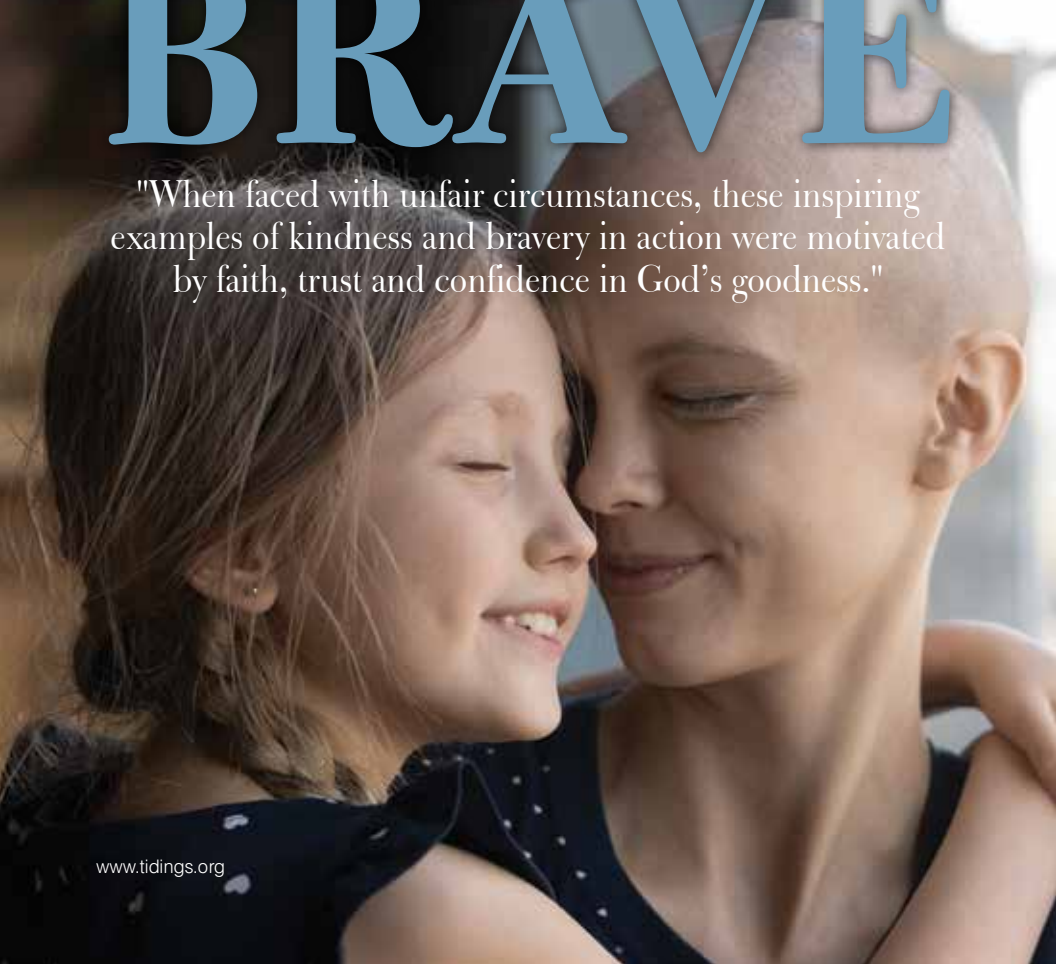


# TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 10, November 2021

## KIND & BRAVE

"When faced with unfair circumstances, these inspiring examples of kindness and bravery in action were motivated by faith, trust and confidence in God's goodness."





**Jason Grant** (Orangeville, ON)

Centennial Beach, Barrie, ON

*"The variety and detail in God's creation never ceases to humble and amaze."*

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN  
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OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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# TIDINGS

Volume 84, Number 10 / November, 2021



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# SEEKING GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

*By Dave Jennings*

**L**IFE can be so confusing. Never in the history of Man has a generation been so flooded with information and hugely diverse views on just about every topic. We are left to sort out what to embrace and what to discard. Just think of all the topics that have divided our society over this past year. Those in the world, without God, must be utterly confused about what is right or wrong. It leaves believers observing a world like that of ancient Nineveh, where God declared that there were 120,000 people who *“cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand.”* (Jonah 4:11). That has an eerie ring to it as we look at the moral collapse around us.

