

TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 4, April 2021

FINDING THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer is an intimate process whereby we can establish a connection with our Maker.





By: Sis. Heide Molinari (Schooley's Mountain, NJ)

God made the beasts of the field after their kind.

Each spring we have the honor of bearing witness to the miracle of creation as new life bursts forth from the earth even in our own backyards.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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SPEAKING WELL OF OTHER CHRISTIANS

By Dave Jennings

IN January 2020, before the pandemic started, some of my wife's relatives gathered for the celebration of the 90th birthday for her uncle. Her family is a mixture of Catholics, Presbyterians and Evangelicals. After dinner, they handed out two hymns they wanted us to sing. One was "Great is thy faithfulness," an inspiring hymn sung frequently in our ecclesias. The other was a more Evangelical hymn and included references to Christ taking on flesh. It demonstrated the blurred view those gathered had about the relationship of the Father and His Son. My reaction was—here we go! I certainly couldn't sing that line of music. But that same family openly proclaimed their love for God as well as His Son, Jesus. They used Scriptural language and references. They prayed for the food and spoke of their gratitude to God. There was a touching "dedication" by the patriarch of the family for two

newborn great-grandchildren. There were strong expressions of faith in Jesus and comments about Jesus returning. I soon began to realize how wrong it would have been if I were to have isolated myself from these people or to stand in judgment of their errors. Have you experienced engaging in Biblical discussion with the Jehovah's Witnesses? They genuinely believe that they are the only people that will be saved. When you speak with them, they give off a vibe that is insulting. You know that their end game is to convert you to becoming a Jehovah's Witness, largely because they believe all other denominations will be condemned. It repulses those engaging with them and usually leads to an adversarial dialogue. We should not aspire to be anything like this! Perhaps I, too, might have sent out a Jehovah's Witness type of aura at that family gathering? I certainly hope not. At the end of the

day, I thanked them and told them I appreciated being included.

Can a person proclaim Christ yet be fundamentally confused by his nature and relationship to God? Can someone be a “believer” and have some fundamental misunderstandings about first principles? Can they still be God’s people? Is it possible that when Jesus considers his body of believers today, there may be many who are laden with incorrect doctrines?

So, what is the body of Christ today? Who are the people? Is it presumptuous to define who makes up “the ecclesia” of the Lord Jesus Christ today by church membership definitions or labels? Was the term ecclesia intended to be used solely for one denomination of believers?

We must confess that only God puts together the body of Christ. It is God that “*set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*” (1 Cor 12:18). We have never had the authority to judge in this matter. Our responsibility is to find the truth of the gospel message, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and have fellowship with like-minded believers as we together serve God. We certainly cannot judge whether the Lord considers others outside our formal fellowship to be part of his body. Our cultural heritage as Christadelphians has at its foundation the messages of *Christendom Astray* by Bro. Roberts. It is an identification of the false teachings of other Christian denominations. Christadelphians have rightly historically desired to disassociate from objectionable and un-apostolic ideas and institutions. We have a Statement

of Faith that binds us together, but we also have a list of 36 Doctrines to be Rejected that further define and separate us. We are part of a community that began by jettisoning false Christian teachings and being separate. For over 150 years, we have vigorously debated our variances with Christendom. Christadelphians standup for truth. We expose error. We will have no part in the doctrinal or ecclesiastical corruptions of Christianity. Some Christadelphians will not even call themselves “Christian” for fear of association with the churches in error. Some may go so far as to see our denomination as the only legitimate group of believers in the modern era.

However, we must be circumspect about how we talk about the people who are in other churches who profess Jesus Christ. The Lord’s exhortation to Ephesus was that they were steadfast in not tolerating false teachers, but they were also warned that they should not forsake their “*first love.*” (Rev 2:4). First love ought to dominate our lips too. Sadly, within our own circles, we often hear comments made about other Christian denominations that they pursue only entertainment and rarely read the Bible. While this may be true of a percentage of Christians, it is certainly not true of all and can make us sound ignorant or

So, what is the body of Christ today? Who are the people? Is it presumptuous to define who makes up “the ecclesia” of the Lord Jesus Christ today by church membership definitions or labels?

arrogant. Those engaged in preaching have often observed that other churches do have some very correct doctrines. What differentiates us, I believe, is not that we are the only ones who appear to understand some of the most important teachings in Scripture, but that we may have a fundamental grasp of the first principles and how they reveal the plan and purpose of God. Many churches teach Jesus is coming back. Many properly understand the nature of man, the death state and the resurrection.

There is a surprising number of Christians that are now rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. Some understand the future Kingdom and the role of Jesus and the saints. Many churches apply themselves to study and are quite familiar with the Scriptures. They take stands for what they believe to be truth. Some of their leaders make profound expositions and devotionals from Scripture. But, without fail, something is missing, fundamental stitches have been dropped.

Isolationism is not an agent for evangelism—it is a deterrent. When we push others away or marginalize them, we limit the influence we can have for truth. People are usually ineffective when they isolate themselves and are unwilling to lovingly discuss differences. As Christadelphians, we are not seeking adversarial relationships with other Christian groups, but we are not looking for assimilation either. Where is the line? What is the danger on either side of the line?

We can clearly see in the record of the life of our Lord that he was not

an isolationist. In Luke 7:34, we are told that he sat down and ate with publicans, sinners—winebibbers! Jesus did not limit his work to those who were lined up perfectly with him and his disciples. The attraction these men and women felt to Jesus was that he accepted what faith they did have and committed to helping them build faith and teach them truth. People who had a confused understanding knew that Jesus loved them, and they could freely approach him for words of truth.

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At the height of Jesus' Galilean ministry, a fascinating incident occurs with a person who was not associated with Jesus. The disciples reported that this man was "casting out devils in thy name" (Luke 9:49). The disciples saw him as an imposter—clearly not part of their group. They informed the Lord that they "forbad him, because he followeth not with us." If he wasn't walking

with them, he couldn't have a real, genuine faith. Right?

There's a practical side to this, as Jesus points out in Mark's Gospel (Mark 9:39). If someone is casting out devils in Jesus' name, he certainly would not speak poorly of Jesus to others. Was he, in fact, casting out devils? Was his work successful? Was God working through this man? The disciples wanted this identification to be cut and dry. The silence of Scripture on these questions tells us that the real point here was more about the disciples than the man casting out devils.

The Lord's reply must have stunned them. "Forbid him not: for he that is

not against us is for us" (v. 50). In other words, the best outcome is for many to proclaim Jesus Christ. It was not their prerogative to define who was a disciple.

Today choosing to take a stand for the gospel requires a solid commitment to Scripture and a faithfulness to stand against the world around us. Christadelphians are not alone in proclaiming the moral requirements of our God. During this pandemic, I have been pleased to see so many Christians openly speaking of Jesus Christ and declaring their dependence on him to see them through difficulty.

Should we embrace ecumenism and join with all Christians in fellowship? Absolutely not! However, it is right to appreciate their courage and willingness to proclaim Jesus Christ. We must acknowledge that God is also working in their lives. I wonder how the Lord feels if I talk negatively about other churches and the work they do? The Father draws out a people for His Name, not me. The church down the

street is not my enemy. The enemy is Humanism, the rejection of God, and the pollutions of a world that celebrates the Creature and not the Creator. The vision we embrace is of a time when all believers are finally restored. The Kingdom is a picture of a united group, one with God and His Son, worshipping in praise and harmony.

Will we speak well of those who walk not with us, but love the Lord? Can we celebrate that in this world of darkness others are also pursuing Light? Will we speak positively of their good works done in the name of our Lord? Let's not denigrate those who stand with Christ. Let's not isolate ourselves from those who are attempting to serve God. Let's show love. Let's pray for them. Let's offer to share our perspective of Bible truth with them so that they too might come closer to Him. Thankfully, it is our God that calls people to righteousness, making up and tempering the body together.

Dave Jennings

The vision we embrace is of a time when all believers are finally restored. The Kingdom is a picture of a united group, one with God and His Son, worshipping in praise and harmony.



FINDING THE POWER OF PRAYER IN OUR LIVES

By Nigel Small

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil 4:6 ESV).

THE need for prayer in our lives began when Yahweh said to his angels, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen 1:26). And ever since, a bond has existed throughout history between our Creator and us. This relationship has been built through interaction and communication between Yahweh and His children. The Almighty communicates to us through intervention and the Scriptures, which the apostle Paul said are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17 NKJV). It is through prayer we communicate with God, and He

responds. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” (Jas 5:16).

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is an intimate process whereby we can establish a connection with our Maker. When we pray, we express our thoughts, actions, desires and emotions toward our Heavenly Father—and this helps establish a proper relationship with Him.

Prayer is not a monologue; it is not a one-sided communication. Rather, it is a dialogue, a two-way exchange between God and people. When we pray, we talk to God about the issues in our lives, and we also expect His reply

to our prayer requests to be the answers yes, no or not yet. God's responses to our prayers are affected by how we pray and with what intent we pray.

THE MODEL PRAYER

For prayers to be effective, meaningful and powerful, one must master the art of prayer. A model was given to us by Jesus when he taught his disciples how to pray. This famous Scripture is referred to as the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). This prayer was a teaching tool providing us with a helpful framework so our prayers might be more effective.

KEY FEATURES OF THE MODEL PRAYER

1. Addressing and Honoring the

Name of God: *"Our father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."* (Matt 6:9). Our prayers start by addressing and honoring our Father in Heaven. Every prayer must be addressed to our Heavenly Father, but we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). We do not pray to Jesus, but rather, we pray through him, *"Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."* (John 15:16). So, we pray to our Heavenly Father, in and through the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, a name above every name given among men (Phil 2:9). It is the only name providing us with instant access to God's throne.

2. Acknowledging God's Will and

Plan: *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."* (Matt 6:10). Immediately after recognizing the supremacy of God, Jesus prayed for God's

Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth: *"All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."* (Num 14:21). The things of Yahweh must rightly take precedence over anything we might petition for ourselves. God's first commandment given to Moses was for us to love Him above anyone and anything. Therefore, He expects us to follow His commands and express a deep sense of love for His plan and purpose for the earth over anything we would seek for ourselves. When we prayerfully put God's priorities first, He hears and responds to our requests.

3. Our Petition to God:

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Matt 6:11). After we consider the things of God, we may present our requests to the LORD, whether we are praying for ourselves or interceding on behalf of another. Here we let God know our concerns. And we should note the selflessness when Jesus petitioned. He appropriately asked his Father for what was needful and necessary.

The Lord's prayer encompasses all the necessary elements of a prayer. It teaches us to address, worship, and acknowledge our Creator and His desires. We are guided to make requests and humbly confess our faults to our Heavenly Father. We are also taught to forgive others if we expect to be forgiven.

