

TIDINGS

Volume 83, Number 6, June 2020

IN A TIME OF VIRUS AND UNCERTAINTY

The unexpected always happens while we are doing something else, while we are thinking of different things.





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SOPHY EMERSON (WELLINGTON, NZ)

Location: Glenlock Bible Camp, South Australia

"I got up 3 hours early to get this photo but the stillness and beauty of God's creation made it absolutely worthwhile."

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Editorial

The Death of Distance

Embracing technology for spiritual applications

In 1997, I read a fascinating book called, *The Death of Distance*, by Frances Cairncross. Before the digital revolution really was underway, Ms. Cairncross predicted that life would be significantly altered with Internet technologies. Global, real-time communications would be enabled. Employers would soon be able to look for talent, not only in their own urban area but from a mountaintop far away. They could just find the best talent, regardless of location. Technology would bridge the distance gap.

Over the years, this vision came fully into focus. Now it is common for many knowledge workers to be employed without geographic proximity being a major consideration. Employees often

work in virtual teams. We can only imagine how terribly impacted our economy would be if virtual work from home had not been available. A primary limitation we will always experience is time zones. These need to be respected carefully. The workplace revolution has been underway for over three decades. In many ways, the revolution is already quite well established.

We've generally not had such a shared vision for ecclesial life, though I suppose we have all seen vast changes in our personal ecclesial lives. Social media, despite all of its concerns, allows us to broaden our ecclesial network and share joys and sorrows in real-time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our ecclesial life has quickly transitioned to online meetings and Bible classes. Names like "Zoom" and "Vimeo" may have been unknown to

many prior to March 2020, but they have been largely demystified during this crisis. If one wants to participate in a streaming memorial service, there are multiple options and a wide variety of geographies to choose from. During the pandemic, while we may feel largely isolated from work or friends, our ecclesial life was too essential in our lives to be fully paused. I have been pleased when seniors in our ecclesias have openly embraced these technologies and connected during this time of isolation. Many of us have found great comfort in virtual fellowship. It is not an intended or reasonable replacement for gathering ourselves together, but it is a valued alternative.

It is during times of crisis that most innovation occurs. We think differently when we find ourselves constrained or limited. The proper use of technology for our community is to explore ways that we can come closer to each other and reach more who are searching. The creativity that I have observed by brothers and sisters has been exceptional. The streaming of memorial services and Bible classes has blossomed in ecclesias. They are excellent, especially during this pandemic, but unfortunately, they don't easily facilitate interaction from the viewers. Beyond this, I have seen ecclesial work continue with arranging brethren using Zoom-type meetings. I have seen sister's classes and fellowship meetings that have raised the level of intimacy, particularly as technology brings others right into our own homes. One group of sisters all shared dessert virtually during a video conferenced class! Brothers and sisters

are using Zoom to continue meetings with interested friends at a time when meeting together would not have been possible. I am aware of at least one public seminar that switched to virtual when the pandemic interrupted the planned meetings at a local hotel.

There is risk, of course. When the pandemic ends and we are able to gather together again, it is essential that we do so. We need to encourage each other to return as soon as it is safe. Virtual fellowship must not replace the assembling of ourselves together. We cannot let the convenience of streaming services govern our decisions about where to be on Sunday morning. We also need to support our local ecclesia and not "shop" for speakers or topics that may be more appealing online somewhere else.

I suspect that there will be change coming to our community and it may modify the way we think about participation and fellowship. Jesus told the woman at the well of Sychar that it wasn't at a place that true worship would occur, such as Mt. Gerazim or Mt. Ebal. But the time now was at hand for true worship to be done in "spirit and in truth." Where we worship has never been about the place — one of the very essential understandings we have about what the "ecclesia" really means. We are the ecclesia and wherever we are, the ecclesia exists.

The opportunity for our community is not to see our participation in streaming and video conference technologies as episodic, something we only employed during the pandemic. Rather, we need to turn our minds to think about how these available

technologies can supplement and improve our interactions and service. How can we better meet the needs of our community? There are technologies now available which enable broadening our interactions as well as developing intimate groups to discuss and share, regardless of distance. Technologies may facilitate staying in touch better during the week, between ecclesial gatherings. They can also help us to broaden resources to work on ecclesial projects. Without forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, how can these technologies nurture

greater “touch” throughout the week? This time may be a great opportunity to involve our young people in these technology solutions.

One author described believers today as living in a “digital Babylon.” We are exiles, surrounded by the idolatry and sinfulness of the world we live in. Ours is a message of faith and hope in a world of great darkness. Let’s use the digital resources that God has permitted to not only survive, but to thrive as we long for our Lord’s return beside the waters.

Dave Jennings

Sources:

The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution is Changing Our Lives, Frances Cairncross, Harvard Business School Press, 1997.

Faith for Exiles, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, Baker Books, 2019.

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Note from the Editor

I’d like to begin by thanking Bro. Peter Hemingray for his thoughtful leadership as Editor of *The Tidings* for this past decade. Peter rightfully positioned the magazine as a mechanism for edification in our community. His tireless efforts to include a wide variety of writers and perspectives was always appreciated by me as a reader. His

unique investigations of historical developments in our community have generated many lessons for our community today. I am pleased that Bro. Peter will stay connected to *The Tidings* and I look forward to continuing to be able to access his wise counsel, Lord willing.

When I was approached to take this role in 2019, *The Tidings* Committee

clarified the need for the magazine to make some changes to better appeal to modern readers. We read differently than past generations. Much of our reading is done on mobile devices and opportunistically accessed during the downtime of busy schedules. I am pleased to say that the Committee is investing in a full upgrade of the tidings.org website. This site will be a mobile-friendly application. There will be dedicated sections on the website that will provide individuals and ecclesias with practical resources, initially for Sunday School, Preaching and Music and Praise. The website is now operational and we invite you to visit us online at **www.tidings.org**. Please note that the magazine will continue to be available in hard copy for those who prefer it.

One of the areas that we wish to improve on is ecclesial news. The existing format for ecclesial information in *The Tidings* lags considerably, often months after they occur. Most of our brothers and sisters live in the “real-time” world of social media, which provides such information almost instantaneously. In the months ahead, the hard copy magazine will serve as the official “register” of ecclesial events and news and notices, but the website will provide expanded information, with photos and videos. We look forward to being able to provide improved access for brothers and sisters of the events in our community.

The magazine will feature seven major “sub-sections” beginning with this issue. Each issue will have articles on life application, first principles, exhortation and devotions, exposition,

music and praise, and preaching. The section editors are provided on the previous page. We hope these articles will be uplifting, but also challenging and thought-provoking. We encourage you to consider writing for *The Tidings*.

The reign of David was enabled by men and women who vigorously supported the work. There was a sense of purpose and urgency that was pervasive for this generation. In the listing of the Mighty Men, one tribe was specially noted for a gift that they offered to Israel.

“And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.” (1 Chr 12:32).

As a community, may we too be blessed by our Heavenly Father to have an understanding of our times and to agree on the direction of how to best serve our brothers, sisters and young people. We live in a volatile world where change is the constant. In some ways, our community may require changes. In other ways, we need to hold fast to the heritage we’ve received from our faithful brethren of prior generations. How we move forward before our Lord’s return can only be done with our Bibles open and through sound, open-minded and loving discussions on Godly principles. We must provide solid scriptural reasoning for what we believe and practice. This is the standard that *The Tidings* aspires to and we invite you to join in the discussion.

Dave Jennings

Thoughts on the Way

In a time of virus and uncertainty

“The unexpected always happens while we are doing something else, while we are thinking of different things.”

Alexander McCall Smith is a Scottish author whose fiction deals primarily with ethics and Christian values. His brief poem, *“In a Time of Distance”*, was written quite recently as a commentary on the coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19 — how the worldwide virus touches us all, and changes us, sometimes for the worse, sometimes for the better. He continues:

“With the unexpected upon us, we look at one another with a sort of surprise; how could things possibly turn out this way when we are so competent, so pleased with the elaborate systems we have created...for every eventuality, except this one?”

McCall Smith quotes no Bible verses (unless you count “love and friendship” and “brother and sister”). Nevertheless, as I read his poem, I find verses coming to mind, one after another:

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”
(Jas 4:13,14).

Jesus illustrates this same principle with his story of the rich man who had more riches than he could ever use. So, he set out to build more barns to hold all he possessed, but he died before he could enjoy all his wealth:

“God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (Luke 12:16-21).

All of us, I believe, are prone to just this sort of error. We carefully list everything we plan to achieve tomorrow, or next week, or next month — only to find, when the allotted time has expired, that we are only halfway to our goal, or have been sidetracked altogether. The sheer truth is just as James says: “You don’t even know what will happen tomorrow!” As we make our way down the path of life, it is always one unexpected thing or another which trips us up, or diverts us from our chosen path. As the old saying goes, “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.” This reminds me of Prov 16:9: *“In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.”* In other words, man plans one thing, but God always has the last word. He can bring something entirely different out of our plans.

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.” (Prov 19:21).

“A man’s steps are directed by the LORD.” (Prov 20:24).

Even the plans of kings and presidents and prime ministers can be stymied or thwarted, or even redirected in ways they never imagined:

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.” (Prov 21:1).

So now, a whole world with its collective plans has been brought to a standstill, for months and months. Music festivals and important conferences have been canceled, disappointing hundreds of thousands. Schools of every variety have been closed down. All kinds of sporting events — basketball, baseball, tennis, golf, the Olympics, and even (horrors!) football — are being postponed, curtailed, or rescheduled. And from our own perspective, we are also forced to cancel...Bible schools, Bible classes, gatherings, and even regular worship services — for how long, nobody knows.

Nobody knows, indeed! And even if we remember to say “God willing” or “Lord willing” as we make plans or announce upcoming events, we may hear the little whisper of a thought, “I know I should say this, but I am pretty sure everything will turn out just as planned.”

Then one day, out of nowhere, the most unimaginable of events happens — a worldwide epidemic that now threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions. It reminds us of terrible prior pandemics, such as the 1919 “Spanish flu” and the “Black Death” (Bubonic Plague) of 14th century Europe.

And Alexander McCall Smith’s words remind us just how much we have relied on the “All things continue as they were from the beginning” philosophy. We stare at our smartphones, our computers and our televisions to see, unfolding day by day, the most unexpected event of the last one hundred years. McCall Smith writes:

“And so we turn again to face one another and discover those things we had almost forgotten, but that, mercifully, are still there: love and friendship, not just for those to whom we are closest, but also for those whom we do not know... and...the words brother and sister... are brought out, dusted off, and found to be still capable of expressing what we feel for others.”

