Becky Laben from the Williamsburg UA Ecclesia. We welcome back Sis. Delis Bediako from the Petersburg Ecclesia during her semester in college.

We were visited by Sis. Nancy Jean Markwith (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Sis. Claire Gould (Hurstville, AU) now living and working in Williamsburg; Bro. Eli Miller (Victoria, AU); Bro. George and Sis. Benita Bediako (Petersburg, VA); Bro. Josh Anderson (Richmond, VA); Bro. Dwight Kindred (Fayetteville, AR); Bro. Matt and Sis. Carol Davis (Arlington, VA); and Sis. Lori Jackson (St. Paul, MN).

Last year in November, the main ceiling in our assembly room collapsed spreading friable asbestos throughout our chapel. Levels were high enough for the building to fall under abatement regulation, requiring major renovations throughout. We were not able to use our building for the following nine months and, as of July, we are currently meeting downstairs. The cause was related to humidity damage following flooding which now occurs regularly due to a failing foundation drain.

Mark Giordano

OTTAWA, ON

On October 2, 2010, Bro. John Bilello presented his “Bible and Science” seminar in Ottawa. Prior to the seminar, the local newspaper ran an article about God and Science, and then a response from Bro. John, with a note about his presentation. That providential publicity drew many attendees, over 60 visitors, in addition to our own members and those from other Ontario ecclesias. Now we pray the seed will grow. We thank ASK and the Simi Hills Preaching Foundation for funding this event and our upcoming Bible reading seminar.

In a small ecclesia such as ours, long-term visitors make a big difference. After a two-year work posting, Bro. Mike and Sis. Hannah Jenner moved back to the UK at the end of August. We will miss their enthusiastic participation and support, and pray that God will bless their growing family. Bro. Dan Leduke of the Kitchener-Waterloo Ecclesia is in Ottawa for a three-month co-op work term.

During the course of this year, the Ottawa Ecclesia has benefitted from the fellowship of brothers and sisters from across Ontario, and from the UK.

Charles Archard

SUSSEX, NB

We are delighted to record the baptisms of JOSEPH AARON GOODWIN and HANNAH JOAN GOODWIN into the saving name of Jesus on September 19, 2010. They are the son and daughter of Bro. Brad and Sis. Debbie Goodwin. This joyful occasion was also witnessed by their grandparents, Bro. George and Sis. Ruth Jackson (Mississauga West, ON), and Sis. Joan Goodwin, along with their great uncle and aunt, and brothers and sisters from Bedford, NS and Boston MA.

Our study in April will be on April 9-10, 2011, and not as usual at the end of April. Our speaker will be Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON). His theme will be, “Lessons from 1Thessalonians”.

Cliff Baines

HELP WANTED FOR THE ISOLATION LEAGUE MAILINGS

For many years the Livonia ecclesia has handled the Isolation League Mailings, but we are now in need of someone new to take this over. This service involves the printing and mailing of exhortations and Bible study materials to about 65 brothers and sisters in isolation every two months or six times a year. This makes a great project for an ecclesial or CYC activity. The materials will be emailed to you in advance, so there is no need to do any typing, just print and mail. If you are interested, please contact Bro. Jeff Adams by phone 248-879-6939 or by email Jeffadams86@yahoo.com.

Jim Styles

Learn to read the Bible Effectively

The *Learn to Read the Bible Effectively* seminars have been very successful wherever they have been presented, and now they have been professionally filmed. The Christadelphian Preaching Committee of Southern California has produced a 16 session set of DVD's for use in smaller ecclesias where it may not be practical to put such a seminar before the public. Packed with Scripture, video clips, and slides, these DVD's can be presented via laptop computer as a one-on-one class, shown on a TV, or projected onto a screen for larger groups. Included is a CD containing questions to help the viewers retain what they have learned. This will enable any brother or sister to present the Truth to interested friends, and to present a ready-made Bible class in an interesting fashion.



If you would like to have a short sample of the videos, please email cindy.and.doug@juno.com and we'll send you a free sample DVD. The 16 session DVD set is available for a suggested donation of \$17.50 USD and that includes shipping. Later this year, the CBMA Committee is planning to post these same 16 LTRBE sessions on their website at www.ThisIsYourBible.COM and thereby make them available throughout the world for viewing on the Internet.

What wonderful new ways to present God's message!

The Vision and the Reality

We always have visions, before a thing is made real. God gives us the vision; then He takes us down to the valley to batter us into the shape of the vision, and it is in the valley that so many of us faint and give way. Every vision will be made real if we have patience. Think of the enormous leisure of God. He is never in a hurry. We are always in such a frantic hurry. In the light of the glory of the vision we go forth to do things, but the vision is not real in us yet. Ever since we had the vision God has been at work, getting us into the shape of the ideal, and over and over again we escape from His hand and try to batter ourselves into our own desired shape.

The vision is not a castle in the air, but a vision of what God wants you to be. Let Him put you on His wheel and shape you as He likes, and as sure as God is God and you are you, you will turn out exactly in accordance with the vision. Don't lose heart in the process. If you have ever had the vision of God, you may try as you like to be satisfied on a lower level, but God will never let you.

Oswald Chambers

Minute Meditation

The Golden Rule

Wayne Dyer is quoted as saying, "Loving people live in a loving world. Hostile people live in a hostile world. Same World."