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

God will hear our prayers if we have faith and try to follow in His ways. We also need to be in the right frame of mind for God to hear our prayers. We



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in different ways.*

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must align our intentions, desires and motives with the will of our Heavenly Father. We learn about God's ways by studying His Word. He will not hear the prayers of those who ignore His Word: *"If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."* (Prov 28:9 ESV).

The Old Testament states God occasionally refused to hear the prayers of Israel because of their wickedness: *"I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood."* (Isa 1:15 ESV).

As we have learned from God's relationship with Israel and His Son, we must pray in accordance with God's will. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, *"not my will, but yours, be done."* (Luke 22:42 ESV). God's Son yielded to his Father's desires. And as followers of Christ,

we should pray similarly—according to God's will. God wants His children to pray for things that benefit them spiritually. The Apostle John wrote, *"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us."* (1 John 5:14 ESV).

Additionally, when we pray, we need faith to believe God not only hears our prayers but has the power and desire to answer them.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." (Jas 1:5-6 ESV).

However, even if we pray with faith, this does not mean God will

automatically give us everything we ask for. Our Heavenly Father does not take away all of our life's problems. But if we pray in the right manner, He will hear us and answer in helpful ways for us to spiritually grow and develop more Christ-like characters—thus better preparing us for His Kingdom.

GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS

God answers our prayers in different ways. We must have confidence He knows what is best for us. Sometimes, He grants a request after making us wait. Isaac prayed but had to patiently wait for his sons to be born (Gen 25:20-26). Other times, God disciplines us, but we can benefit and learn from His chastening (Heb 12:6), and thus be spiritually refined as purged gold—*“We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* (Rom 8:28 ESV).

God loves and cares for those who sincerely seek Him, and we must believe whatever happens to us is because God is working in our lives for our good. We should therefore ask in faith, praying God's will be done—not ours, knowing that only God can truly help us.

David said, *“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”* (Psa 34:15). God can direct believers through controlled circumstances requiring great faith. Sometimes, it is only through hindsight we can understand and fully appreciate how God has answered our prayers.

A good example is Daniel who prayed to Yahweh three times a day despite the decree by King Darius that threatened


those who petitioned any other than himself. But God heard Daniel, and when he was cast into the lion's den, God stopped the mouths of the lions—all because of Daniel's faith, obedience and trust in Yahweh.

Hannah also prayed to the LORD and wept in bitterness because God had shut her womb. She faced cruel provocation and cried out to the LORD for help in her affliction. Hannah vowed if the LORD opened her womb, she would give God the child as a Nazirite. Because she had faith and was fervent in prayer, the Almighty opened her womb, and she gave birth to Samuel.

Lastly, we remember God's Son reaching out to his Heavenly Father for the strength to endure. As the epitome of selflessness, he prayed, *“Father if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42). Jesus understood he must perfectly obey the task ahead to fulfill his Father's will and bring about salvation for a world in desperate need.

Jesus spent much time communicating with his Father, sometimes praying all night (Luke 6:12). Paul says believers should *“pray without ceasing.”* (1 Thess 5:17). Prayer is Yahweh's designed way for all people to communicate with Him. When we pray reverently and fervently, we get blessings from God and receive the fruit of our faithfulness, if He wills.

*Nigel Small,
(Moorestown, NJ)*



ALL ONE IN CHURCH PART 7 JEWS

By Carmel Page

THE sacred books of the Bible illuminate the history, culture and future of the Jewish people. Because of our love of the Scriptures, Christadelphians embrace this heritage and are motivated to think favorably of the Jewish people. We know they are God's chosen people; consequently, we follow their affairs with great interest, especially through the lens of the Bible. But are we always respectful of Jews, and do we know as much about them as we think we do? How can our ecclesias think about these people in an open and inclusive manner?

The Jewish people are an ethno-religious group who defy exact definition. Their origins are known: Jews come from the Hebrews of the past, but nowadays, some people are born Jewish while others convert to Judaism. Orthodox conversion is very different from more liberal Jewish conversions. It is generally accepted that anyone with a Jewish mother is Jewish, but this doesn't have a strong Biblical basis and may not be how

God defines Jews. There is no single definition.

Although some Jews, particularly Orthodox, have a very distinctive dress code, they do not have a characteristic look. This makes it impossible to tell if we have Jews in our midst. Because we may have Jewish members or visitors at any service, nothing said should be insensitive.

Anyone speaking about Jews needs to define which group of Jews they mean. For example, the term Jews should not be used when discussing religious Jews because many Jews are secular. Nor should Jews be used when Ashkenazi Jews (those of the European Diaspora) are being talked about. Without a precise definition, there is the risk of misinformation and offense. About 20% of Israelis are not Jewish, so the terms are not interchangeable. The secular government of Israel should not be confused with a religious organization. The Knesset upholds causes that are not supported by many

of their citizens and are far from what we believe in.

News reports of racial abuse, national disasters and wars are always distressing, especially for those with loved ones involved. However, when we hear news from the Middle East or of anti-Semitism, we may feel some excitement that prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes. It is dehumanizing for people at the epicenter of a disaster to know that others are elated because of their situation. Their needs will be for practical help and compassion. When you hear of distressing events, you can express your belief that what happened is wrong and that their community is not to blame. Do not ask questions, just offer support. This advice applies to any targeted group, not just Jews. Compassion is an act of Christian love and needs to be expressed before excitement becomes appropriate.

If you wish to avoid disrespect toward the Jewish community, everything said about Jews should be both accurate and sensitive. These are some misconceptions and misused phrases to consider:

- Holocaust comes from a word meaning “burnt offering” and so implies a sacrifice to God. This idea is problematic because of the implication that it was what God wanted. While most people currently use the word “Holocaust” in reference to the mass murder of more than 6 million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe between 1939 and 1945, Jews tend to prefer *Shoah* (“destruction”). It is respectful to say the “Holocaust or *Shoah*,” at least upon first discussion. Many

Jews also prefer to use the word “*Churban*” to describe “catastrophe or destruction.”

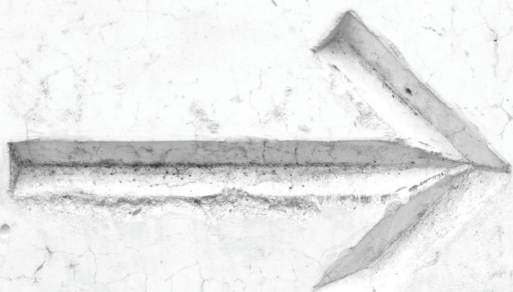
- Mentioning Hitler is likely to be traumatic or upsetting for Jews and shouldn’t be necessary during a Bible talk. I have heard him portrayed as an angelic host sent by God to punish Jews and arrange their return to the Holy Lands. This treatment is extremely offensive. We can only look at the deeds of Hitler in a negative light. Surely God would have been able to arrange this mass-emigration himself if it had not happened as it did!?
- Images of piles of naked, dead Jews have been used as evidence of Bible prophecy—showing disrespect for both the victims and Jews alive today. Great sensitivity needs to be exercised when displaying such pictures. The extreme wrongdoing of the perpetrators and the innocence of the victims should always be mentioned. Otherwise, we can create an emotional disconnect from the Jewish community where their suffering becomes perceived as a positive event. Many survivors still experience mental illness as a consequence, and their families may also be deeply affected.
- It is no longer true that all Jewish boys are circumcised. Some families skip the ritual as part of a modern movement.
- It is untrue that Jews always eat lamb at Passover; every Jewish community has its own traditions. Beef brisket is more common, although a lamb bone is often placed on the table.

- Jews and Arabs do not all hate each other. There can be mistrust between them, but many are working for peace and would be offended to have their views misrepresented.
- People say God gave Jews high intelligence. On testing, Ashkenazi Jews average slightly higher IQ in certain areas but slightly lower in others. As this only affects Ashkenazim, it seems unlikely to date back to Old Testament times. Emphasizing what we all have in common is more important than highlighting minor differences which may cause alienation or misunderstanding.
- “Jewess” is an offensive and hurtful term. We wouldn’t describe a sister as a “Christadelphianess.” Our women have full status as Christadelphians, and we do not label them as a subgroup. While Jewess is a Biblical word, modern translations tend to use “Jewish woman.” (Acts 16:1).
- Jews refer to their head-coverings for prayer as a *yarmulke* or *kippah*, not a “skullcap.”
- “Gentile” is a Biblical word not in common usage today. A general rule for defining groups is to use the language which they use themselves. I know of no one who self-defines as “gentile.” For this reason, the name should not refer to people alive now. “Non-Jews” is a more appropriate term.
- Jews normally call their place of worship “*Shul*” or “*Temple*.” This is similar to us saying “hall” or “meeting room,” not “church.” “Synagogue” is the correct word, but its sole use shows a lack of understanding of Jewish Culture.

You may wonder how I know these things, so it feels appropriate to explain that I am Jewish (by the definition of having a Jewish mother). I don’t feel this makes me any different from any other Christadelphian; we are all sinners unworthy of God’s grace. We all know, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal 3:28).

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LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

By Dalton Henley

THE previous year brought new, unexpected challenges to our lives, affecting our individual and collective faith practices in ways no one could have predicted. As we reflect on 2020 and move forward in this new year, here are ten thoughts with a Biblical perspective regarding humanity in general, the ecclesia and ourselves. Hopefully, we can take away some action items from these thoughts to help us grow in our faith and become more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

ADAPTABILITY

We were all put in a horrible situation for a far longer time than we initially imagined. This virus has taken an immeasurable toll—death, sickness, job loss, isolation and mental challenges. Yet, despite the difficulties, here we are, enduring. If you had known what you would have to endure for the last 12 months or more, you may not have thought you could do it. Maybe,

just maybe, you're getting through it better than you might have thought. I believe God gave us the beautiful gift of adaptability: we can adjust to our circumstances much better than we think. Consider this inspirational passage: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Phil 4:13).

WORRY

We consume ourselves with worry, yet it seems it's the things we never saw coming that hurt the most. Before the pandemic struck, you probably were not fretting about a worldwide plague ravaging the whole world. We live in an unpredictable world. Events will transpire that are beyond our thought process or control. Spending time consumed in worry is not only useless, but it doesn't make much sense. To paraphrase former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, "It's not the known unknowns that should trouble us, but the unknown unknowns."

Christ tells us, *“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”* (Matt 6:34 NIV). Take this to heart. Challenges will arise, and when they do, by God’s grace, we will deal with them. Take on what’s at hand, and leave the challenges of tomorrow for tomorrow, for who knows what tomorrow will bring?