Perhaps God is trying to break through our selfishness, with our plans which always seem so important until, unexpectedly, they don’t. Perhaps He is trying to shake us out of our comfort zones so that we think less about satisfying ourselves and more about loving others, because — let’s face it — any day now may be our last.

Our Father in heaven, may Your kingdom come. Help us to remember that not our will but Yours shall be done in this earth. Watch over our brothers and sisters, and their little ones, wherever they may be, during this current distress. And thank You, Father, for those who risk their lives to save others, and please bless them as well. We pray in Christ’s name.

*George Booker
(Austin Leander, TX)*



Life Application

DRAWING THE LINE AT JURY DUTY

The beginning

For me, the journey started at the end of a long, boring day sitting in the court's waiting room with 300 other potential jurors. I had read all of the books and magazines that I could, and I was ready to go home. It was almost 5:00 pm on a Friday, and I had been sitting there since 9:00 a.m.

Each state, and sometimes each county, has its own jury process, but where I live you don't have an option regarding Jury Duty. Our laws were changed to allow juror selection to come from a pool of everyone who has a driver's license and is above age 18.

You can only be called once every 12 months, and for 20 years I was called into the county courthouse every 24-36 months for another long day of sitting and waiting. I have never been selected to be called up to a courtroom. In the

county where I live there are typically 300 potential jurors randomly assigned numbers sitting in the waiting room. When a judge in one of the courtrooms above us decides that a jury is necessary, he calls down for the clerk to select a panel of 24-30 individuals to report to the courtroom. Some days I sat there, and no jury was ever even called upstairs. Some days several juries were called, but I was "lucky" and never called up.

On a Friday that I had spent 8 hours playing Solitaire, something unique happened at ten minutes before Five. There was a young, particularly civic-minded judge in the courthouse that day, and he took the opportunity to come down to the waiting room at the end of the day to thank us for our service. He stood before the crowd and said, "I want to thank you for your

service today. Yes, even though you were not called up to join a jury panel, you did serve an important and vital purpose today. When I am negotiating with the attorneys over how we are going to handle the case before me, I can remind them that I have 300 potential jurors waiting downstairs ready to try this case.” He wanted us all to understand that even though we weren’t asked to come upstairs that we still fulfilled an important role in the justice system.

That caused me to think.

Let’s first talk about the reason why I don’t feel that I should serve on a Jury. I’m sure that most believers have their own reasons and understanding of the Bible, and I would like to explain mine.

Thou shalt not judge

I am not concerned at all about judging people. Some people may turn to Matthew 7, and be guided by the words of Jesus: “*Judge not, that you be not judged.*” (Matt 7:1 ESV.) I do not understand these verses in the legal context, and instead, I am guided by Paul’s words in 1st Corinthians 6:

“When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!” (1 Cor 6:1-3 ESV.)

I understand that Paul is specifically teaching against going to court against

a brother, but I feel that his words are clear. Who better than a wise, biblically sound, morally guided brother or sister to sit on a jury and hear a legal case? Actually, I feel that most Christadelphians would make ideal jurors. That is not why I choose not to serve.

Thy will be done

I have heard others express a concern that it would not be appropriate for them to make a judgment in court because they wouldn’t want to have an opinion that goes against God’s will. Again, this argument does not really move me to action. I feel that I try my best to align my thoughts and actions with God, and do not willingly depart from His way. I believe that even if I did, the God of Mercy would forgive me. In actuality, I think that God works in this world through me and other believers like me, and this is an argument for us serving as jurors. How else can God cause justice to happen in this world unless He is able to speak through conscientious, well-meaning individuals?

Thou shalt not kill

I know some brothers and sisters who feel that they could not, for the sake of conscience, ever participate on a jury because they fear that the jury could render a guilty verdict leading to the death penalty. The Bible is clear in its message against murder, and for many brethren, capital punishment is equivalent to murder. Most courts are sensitive to such convictions, and if a state allows the death penalty, usually neither judges nor lawyers want a juror who cannot vote his or her conscience.

My kingdom is not of this world

Ding. Ding. Ding. Now we come to the reason that has moved me to decide against Jury Duty. Even beyond Jury Duty, the understanding of this concept guides me to avoid voting, serving in public office and military service as well. I do not consider myself a citizen of this country. I try my best to live a life that reflects the fact that my citizenship is in heaven and not part of this (frankly corrupt and ungodly) system on the earth.

As a young man I memorized this verse:

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’”
(John 18:36 ESV).

This principle continues to guide me as I ponder these issues so many years later. Like all good truths in life, it seems to become clearer and stronger as experiences and circumstances shape my personal development. As I’ve mentioned above, other arguments have eroded in my valuation, but this one seems to be growing stronger.

This simple concept guides how I choose to act and behave in society. *“our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Phil 3:20 ESV). If I were a citizen of another country then I wouldn’t even be allowed to serve on a jury, hold public office, serve in the military or even vote.

Friday at 4:50 pm

So, guided by this clear conviction that I am not a citizen of this world and shouldn’t participate in its legal

processes...The message I heard from that young judge on that Friday afternoon has changed my opinion on how I should deal with Jury Duty.

Where do you draw the line?

For me, that is where I have drawn the line. I understand that most people feel that there is an opportunity later on in the process to stand up for their religious beliefs and be excused. I appreciate that position and fully understand why believers might take that view.

Governing authorities

Romans 13 is one of the most helpful chapters in the Bible in guiding us about how to interact with the government above us. Romans instructs us that *“there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”* (Rom 13:1 ESV).

This is an extremely important point, and in this volatile political climate one that is easy to forget. Brothers and sisters get quite upset (and rightly so!) over the unjust, unloving, immoral and sometimes illegal actions of our elected officials. We can, like righteous Lot, *“vex our righteous souls”* (2 Peter 2:7-8) because we are distressed about the wicked actions occurring in society around us. Romans reminds us that when the authorities are acting ungodly, it is not our place to resist them, for *“whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed”* (Rom 13:2). Remember, Paul wrote this during the reign of Nero, an emperor well known for a variety of illicit acts.

Even though I have decided to draw the line on Jury service by not appearing for the jury pool that doesn’t mean that I am encouraging rebellion against

authority. I understand the importance of learning this spiritual trait, and what better way to learn true submission than choosing to submit to those who haven't earned it by their actions. I pay taxes, I follow the laws and I fill out all of the forms that I am asked to complete.

Obey God rather than men

Sometimes this is not possible. We think of the perfect example when Peter and the apostles were charged by the authorities not to preach!

“And the high priest questioned them, saying, ‘We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.’ But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’” (Acts 5:27-29 ESV).

Of course, we should obey the law of the land...unless that law conflicts with the word of God. I have determined that I'm willing to suffer the consequences of my decision if the government decides to prosecute me for my actions. The state of California does not allow me the option (which they used to) of opting out of the system completely.

I'm not trying to imply that I have performed some great, heroic task of bravery. I simply write a letter to the County Clerk informing them that I won't show up when called for Jury Duty. Nonetheless, I think of Daniel's friends when I think about my decision. Nebuchadnezzar had made a 90-foot-tall statue, covered it in gold and put it in the middle of a flat plateau in Babylon. A law was passed to bow



down towards the statue whenever the royal music played each day.

Daniel's friends had choices. They could have capitulated, changed their religion and decided to worship an image. That wasn't the kind of people that they were. They could have done what I probably would have done: Fake it. They could have taken the opportunity to bow to the ground and say a silent prayer to the Almighty God. From the outside they would have looked like everyone else and they would have avoided any trouble. They chose not to. They chose to take a stand

and make a statement to the governing authorities. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out for it. Look at their response in Daniel 3. I love their courage and conviction! God can deliver us from whatever you bring upon us... and even if He doesn't, we still feel that this is important enough that we will do the right thing regardless of what happens.

Conclusion

I believe that my Lord's kingdom is not of this world, and therefore I shouldn't be a part of this world's system. This belief guides me to not serve on a jury, hold public office, serve in the military or vote in elections. I have come to the conclusion that if I choose not to serve on a jury, then I shouldn't even be a part of the pool of potential jurors provided to the court to choose from. Whenever I receive a Juror Summons from the county, I send a return letter

explaining my religious beliefs, and how my convictions do not allow me to join the pool of potential jurors. This letter does not cause them to excuse me, and as I don't appear, I realize that there may be ramifications for me sometime in the future.

Everyone has to decide for themselves on issues like this. We all have to decide where we are going to draw the line in our relationship with the state. Do we decide not to sit in a juror box, or decide to not even show up?

I understand that some believers feel that it is appropriate for them to serve on a jury and have done so. This is not the decision that I have made for my life in Christ. I pray for God's strength in your life as you decide where you are going to draw the line on this issue.

*Jeff Gelineau
(Simi Hills, CA)*

Life Application

A WELCOMING CHURCH

I recently went for a walk just to look at my local churches. I suggest you do this too and notice which ones make you feel like walking in. Imagine you are at a crisis point in your life and you're feeling vulnerable. Which church would you choose? Which one looks best to visit if you are lonely? Which

one is most appealing for worship? Next Sunday, park somewhere different from usual and walk to your own meeting place. Try to look at it with fresh eyes. How do you think your ecclesial hall looks to other people?

Not everyone knows what happens in churches. Some people have never been

Not everyone is aware that churches operate as community centers, providing activities for all ages.

into one and have only seen Christian services in films, where they tend to be portrayed in stereotypical ways and satirized. Not everyone is aware that churches operate as community centers, providing activities for all ages. People may not realize there is more to church than just services. It may help to ask yourself these questions:

- Does my church building look inviting?
 - Does it have a Welcome sign on the door? Or a Welcome mat?
 - Does our signage include the languages used by members of our local community?
 - Have we clearly posted what times the church is open and what happens inside?
 - Can passers-by see photographs of the inside?
 - Do we host activities people can attend without committing to sitting through a whole service?
 - When my church is open, is the door open?
- Is there normally someone assigned to greet visitors?
 - How do we appear welcoming if we rent, not own a hall?
 - What needs to change to make my ecclesia more welcoming?