But this should never be descriptive of God’s people. We have been uniquely trained to find answers to the puzzles of our lives by seeking the only true wisdom—God’s perspective. When we search the Scriptures, we find the clarity that the world seeks but doesn’t find, an outlook that lifts us beyond the human mind’s reasoning to that of the Divine.

Both the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel struggled with the message of God that they were to carry to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The last hope for the House of Israel was for those in Jerusalem and Judea to repent and seek God. The details of the coming pestilence, famine, starvation and ultimate collapse must have been overwhelming to these prophets. Knowing that even the temple was about to be destroyed and the throne of David vacated would have been a difficult message to accept. How could it be good to have God’s chosen people receive such a judgment? Would this not bring painful rebuke to God and Israel in the sight of the surrounding nations?

Rather than dismissing the concerns of the two prophets, our long-suffering

God took the time to help Jeremiah and Ezekiel see what He saw. Jeremiah was to see God’s perspective by the countless persecutions he would endure. His own family in Anathoth would turn on him (Jer 11:23). He would be lowered into the mire and barely kept alive. Jeremiah would know, at a very personal level, the corruption and ungodliness of that generation. The manner of revelation was different for Ezekiel. As he sat safely by the river of Chebar, near Babylon, he would see remarkable visions. Initially, he was so upset by the message of God’s pending judgment that he sat for a week at the river of Chebar. The next vision, recorded for us in Ezekiel 8, provided him with the righteous perspective of God. Right inside the temple, in the area where the priests entered, was an idol! There were secret worship services of detestable things and idols, led by men like Jaazaniah, a scribe! Their hearts declared that God could not see in the “dark chambers.” There was sun worship in the temple court and women weeping for Tammuz. Ezekiel, having seen what God saw, understood the righteousness of God in His judgments.

When Jeremiah and Ezekiel saw what God saw, their perspective changed forever, and they were ready for the work ahead. The fundamental message they both needed to learn was that God wasn’t destroying His people; He was creating a means of saving them!

In our modern age we, too, strive to understand God’s perspective. It is often quite different than how we would see things through mortal eyes. When we discover God’s perspective through the Scriptures, it frees us from the limited and deceiving ways we can see things, and it takes us to a different level of consciousness.

The world around us judges issues on how they appeal to the flesh or what seems right according to one's perceptions. This is a unique challenge before us. Whatever the issue, our job is to go to the Scriptures and discover the principles of what God sees as being right or wrong. This has been a challenge for all generations, who faced unique challenges to their faith and belief.

Today, we frequently face significant challenges for finding God's will. How does God view the issues of violence and abuse that occur across the world? How does He view the kingdoms of men and participation by believers in those kingdoms? How does God view the moral and sexual practices that are common around us, and what would He expect of us today? The list goes on and on.

I wonder if we could untangle much of the conflict and separation that we currently experience if we would just take the time to together explore God's perspective about the challenges facing us? How does He view the issues before us?

Let's take a couple of pressing issues today and see if we can find God's perspective.

Let's start with one that has been around for quite a while—how we dress for Memorial Service. Never has this issue been tested more than the past 18 months, as we participated in online services! To be honest, the expectations for one's apparel and grooming at worship services have been changing for many years. Some feel that what one wears to meeting reflects respect and humility to God, arguing that one would certainly dress in their best clothes to go to see a dignitary. Others argue that

clothing has never been a measure of one's humility and respect and that we have turned it into a "thing" by our traditions and culture. So, how do we get God's perspective about what we wear and how we are groomed?

Surely, our God is not the least impressed with our apparel (Jas 2:1-5; Acts 10:34). God's righteous perspective is not concerned about fashion but about what is going on inside our minds. Is what we are wearing making a statement or drawing attention to us? Is it done out of rebelliousness? Is it done to impress? Is it done with the best interest of our brother and sister in mind?