GRATITUDE

Always, always, always be grateful for what you have! Did you ever stop and think about how thankful you are to be able to go to concerts, weddings, ecclesial events, school, work, parties, restaurants, friend’s houses, vacations and travel on planes freely without any concern? Truly there is nothing to be taken for granted in our lives. Thank God daily for what you’ve been given: *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* (1 Thess 5:18 NIV). Like Jonah’s shade, we never know when what we have, no matter how small, might be taken from us.

TRUST

Simply put, don’t put your trust in this world. We have witnessed world leaders flounder as they attempt to control the virus and its outcomes. Politicians have fought bitterly over prevention methods and how to provide economic relief to those who have been financially harmed. Our health care systems have been brought to their knees at times as

the sick have swamped them. Should we really put our trust in man’s world? *“It is better to trust in God than put confidence in man.”* (Psa 118:8).

DIVISION

2020 was a year of increased division in society. For example, in the U.S. there were contentions over handling of the pandemic, responses to protests over racial injustice and a contentious political election. Sadly, this has sometimes spilled over into our Faith community.

There will always be something that can divide us. We can choose to be consumed by divisive matters and allow them to drive us apart, or we can seek to have unity of spirit whenever possible. Consider other perspectives, have humility and develop a forgiving attitude. *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* (Eph 4:3 NIV).

DICHOTOMY

Human beings are capable of the greatest things and the lowest things. We live in an incredible world where humanity has accomplished near unimaginable progress in many fields. Yet we have been confounded by the problem of the spread of a tiny virus when the solutions are as simple as this: wash your hands, cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze, wear a mask and keep an appropriate distance from others.

There will always be something that can divide us. We can choose to be consumed by divisive matters and allow them to drive us apart, or we can seek to have unity of spirit whenever possible.

The species that created multiple vaccines to combat the virus in less than one year, something unprecedented in terms of the number of vaccines and the short amount of research and development time, is the same species that has spread nonsensical conspiracy theories, been hoodwinked by fallacies and, at times, been engaged in extremely foolish and selfish behavior.

Let us appreciate that, through the gift of God, we are capable of almost unlimited possibilities. At the same time, let us have the humility to recognize that we will fall so woefully low at other times, in many areas: *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Rom 3:23). *“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”* (2 Cor 9:8).

TIME

We all want more time. Well, this past year has most likely given us more time. For some, it's a little. For others, it's a lot. Now we can look back and reflect on how we've used this extra time. It's natural to feel that we may have squandered the extra time. We tend to not be particularly good with extra time, and in most instances, it really isn't time holding us back. It's our misplaced priorities that cause many problems. This year has reinforced the importance of developing good habits. We are going to have habits one way or the other, so make them good ones. Our

minds have a way of subtly snatching any extra time right from under our noses. *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”* (Eph 5:15-16 ESV).

WEAKNESSES

Most of us have been attending ecclesial events virtually (Zoom) for the past year. It's an interesting social experiment, because attending virtual ecclesial events could not be more convenient. Sunday service, Bible class, Bible reading groups, fraternal gatherings, CYC events, all available instantly and from anywhere. You simply open your electronic device. It's wonderful to observe instances where members are taking advantage of this convenience and attending things they might not have if they were in-person. Yet the same struggles may still plague us: being late, regularly attending, even leaving in the middle of events. Maybe we wanted to be punctual for events or participate in more events. Now it could not possibly be easier to do just that.

We will always struggle with our weaknesses, because the answer is usually not changing the circumstances. Rather, we can overcome by intentionally seeking to change our thoughts and actions. If we place our trust in God's power to change us, we can succeed.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you

may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom 12:2 ESV).

“GOD-WILLING”

We have all experienced unexpected changes this past year. God is in control; we are not. We would do well to remember that. While we may be anxious to have circumstances turn out our way, it can actually be quite a relief to know we don’t have to control everything to achieve our desired outcome.

“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” (Psa 139:7-10 ESV).

DESIRE

Where there’s a will, there’s a way. It has been uplifting to witness how people have been serving God and others. In these unusual times, there is always something we can be doing to worship God, support fellow believers and spread the gospel!

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet 1:10-11 NIV)

*Dalton Henley
(Sacramento, CA)*

Baptism is
God’s vaccination
against the pandemic
of mortality.



www.theseventhday.com.au

By Kristin Atwood

I had the pleasure of interviewing a few of the members of “*The Seventh Day*” group. They have produced a large collection of spiritual music for our community. Their music’s lyrics are incredibly powerful and uplifting. The recordings are high quality so that there are no distractions, which makes it easy to uplifted spiritually to connect with our Heavenly Father in prayer.

“*The Seventh Day*” is a non-profit organization, focused on the production and distribution of music projects created by Christadelphian brothers and sisters for both personal meditation and wider use within the community, where suitable. Lyrics are Bible-based, with music that complements the words by giving expression to the many aspects of spiritual life and the challenges of godly living. The current contributors to the music and distribution include James

and Charlotte DiLiberto, Phil Rosser, Nathan Coad, Jarrod and Abi Edgcombe, Steph Tappouras, Timon Burney, Luke Jurevicius, Aletheia Burney.” (*theseventhday.com.au*).

Why the name *The Seventh Day*?

PHIL ROSSER: It was really a spur-of-the-moment call. When we look at Creation, we look at God’s creative work, over six days and we have the seventh day which was a day of rest. It wasn’t meant to be a day of rest for His creation; it was a day which His creation would actually do the work of God as Jesus went on to highlight in his ministry. The seventh day is really a continuation of the idea that God has created so many beautiful things for our enjoyment and to display His glory and *The Seventh Day* is really the opportunity to reflect that glory and present offerings to Him through praise and worship and creative means. The theme of *The Seventh Day* is about that

reflection of God's glory in Creation, with music and poetry, and giving that back to each other and God and Christ.

How has the music you've produced impacted the worldwide brotherhood so far and what do you hope it will do in the future?

ALETHEIA BURNEY: James uses the phrase "to bridge the head and the heart." To me, that's what music does and does really powerfully. It is a communication tool and a storyteller, and not only in the narrative sense either. The story can be a story of heartbreak, of love, of praise, of thanks. It can even be a one-word story, but it still tells that story if it's doing its job

effectively. I think when you bring that into the spiritual realm and into worship music, that's when it really shows those qualities most powerfully in allowing people to connect to what they're hearing and what they're feeling and in both an individual and also in a group setting. It connects us together as people, and that's really important. It's been really important this year since we've not been able to be physically together in a lot of parts of the world. Music is something that can connect you and take you back to a certain time in your life powerfully. We all have songs on our timeline, the timelines of our life, that we hear the song, and we are instantly taken back there. One of the things that have been powerful is the way that some of our songs have integrated into people's lives. There's a weird kind of distant intimacy when someone tells you that they made your song into the alarm that they wake up to in the morning! To be ingrained in people's lives through music is pretty incredible. It's a pretty amazing sort of faith builder. Having global impact through music is wonderful.

JAMES DiLIBERTO:

I remember the first email I got from an older sister, whom I had never met. She wrote me this email and she said, "I just want to thank you for recording all of this music and putting it out there because you have turned my mundane



day-to-day housework into a worship experience.” I think I forwarded it to everybody and said, “We need to keep doing this.” When we put out “*Children of the Promise*” and the “*Good News of the Kingdom*” finally got out there, I would get text messages and *WhatsApp* messages, and email messages. I’d have 20 versions of mothers with their phone in the car and recording their children, belting out “Jesus will be King over all of the Earth, glory, hallelujah!” I remember just thinking how many moms right now are thankful that their kids, instead of singing Playschool and Raffi, are singing about the Kingdom. You now can walk into a camp and you hear someone singing one of Aletheia’s songs with an instrumental arrangement from Timon, with the lyrical tweaking from Phil and the recording and production of Luke. We never met these people before, and this music is now being used at a Bible School or a Conference. It is definitely humbling. We want resources to be given to our community that don’t have a copyright that doesn’t have to be paid for. We want to provide this resource for the community. As far as the financials, all this music, and at least up until the last couple of years, was self-funded, any money that we received was used and is still being used. You can go on our website and look at the projects that we support. We actually want this to put music and instruments into the hands of people that are the next generation. So, a lot of the funding has been used for buying equipment. And we’re also providing mentoring over the last couple of months. We recently ran some online mentoring for a whole

bunch of teenagers in Australia. They would come on for two hours at a time, asking, “How do I record? What’s the best piano I should get? Please provide me with some tips. Here are some of my demos. Does this song have any legs?” I guess that’s another big part of what *The Seventh Day* is doing. We want to pass it on. [Be]cause that’s what happened to all of us. So now we’re paying it forward. And although we are using some of the funding to increase quality, the vast majority of it goes to other things now.

Do you have a favorite song that has been produced?

PHIL ROSSER: For me, sometimes it’s not even necessarily the song itself. It’s when it was written, the context around when it was written, the things that were going on in our lives and in the lives of others. It was when we recorded it. It was when it was played or done together at an event like a conference or a study week. I think one of the things that Aletheia touched on was that music has this unique ability to transport people in time, back to a moment in a similar way that other senses, like smell, have these really strong attachments to memories... I guess what made this powerful for me personally in songs like “*Here at Last*,” with Tim on the strings arrangements and how the recordings were done in a couple of different locations with different people. That song also has a strong connection with the time that I spent in South Africa. So, there are so many different layers of why that song is strong. It has a strong memory for me.

ALETHEIA BURNEY: I think there are moments in the songs where, because we're not a band and we don't rehearse, we sort of turn up in the studio in front of a microphone or an instrument and see what happens. A lot of the time the arrangements are happening as we're doing them. The harmony that you had never thought of before just happens and it makes the song work. Those kinds of points in the various songs are some of my favorite things. It is the whole experience of making music, from an idea or from a quote or from a life event, through to something that is its own entity in a way. That process is extremely rewarding and inspirational to see it unfolding and to have the privilege and the blessing of having this collaborative circle.

JAMES DiLIBERTO: A lot of my favorites are the ones that are at the ends of the albums and in the nooks and the crannies that aren't the ones that are sung at the conferences. I guess that's something that I hope to encourage people. Don't be a music consumer. Really sink your teeth into what we're producing. You might just find yourself surprised at how it moves you in your heart.

What would you say to the next generation to encourage them to create, produce, and perform spiritual music?