There is a church near where I live with three words written on the doors: Worship, Friendship, Advice. The word “worship” makes it clear the building is not just a community center. It’s a church and its number one activity is to be a place for worshiping God, but the other words show it is also about people, our need for contact with others and our need for support. I really like those three words. If someone has not been to church before, their introduction to the Bible might be the moment they walk into your church. What do we need to do to emulate Paul and Barnabas who reported how they had made the church a welcoming place and, “opened the door of faith” for others (Acts 14:27)?

*Carmel Page
(Sheffield, UK)*





Exhortation and Consolation

THE LIVING GOD

There are many titles for the Lord God in scripture. For example, Abraham uses the expression “*Judge of all the earth*” (*Gen 18:25*) and LORD, God of heaven, and God of the earth. During the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Moses and Aaron address God as “*the God of the spirits of all flesh*” (*Num 16:22*). Each title seems apropos to the circumstances. This is also true of the expression “the Living God”. It seems to stand out from many of these titles as special, likely because it occurs at crucial points in the Biblical narrative.

A fearful thing

“*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (*Heb 10:31*). Now, there is no getting around this verse. We can’t sugarcoat the meaning here by trying to soften the writer’s intent to mean something like “it’s an awesome thing,” or “it’s a thing demanding our respect”. The original word for “fearful” occurs only 2 other times in Scripture, both in Hebrews: “*a fearful expectation of judgment*” (*Heb 10:27 ESV*) and “*so terrifying was the sight*” (*Heb 12:21*). “Fearful” clearly means “frightening”.

The context for Hebrews 10, though, concerns the rebel believer: the one who keeps on sinning deliberately (or willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth. For that person, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, because they have “*...trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and have outraged the Spirit of grace.*” (*Heb 10:29*). Clearly, this refers to someone who is not struggling to overcome a chronic sin, but rather has succumbed completely to a sinful

way of life and has chosen to spurn and disavow the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice and personal love for them. We love God because He first loved us. If we repudiate that love, then the consequences are dire.

“Living God” versus idols

But what of other uses of the phrase “the Living God”? Let's look at 1 Thess 1:9:

“For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”

The contrast here is to the many (implicitly dead) Greek gods that the Thessalonians believed in, versus the one true “Living God”. Idols and idolatry (idol worship) were a fundamental part of everyday life in both the Middle East and Asia Minor at the time of nascent Christianity in the first century. There are several accounts referencing idols in the gospels and the book of Acts.

Consider:

- Caesar himself was worshipped as an idol, being considered the “son of God.”
- Herod, in Acts 12, is angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. In an attempt to curry his favor they shout “the voice of a god and not of a man,” with pretty serious consequences for Herod. (Acts 12:20-23).
- Paul and Barnabas are called Zeus and Hermes at Lystra, and the priest of Zeus set out to worship them as gods (Acts 14:11-15). Paul tells the

crowds to turn from vain things to the “Living God”.

- The Jerusalem conference dealt head-on with the problems of idolatry and sexual immorality. The two often go side-by-side, because being intimate with temple prostitutes was believed to be a form of divine worship — a problem the Jews of the Old Testament were also not immune to. (Acts 15:19-21)
- In Thessalonica the prominent Jews in the city used the common superstition regarding Caesar being the “son of God,” part of their ingrained idolatry, to their advantage to try to discredit Paul and Silas: “...they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus.” (Acts 17:7)
- Acts 19:23-34 demonstrates how idolatry was an integral part of the economics of Roman society, too. When Paul preached Christ, he was threatening the livelihood of merchants and craftsmen, not to mention butchers, farmers, etc. (meat offered to idols). This caused great socio-economic as well as spiritual disruption.
- And, of course, when Paul arrived in Athens, he “...saw that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16).

Clearly the title “the Living God” is meant to teach that God is the only true God — a reasonably self-evident conclusion. But beyond that is the implication that we are to have a meaningful relationship with God — to “serve Him”.

The Enduring Word commentary has this to say about 1 Thess 1:9:

“Their reception of the Word and their faith in God was shown as true because they did something with the Word of God.”

To serve the living and true God:

It seems that the verb *douleuo* (to serve) was apparently never used in a religious sense in pagan literature. Hiebert quotes Denney: ‘No Greek or Roman could take in the idea of “serving” a God... There was no room for it in his religion; his conception of the gods did not admit of it. If life was to be a moral service rendered to God, it must be to a God quite different from any to whom he was introduced by his ancestral worship.’”¹

This is a fascinating insight into the contrast between worshipping Greek and Roman gods versus the true Living God. Not only were those gods many, specific to certain aspects of life and capricious, they were also distant, remote, requiring nothing

in return from the worshippers than the mere acknowledgement of their existence and superstitious reliance on their supposedly divine intervention. The true God of the Bible earnestly desires not only our salvation, but also our company, our fellowship — as expressed in our faith in Him.

Old Testament usage

The first occurrence of the phrase “the Living God” is in Deut 5:26: “*For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived?*” (ESV).

Here, Moses has just delivered the 10 commandments and is reflecting on the experience at Sinai — the miracle of being so intimately in God’s presence, and, despite the fear it engendered, living through the experience. The lesson is that God is not just alive, but that He gives and nurtures life. For Israel, Yahweh was a true, life-giving presence. The chapter concludes with this message from God for Moses to share with the people: “*You shall walk*

*The lesson is that God is not just alive,
but that He gives and nurtures life.*

in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.” (Deut 5:33 ESV). Again, the imperative is for us to be in relationship with God, to serve Him faithfully.

A hint of a greater meaning

Joshua and the people of Israel came to the banks of the Jordan in preparation to cross over into the promised land. Joshua shares God’s message of deliverance for them all:

“Then Joshua said to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.’” “And Joshua said, ‘Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the

Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.” (Josh 3:5,10,11 ESV.)

Recall that the willful sinner of Hebrews 10 is described as having “*profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified*”. The ark of the covenant spoke of God’s grace and mercy towards God’s people. It was not only the meeting place of God with man but also the expression of his covenant love towards man. It embodied the notion of the Living God — a God of deliverance, one who gives life, and life eternal. Jesus Christ is our mercy seat (Rom 3:25) and it is by His blood of the covenant that we have an enduring hope. We have been called to serve a Living God, through Jesus Christ His Son. We will continue exploring this theme in the next article.

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Notes:

1 <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-thessalonians-1/>



Exhortation and Consolation

DAUGHTERS OF VIRTUE

Young sisters in New England create service group

A group of young women and sisters from the Northern New Jersey ecclesias inspired us to start a sisters' group. They called their group "The Virtuous Women." They developed a mission statement and created matching t-shirts. They met once a month for several hours to pray, share a meal, lead a devotion or class and end with a focused discussion and fellowship.

A sister from Virtuous Women brought news of these happenings to the young sisters in New England. We loved the idea so much that we started another group, called **DOVE: Daughters Of VirtuE**. Jesus instructed his disciples to be "innocent as doves." The first meeting was on November 14, 2009, at the Worcester Ecclesial Hall. Ten members were in attendance. We followed the same format as the Virtuous Women group and really

thrived in our new found friendships and responsibilities. We came up with our own mission statement, as follows:

"As members of **DOVE**, we proclaim to be just that: Daughters Of VirtuE. We are a group of young women in the New England area who strive to be valiant for God in thought, behavior, dress and deed. Working together, we hope to be more like the Virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:11-31 and more like Jesus Christ, our ultimate example. Through God's grace, we seek to define our roles as virtuous women by helping our fellow brother and administering to the poor and needy. We aim to make for ourselves a pattern of good works, strengthening bonds among ourselves and with our God through study, prayer and outreach opportunities."

We practiced outreach by distributing a gift basket assembled for Abby's House, a well-known women and children's shelter in Worcester. We also copied another idea from another ecclesia and decided to host a tea party for fellowship. It was a huge hit and we have been doing them annually

(sometimes bi-annually) ever since.

Sis. Kelly MacAdams wrote a poem for the first tea and was strongly encouraged to keep doing so. Following is one of those poems.

*Kelly MacAdams
(Worcester, MA)*

Tea by the Sea

Dove Tea Poem #6

Our thankful hearts, considering the
substance of our hope,

Search out the height and depth and
width of Faith within its scope.

For without Faith, there's no soul
with whom God can be pleased;

But we who seek in diligence, His
promises believe.

We stagger not but, strong in Faith,
give glory to our LORD,

Persuaded that His promises He's
able to perform.

Yet sometimes, in our frailty, in our
deeds and thoughts we think,

We lose our focus, miss the mark
and in the water sink.

The waves crash down upon us and
they toss us all around,

Leaving us with no more breath and
praying for dry ground.

It's then our Savior heeds our call
and offers us his hand

And on a calm sea talks with us, as if
upon the land.

The "good we would" too often fails
to be the good we do;

Forgive us for our weaknesses! In
mercy see us through.

Help us, Lord, to follow you and
strengthen what remains!

The days are dark and evil and too
many lose the way.

The sober question posed is one we
often contemplate:

"When the Son of Man returns to
earth, will he find those of faith?"

The stars have called to witness, and
the sand upon the shore,

The blessing and the richness of your
people evermore.

A trumpet blast, the dead will rise,
our bodies will be changed!

A people humbled, reconciled to be a
people reigned

By He whose right it truly is to sit on
David's throne;

By mercy and by righteousness, to be
called His own.

Until that day our hope is turned
toward the glory we can see,

Our Faith will overcome the world
and be our victory!



Music and Praise

APPROPRIATE MUSIC FOR WORSHIP

**“Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary:
praise Him in the firmament of His power.**

Praise Him for His mighty acts:

praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”

(Psa 150:1-2 & 6)

Before I start this article, I thought I would take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Kristin Atwood. I attend the Verdugo Hills Ecclesia in California and I am excited to be the new Music Section Editor. Throughout my life in the Truth, I have been involved with music in a variety of ways. As a teen, I loved singing CYC songs around the campfire and participating in Youth Conference Choirs. I enjoy working with children at Sunday School and our Christadelphian Heritage School here in California on learning spiritual songs and songs to go with memory verses. I love helping put on Sunday

School Programs and presentations. As an adult, I love playing piano and directing cantatas at Bible School. As a mother, I love teaching our three young boys hymns and other spiritual songs together around the piano, driving in the car, and going for walks. Music has and always will be a huge part of my personal and ecclesial spiritual walk. Personally, I feel most connected to God through music. In times of joy or in distress it is always my reaction to sing! *“I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.” (Psa 104:33)*

Music is powerful!