There is a story of a Realtor showing a home to some prospective buyers. They asked the Realtor, "What kind of neighbors will we find here?" The Realtor replied by asking them, "What kind of neighbors do you have where you live now?" The couple replied how nice their neighbors were and how they all looked out for each other. The Realtor then told them that they would find the same kind of neighbors here. Later in the day the Realtor showed the same home to another couple and the same conversation took place. Only this time the couple answered that they have terrible neighbors who feud with them all the time. The Realtor replied regretfully that unfortunately they would find the same kind of neighbors here.

This story shows that Wayne Dyer's observation generally holds true in our day-to-day lives, because we often find what we expect to find, and people's reactions to us reflect the way we treat them. We'll find what we are looking for not only in our neighbors but in the world all around us. If we expect to find the glass half-empty, it often is. People who walk around with a chip on their shoulder looking for someone to knock it off usually find someone willing to oblige.

Jesus tells us, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you." This advice is known as the Golden Rule, and while it may be old because Jesus said it so long ago, it sure hasn't been used enough to look worn. It isn't that we do not know the Golden Rule, it is just that it seems so many of us fail to practice it as we should. If we really treated others the way we want to be treated, we would solve many of our problems in our homes, in our places of work, certainly in our ecclesias, and even in our neighborhoods, as the wise Realtor realized when advising the prospective buyers.

Jesus' advice how to treat others really works. If we are generous and helpful to others, especially when they most need help, not only do the ones we help benefit, but others often follow our example by being helpful as well, those helped feel grateful and reach out to others, and when we are in need, the spirit of generosity we have cultivated can rebound to benefit us.

In our conversations, if only, every time we have dealings with others, we would just ask ourselves, would we want someone to say to us what we are thinking of saying to them? How many arguments between husbands and wives, co-workers, or relatives would vanish if we all would ask ourselves this question every time before opening our mouth? If we think first before speaking, we won't say the words we might regret having spoken in the heat of anger. We all should try to keep our words sweet for sometimes we find that later we have to eat them.

Occasionally when brothers and sisters are discussing issues, we hear harsh and unfriendly words uttered sometimes in anger, and yet each of us would certainly not like it if someone said these very same things to us. Solomon tells us that “a soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Solomon also observes, “The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.” “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” Later Solomon warns, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

James has much good advice about the tongue. “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell... But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

We cannot actually practice the golden rule if we don't control this tongue of ours. It can get us into a pile of trouble, and it can also save us, for as Jesus said, “By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” David wisely said, “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”

So our job is to treat others the way we would like to be treated. If we are loving to others, we will find the world to be a more loving place. To be more loving, we need to control our tongue and only say things to others that we would want being said to us. We all should pray the words of the Psalmist when he declared, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Robert J. Lloyd

A Church Without Tares?

Beloved brethren, human nature is always tending to extremes and transcending what is written. As the saying goes, it will strain at gnats and swallow camels by the herd. It set up the Inquisition and is incessantly prying into matters beyond its jurisdiction. It is very fond of playing the judge and of executing its own decrees. It has a zeal but not according to knowledge, and therefore its zeal is intemperate and not the zeal of wisdom or knowledge rightly used. It professes great zeal for the purity of the Church, and would purge out everything that offends its sensitive imagination.

But is it not a good thing to have a church without tares, black sheep, or spotted heifer? Yea, verily, it is an excellent thing. But then it is a thing the Holy Spirit has never yet developed, and it cannot be developed by any human judiciary in the administration of spiritual affairs. There are certain things that must be left to the Lord's own adjudication [judgment] when he comes.

John Thomas

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

November 2010

5-7 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "Discourses in the Gospel of John". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen csnobelen@csl.ca 250-652-3318

6 Brantford, ON "Signs of our Times" Prophecy Study Day. Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governor's Rd., Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12:00 noon, first class begins at 1:00 pm. Theme: "The Vision Tarrieth Not". Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Milestone Events to the Kingdom". Bro. Nicholas White (Pershore, UK): "Christadelphians & the Hope of Israel 1848 - 1948". Bro. David Billington (Brantford, ON): "The Hill Country of Judah in the Latter Days". Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@yahoo.ca

6-7 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 am. Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON): "Surviving Perilous Times". Contact: Bro. Joe Bennett at 219-762-2704 or jkb8275@comcast.net

12-14 Austin Leander, TX Fall fraternal gathering at the HEB Foundation camp near Leakey, TX. Bro. Ron Stewart (Lompoc, CA): "A Portrait of a Saint". Register with Sis. Maritta Terrell mt_ct@swbell.net

12-14 Kitchener Waterloo, ON Brothers Weekend, Hidden Acres, New Hamburg, ON. Bro. David Lloyd: "Five Biggest Mistakes Men Make". Contact Bro. Nathan Badger natebadger@yahoo.com

13 Southern CA Fraternal LA County Arboretum, Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT). Sponsored by the Christadelphian Preaching Committee of SoCal

13-14 Pittsburgh, PA CYC Study Weekend. Bro. Daniel Osborn (Maple Ridge, BC): "Jehoshaphat"

26-28 Washington, DC Family Bible Study Weekend. Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Ron Leadbetter (Hamilton Book Road, ON) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "David a Man after God's own Heart". Contact Bro. Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org

DECEMBER 2010

25-Jan 1 Texas Youth Conference A Bible Study conference for young Christadelphian adults, 17-35. Held at the Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center (T4C) near Freestone, TX. Theme: Biblical Symbols, Types and Parables. For registration information please see our website www.texasyouthconference.com

JANUARY 2011

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

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FEBRUARY 2011

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

APRIL 2011

9-10 Sussex, NB Study day. Our speaker will be Bro. John Perks (Ottawa, ON). His theme will be, "Lessons from 1 Thessalonians".

APRIL 2012

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