ALETHEIA BURNEY: You did ask for advice for a younger generation, but there also needs to be space to allow it to happen. So perhaps that's advice for the people of our age and older generations. Not every song is appropriate for every occasion. Within your ecclesias and within your CYC, whatever it is to allow the opportunity

for new music to occur because there is a sort of spiky process of having to learn a song before everyone can sing it. That's been a good thing, I guess, about *The Seventh Day* in providing resources having recorded music. It means that a lot of people more organically get to know it rather than sitting down and being taught or learning or reading off sheet music. Have a place where people can share what they're feeling through music. Maybe they're in compositions or a version of a song and to be open to introducing new music and different types of music. Particularly if it's a piece that someone has written themselves because they're giving you a part of themselves by doing that. It's something that has come from the heart and I think probably, historically, something that I didn't experience growing up in my sort of ecclesial culture, and that might be different in different parts of the world. I think that's an important thing, and that is something that the ecclesia that Tim and I went to when we were sort of in our teenage years and early twenties. They were good at providing occasions when new music could be part of the worship and part of the CYC and something that we could all kind of participate in.

TIMON BURNEY: We had "variety nights" at the ecclesia. I think it was once a month or once a quarter, the format of the public lecture in the evening to be a variety of different mediums on a theme. One Sunday was a themed meeting where there were talks and readings, but they might be a little bit shorter than usual and there'd be more opportunity for music. More people were asked to contribute things in a more creative way. So, it wasn't completely scrapping standard ecclesial

activities and things or completely radical. It was having the space to focus on a theme and be a bit more creative. It was departing from just the standard “stand and deliver.” The type of content delivery was very helpful to explore and it required some trust between people to give them a bit of model license. It didn’t end up in any bad experiences. It was very positive.

ALETHEIA BURNEY: I guess advice for a younger generation of people, or just anyone would be to learn to play an instrument. Don’t think that you can’t. I certainly never intended to write a song and didn’t even think about it for a long time. I wasn’t writing songs as a kid or anything like that. Just give it a go. You know the music that you like, and I guess for me, my yardstick of whether it’s a good song or not is if I want to listen to it, even if I’m the only person that ever listens to it. There are definitely a few songs I’ve written that fall in that category that haven’t yet made their way into the wide world. I think it’s still beneficial. It’s still something. You’ll know that’s it’s a good one or not, and probably your first one isn’t going to be a good one. You can play it to someone, and they might say, “Oh, change this bit. Or how about if you did that?” And then you find the people around you that you can learn together with them and develop your skills together and then if you get to a point where you want to record something, get in touch with us. We’ll find fun people and you’ll find people in your area as well.

JAMES DiLIBERTO: We’ve tended to be very safe. If I had to give a piece of advice, I’d say it’s very safe to put the

Bible to music. That’s very safe. And what I’m seeing in the most powerful songs now that I think are coming out is people are being informed by the Bible, which gives us a structure and a framework and boundaries of where we go. But when you look at the songs, they swing a lot further in terms of their expression and reaction and honesty to God that has really given us permission to go to some places that we don’t have a lot of music in our community for. Examples would be mourning and being kind of mad at God and not knowing what’s going on. And we have some songs that are coming out now from some of these new latest sorts of songwriters. And I think that’s a piece of advice I have. I had a lot of them, but I didn’t dare record them and show them to anyone. They were too personal. It was too, too close. And as Aletheia mentioned, it’s really risky to share because if somebody doesn’t get what you were trying to say, or somebody criticizes it. You feel like that was my heart on a plate that just got crushed. It takes a lot for people to put their feelings out there into our community. But I think if our community really does try not to be consumeristic like pop music is, and really look for depth and meaning and authenticity, it will help people be able to get that out. More people will find that it’s a very healing process. So, I think being more honest. My piece of advice for people in writing: Write it, get it out there. Don’t be afraid to put your music out and share it. I think in the company of mentors it will shape.

*Kristin Atwood,
(Verdugo Hills, CA)*

Ancient Jewish Wedding

A Type of Marriage Feast of the Lamb and His Bride

Father and/or son selects a prospective bride.
(John 6:65, John 15:19)

Son declares the price he is willing to pay
for the bride.
(John 10:15, 1 Cor 6:20)

Prospective bride and groom make a covenant promise
of betrothal and drink a cup of wine.
(Matt 26:27,28)

Groom pays the price.
(Mark 15:25)

Groom departs to father's house.
(Acts 1:9)

Prepares a place (house) for his bride.
(John 14:2)

Father declares when house is ready and groom can return for his bride.
(Matt 24:36)

Bride waits with oil lamps ready.
(Matt 25:1)

Groom comes with great fanfare at night.
(Matt 24:27)

Groom takes bride to a house prepared.
(1Thess 4:17)

Bride and groom come out to the guests and have a marriage supper.
(Rev 19:9)

John Pursell, Southern Oregon, OR



*Sadly, Bro. John feel asleep in Christ soon after this
submission. We pray his sleep will be short.*



AVOIDING BIAS (PART 3)

By Richard Morgan

A common situation comes up when talking to someone from another church about a fundamental Bible topic. For example, let's say you're looking at the devil and Satan. Your adversary (no pun intended) believes in a supernatural devil. They read passages like Zechariah 3 and Revelation 12 and say, "See, it's clear—the devil is a supernatural being!" You, however, don't believe in a supernatural devil. You read the exact same passages and say, "See, it's clear—the devil is not a supernatural being!"

Both, reading the same passages through their particular lens, are satisfied with their interpretation. Therefore, the conversation reaches an impasse.

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Each person in this scenario reads Scripture through a lens constructed by their religious perspective, whether that is Christadelphian or orthodox Christian. It's challenging to avoid placing that lens in front of the passage that you're reading, in the same way that it's challenging to avoid comprehending a sentence written in your first language when you look at it. Somehow, we need to make a new lens, one that removes bias brought on by our preconceived ideas, to the best of our ability. Yes, that's a tall order and requires spiritual integrity that we genuinely are searching for truth and not just going with the Christadelphian status quo. We ask our Christian

The majority of religious thought throughout the centuries has been shaped by creedal dogma.

We Christadelphians are no different.

friends to do that when preaching to them; it behooves us to do the same.

The first hurdle we need to get over is the feeling we sometimes have that the true gospel is founded on sand. It isn't; it's built on the eternal rock of God's faithfulness. There is no power strong enough to batter that truth down, so don't be afraid of approaching Scripture with an open mind. If what we Christadelphians preach is correct or incorrect, it will be manifested, and there won't be anything that will contradict it.

Second, that spiritual integrity mentioned before needs to be at the forefront of our search for truth. It's one thing to open Scripture with an open mind; it's another thing to play devil's advocate or purposefully label yourself as a maverick. That can quickly turn into **wanting** to show Christadelphians are wrong about something.

Third, we must be prepared to put in some hard work. One thing I like to

say to Trinitarians is, "That's great you believe in the Trinity. It took the Church Fathers several hundred years to come up with it. How long did you spend studying?" Of course, we don't have time to reinvent the wheel and do what someone like John Thomas did and spend our whole lives searching for the true gospel. In many ways, we stand on the shoulders of giants. But that's only a good thing if we understand that our Pioneer brethren's true heritage is their appetite for truth.

The majority of religious thought throughout the centuries has been shaped by creedal dogma. We Christadelphians are no different. So, challenge yourself to try to put aside your biased lens and construct a new one made with the intellectual honesty and integrity of someone who genuinely wants to know what is true and right.

*Richard Morgan,
(Simi Hills, CA)*



...we must be
prepared to put in
some hard work.

EVERYONE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES (PART 3)

By Neil Robin

AS we saw last time, chapters 17 and 18 of Judges show how Israel's religious practices had become corrupted or "Canaanized," perhaps only a generation or two after entering the land. This time we'll begin to consider how Judges 19-21 show that, as a result, the ethical and moral values of the people were no longer based on anything God said but only on what seemed right in their own eyes. We'll also consider several ways in which the same thing could so easily happen in our lives.

Chapter 19 introduces us to the two principal characters of this part of the account: a wandering Levite and his concubine. We are not told their names—in fact, we are not told the names of any of the individuals who appear in chapters 19 to 21. This may suggest that the ungodly attitudes and behavior we read about were not confined to these individuals alone but were widespread in the Israelite community.

It may also suggest that the author of Judges intended to emphasize the "dehumanization" of Israelite culture: as their society grew more and more like Canaan's, individual people (mainly women, as we will see in these chapters) ceased to matter or have value as children of God made in his image and began to be seen as little more than objects for pleasure or convenience.

Daniel I. Block, professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, sums up the situation like this: "Because Israel refuses to acknowledge Yahweh as king, the nation lacks a theological reason for not sinking to the ethical level of the Canaanites at the personal, tribal, and national levels"¹ Although this people claims to be the people of Yahweh, their conduct and their consequent fate contradict this claim.

In chapter 19, we see that the concubine has left her husband the Levite and returned to her father's house. We are not told why she left him or on which

side of the relationship the fault lay. Was she unfaithful to him, perhaps working as a prostitute on the side? Or was she attempting to flee an abusive relationship? Whatever the reason, in verse 3, he went after her, apparently genuinely seeking reconciliation, and she seemed happy enough to welcome him into her father's house.

It should be noted that this will be the last time in the account that this woman will take an active role. From this point on, she will play an entirely passive role, with all of the decisions and actions affecting her being taken by the men, who do not consult her at any point. This should not surprise us, for in a patriarchal society such as Israel at the time of the judges, a woman would be expected to take the submissive role. While the writer does not appear to be criticizing patriarchal society *per se*, this passage does emphasize the horrors that can take place in such societies if the men in charge treat women as inferiors, or worse, as mere objects, instead of taking seriously their responsibility to respect, protect and provide for them.

Block describes it as “a social system in which men rule over women in the worst sense of the phrase and sacrifice them for their own interests rather than providing responsible leadership and sacrificing themselves for the best interests of women”²

Leadership within the ecclesia or the family is about self-sacrificial care and provision (Eph 5:25). It is not about getting to rule or dominate the ecclesia or force obedience from those for whom we are responsible. We are one family in Christ, and all of us should feel the same sense of loyalty and affection

to all of our brothers and sisters, not just those who are our biological family or close friends. Israel, in Judges 19-21, had forgotten that. In these chapters, we see time and again that, with God's authority ignored and everyone doing what was right in his own eyes, there was no social cohesion, nothing to hold the twelve tribes together as a single family.

Social degradation inevitably leads to moral degradation, as we shall see. When we no longer respect or value people as individuals made in God's image and with the potential to be his children, our treatment of them will inevitably grow worse. When we begin to see people from other countries or backgrounds or ethnicities as different or inferior to ourselves, that sense of familial loyalty and affection will be lost.

We may find ourselves ignoring their needs and cries for help, or using them for what they can give us and then abandoning them once our needs are met, or exploiting them in some way for our pleasure or benefit.