Music elevates our prayers and brings in our emotions and hopefully takes our praise to a different level. Many of you may have experienced moments in praise where your heart and mind are so focused on God that it might even bring you to tears. The concept of praising God in song can be found throughout scripture. The word “sing” appears 119 times in scripture in 102 verses. Psalms is one of the biggest books in the Bible and is all about singing praises. We can think of many people in scripture that came to God to praise Him through song. Moses and the children of Israel sang to praise God after the parting of the Red Sea. Hannah praised God in song after the birth of Samuel. Paul and Silas sang to God in prison. David has songs recorded throughout his life when he praised God and when he poured out his troubled heart in song. Yet even though scripture is filled with “songs,” God hasn’t given us the music to go with these songs. This leaves us in a difficult position as we try to figure out “appropriate” music to sing. As Christadelphians, we know that singing to God is an important part of our spiritual walk and most of us acknowledge the value and importance it has in our walk in the Truth.

Yet as Christadelphians, let’s be honest, we don’t tend to all agree on the topic of music. One could even say that music is a bit of a “taboo” subject in Christadelphia. Many have strong beliefs that we should only use the green hymn book. Some think we should feel comfortable using mainstream Christian songs.

As Christadelphians we don’t tend to all agree on the topic of music.

Some feel that we should be using music only written by Christadelphians. Whatever your viewpoint on music, I encourage you to step back for a moment and honestly ask yourself, “How do we determine if music is appropriate for worship?” I encourage you to ask a lot of questions and look at scripture to guide thinking. The goal of this article is not to tell you what is or is not appropriate, but instead to see if we can all find some common ground by looking at questions we should all be asking when we look at spiritual music. The following are many of the questions that I personally ask myself when looking at spiritual music and my hope and prayer is that it moves you to do the same.

“Are the lyrics scripturally sound?”

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom 12:2).

I am starting with this question because, in my opinion, it is the most important. If we are trying to find music that is appropriate for worship, the very first thing we need to do is look at the words. Music is powerful and sometimes that distracts us from the words. Even if the music is beautiful, are the words appropriate? Are the words meaningful and deep in a way that brings scripture together and deepens our worship? Are the words doctrinally

sound? Are the words straight from scripture? The more that we can have God's word imprinted on our hearts the better! Music gets stuck in our heads easily so we need to make sure the lyrics are appropriate so that when we go through our busy days and a tune gets stuck in our head it helps us to focus on God's words and principles.

"Is this the appropriate time and place for this song?"

"Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints." (Psa 149:1).

When we gather together on a Sunday morning, mid-week Bible class, or some other larger ecclesial function, the purpose is for communal worship. We are all gathering as an ecclesial family to raise our voices collectively. So, the songs that are chosen should be ones in which anyone can join in. Is the music in a key that we can all sing? Is the music distracting or confusing? Is the music easy to pick up so that everyone can participate? Does everyone understand the lyrics so that they can focus spiritually? When we are gathering for Sunday School, are the lyrics simple enough for the children to learn? Is the music engaging so that the children are interested? When we have the opportunity to come together for Bible Schools or other longer events, we frequently get the opportunity to work on more difficult songs together. Are we taking advantage of this opportunity to work on perfecting well-known songs or learning more complicated songs? Many times, songs are very "appropriate" but if they are used in the wrong time or place, they can take away from the service or event.

"Why was this song chosen?"

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa 55:8-9).

Have you had a Sunday morning service where things line up beautifully and it really helps you focus your mind appropriately? Maybe the extra time was taken for those serving to make sure the readings, hymns, prayers, and exhortation are all on a similar topic so that way we can really focus on one thing and elevate our thoughts? Is the music that is being selected chosen because it brings the service together or highlights one aspect of the service? Was the song chosen because of some important event that has happened and the words are true to the occasion?

I am sure more questions could be asked as we examine pieces of music, but hopefully, some of these questions can help guide and direct us as we move forward. Over the next few months, Lord willing, there will be a collection of articles in this section from brothers and sisters around the world. Hopefully, these articles will allow us to see different ways music is being used to praise our Heavenly Father from different cultures and continents, but all in the same faith. There are so many talented brothers and sisters that have used their talents in service to God and it is my hope and prayer that we can all learn from each other and grow closer to God as we await Christ's return.

*Kristin Atwood,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)*



Exposition

A TALE OF TWO FAMILIES

“It’s twins!”

Imagine the mixed feelings Tamar experienced when greeted with this proclamation. She most likely felt joy at the prospect of the birthright she’d risked her life to ensure. She’d orchestrated the plan to force Judah to provide the seed, the heir to the promises of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We read in Genesis 38, the story of Judah declining to give Tamar in marriage to his last son. This action was contrary to the custom later encoded in Deut 25:5-10, and today is known as levirate marriage. The end result: she’d protected the line of the tribe of Judah from coming to an end.

But also, she must have felt fear. At the outset, she probably was terrified for her own life. The law (Lev 21:9) describes the fate of a harlot: burning! She saved herself only at the last moment, by proving the true paternity of her children and displaying the unique cord and seal that could only

belong to Judah. Hence, she shamed him into admitting the error of his ways. Secondly, she feared for the destiny of her twins. She doubtlessly had learned of the troubles between the previous pair of twins in the family — Jacob and Esau. Those twins struggled together from the very beginning in their shared womb and then became mortal enemies. Controversy about firstborn rights had caused discord in the family before, a situation she wanted to avoid at all costs.

So, no doubt she carefully instructed the midwife to make sure she properly designated the firstborn from the beginning. The strategy was to tie the crimson cord which bore the signet of the prince of the tribe of Judah, obtained at the children’s conception, to the wrist of the firstborn. No sooner had this been done than the child pulled back, and his brother pushed him aside, to the shock of the midwife. “You burst forth!” she exclaimed and

thus they called the firstborn Perez or “breach.” They named his brother, born with the cord, Zerah, meaning “sunshine” or “spring up as light,” probably a reference to red morning sunlight, as evoked by the scarlet cord. Afterward, the family transferred the princely symbols to the proper firstborn. We know this happened from the story of Rahab in Jericho, who hung the crimson cord in her window at the instruction of the spies. After her rescue from the city she married one of the spies, the prince of the tribe, Salmon. No doubt this cord had passed down the Perez side of the family.

And thus, two family lines were formed. The one, from Perez, culminated in the line of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ruth 4:18-22, 1 Chr 2:4-15, Matt 1:3, Luke 3:33). The other line, from Zerah, became the family of Achan, who at the time of the conquest of Jericho stole devoted silver, gold and a Babylonish robe. (Josh 7, 1 Chr 2:6-7.) What started at the birth of the twins must have continued as characteristic family behavior. Achan lived up to the meaning of his name, “trouble,” and probably felt resentment and bitterness about belonging to the secondary clan. His counterpart in the Perez lineage, Salmon, was the leader of the tribe and volunteered to spy out Jericho. At the same time, Achan held back. As for this Salmon, he obtained the prize of the beautiful Rahab as wife. Thus, to increase the prestige of his family, Achan helped himself to treasure. It’s recorded that he saw...coveted...took, just like the first sin in the Garden of Eden. (Gen 3:6) They stoned and burned Achan, along with other family members who were complicit in the crime. The line of Zerah ended there.

Or did it? Buried in the genealogies of 1st Chronicles are two vignettes about two men. One is about Achan, the troubler and the other is about Jabez, the honorable:

“The son of Carmi was Achar, the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban.” (1 Chr 2:7).¹

“Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, “Because I bore him with pain.” Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!” And God granted him what he requested.” (1 Chr 4:9-10).

It appears they were related to each other. We find information about Jabez in the genealogy of Carmi, Achan’s father. Careful consideration of the lists of people in 1st Chronicles suggests that Jabez’s mother may have been Achan’s sister.² This probably explains why she named her son, “sorrowful.” Her entire family, perhaps even husband, had been stoned and burned as a result of her brother’s sin.

Jabez is renowned for his prayer, mischaracterized in contemporary Christian literature³ as the “Prosperity Prayer.” It’s said that those who pray like Jabez can reap fortunes and yachts, and mansions and bursting stock portfolios. They miss the point! These are all superficial standards of status, and not at all what Jabez prayed for. This is not a prayer to incant magic power for selfish gain. He didn’t want treasure and goods like his relative, Achan. He prayed for God to bless

him with the promises to Israel. Jabez wanted God to guide his life. And he hoped for his border to be enlarged, for the restoration of the family lands forfeited because of Achan. Finally, he requested, with a play on the meaning of his name, that God keep him from evil, that the pain as a result of the family sin be removed. (See Matt 6:13.)

“And God granted him what he requested.” There’s a hint in 1 Chr 2:55 about the future outlook for Jabez. This passage mentions a town near Bethlehem named after him, where families of the scribes dwelled. Because Ezra, the author of the Chronicles was a scribe, he took special note of this development. Furthermore, it appears the inspired writers recharacterized the Valley of Trouble to the Valley of Hope, a sanctuary for the lambs of redemption.

“Then I will give her her vineyards⁴ from there, And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.⁵” (Hos 2:15).

“Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds, For My people who seek Me.” (Isa 65:10).

And so, the curse on the family of Achan has been reversed — by a man who was more honorable than his brothers. *“Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.”* (Phil

2:9). This man was *“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with of grief.”* (Isa 53:3). His mission became to *“save his people from their sins.”* (Matt 1:21). God granted him the blessing of enhanced borders. *“Ask of me and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.”* (Psa 2:8). Because of him, redemption came through the “Valley of Hope.” When this man prayed, God answered him. *“You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me.”* (John 11:41-2). And he rejoined two family lines — those who held back with those who broke through — so that all could participate in the promise of a place in the kingdom. *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* (John 10:10).

Jabez was no ordinary person, no side note in a boring genealogy. He was a “type” of our Savior and Redeemer! In order to impress on us the depth and wonder of His plan for mankind, God gave us shadows, types and patterns that only became fully embodied in Jesus Christ. *“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things.”* (Heb 1:1-2).

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Notes:

1 All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version (NASB).

2 See analysis in: The Book of Chronicles, James Gracey Murphy.

3 *The Prayer of Jabez: Breaking Through to the Blessed Life*, Bruce Wilkinson, Penguin Random House, 2000.