This is illustrated most horrifically for us in the account of what happened in Gibeah. The tragic irony is that the Levite ignored his servant's suggestion to spend the night in Jebus since he expected they would receive a better welcome in an Israelite town than a Canaanite one. On the surface of it, this might seem a sensible enough decision. If you were to find yourself in an unfamiliar place, needing somewhere to spend the night and without enough money for a hotel, would you feel safer in the home of an unbeliever or the home of a brother and sister in Christ?

The Levite did not appear to be aware

of the extent to which the culture and moral values of Canaan had taken over the Israelite people. Having said that, the requirement to show hospitality to visiting strangers was not unique to Israel. It was common through the Ancient Near East. Perhaps we see here another example of people who were supposed to be faithful to God having rejected him so entirely that they had sunk even lower than the entirely godless people around them (see, e.g., 2 Chr 33:9). The human mind which has been exposed to the mind of Christ but has then decided to reject him completely may find itself, as a result, sinking into a deeper and darker place than it would have done if it had never encountered Christ in the first place (see, e.g., 2 Pet 2:17-22; Heb 6:4-8). The Levite and his party may have been better off going to Jebus!

We would naturally expect better treatment from our brothers and sisters than we would expect from people in the world. Yet, we cannot automatically assume that taking the name “brother/sister in Christ” makes us inherently better than anyone else. Our attitude and behavior and treatment of others will only be better than that of the world if it is based on Jesus and what he taught, and if we continually seek to transform ourselves to become more like him. Suppose we rely on our self-identity as “brother/sister in Christ” and assume our moral superiority to everyone else, yet follow our own hearts and do what’s right in our own eyes. In that case, we won’t treat people any better than the world does.

On arrival in Gibeah, it quickly became apparent that its inhabitants felt no

Our attitude and behavior and treatment of others will only be better than that of the world if it is based on Jesus and what he taught, and if we continually seek to transform ourselves to become more like him.



sense of loyalty to those outside their tribe or city. Despite the lateness of the hour, the Levite and his party were utterly ignored. To our eyes, that may seem rude or unkind, yet in that culture, it would have been seen as a shocking lack of even the most basic common decency. An entire city of people had sunk to the level of not even meeting the world's standards of behavior, let alone God's.

We should pause to consider whether the same attitude can be found in our own hearts. Do we truly see ourselves as part of a worldwide family in Christ, or have we become divided into different groups and factions? Are our loyalty and our religion concerned only with the interests of our local ecclesia and the people in it? Or the people in our

social clique or biological family? Do we let family or "tribal" loyalty take priority over the fellowship we should feel for all of our brothers and sisters regardless of nationality, social class or race?

The Levite and his party were finally taken in for the night, not by anyone of Gibeah, but by another outsider, an Ephraimite who happened to be temporarily living there. Did his status as an outsider make him feel more inclined to look out for them? Might that tell us something about those who are more likely to look out for the needs of the marginalized and abused in our midst? Do we tend to look inwards at our own interests and concerns or outwards at those who are seeking help?

Block explains it like this: "He insists that whatever they do, these travelers must not spend the night in the city square. The old man does not say why. Since this is a walled city, they should be safe from outsiders, but as a resident alien he has learned that the problem is inside. He knows the ways of the citizens of Gibeah all too well."³ While it may seem obvious to look at the world and see the evil and the darkness of people's hearts and keep ourselves away from it, are we equally watchful for instances of the same darkness within our midst?

Verses 22-30 have several similarities with the story of Sodom in Genesis 19. This is not accidental. Sodom was no doubt used as a byword for the utmost depravity which deserved destruction from God. Here the writer makes the point that an Israelite town has sunk to the same level. Do they deserve any better from God than Sodom did? Interestingly enough, we are told very little of God's thoughts or reaction to



Do we tend to look inwards at our own interests and concerns or outwards at those who are seeking help?

the events of Judges 19. Perhaps this is because the Israelites had ceased asking him or even thinking about him.

As the men of Gibeah surrounded the house, demanding that the Levite be handed over to satisfy their lusts, the old man stood up to them. He denounced their evil behavior, both in their refusal to show hospitality and their demands to have illicit sexual relations with the Levite. At first, he may appear to have been a faithful man making a stand for godly principles, yet his noble words didn't last long. In his efforts to protect the Levite, he offered up the concubine and his own daughter as a sacrifice in his place.

Even he was only doing what was right in his own eyes. His interest lay not in defending God's principles but only in protecting his male guest and his honor as a host. These vulnerable women, whose only hope of protection lay with him, were entirely expendable for that end. In Genesis 19, Lot made essentially the same offer to the men of Sodom.

We likewise can look at the world around us and see much that is vile and depraved, such as modern Western society's obsession with sex, money, power and other vices. We would hopefully consider ourselves to be separate from that world. Yet when that world makes demands of us, how do we respond?

Would you offer up your own spouse or child to save your own skin? Perhaps not. But are there

other situations in which you would be prepared to sacrifice or compromise the physical or spiritual wellbeing of those for whom you are responsible?

Would you be prepared to let the world pour ungodly ideas into your children's heads if refusing to allow it would get you into trouble? Would you be prepared to neglect your family's spiritual needs to agree to extra demands at work?

Would you be prepared to sacrifice either principle or people to maintain your reputation, either within the meeting or at work, or in your local community?

Like the old man in this passage, we may be so worried about "honor" and reputation that we end up doing some fairly dishonorable acts. Why pursue or try to maintain a reputation that our thoughts and actions don't justify? To what lengths are we prepared to go to give other people a perception of ourselves which is very different from who we are inside?

The world around us will apply pressure for us to be what it considers "good Christians," that is, people who do good deeds and care for the needy while keeping our mouths shut on what the Bible says about the way humans ought to behave. Will we give in to that pressure, or will we instead pursue what God considers "good Christians" to be?

It's unclear which of the two men threw the

Like the old man in this passage, we may be so worried about "honor" and reputation that we end up doing some fairly dishonorable acts. Why pursue or try to maintain a reputation that our thoughts and actions don't justify?

concubine out to the men of Gibeah. In most English translations, the text reads “the man.” Either way, the Levite did not protest and is not recorded as showing any concern for her safety. In the morning, he “rose up,” which may suggest he did not have much trouble sleeping despite what was happening to her.

In the morning, his lack of concern continued, as he simply demanded she get up so they can continue on their way. It was only when he realized she was dead that he seemed to begin caring (or perhaps it was even worse than that—one commentary suggests that the text is ambiguous over the question of whether she was already dead when he found her or whether he, finding her disfigured, but still living, body to be no longer attractive to him, finished her off himself).

Having left Gibeah and returned to his own home, he divided up her body and sent the pieces to the twelve tribes, calling for justice to be done to the perpetrators of this great moral outrage. However, the question must be asked: was he outraged at what had been done to an innocent woman or at the offense against himself and his honor?

What about us? Are we more likely to feel outrage and a thirst for justice when we see innocent people worse off than ourselves treated appallingly? Or are we only motivated to demand justice when we are in some way affected by it? Perhaps, like the Levite, we should sometimes be prepared to ask ourselves if some of the terrible injustices around

the world could have been mitigated or avoided if we’d proactively done something to help people in need when we had a chance, rather than just reactively protest when it was too late.

Human beings who are struggling to process their inner guilt can often project it into an expression of anger towards wrongs done by others. Sometimes a person who cannot bring themselves to admit their fault and confess it to others will double down on their accusations and demand punishment towards someone else who was part of the same problem. Is that something you ever find yourself doing?

Chapter 19 ends with “*all who saw*” one of the dismembered parts of the woman’s body, declaring that “*such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day.*” (Judg 19:30). While this may seem an appropriate reaction from godly people to something so evil in their midst, notice that they make no mention of God. People loyal to God and mindful of his covenant would have been more likely to say, “from the day that the LORD God brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.”

Next time we’ll examine in more detail their response to the Levite’s cry for justice and consider what this means for us and how we respond to times of crisis or acts of great evil.

Neil Robin,
(Wardley, UK)

1 Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, Publishers, 1999), from the New American Commentary series. Pages 521-522. 2 *ibid.* Page 543. 3 *ibid.* Pages 531-532.

THE BIBLE AND FOOD

PART 1

*“Oh, taste and see that
the lord is good!”*

By Lorna Dean

WE read the Psalmist’s lovely words and straightaway turn our Bible pages to follow where the spiritual lessons from these verses lead. But stop in your tracks for a moment and think of the truth of such a statement from the God of all creation. The very real provision of food underscores God’s love for us each day. And Jesus, from the outset of his ministry, uses meals and the dinner table to teach us inclusion and welcome. The Lord reaches out with generous and practical help and he wants us to follow his example. Look out for food in your daily readings and you’ll see it smelling delicious and tasting wonderful. And you’ll taste the love of God.

FOOD PORTRAITS

The graphic and picturesque language of food helped Jesus’ real-time listeners remember his teachings. It was a hook that reeled in every one of his hungry followers when he spoke on the shore and in the fields and in the Temple. Each subsequent generation that reads

the Bible can understand the ideas that food illustrated to those first hearers. It is used as a powerful descriptor—from superabundance at a seaside preaching talk, to famine and scarcity in a parched, rocky wilderness. From feasts and banquets to suppers and picnics. From a starving son scraping out the bottom of the barrel to raucous parties crowded with ravenous guests. Food flavors so many narratives and takes center stage at key Biblical dramas.

We read of food grown in fruit gardens, in vegetable gardens, in herb gardens. We breathe in the scent of cinnamon and coriander, mint and lemon balm. We sit down at meals eaten in palaces, in villas, on fishermen’s boats, in prisons, in the wilderness. Meals on the seashore, in temples, in Egyptian and Empire cities, at births, marriages and deaths.

We hear cooks rattling pots making breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Royal meals, sacrificial meals, celebratory meals. Meals with kings, with slaves,

with lawyers, with prostitutes, with Greeks, with sailors, with soldiers, with farmers, with wedding guests. Meals with laborers, with prisoners, with widows, with small girls, with lost sons. Meals with watching shepherds, with murderous priests, with hand-washing Pharisees, with stingy hosts and with generous new believers.

We watch sparrows being fed. We stop and look at lively penned portraits of sowing seeds, sweeping up breadcrumbs, grinding flour at mills, vultures ravaging corpses. We read of figs and thistles, fish and serpents, easy yokes and heavy burdens.

FOOD IS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING

We hear Jesus' inspiring voice as he gives us a new commandment to love one another just after supper on that last evening together with his disciples. We have some of the most beautiful, as well as the most desolate acts of Bible history played out around a meal. We want to cry out to Pontius Pilate at the Feast of the Passover, setting Barabbas free as the customary pardon, leaving the Lord Jesus condemned in a cell, waiting for the cross. We shed tears with the distraught widow rescued by a food supply through the days of famine, food gifted to her by God when she uses the last of her meager supplies to make a meal for Elijah. We crash the party and join the drunken guests at Herod's birthday bash, gorging on the extravagant delicacies imported from Rome. Our hearts are breaking when the platter with John's blood-soaked head is laid on the table alongside the dishes piled high with roasted meats and preserved blackberries and pears and jugs of wine.

OLD TESTAMENT MENUS

We look back at Egypt and the sweet juicy bite of the ripe melons, the muddy leeks and the onions, the smell of crushed garlic on our fingertips. We hear the noisy chattering from the birds pecking the loaves in the baker's basket and his body swinging lazily from the gallows while Joseph spends two more years in prison. We've grumbled about the manna and the quails but now we've seen and tasted the milk and honey



of the promised land and we want to take others on that journey with us. We listen as Boaz tells his fieldworkers to leave grain for Ruth. He doesn't offer clumsy pious charity or pity. He provides an honorable mechanism for her to eat and help her mother-in-law too. We peer inside the baskets of Abigail's food bundles, strapped to the donkeys, and we see the raisins and the bread and the lamb, the grain

and the fig cakes and the wineskins. And we know an appeal for mercy and clemency is helped by their offering. We run alongside David, hunted like a dog in the wilderness, being rescued from hunger by his friends who brought baskets full of different but equally welcome food—beans and lentils, honey and yoghurt and meat and cheese. We see lovely small details in genealogies—Mattithiah entrusted with baking good batches of flat cakes and the Kohathites in charge of kneading and baking the holy bread.

We listen in with trepidation as Daniel signs up to a vegetable-only test as a captive in a foreign land with foreign customs and foreign food. We are still nervous as we watch Daniel straighten his shoulders and summon up the courage to tell the king that Nebuchadnezzar would eat grass in the field like an ox. We swagger into the palace and join the revelers at Belshazzar's feast, where a thousand guests look on terrified as the hand of God writes on the plaster wall. The noblemen, their wives and their mistresses are all drinking wine from golden goblets ransacked from the temple in Jerusalem. As they are raising toasts to their idols, God judges their thoughtless and depraved ways and, for this folly, it will be the king's last meal and last night on earth.

We marvel at how the description of food in the text brings authenticity and reality and glorious color to the narrative. Samson and the honey from the carcass of the lion, bees swarming and buzzing around. Zechariah sowing peace like wheat. Vashti's delectable feast for women only. Solomon's



fabulous shopping list of provisions. The Kings and Chronicles' narratives say that what the Queen of Sheba saw that day took her breath away. We pity the suffering of desperate men in the Book of Job, gnawing the hard ground and starving and eating the roots of trees. Hosea describing his nation like a fig tree, swallowing down the fruit of lies. Ezekiel breaking down as God outlines for him the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem where the captives are eating bread with anxiety and drinking water with dismay, starving and dying.

DINING WITH JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES

We step again into the New Testament with John in austerity, eating locusts and wild honey. We feel the pressure on Jesus in the sweltering heat of the desert, staring at the stones and imagining them as loaves of crusty bread. We hear Martha stressed and cross with Mary as she rushes around the kitchen getting dinner ready, and we secretly love her for her very relatable annoyance with her sister. Their home with Lazarus is in Bethany on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, where these trees flourish in the limestone earth. The olive fruit and oil of the olive have been used at meals, anointings, births, sacrifices and deaths since the day that the dove flew back to Noah with a branch in its beak.

We catch a glimpse of Peter at two

very different charcoal fires—in John 18, cold and angry and descending in a spiral of denial and self-destruction in the courtyard of the high priest. Then at another, a few chapters later, as he clambers out of his boat after a dispiriting night and sees fish already laid sizzling on the coals. Food cooked by the risen Jesus who never stopped loving him. Showing that love in action—a master preparing a meal for his disciple. We are ashamed again of our meanness and selfishness when James tells us that pure religion, undefiled, is this—to visit the orphans and the widows, the heirs of the Kingdom of heaven. He warns us that it is pointless to say “*Be filled*” without giving people what they actually need (Jas 2:16 NASB). Not empty words, not just interesting lectures and Bible verse connections. Instead, shared hospitality, taking around a dinner, stocking up kitchen cupboards, planting a vegetable garden, paying a supermarket bill. Being practical and being genuine. One meal at a time.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God helps us move beyond the words and pictures and use them in 2021 to motivate us to love and good works, to change and influence our behavior and our attitudes. Food is already one of our favorite topics. Eating is one of our greatest pleasures. No wonder God says to use that enthusiasm and passion

Jesus warns us that it is pointless to say “Be filled” without giving people what they actually need...shared hospitality, taking around a dinner, stocking up kitchen cupboards, planting a vegetable garden, paying a supermarket bill. Being practical and being genuine. One meal at a time.

as an entry into talking about Him and His Son, our Lord, to people we meet and put Christ-like love to work.

“The Gospel is not just the illustration (even the best illustration) of an idea. It is the story of actions by which the human situation is irreversibly changed.”¹

Jesus uses food and meals to show us principles of inclusion and harmony, and help, welcome and generosity. This concept of providing for someone's needs is encapsulated in the Greek word *philoxenia* which comes across in English as eagerness to show hospitality. It means the love of a stranger. It shows itself in tangible acts of kindness for someone you don't know, acts of giving which cannot be grudging or half-hearted. This idea of searching, seeking out and pursuing hospitality is central to the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments. God spells out how crucial it is for anyone wanting to live a godly life to be concerned for the welfare and wellbeing of strangers. Hospitality speaks of sharing your life with others. It is what Jesus came to do. “Jesus is actually looking for people he can trust with his power.”²

How can we make this idea of hospitality work in our world? A world where political rhetoric has perhaps made us fearful of strangers—in a world which builds walls to keep people out and which primarily focuses on who's in

and who's one of us. In a world reeling with a pandemic. We need to see Jesus and his life to help us to be his kingdom people now, to grasp his hand and turn with him to reach out and see need and respond with love. When Jesus walked the shoreline on Galilee, or when he stopped at a fisherman's home or ate dinner at the house of a ruler, his mission was to seek out and save the lost and the lonely. And he did this one meal at a time. We want to follow his exemplary life.

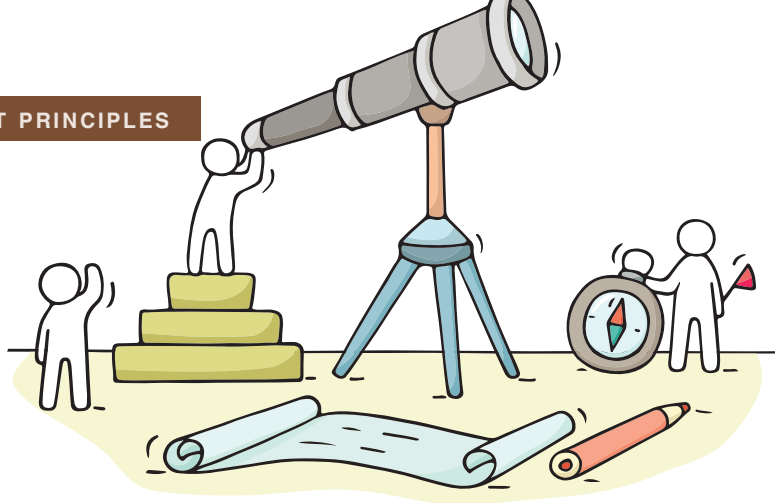
Jesus was looking for the lost to come and sit with him and eat. We often think that must be someone else; it surely couldn't be you or me. But being lost isn't an indictment. We have all been lost—you might be feeling lost right now—but we all want to be found. Jesus says he has found us, and he wants us to follow his methods to find others. He says eating together is a good place to start. Let's see his inspirational connection with people in his world, how he sat down with them to eat and talked about the things that matter. If we could learn from his sweet example, his genuine interest in others, his welcome that had no barriers, no prejudices, no exclusions, wouldn't that be wonderful?

Lorna Dean,
(Ware, UK)

Next Issue: *Using food and meals to show the love of Jesus.*

1 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989)

2 Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006)



TRUE PRINCIPLES & UNCERTAIN DETAILS ABOUT PROPHECY

PART 2

By Joe Hill

THE PERSONAL RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE EARTH

BASF Clause #20—That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles.¹

Doctrines to be Rejected #14 — That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years.

WE have complete confidence that Jesus Christ will return to the earth. This is a first principle of the faith supported by dozens of passages in the Bible. We preach it, we teach it, we make sure students believe it before we baptize them, and we insist that brothers and sisters accept it to be in fellowship with us.

We are eager for this event to happen. We pray for it: *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom*

come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt 6:9-10).² *“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’... Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”* (Rev 22:17, 20). We sing about it: “Come, Jesus, quickly come, Hallelujah, amen.” (Hymn 280.3). “The days are quickly flying, And Christ will come again... Lord, come then in thy Kingdom, Set up on earth thy throne.” (Hymn 284.1). We hope it is soon. We can’t imagine it being much longer.

AN UNCERTAIN DETAIL: WHEN WILL JESUS RETURN?

On the other hand, there are some uncertain details associated with the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, and perhaps of most interest: When will it happen? Some of us are almost desperate to know the answer to this question. We do everything we can to detect any and all clues in the Bible and the so-called signs of the times to solve this mystery. But Scriptures are clear: we don't know, and we can't know: *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."* (Mark 13:32-33). *"Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'" (Acts 1:6-7).*

It is right and proper that we eagerly await Christ's return, but, and this is important, it is inappropriate for us to predict when it will happen. Being eager is OK. Setting dates is not.

In an article discussing these topics, entitled, "Loving Christ's Appearing, But Not Counting the Days,"³ Bro. George Booker offered these wise words:

"It is good to hold with a gentle grip our cherished personal interpretations about Last Days prophecy. If we cling to such non-essential opinions as though they were life itself, then it will become all the harder—maybe

even impossible—to let them go if and when something different happens... we need an open mind when we read our Bibles and try to look into the future... We should be sincere and dedicated Bible students while remembering that we are not prophets. How can we rely on our own cleverness and ingenuity when Jesus, the greatest prophet of all, tells us: 'You do not know on what day I will come', or 'I will come on a day when you do not expect me?'" (pp. 377, 378).

Those who set dates often do not realize how much the failures of those predictions can undermine the faith of some of our members, our young people and interested friends. It also provides ammunition to those who want to ridicule our message. We can come across as false prophets. At the very least, we must all recognize that the timing of Christ's return is the most uncertain of uncertain details and should never be treated as a test of fellowship.

ANOTHER UNCERTAIN DETAIL: WHY HASN'T CHRIST RETURNED YET?