4 Carmi, Achan’s father, means “my vineyard.”

5 “hope” is Strong’s 8615, Tikvah: “cord, as an attachment,” same word as Joshua 2:18.



Exposition

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN HAVE NAMES (11)

Greetings from Paul's companions (*Rom 16:21-24*)

Paul now conveys greetings to the Roman brothers and sisters from his companions. Once again in this chapter, we see how scrupulous he is to mention those companions' names to his associates, his friends, and his brothers and sisters in Rome. Everyone is known by name; no one is a mere statistic; and each of them, alone, is of great worth to the apostle, to Christ, and to the Father.

In this chapter, there are so many who are known by name to Paul. There are so very many, in fact, that we must add this thought. On several occasions Paul actually refers to other believers, but not by name:

- “those who belong to the household” (vs 10,11),
- “[Rufus] mother” (v 13),
- “the brothers with them” (v 14),

- “all the saints with them”, and
- “[Nereus] sister” (v 15).

When he does this, we should not assume that it is because he does not care enough to mention their names. Most likely, it is simply because he has never been told those names, or perhaps he has forgotten their names. We know that, try as he might to remember everyone, even the great apostle was human, and by no means infallible.

Romans 16:21

Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

For “fellow worker” see verses 3 and 9, and the notes there.

The men whom Paul mentioned in verse 21 all seem to have been his fellow missionaries who were working with him in Corinth

when he wrote this epistle... Jason may have been Paul's host in Thessalonica (see Acts 17:5-9). Sosipater was probably Sopater of Berea, who accompanied Paul when he left Greece toward the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). (Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans).

Lucius: From the earliest times, some have identified this Lucius with Luke the writer of Luke and Acts. This is possible but by no means certain, for several reasons:

- Lucius was a very common name.
- We know of no particular reason why Paul would have referred to one of his closest associates by two slightly different names.
- Other ancient traditions take Luke to be a Gentile believer (a Samaritan or Syrian); if he were not a Jew, then he could not be one of Paul's "relatives".

Romans 16:22

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

At this point Tertius, Paul's secretary, must have asked to add his personal greeting. We may suppose that by this time he had become thoroughly wrapped up in the message and had developed a rapport with the Roman believers whom Paul was addressing.

William Barclay comments:

For the first and only time, we know the name of the amanuensis [secretary] who actually penned this letter to Paul's dictation, for Tertius slipped in his own greeting. No great man can do

his work without the aid that humble helpers give him. Paul's other secretaries are anonymous, so that Tertius is the representative of those humble unknowns who were penmen for Paul.

This little verse also suggests an affectionate scene, one which is perfectly ordinary but at the same time quite instructive. Paul doesn't use Tertius merely as a secretary. Tertius has a personality, as well as his own personal feelings as a brother in Christ, and Paul is pleased to accommodate those feelings by giving him the privilege of enclosing his own greeting.

Romans 16:23

Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings. Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.

Gaius, one of Paul's early converts in Corinth (1 Cor 1:14), was the brother with whom Paul was staying when he wrote this letter. As mentioned earlier (vv 1,2), Paul's letter to the Romans was written in Corinth, while he stayed with Gaius, but it was delivered to Rome by Phoebe, who lived nearby in Cenchrea.

The very fact that Paul made an exception in the case of Gaius by personally baptizing him (1 Cor 1:14 again) suggests that his conversion was a notable event due to his prominence.

Evidently, Gaius had a comfortable and roomy house which he had made available for the meetings of the ecclesia. The Greek phrase here may also suggest that, earlier, Gaius had

“welcomed” Paul and many others (who were previously “strangers” to him) into his home and his care.

Because of Paul’s remark that the whole ecclesia enjoyed Gaius’ hospitality, it is tempting to suppose that he is the man (Titius Justus) who invited believers into his home after the break with the synagogue (Acts 18:7). This involves the supposition that Paul is giving us only a part of his name and that Luke provides the rest. Quite often, Roman citizens had several names.

Erastus, who is the city’s director of public works.... The Greek word used here is “*oikonomos*”, a compound word of “*oikos*” (house) and “*nomos*” (law, rule, administration). In a very general sense, this refers to the manager or butler of a family house (see also Luke 12:42; 16:1–4; 1Cor 4:1,2; 9:17; Gal 4:2; Eph 1:10; 3:2,9; Col 1:25; 1Tim 1:4; Titus 1:7; 1Pet 4:10).

The KJV translates “*oikonomos*” as “chamberlain”. This English word comes from medieval Latin and old French, and describes a trusted senior employee. “Chamberlain” refers to the employee’s access into the private chambers of the master so as to consult with him there. This authority

also extends to management of the household staff and finances.

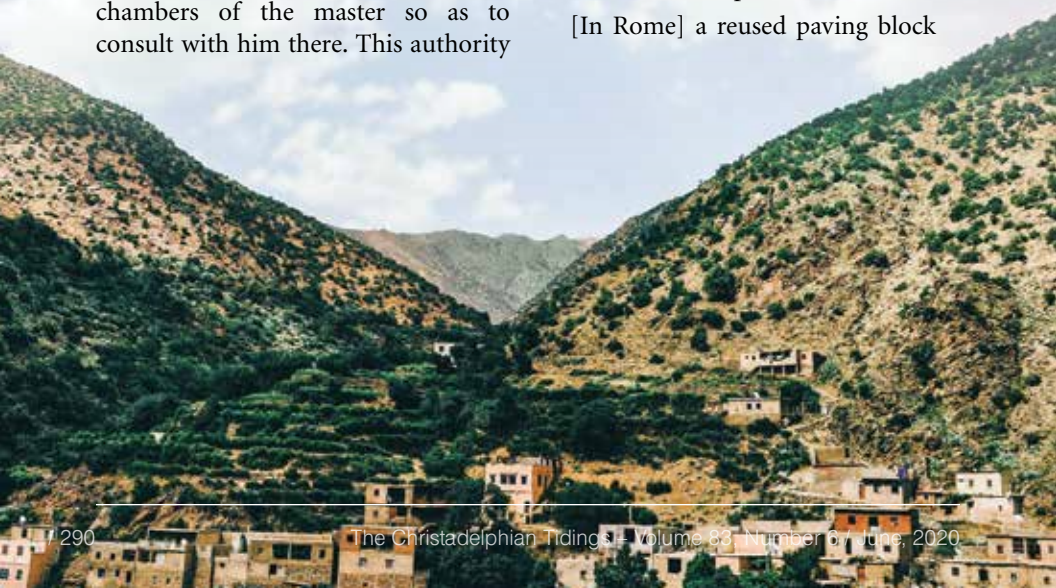
The simple word “house” may have many applications. The idea has been expanded to encompass a larger sphere of oversight: not just the steward or butler of a domestic house, but the trustee of a business, or even the executive director of a nation or kingdom. In this case, because of the other word used here (“*polis*”, or city), Erastus was the “*oikonomos poleos*”, the city manager or director.

The NET and NRSV Bibles translate the word as “the city treasurer”; the ASV, as “the treasurer of the city”; the NIV as “the city’s director of public works”.

Any further evidence as to Erastus’ precise position in Corinth would have to be determined from archaeology and history. There is at least some evidence, though by no means conclusive, that suggests that Erastus held a supervisory position over Corinth’s public works:

Oscar Broneer, who did considerable excavating at the site of ancient Corinth, reports in *The Biblical Archaeologist* XIV (Dec. 1951), p. 94:

[In Rome] a reused paving block



preserves an inscription, stating that the pavement was laid at the expense of Erastus, who was “aedile” (Commissioner of Public Works). He was probably the same Erastus who became a co-worker of Paul (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23, where he is called “oikonomos”, “chamberlain” of the city), a notable exception to the apostle’s characterization of the early Christians: “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called” (1Cor 1:26).

...and our brother Quartus send you their greetings: “Our brother” may simply mean another brother in Christ. On the other hand, Harry Whittaker writes:

The Greek text reads: “the brother”. This is... strange, until it is recognized that this is a common New Testament idiom for “his brother” (e.g., 1Cor 1:1; 5:1; 16:12; Matt 9:10; 13:25; Luke 16:8a; etc.), that is, the brother of Erastus.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 279

Nothing else is known of Quartus. The name means “fourth”, so quite possibly he is the fourth son of a prominent family, of which Secundus was the second son (Acts 20:4) and Tertius the third son (Rom 16:22).

If so, who is the “first”? Since there is no reference to a “Primus”, then perhaps the older brother of the family is Erastus himself — simply because

Erastus may have been the eldest brother of a quite distinguished family - distinguished by their offices in some instances, and certainly distinguished by their standing in the Lord.

of his placement in the list just before Quartus. This also suggests that Erastus may have been the eldest brother of a quite distinguished family — distinguished by their offices in some instances, and certainly distinguished by their standing in the Lord.

Romans 16:24

At this point the KJV has a verse 24 as follows:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Likewise, the verse appears in the ASV. However, the RV, NEB, RSV, NIV and NET omit this phrase altogether, and their translations have no verse 24 at all. Other manuscripts have this verse or its equivalent after verse 27, but this isn’t usually reflected in the translations (see further notes on verse 20).

According to the NET Notes: “The strength of the external evidence, combined with uncertainty in other manuscripts over where the verse should be located and the fact that it is a repetition of verse 20b, strongly favors omission of the verse.”

*George Booker,
(Austin Leander, TX)*

JESUS - GOD WITH US¹

We are refreshing our section on **First Principles**, focusing on four overlapping types of material:

- (a) **“This is a faithful saying”** articles that support true doctrines, the “true principles” of the gospel that we share in common.
- (b) **“Another gospel”** articles that refute false doctrines that we have not received, that need to be rejected.
- (c) **“Let everyone be persuaded in their own mind”** articles that identify and discuss interpretations that should not be treated as tests of fellowship. These “uncertain details” are not in our statement of faith; rather, they are personal opinions that we must be allowed to differ on without threat of separation. Those who insist that others agree with them on these matters have gone too far.
- (d) **“Be merciful to those who doubt”** articles that provide a forum for those who might be wavering to safely raise the issues that concern them, that cause them to hesitate in their faith. We must discuss these issues in a non-threatening way. We must listen. We must hear where people are coming from. We must understand their uncertainties. We must avoid assuming bad motives. We must have empathy. We must be willing to be vulnerable with one another.

In all cases, articles will be based on solid scholarship. Straw man arguments are not allowed. Sources must be properly cited. For example, the first articles are on **“Jesus – God with us”**. They are primarily of type (a), because they determine the scriptural meaning of this phrase and then explain how it is applied in Matthew’s gospel. Of course, by doing so, they lay a solid foundation for refuting misunderstandings; whenever possible, this is a preferred pattern for dealing with wrested scriptures of type (b). We will see that this helps to explain why Matthew chose to describe the ministry of Jesus in the way he did: he was demonstrating that Jesus was indeed God with us.

Matthew opens his gospel by connecting Jesus Christ to Abraham, David, and the return from exile in Babylon. Then he describes the virgin birth, the angel of the Lord saying to Joseph:

“...fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying [Isa 7:14], Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matt 1:20-22).

What does it mean to say His name is “God with us”? How does Jesus “save His people from their sins”? As we will see, these phrases are loaded with meaning and they are the fundamental theme for Matthew’s gospel.

God with His people

The idea of Yahweh being with His covenant people, and in particular, with His chosen leaders and those associated with them, is prevalent throughout the Old Testament. It is often linked to the blessings of God’s covenant promises, as illustrated by the following passages.²

Yahweh was with Abraham

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall

all families of the earth be blessed... Abimelech and Phichol... spake unto Abraham, saying, ‘God is with thee in all that thou doest.’ (Gen 12:2-3; 21:22; see also, Gen 14:19; 22:17-18; 24:1, 35).

Yahweh was with Ishmael

“And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him... And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.” (Gen 17:20; 21:20).

Yahweh was with Isaac

“And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac... And the LORD appeared unto him, and said... Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father... And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake... And they [Abimelech, et al.] said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee.” (Gen 25:11; 26:2, 3, 24, 28).

Yahweh was with Jacob

“And, behold, the LORD stood above it [the ladder between earth and heaven, v12], and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land

whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, **I am with thee**, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” (Gen 28:13-15; see also, Gen 31:3; 32:9, 12; 46:2-4).

The sons of Korah sang

“**The LORD of hosts is with us**; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” (Psa 46:7, 11).

Yahweh was with Joseph

“And **the LORD was with Joseph**, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the **LORD was with him**, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.... But **the LORD was with Joseph**, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because **the LORD was with him**, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.” (Gen 39:2-3, 21, 23).

Yahweh was with Moses

“And [God] said [unto Moses], Certainly **I will be with thee**.” (Exod 3:12).

Yahweh was with Joshua as He was with Moses

“And the LORD, he it is that doth

go before thee; **he will be with thee**, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.... And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and **I will be with thee**.” (Deut 31:8, 23).

“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: **as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee**: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.... Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for **the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest**.... According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: **only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses**.... And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, **as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee**.” (Josh 1:5, 9, 17; 3:7).

Yahweh was with the children of Israel

“For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years **the LORD thy God hath been with thee**; thou hast lacked nothing.” (Deut 2:7).

“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for **the LORD thy God is with thee**, which brought thee up out of

the land of Egypt....For **the LORD your God is he that goeth with you**, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.” (Deut 20:1, 4).

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: **for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee**; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Deut 31:6).

Yahweh was with the judges

“And when the LORD raised them up judges, then **the LORD was with the judge**, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.” (Judg 2:18).

Yahweh was with Gideon

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, **The LORD is with thee**, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, **if the LORD be with us**, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house. And the LORD said unto him, **Surely I will be with thee**, and thou shalt

smite the Midianites as one man.” (Jdgs 6:12-16).

Yahweh was with Samuel

“And Samuel grew, and **the LORD was with him**, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.” (1 Sam 3:19).

Yahweh was with Saul

“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon [Saul’s] head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?... And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for **God is with thee**.” (1 Sam 10:1, 7).

Yahweh was with David and was departed from Saul

“Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and **the LORD is with him**.”

“And Saul was afraid of David, because **the LORD was with him**, and was departed from Saul... And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and **the LORD was with him**.”

“And David went on, and grew great, and **the LORD God of hosts was with him**.”

“So David waxed greater and greater: for **the LORD of hosts was with him**.” (1 Sam 16:18; 18:12, 14; 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Chron 11:9; see also, Psa 23; 89:20-24).

Yahweh was with Solomon and the congregation of Israel

“And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king [David], and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. **As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon,** and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.” (1 Kgs 1:36-37).

“And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and **the LORD his God was with him,** and magnified him exceedingly.” (2 Chr 1:1).

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon “stood, and blessed the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. **The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers:** let him not leave us, nor forsake us.” (1 Kgs 8:55-57).

Yahweh was with Jeroboam

“And I [the LORD, the God of Israel,

v31] will take thee [Jeroboam], and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that **I will be with thee,** and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.” (1 Kgs 11:37-38).

God was with Abijah and Judah

Abijah King of Judah said to King Jeroboam and all Israel [v 4], “And, behold, **God himself is with us** for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.” (2 Chr 13:12).

Yahweh was with King Asa

“And [Azariah] went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; **The LORD is with you, while ye be with him;** and if ye seek him, he will

God himself is with us...

be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you....And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that **the LORD his God was with him.**" (2 Chron 15:2, 9).

Yahweh was with Hezekiah and the kingdom of Judah

"And the LORD was with him [Hezekiah]; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not." (2 Kgs 18:7).

In the face of Sennacherib's attack, Hezekiah encouraged the people, "With him is an arm of flesh; but **with us is the LORD our God** to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." (2 Chron 32:8).

Isaiah prophesied

"Fear thou not; for **I am with thee:** be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness... For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." (Isa 41:10, 13-14).

"But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called

thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, **I will be with thee;** and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee... Fear not: for **I am with thee:** I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west." (Isa 43:1-2, 5).

Yahweh was with Jeremiah

"Be not afraid of their faces: for **I am with thee** [Jeremiah] and deliver thee, saith the LORD... And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee." (Jer 1:8, 19).

Jeremiah prophesied

"And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for **I am with thee** to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD." (Jer 15:20).

"For **I am with thee,** saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." (Jer 30:11).

"Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for **I am with thee;** for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will

I not leave thee wholly unpunished.”
(Jer 46:28).

Zechariah prophesied

*“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that **God is with you.**” (Zech 8:23).*

Summary

One writer explains that God being with someone is synonymous with God blessing them:

“When a man is blessed, it may also be expressed in the way that God is with him... This expression that Yahweh or God is with one is only another term for the blessing. There are sufficient statements to show that the two appellations are used interchangeably. In this there is nothing strange. The blessing is concentrated in Yahweh, therefore one can only have blessing in harmony with him.”³

Another writer summarizes that Yahweh being with His people is akin

to Yahweh being their God and they being His people, so that He might bless them in all things:

“The basic idea in Israel’s traditional Covenant ideology is that Yahweh is to be Israel’s God and Israel Yahweh’s people. Yahweh — God — binds himself to ‘be with’ his people and bestow upon it his ‘blessing’; Israel will lack nothing (see, e.g., Deut 2:6-7; see also Deut 8:9 and Psalms 23:1). He promises to provide food and drink for them and all other personal necessities of life, to protect them and save them from diseases, dangers and threats; they will obtain wealth and glory, power and might, happiness and victory—in short, the divine ‘blessing’ in all its aspects (e.g., Deut 28; see also, e.g., Deut 7:12-24; 11:26-28; and Lev 26).”⁴

With these things in mind, we are now ready to return to Matthew’s gospel in our next article.

Joe Hill
(Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

- 1 These articles expand on a talk I gave at the 30th Northern Gathering Family Day in Leeds, UK, on Monday, May 5, 2008. Overall theme: God is closer than you think! Topic assigned to me: “Jesus – God with us”.
- 2 I have quoted a lot of passages for three reasons; first, because they are not easy to find using a concordance (essentially the only word they have in common is the preposition “with”); second, they form an important aspect of the gospel which is often overlooked; and third, many of them are especially relevant to our immediate topic of Jesus being God with us. I encourage you to highlight them in your Bible and to look for others as you do the readings (e.g., John 3:1-2; 8:29; 16:31-32; Acts 10:38; Rev 21:3-4).
- 3 Johannes Pederson, *Israel: Its Life and Culture, I-II*; London, 1926, pp. 182-212; see p. 194.
- 4 Birger Gerhardsson, “Mighty Acts and Rule of Heaven: ‘God is with us’”, *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, eds. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moises Silva, Library of New Testament Studies, vol. 100, 1994, pp. 34-48; see p. 36.



Take a Marginal Note

“RESTORE SUCH AN ONE”

The instruction of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians about restoration was critically important to that ecclesia. After listing the works of the flesh that would prevent inheritance of eternal life for the unrepentant, he then cataloged the expression of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-24). Paul had exhorted them not to “bite and devour” (vs. 15) or to provoke or envy one another (vs. 26).

But just how are we to serve those who are overcome by the works of the flesh? How should an ecclesia respond to an individual that is currently immersed in such observable behaviors? Paul says that those who are spiritual should “*restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*” (Gal 6:1). This requires

us to bear each other’s burdens (vs. 2) and have an accurate view of your own need – “if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (vs. 3).

The word for “restore” gives us great insight into the manner we are to approach one lost in sin. The Greek word is “*katartizo*.” It is a fascinating word, for it means to “mend or repair.” It is the word used to describe the work that James, John and Zebedee were doing on the seaside – mending the nets. (Matthew 4:21). We can imagine the tangles and debris that might have encumbered the effective use of the net. No fisherman would ignore the damaged net, nor would they casually discard it. They would

“katartizo” is a fascinating word, for it means to “mend or repair.” It is the word used to describe the work that James, John and Zebedee were doing on the seaside – mending the nets.

understand the need to carefully repair the net for further use. In non-Biblical Greek literature, it is said that *katartizo* is used to describe how a physician gently resets a broken bone. In 2 Chr 30:20, we are told that after the reforms and prayer of King Hezekiah, God hearkened and “healed” the people. The Hebrew word for healed is “*raphah*”, meaning to mend or stitch together. Heb 13:21 uses the word *katartizo* when it speaks of the of the great shepherd of the sheep, who will “make you perfect (*katartizo*) in every good work to do his will...”

Perhaps this serves as useful insight for believers today as we contemplate the responsibility that we have to

one another. We are to employ the “*meekness and gentleness of Christ*” (2 Cor 10:1) as we attempt to restore one another. There is no room for harshness or condemnation. It could very easily have been us that had been overcome! Next time you find yourself feeling exasperated or maybe even angry with one who is overcome by sin, remember the careful and patient work of the hands of the fishermen, who gently untangled and mended their nets. We can rejoice that our Lord doesn’t ignore or discard us when we are damaged and in need of repair.