Jesus and the inspired writers of the New Testament expected him to return in their lifetime. Here are just three of many passages that could be quoted:

"And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.'" (Mark 9:1).

"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about

those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that **we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord**, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, **we who are still alive and are left** will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words." (1 Thess 4:13-18).

"He who testifies to these things says, **'Yes, I am coming soon.'**" (Rev 22:20).

So why didn't Jesus come in the first century? The Bible tells us that Christ's return and the fulfillment of the promised blessings of the Kingdom depend on the repentance of Israel:

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so **that** your sins may be wiped out, **that** times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and **that** he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus."* (Acts 3:19-20).

"But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors—their unfaithfulness and their hostility toward me, which made me hostile

*toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—**then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.**"* (Lev 26:40-42).

Bro. John Thomas highlighted this connection in his book *Elpis Israel: An Exposition of the Kingdom of God* (1849):

"Had the nation continued to obey the Lord's voice and to keep the covenant, and when Christ came received him as king on the proclamation of the gospel, they would doubtless have been in Canaan until now; and he might have come ere this, and be now reigning in Jerusalem, King of the Jews and Lord of the nations. But had this been the case, we Gentiles would have had no part in the kingdom. We might attain to eternal life at the end of the reign; but in the glory of the kingdom, and in the administration of its affairs, as heirs of the world with Abraham and his seed, we should have had no part; for it was the unbelief of the forty-second generation of Israel that became the riches of the Gentiles." (p. 309).

The concept that God's fulfillment of the covenant promises depends on the repentance of Israel is found in many places in the Bible.⁴

So, Israel has not repented yet.⁵ Why? Surprisingly, it is God who is hardening and blinding Israel:

“What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, as it is written: ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear to this very day.’ And David says: ‘May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.’” (Rom 11:7-10, citing Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10; and Ps 69:22-23).

Why is God doing this to his chosen people? Following the parable of the olive tree, Paul explains:

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.’” (Rom 11:25-26; citing Isa 59:20).

So, we should be thankful that God continues to give us time. He is still calling out a people for His name, a remnant of Israel, and an ever-growing multitude of Gentiles. So whenever

we grow weary of waiting for Christ’s return, we must remember: *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* (2 Pet 3:9).

SUMMARY

The second coming of Christ is one of the most fundamental principles of our faith. We long for it to happen in our lifetimes. It should be a cornerstone of our preaching efforts.

But we should not make predictions as to when it will happen. Any such prognostications on something we are explicitly told we have no way of knowing is unacceptable. It brings a bad name to the gospel message and to the reputation of Christadelphians. Believers may lose hope. People who might otherwise be interested in the Gospel may have second thoughts about the accuracy of the Bible. And most significantly, it can lead to God’s name being slandered.

Of course, we should be alert, constantly watching, ever diligent, always prepared for the time when it actually happens.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

*Joe Hill
(Austin, Leander, TX)*

1 Acts 3:20-21; Ps 102:16, 21; 2 Tim 4:1; Acts 1:9, 11; Dan 7:13; Luke 21:24-27; Rom 11:25-26.

2 Bible quotations are from the *New International Version* (NIV, 2011).

3 *Tidings*, August 2017, pp. 373-379 (available online at https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017_08_Aug_Special.pdf).

4 For a more complete discussion, see Harry Whittaker, “*The Repentance of Israel*,” Chapter 7, *The Last Days*, and “*The Repentance of Israel*,” Chapter 2, *The Time of the End* (both available online at <http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/haw/index.html>).

5 For a discussion of God responding to His people’s actions, see Joe Hill, “*God Repents*,” *Tidings*, August, 2017, pp. 326-332 (available online, see endnote 3 above).

A NEW BEGINNING IN 2021

By Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell

ON Monday February 15, we were delighted to add another sister, Milenka Escobar, to the group of believers here in Bolivia, as well as to the brotherhood at large. God's grace is abundant, and we are continually encouraged that He is still calling people out of this world to be part of His greater plan!

Milenka put in her request for baptism earlier that same week. A couple of days later, a group of brothers listened to Milenka's faith in God, and consequently, her faith in Christ Jesus the Savior. They listened to her describe the hope of the coming Kingdom of God on Earth and of the hope of the resurrection. Hearing her sound confession of faith and commitment to the body of Christ, plans for the baptism were made.

She lives in isolation in a city called Cochabamba, an eight-hour bus ride from La Paz. Because of the quarantine situation, she flew up to La

Paz on Saturday to avoid the complete lockdown that occurs on Sundays in Cochabamba. The following Monday morning, she was baptized in the presence of many, some in person and some virtually. This, of course, was looked upon with great joy by the angels in heaven, and by the Father and His Son.

While the arrangements for the baptism were quite rapid, the event of her baptism was a long time in coming. She learned of the truth from a sister in La Paz in 2016. In 2017, she began taking baptismal classes and had continued since then, growing in the truth. With the recent problems on the world scale suddenly made many opportunities available to her online. She has benefited greatly, connecting to many different classes and studies throughout Central and South America.

Her baptism, while obviously a life altering event for her, will also God-willing serve as a bright witness to her family. Throughout her time spent with the Scriptures, she has shared what she has learned with her family. Because of her consistent preaching efforts (obviously with God providing the increase), two of her sisters and her brother-in-law are now also taking Bible classes.

May God bless Sis. Milenka in her walk to the Kingdom. Please keep Bolivia in your prayers, that God may continue working here.

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



AN APPEAL FOR PRAYER

from the CBM Worldwide



From time-to-time representatives of the three CBMs; Asia-Pacific CBM, CBM of the Americas and CBM (UK) meet to discuss topics of mutual interest. At a recent “Zoom” conference two issues of concern arose which we would like to share with the brotherhood more widely.

1. Oppression of New and Young-in-the-Faith converts.

We are concerned that in some parts of the world it is difficult for those young in the faith to follow the Lord Jesus in the way he asked. This occurs particularly in parts of Europe, and in the Far East, where refugee brothers and sisters may be in fear of their lives, lest they be sent back to their homeland and what may happen as a consequence. This is a very real threat

for large numbers. Their income is cut off, they have their activities monitored by secret police, they are fearful about attending Breaking of Bread meetings either in person or on line in case they are being watched. Deportation could well mean that they will be dealt with very harshly on their return home. Some could lose their lives because of their new-found faith.

This threat is not confined to refugees. In some parts of the world, it is dangerous to convert to Christianity in any form. Oppression by the state is a real and constant threat. Again, simply being at a Breaking of Bread meeting may endanger lives.

Whilst we have a natural feeling that we should help by getting brothers and sisters out of such countries, this is not

easy, and dealing with the necessary paperwork can put lives in danger. If a few were able to leave the lives of those who remain could be in more danger than before. Even sending money can bring our brothers and sisters to the notice of hostile authorities, if they are thought to have connections with unfriendly states.

The three CBMs are very aware of many of the dangers and are doing all they can to send welfare, where this is appropriate, through safe channels. Ultimately such situations can only be resolved by the coming of the Lord. It is however incumbent on us all to bring such issues before our Heavenly Father in prayer, and the CBMs have decided that they will join together in prayer on **Sunday, April 11th, 2021**, to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters and to pray for the coming of our Lord. We invite brothers and sisters around the world to join us in this. Further details may be had from the secretaries of any of the CBM organisations.

While we are aware that brothers and sisters are extremely generous, we would ask that you do not send money directly to any mission areas. However, if you feel moved to do so, please forward it through one of the CBM organisations.

2. Social Media Appeals.

During the recent pandemic many of us have benefitted from the use of internet technology for meeting together, but it has also brought an increase in the incidence of bogus appeals for help in mission areas. All the CBMs have robust and sensitive welfare systems in

place, working usually through a local committee and the linkman. They try to provide a careful oversight of what is going on. While it is always possible that such systems make mistakes, we are confident that they are rare, and when brought to the attention of the linkman are remedied speedily.

Some less scrupulous brothers and sisters have been using Social Media to seek help which is totally unjustified. They may have asked their local welfare committee for help and been turned down, or perhaps the linkman has felt a claim inappropriate, so they appeal to individuals. Many of these appeals can only be described as fraud, and to support them actually uses funds which would be much better spent on real cases of illness and hardship. It is often those who are already in a better situation than the average for the country who have the means to make such appeals. To respond is to encourage the recipients in action which is unhelpful to their eternal salvation, and puts temptation in the way of those who are not able to handle it.

If you should receive a request from a brother, sister or contact in a CBM territory, please consult the linkman before responding, other than the briefest of acknowledgments. The linkman will either know the person concerned or be able to find out quickly from local brethren exactly what the situation is, and how best to respond if action is needed. Please do not, under any circumstances, send money. To do so encourages fraud by the recipient and also by those who see the results of dishonest actions.

NEWS & UPDATES

LOS ANGELES, CA

Sister Phyllis Dora Stark is turning 100 years old on March 20, 2021. Hers is an incredible story of the growth and continuance of the Truth in a small corner of the USA. The story begins, however, in Looxahoma, Mississippi. Henry Macon Cocke and his wife, Eliza Jane [Bayless] Cocke had moved there in 1852. Recorded in the Cocke-Bradley book by Arnold M. Bradley, published in 1980 in Cerritos, CA, is the history of the Cocke-Bradley family, which originated in Virginia in the 1700's.

In Mississippi, Henry and Eliza Cocke met the Campbellites, and soon thereafter a group of Christadelphians. It is recorded that Henry and Eliza Cocke were baptized into Christ in Mississippi. Bro Henry Cocke traveled the countryside with Bro. John Thomas preaching

the Truth. Bro. and Sis. Henry and Eliza Cocke moved near Marion, IL in the spring of 1868 with their children, including Lemuel who was born in 1858. Lemuel married Dora Belle Clark. Their children were born in Marion, including Mark Ernest Cocke, who was born in 1885.

Bro. Henry was one of several brethren who built the first Christadelphian meeting from logs. That first building was later replaced with a larger building (shown in a photo below) dating to the late 1890's. In the photo is Mark Ernest Cocke in the front row to the



left. “Ernest” Cocke was approximately twelve in the photo.

Mark Ernest Cocke migrated to Pomona, CA. In 1913, he married Ruth Stocks. Phyllis was the fifth of seven and the only child still living. Her aunt Noma Hill, sister to her father, lived to 102.



From the Berean Christadelphian magazine of 1939 we read: “We have had the pleasure of assisting another child of Adam in putting on the

sin-covering Name in baptism, viz.: Phyllis Cocke (18), daughter of Bro. and Sis. M E Cocke. May she gain the crown of life which we all seek.” [Bro. Oscar Beauchamp (RB)]” Her baptism occurred in the summer of 1938.