Dave Jennings





Preaching and Teaching

COME TO JAMAICA!

“Come to Macedonia!” Paul received this vision during his second missionary journey, a lesson I had recently taught to my Sunday School scholars. And so he went, not doubting the directive. “Come to Jamaica!” Ours was not in a vision like the Apostle’s, but rather a request from our son and daughter-in-law, Bro. David and Sis. Cassie Giordano. As full-time missionaries in Jamaica, they were asking for help in their final weeks on the island. So, after a brief consideration of our ‘comfort zone’, Bro. Mark and I heeded the call and went. As I’d heard it said, there’s no growth inside the comfort zone!

The thirteen day trip flew by much too quickly. In that short time, we traversed the beautiful island of Jamaica — driving up and down on good roads and bad ones — meeting brothers and sisters, children and friends whom we cherish now with all our hearts.

Our first stop was the mission flat atop the home of Bro. Leroy and Sis.

Lorraine Johnson, in Clarendon on the south side of the island. We had our first foray into Jamaican cuisine here: ackee and salt fish, callaloo, fried plantains, bammy, raw sugar cane, and fresh coconut. We spent our evenings packing up the flat for Dave and Cassie’s soon departure and preparing for the upcoming Ash Wednesday Gathering. We also enjoyed visiting and doing the daily readings with the wonderfully hospitable Johnsons.

The next stop was lovely Port Maria. Moody island weather brought sun, high winds, and torrential rains, all in a very short time. We were able to meet up with three of the five sisters in isolation in the area — Sisters Shauna, Pauline, and Alissa. We held a simple Breaking of Bread in the hotel room, with some words of encouragement by Bro. Mark and hymns accompanied by Bro. Dave on his guitar. The sisters dashed to the taxi stop late in the afternoon when there was a brief break

in the heavy rains, taking leave with mixed emotions since it was the last time (at least for a while) they would see Bro. Dave and Sis. Cassie.



Kids at the annual gathering at the Spanish Town Ecclesia in Jamaica

conversation about our hope, and we gave him contact information before driving away.

Finally, we headed west to Negril and the Broughton ecclesia. We lodged at Bro. Ray Arthur's Golden Sunset Villas while traveling back and forth between the mission house in Broughton and the ecclesial hall for CYC, ecclesial events, and Sunday meeting. At the house, Dave and Cassie hosted a special spaghetti dinner for the local ecclesial members, and we were delighted when one of the chefs from the local jerk chicken shack showed up (from our earlier invitation) to eat and to hear the Kingdom of God presentation by Bro. Mark.

Wednesday, February 26th, brought us to the Ash Wednesday Gathering. Wonderfully hosted by the Spanish Town ecclesia at a local YWCA, over sixty-five brethren, children, and friends arrived from around the island to enjoy fellowship and listen to talks by Bro. Mark on Prophecy, and *"Being Ready for the Lord's Return."*

Cassie and I taught classes for the thirteen children outside, because there was no room inside! The day overflowed with enthusiasm and camaraderie. Even the security guard on the premises engaged us in a

Nine neighborhood children appeared out of nowhere at the ecclesial hall on Friday afternoon, ready and eager for a lesson from Sis. Cassie. She pulled a lesson and craft out of her magical bag of supplies and kept them engaged for the next hour with Bible stories and activities. They loved it!

Thirteen teens arrived later for CYC, which was presented by Bro. Mark on "The Kingdom of God — Not in Your Heart, the Church, or in Heaven — but on the Earth!" All of them seemed to understand the concept and easily repeated the point later on.

Nine neighborhood children appeared out of nowhere at the ecclesial hall on Friday afternoon, ready and eager for a lesson...



Dave and Cassie Giordano with members of the Spanish Town Ecclesia in Jamaica

On Sunday morning, the Broughton hall came alive with the sound of hymns and praise to our heavenly Father. To the little flock gathered there, Bro. Mark gave a moving exhortation on the responsibility we all have to sow the seeds of the gospel of the Kingdom to everyone in our hearing, as this produces fruit and glorifies God.

As we sat at the airport at the end of two weeks, we reflected on the amazing opportunity we'd just experienced.

Our love and care for the many faithful brothers and sisters we met in Jamaica will stay with us until we meet again.

The CBMC is appealing for more long term missionaries for Jamaica. Are you able to answer the call to help these lovely believers? You will feel blessed and thankful if you can!

*Written by Jean Giordano
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C Publicity*

Blue Mountain, Jamaica

Preaching and Teaching

NOT THE BEGINNING WE ANTICIPATED

La Paz, Bolivia

Well it has been just over four weeks now since Isaiah and I safely arrived at our apartment here in La Paz, Bolivia. It was quite the journey to get here, and we were not entirely sure that we would even make it!

At the beginning of this year we were both in California visiting Isaiah's family for a couple of months before heading to South America where we planned to start two years of mission work in Bolivia. All was going according to plan until right before we left when Coronavirus really started to have an impact worldwide. We were still planning on going in spite of this, but the day before we were due to leave, we found out that Peru had entirely shut down their borders. Our flight from the USA was routed through Lima, Peru to Bolivia and so had been cancelled. Finding an alternate route was not straightforward, as there are no direct flights between America and Bolivia and many countries in South America were due to close their borders within the next 24 hours — not giving us enough time to route through on our way to La Paz. Eventually we found a flight that stopped in Brazil and would get us to Bolivia.

Setting out the next day, it really felt as if

we were going against the tide. Everyone else it seemed was heading home to their native countries, and on our flights, we were pretty much the only foreigners. As we were travelling, we found out that Bolivia would be closing their borders and entering a state of nationwide quarantine beginning in 48 hours — not long after we were due to arrive. We were praying that no flights would be delayed and that we would land before everything locked down. Thanks be to God, everything went to plan and we arrived in La Paz safely on Wednesday afternoon, only to be told by immigration officials that the border had already closed to foreigners and they were only allowing citizens into the country! We were told to go and stand in a corner with a couple of other foreigners who had arrived on the same flight and to await their decision. After what seemed like quite a long time (but was probably only about a half hour), and much discussion of many officials, they came and spoke to us saying that they had decided they would allow us into the country. Praise God!

We first had to complete a health examination before we were allowed to leave. Taking Isaiah over to another corner, they carried out a very 'rigorous' health check. After taking down his

name, number and contact details, they took his photo and his 'examination' was complete! They told us we needed to self-isolate for 14 days, and then they finally let us walk free!

The stress was not yet quite over though, as due to being held up in the airport awaiting their decision, we walked out of the airport after 6pm. Bolivia had just laid out a whole bunch of curfew laws the day before and no public or private vehicles were supposed to be on the road at this hour. Our taxi driver was waiting for us, and when we asked him whether this would be an issue, he said not to worry as he knew the back streets! Sure enough we arrived at our apartment 20 minutes later, not having been stopped by any police.

What a relief to walk in the door and know that thanks be to our Heavenly Father we had safely arrived! We are so grateful for His loving care in looking after us, and we truly feel that it must be His plan for us to be here in La Paz as so many things almost hindered us from being able to come, and yet, thank the Lord, here we are.

Since arriving, curfew and quarantine rules have tightened even further: only one person per family may leave once a week between the hours of 7am and 12pm to buy essential items (what day you are allowed to go out depends on what your passport number ends in, and is monitored by police), and no public or private transport is allowed

on the road. Anyone caught flaunting these rules will have to pay a fine as well as spend 8 hours at the local police station!

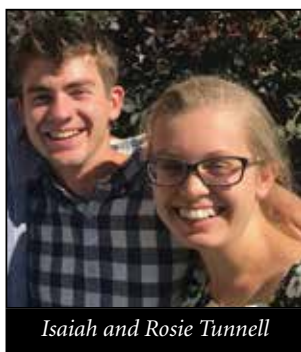
It is very strange to be living in an apartment building in the middle of a large city and to open the window and only hear the sound of dogs barking, and the occasional bird chirping. Despite the isolation, we have been able to meet with the brothers and sisters regularly via Zoom (online video conferencing), although we are definitely looking forward to seeing them face to face.

Besides the weekly breaking of bread, Isaiah also runs a midweek bible class and we are each doing personal Bible classes multiple times a week with a few interested friends

here. We have also had one online combined meeting with brothers and sisters joining from Chile, Argentina and Peru and hope to start a weekly bible readings session via Zoom as well. People are definitely questioning the state of the world here (as I imagine is the case in much of the world), and there is a lot of fear, but this means that the fields are ripe for the harvest!

We ask for your prayers that God will open men's hearts to gladly receive the good news of the Kingdom of God here in Bolivia.

*Written by Rosie Tunnell
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C Publicity*



Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell

MEET BROTHER MATTHEW WILLIAMS

A few months ago David and I were visiting with the Harvey River ecclesia at the home of its recording brother, Matthew Williams. The drive is a rough one, winding along pothole studded bamboo shaded roads, up through the hills, almost an hour from the closest main city, Lucea. During our time in Jamaica, we tried to regularly visit the small ecclesia. Despite all 5 of the members being over the age of 80, they rarely miss doing service at the hall on Sunday and have been enjoying Brother Matthew's weekly exhortations for nearly two decades!

Below, is his story about his conversion to the truth, as well as his advice for other brothers and sisters.

"I met the Christadelphians in 1950s. As I was going home, I stopped at this open air meeting, and this man was there. He was Brother Alan Eyre, who was in Jamaica at that time. As the meeting subsided, he asked if anyone had any questions to ask. So, I asked him a question. I asked him, "the fruit in the Garden of Eden, what was that fruit?" And he never answered me! He went to the Bible and read two verses, and he said "OK, where are you from sir?" And I said, "Up the road". He said, we are having classes over the river every Wednesday night, and you can

come, and you will hear. And I went, and I took another man with myself, and we went to the meeting, and we took instruction from there. I was instructed from '54 until '56. I went to the waters of baptism, through Alan Eyre.

And when the day of the baptism was set, you wouldn't realize that I was married the Wednesday, and I was baptized on the Sunday. On the Friday night we had rain, rain, rain, rain! Saturday, rain, rain, and rain! Sunday morning: rain! We made ready at the home, because Alan had to leave Lucea to come 10 miles for me to go to be baptized. My wife said to me, "You can't go again, because the rain is falling." No sooner had she said that than we looked up the hill, and saw the man coming down with two umbrellas, and we went down.

We went to Lances Bay for my baptism. When we reached Lucea, at the first entrance, we see the sea. The sea was so rough we couldn't meet there. We went to another point at Bulls Bay, open sea. The sea was rougher than rough. I say, what to do? The other sisters from Lances Bay were there waiting on us, so one of the sisters says, "Brother Alan, we have a place down near the church where that part is never rough,

so let's go down". When we reached the church, it was on a chain, and the water was inside the church, and we couldn't baptize. One of the other sisters says, "Mr. Eyre, Brother Eyre, let's go down to the river." Went down to the river. And we go up the river stream: muddy. Brother Alan went into a cane field, broke a bamboo stick, went into the water, took the fathom of the water, and says "come". The next man went in and I went behind him. As soon as I was baptized, held up my head, and stepped on the ground, the rain ceased. We went up the hall, and we had a breaking of bread.

Here I am today, basking in the hope and full of salvation, just waiting for the kingdom to come. May God bless all the members and all the brethren (Alan Eyre, David White, David Simpson, David Morgan), and all those brethren from abroad. Out here we all unite. It's 24 I have already buried from that church. Twenty-four brothers and sisters have died, and none of those ever left the Christadelphians to another church, or said, "well, I'm not bothering with this church." All died in the Truth. Here I am today, praise God! The advice that I can share with the young people today, Sister, is I don't think that they follow what we teach. The young brethren and sisters, I

think, are more for the world. I see this in many brethren that are out there. Nobody responds.

It seems to me like the brethren, when the Missionaries are here, they are comfortable. But when they are gone, the young people are gone. It's only God that can make that plan for them. Let's hope that the young people will



Bro. and Sis. Matthew Williams of the Harvey River Ecclesia

see for themselves and know what they have learned and where they are coming from, so that if that day may come, they may not hear 'Depart', but may hear that voice 'Welcome'.

On looking forward to the Kingdom when Christ returns, I believe that the Kingdom is prepared for me! Day by day, I am looking into the Kingdom. Not outside, not behind, not sideways, one way — and that way is eternal life. When that trumpet shall sound, if I'm even in the grave, I know I will be awakened."

*Written by Cassie Giordano,
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*



Our Community

NEWS & UPDATES

TORONTO WEST, ON

It is with great joy that we announce the baptisms of a number of our young people including:

SARAH WILTON, daughter of Stephen and Tanya, on March 04, 2018;

JACOB CARR, son of Mark and Liz, on February 09, 2020;

CALEB WILTON, son of Stephen and Tanya, on April 03, 2020;

NICK BROWN, son of Roger and Kim, on April 03, 2020.

We pray that our walk to the kingdom together will be mutually beneficial.

We welcome by transfer from the Toronto Church Street, ON Ecclesia, Bro. Bruce and Sis. Dale Scott.

We commend Bro. Alex and Sis. Lynne Browning to the Kitchener Waterloo, ON Ecclesia, and Bro. Lee and Sis. Jody Elliott to the Cambridge, ON Ecclesia.

We were happy to welcome many brothers and sisters over the past

year, prior to closing due to social distancing regulations, including: Mark Leane, Christopher Wauchope (Adelaide, Aust.); Jared and Esther, Josiah, Emily Keyes (Ann Arbor, MI); Phil and Rachel, Melanie Wilson (Blue Mountain, Sydney, Aust.); Tim and Sherrie, Hannah, Sarah, Rebecca Young (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Nesbit Amos, Jordan Milne, Kevin Pereira (Brampton, ON); Dan and Ashley Robinson (Brant County, ON); Cathy Badger, Jackie Cooper, Lee and Jody, Hannah Elliott, and Caleb and Julia Lawrence (Cambridge, ON); Dan Dayes, Winnie Reynolds, and Peter and Teresa Wisniewski (Toronto Church Street, ON); Martha Levin (Denver, CO); Sarah Shajari (France); Alex and Lynne Browning, Michael and Ruth Carr, and Martin and Lois Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON); Jill Cooper, Daniel and Linda Wilton (Manitoulin Island, ON); Jinny Babb, Luke

Groothuis, Joan Maycock, Joel and Amy Thorp (Mississauga West, ON); Sarah Davies (New Zealand); Derek and Emily Elder (Paris Avenue, OH); Dan Gaitanis (Richmond/Petersburg, VA); Paul and Bethany Jackson (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Olivia Baines, Hannah Goodwin, Megan Goodwin (Sussex, NB); and Clive and Sylvie Leane, and Brad and Stephanie Stephens (Toronto East, ON).

We thank our heavenly Father for His protective care while Bre. Mark Carr and Brian Carrick recently travelled to Guyana for a two-week pastoral visit. Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic, we had to cancel our semi-annual ecclesial Retreat at Hidden Acres this spring. In addition, for the first time in a century or more, the annual Toronto Fraternal Gathering was also cancelled. We thank the Mississauga West Ecclesia for streaming

the Prophecy Day in its hall with talks led by Bre. John and Peter Owen.

We are saddened to announce the falling asleep of Sis. Millie Dayes last year, and Sis. Gaitre Prashad, the eldest member of our ecclesia, last month. We sorrow with their families yet rejoice in the hope of the resurrection. We pray our sisters' sleep will be short.

We continue to stream our Memorial services, lectures and Bible classes to our members as well as those in isolation, especially the ecclesias in Larissa, Greece, Montreal, Quebec, and many others in North America. Please contact the undersigned for the link. All our past services were recorded and can be viewed on our website at: www.24langside.com.

Please note the undersigned is now the Recording Brother.

Brian Carrick

NEW WEBSITE!

The Tidings is pleased to announce the launch of our revamped website:

www.tidings.com

FREE RESOURCES • PAST ISSUES • COMING EVENTS • AND MUCH MORE!

Please send in news and notices by the 1st of the preceding month and include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.

Email to tidings.publisher@gmail.com or submit online at www.tidings.org.

The ecclesial position primarily in Ontario, and perhaps elsewhere, is at present confused as unity-related matters are being resolved. Intelligence is published for information purposes only, without endorsement by The Christadelphian Tidings Committee.



Our Community

FOR THE CALENDAR

JUNE, 2020

All known June events have been Cancelled
Be sure to double- check July before attending.

JULY, 2020

5-11 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School
has been Cancelled.

11-18 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp has been
Cancelled.

11-19 Midwest Bible School at Trine University
in Angola, IN. Bro. Roger Lewis, (Christchurch,
NZ) “Zerubbabel- My Servant;” Bro. Mark
O’Grady, (Tawa, NZ) “Elisha” and Bro. Tim
Badger, (Brighton, AUS) “I Will Be with You –
Exhortations from the Book of Joshua” Register
online at: www.midwestbibleschool.com

19-26 Idyllwild Bible School at Idyllwild Pines
Camp in Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Arne Roberts,
(Dunstable, UK) “Wholly Holy;” Bro. Ken Styles
(Royal Oak, MI) “The Blessing of Forgiveness;”
Bro. Nathan Lewis, (Christchurch, NZ). Register
online at www.californiabibleschool.org

20-26 46th Annual Church of God of the
Abrahamic Faith Gathering has been Cancelled.

25-August 1 Christadelphian Bible Camp at
Manitoulin Island has been Cancelled.

26-August 1 Western Christadelphian Bible
School has been Cancelled.

AUGUST, 2020

2-8 Rogue River Bible School has been
Cancelled.

17-22 Lakefield Bible School in Lakewood,
ON. Bro. Caleb Lawrence (Cambridge, ON)
“Minor Characters - Major Faith”; Bro. Stephen
Snobelen (Bedford, NS) “Biblical Perspectives on
the Environment”. www.lakefieldbibleschool.com

OCTOBER, 2020

10-11 Vancouver Ecclesial Fraternal Gathering
held at the Vancouver Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Daffyd
Jenkins (Museum Place, Cardiff, Wales, UK) “The
Stone”. For registration information, contact
Bro. Phil Snobelen at: philsnobelen@shaw.ca

Addresses for Donations

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works. 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941: www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make online donations. Donations by check should be sent to 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or cbma.treasurer@gmail.com

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, V3R 0J7

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 or jberneau@earthlink.net

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Donations to: Thousand Oaks Christadelphians, c/o Jimmy Vetkos, 2322 Alscot Ave. Simi Valley, CA 93063

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) helps ecclesias cultivate faith, nurtures faith in youth and creates opportunities for faithful service. c/o Virginia Brierly, PO Box 264, Villas, NJ, 08251-0264 www.wcfoundation.org

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

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 146, Three Rivers, CA 93271-0146, or 70 Delevan Drive, Cambridge, ON N1S 4S3 or via website: www.agapeinaction.com or agapeinaction@rogers.com

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

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 Jonathan Farrar, 140 Whitwell Way, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

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

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. To donate: Acct name: Timothy Charles Galbraith, BSB: 343020, Acct #: 018016090, Bank: HSBC Eastland, Ringwood, AUS, Address: TC Galbraith, 18 Edna Str., Heathmont, Vic, 3135.

Spanish language Literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, or jdhunter45@gmail.com

PREACHING AROUND THE WORLD

The gap between the tremendous preaching successes in Africa and India, for example, and the self-inflicted obstacles to growth we face in legacy areas is astounding. We need to rejoice in the former and overcome the latter. The Tidings will do all we can to encourage both.

Next month's special issue on **"Preaching Around the World"** follows these principles. We hope it provokes celebration over the growth where it is happening and correction of the problems inhibiting growth in the other areas. The articles represent various preaching efforts around the world.

Mission Work in Iranian Émigré Community in the U.K.

Steven Cox, (Leicester Westleigh, UK)

"The number of Iranians baptized in the UK, most within the last 18 months, was 549 prior to the March 23rd coronavirus lockdown. Pre-lockdown, by God's grace, 40-50 baptisms were happening each month."

Our God at Work in South Asia

Tim Galbraith, (Hyderabad, India)

"As one seeks to follow the Lord Jesus, one constantly becomes aware of the general needs of those in society around you, particularly in a country like India. Our primary focus has been to preach the good news of the kingdom of God, but when requests come from people genuinely in need, I found the response – "Sorry, we cannot help you" was not an honest one."

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The Christadelphian Tidings of the Kingdom of God

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