Bro. Ben Stark spent many days driving to Chino to see Phyllis in the late 1930’s. They were married in 1940, whereupon they transferred to the Los Angeles Ecclesia. While members of the Los Angeles Ecclesia most of their lives, they did attend the San Luis Obispo Ecclesia for 17 years. They returned to the Los Angeles Ecclesia in 2006. Bro. Ben fell asleep in Christ in 2010 in Huntington Beach.

On March 20, 2021, Phyllis will be 100. In June she will have been a sister in Christ for 82 years. There is much to celebrate with her 100th year. We are pleased with the Truth flourishing in this family dating back three generations to the teachings of Dr. Thomas in rural Mississippi.

Now her eyes are growing dim. But each day from noon until bedtime, much of her time is spent reading her daily readings [interrupted by frequent naps]. In addition, she reads Christadelphian books such as *Making Prayer Powerful* as well as the *Tidings* and *Testimony* magazines. She has a clear focus on the coming Kingdom. Most evenings by bedtime, she will be asleep in her chair, holding on to her well-worn Bible, or a Christadelphian book or magazine. She had two children, Dan and Marilyn (Land). She has three grandchildren, all baptized, and seven great-grandchildren. Lauren [Land] Henley, of the Sacramento ecclesia is the first baptized of the great-grandchildren.

She is truly a “Mother in Israel”, in a family with seven generations of Christadelphians dating back to the teachings of Dr. Thomas during the Civil War. Coincidentally, on the same day of her birth, Sis. Antonia Banks, now of the Verdugo Hills Ecclesia, was born in the Philippines. They have enjoyed a close friendship since “Tony” moved to the US.

James E. Land

OTTAWA, ON

Our members have participated in online Bible classes and memorial services with other ecclesias since the end of March 2020. In spite of this, we thank our heavenly Father for four baptisms, more than in our 20 years as an ecclesia.

What a joy it has been to see three of our young people take on the saving name of Jesus. Before the Covid lockdown,

SILAS PERKS was baptized on February 29, 2021. During lockdown, DANIEL ANDREWS was immersed on May 17, 2021, and DAMARIS ANDREWS was baptized on October 30, 2020.

In addition, we are delighted that MASOUMEH KAHVAZI, who studies the Bible in Farsi with a Zoom class in the UK, was commended to us for baptism and was immersed on September 3, 2020. Our new sister is from Iran and is learning English.

Three of these baptisms were witnessed online by large audiences who otherwise would not have been there to offer words of love and encouragement, including for Daniel and Damaris, the Guyanese community, and for Masoumeh, her fellow Iranian Bible students.

Bro. Majid Aghdam and Sis. Atieh Tabibi, and Atieh's brother, Bro. Alireza Zare Tabibi, moved to Ottawa from the Toronto North, ON Ecclesia in the fall of 2019. Majid and Atieh were blessed with a baby girl, Mana, on January 5, 2021.

Ethel Archard

VANCOUVER, BC

In August 2020, Sis. Chelsey Bennett transferred to our ecclesia from the New Westminster, BC Ecclesia; we welcome her amongst us.

On February 21, 2021, we rejoiced with our new sister, ZSANETT SHERLOCK, as she was baptised into Christ. Sis. Zsanett is a friend of Sis. Chelsey. A few witnessed the immersion at the meeting hall, while many joined by Zoom. As with most ecclesias during the COVID-19 restrictions, our

meetings are online and we enjoy the company of members near and far usually unable to attend.

We thank the many brothers who have provided exhortations and classes, including Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff–Museum Place, UK) who provided fraternal classes on, “The Stone”.

Our 2021 fraternal gathering on October 9-10, 2021, will be lead by Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA).

Phil Snobelen

MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL

God willing, the Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School, in Shippensburg, PA, will be held virtually for the dates of July 3–11, 2021. The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to impact all plans and decisions and demonstrates vague signs of possible improvement by summer.

The MACBS program this year will be provided in a virtual format of some kind. This format is still in the planning stages. Included in this planning are discussions with our Speakers, Bro. Mark O'Grady (NZ), Bro. David Simpson (UK) and Bro. Jonathan Bowen (CA) as to their availability for virtual participation. The virtual Bible School will understandably be a reduced format when compared to usual formats.

As plans are developed, additional details will be provided to ecclesias, the Christadelphian magazines and prior attendees who have provided emails.

These details, as developed will also be available on the MACBS website:

www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.org.

ANNOUNCEMENT



Heritage College Sydney

is dedicated to providing a God-centred educational environment that assists all students in achieving their full potential by encouraging them to strive for excellence, to use their talents in the service of others and for the glory of God.

Felicity Shields has been the College Principal since 2018. She has recently informed the College Board that she will retire at the end of third term, 2021, thus allowing sufficient time to advertise and appoint a suitable replacement.

Therefore, the College seeks a brother or sister who has demonstrated sound educational leadership skills to provide direction and work with a dedicated team of professional staff to meet the needs of our students. A critical quality will be a willingness to maintain the ethos and strong spiritual emphasis of the College.

The College was established in 1998 in the western Sydney suburb of Kemps Creek, approximately 35 kilometres from the Sydney CBD. It currently has approximately 250 students from Kindergarten to Year 12, supported by fifty paid teaching and ancillary staff

and a number of volunteers. Approximately 45% of our students are drawn from Sydney Ecclesias with the balance drawn from the local community. The College enjoys positive support from both parents and the broader Christadelphian community. It promotes teaching excellence, enhanced learning outcomes and fosters student welfare. The College enjoys well established facilities and is continuing to invest in development, with further capital works currently in progress.

The College Board will maintain applicant confidentiality in the recruitment process. The College will negotiate an appropriate salary, conditions and moving costs (if required) for the successful applicant. The recruitment process aims for the Principal to commence leadership in Term 4, 2021 if possible.

For a detailed position description please contact Sam Dando (Chairman, Board of Directors),

sjdan@optusnet.com.au. Information relating to the College can be found at www.hcs.nsw.edu.au. Expressions of interest should be forwarded to the Board Chairman by May 10th, 2021.

Thoughts on the Way

Revelation's Exhortations (2)

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." (Rev 3:14).

THE word "Amen" solemnly affirms, and confirms, that which went before. Jesus, the Son of God, is the perfect confirmation of God's promises, and John the Apostle, in Revelation, refers to him as the "Amen." Jesus was and is the perfect sacrifice, by which our sins are forgiven. Jesus is the perfect prophet, to foretell good things for those who put their trust in him. And he is and will be the perfect king, to rule on God's throne over a regenerated world. As sacrifice, prophet and king, then, he is the "Amen." As priest and teacher and shepherd and friend, he is also the "Amen."

"Amen" is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best-known word in human speech. The word is directly related—in fact, almost identical—to the Hebrew word for "believe" (*"aman"*) or "faithful." Thus, it came to mean "surely, or truly," an expression of absolute trust and confidence. When one believes God, he indicates his faith by an "Amen." When God makes a promise, the believer's response is "Amen"—"So it will be!" In the King James Version of the New Testament, "Amen" is often translated "verily" or "truly." When we pray according to His Word and His will, we know God will answer, so we

close with an "Amen." So also do we conclude a great hymn or anthem of praise and faith with a heartfelt "Amen." Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is God's "Amen." Jesus comes to us with a perfect guarantee. We can be absolutely certain that the word of Jesus is always faithful and true because he is none other than the beginning of his Father's new creation, and thus he is our eternal "Amen." As 2 Corinthians 1:20 reminds us, every promise of God in Christ is "Yes" and "Amen," as strong an affirmation of truth as can be expressed in the Greek language.

It is, therefore, profoundly meaningful that the entire Bible closes with an "Amen":

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with God's people. Amen." (Rev 22:21).

This assures everyone who reads these words that the whole Book is absolutely true and trustworthy. We may not know how or when each of its promises will be realized. But we know for a certainty that God's promises will be fulfilled. So we say: "Amen."

"They overcame... by the blood of the Lamb." (Rev 12:11).

"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." (Rev 14:1).

Those who bear in their foreheads the name of the Lamb and of his Father have the “mark” of the Lamb. They are deliberately contrasted with other people who bear, on the right arm or the forehead, the “*mark of the beast*.” (Rev 13:16-18). The Lamb is of course Christ. In an especially poignant scene in the Apocalypse, he is pictured as “*a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain*” (Rev 5:6; cp Rev 5:12; 13:8). Jesus is the Passover Lamb, slain for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7), bearing ever after in his body the marks of his sacrifice (John 20:25-28).

The original Passover lamb was slain in Egypt, and its blood used to mark the lintels and doorposts of the houses of the believing Israelites. Succeeding generations of Israel would readily recognize such a mark (which closely resembles a doorway) as approximating the Hebrew letter *He*, which almost by itself spells the name of God: *Yod He*, or *YAH*. It is no great stretch of the imagination to see that, when the lamb’s blood was painted around the door of every faithful house in Egypt, then the Jews appeared to have the name of the Father marked around their doorways, written in the blood of the Lamb! And the name of the Father, “*Yah*” or “*Yah-weh*”, is, of course, the name of the Lamb too: “*Yah-shua*”, or Jesus!

Now, in the Book of Revelation, there are marked out, not houses, but individual men and women, each sealed, not upon the door, but in the forehead (the “door” of the mind) with the “mark” of the Lamb. These are the individuals who have opened their minds to the message of God, who have directed their thoughts into the ways of His Laws. These are they who have been

touched by the blood of Christ, who have been baptized into his name and the name of his Father. These are they who, wherever they are, even in the grave itself, will be protected in the Last Days from the “Angel of Death” and will be delivered from the “Egypt” of slavery and sin and death.

Listen to what our Lord and King Jesus promised to those who keep his word and do not deny his name:

“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.” (Rev 3:10-12).

Let us not worry too much about the fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation—for it is in Christ’s hands, and it is sure and certain. Instead, let us especially take to heart its exhortations, as well as the exhortations in the rest of the Bible. Let us believe, and trust in, all the promises of the One who is called the “Amen,” the faithful and true witness. By his blood we have overcome sin and the world. And in his name we will receive immortality, and reign with him upon this earth

George Booker,
(Austin Leander, TX)

O Give thanks unto the LORD for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever -
Psalms-136:1

Christadelphian

WORLDWIDE

**PRAISE
AND
WORSHIP
2021**

GOD WILLING

EVERY FRIDAY

FROM: 18-09-2020

TIMINGS: 5:30PM

VIRTUALLY ON ZOOM

**BY: BRO. SIMON JAYAKAR (HYD)
(INDIA).**

GMAIL: PALLYSTARK9988@GMAIL.COM

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