God's perspective about this issue can be found in Paul's diagnosis of the concern of eating meat offered to idols. There was nothing inherently wrong with eating meat offered to idols—unless it became a spiritual problem for one's brother. Paul concluded, "*For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves.*" (Rom 14:7 NLT). If our dress and grooming is a spiritual obstacle for our brother, then the perspective we must embrace is that the needs of our brother are superior to ours. That is completely opposed to the thinking of the flesh, but it is the Divine perspective. The character of selflessness was demonstrated for us by our Lord. It is quite okay to wear casual clothing to meeting, assuming it does not represent a rebellious attitude in the face of objection. On the other hand, it is quite easy to insist that one's personal tradition is right and that others should be compliant to it. That again misses the Divine perspective of living for others. Any time we feel our personal rights have been abused, that's a good time to pause and consider the perspective of God. The Lord Jesus Christ never taught

us to live in a way where we demanded our rights. Rather, we are taught to avoid “*strife and vainglory*” by having “*lowliness of mind*.” (Phil 2:3). So, we can find a principle here to allow us to govern our own behavior. Unless it truly represents an offense to Christ, we should not insist on our own preferences. Seek peace and accommodation.

Let's look at another issue we are currently facing. Ecclesias have been encountering difficult decisions when they physically return to ecclesial halls. What should be done about vaccinations, wearing of masks and accommodation of the needs of others? Some ecclesias have had a seamless return to their worship in their meeting place, but others have struggled with the transition.

Do the Scriptures address vaccinations? Our community long ago concluded that the Scriptures do not address this issue (see *Vaccinations and Obedience to the Truth*, Tidings, December 2020). Vaccinations are a modern phenomenon. Unless we are required to be vaccinated by the authorities, we have the freedom to make our own decisions. However, such decisions are not made in a vacuum, and there may be consequences for ourselves, our loved ones and our ecclesia. On the issue of wearing masks inside our enclosed buildings, where it is required by law authorities, there should be no debate. It is not a law that opposes the laws of our Lord, and therefore the clear instruction in the Scriptures is to be subject to it. (Titus 3:1). In areas where masks are not mandated, but the ecclesia has requested its members to comply, submission to the needs of our brothers and sisters is essential. Our decision to comply with the laws of the land, and the requests of

our brethren, is a demonstration of our commitment to following the way of the cross.

God wants us to submit “*to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*.” (1 Pet 2:13). As for accommodation of the needs of our brothers and sisters, far be it from any of us to behave in such a way that would make our brothers or sisters feel uncomfortable to come to meeting.

Committing to the consistent practice of seeking and applying God's perspective is the only conduit for believers to find peace and harmony. It detangles us from the invisible, sickening poison of world philosophies (2 Pet 2:20) and proclaims righteous thinking. These practical, day-to-day decisions are what living the Truth is all about.

In the long-standing issues before us, which seem to be without resolve for decades or more, perhaps a reassessment of God's perspective is overdue? Our Lord walks among the candlesticks, and we know that he is active in our personal lives as well as our community. The ecclesias have never been “ours.” They have always been the Lord's. We can know with certainty that he and his angels will direct our steps toward righteousness if we but trust in his sovereignty. That is God's perspective for us to live by.

*Dave Jennings*

*Our thanks to a sister from Canada for pointing out the mistaken attribution on page 447 of the October 2021 issue.*

*The quote from John 7:51 should have been attributed to Nicodemus, not Jesus.*

# KIND AND BRAVE

*By Kathryn Owen*

**E**ACH morning as we walk with our dogs, we pass several signs strategically placed in our neighbors' front yards. They contain a 26-word advocacy statement which promotes inclusion for all and begins with, "in this house we believe," and ends with, "kindness is everything." It originated in Wisconsin and was produced by a group of women whose aspiration was that their sentiments would become "natural" to their children (Taylor, 2020).<sup>1</sup>

These sentiments, bound by the two words **kind and brave**, which we have heard strung together in one sentence during the pandemic, have emerged as important skills for young children to develop within the context of relationships. It's the underlying message in Cinderella, whose mother asks her to promise that she will have courage and be kind, and it conjures

up an image of something magical that happens when a child takes a risk and acts on goodness.<sup>2</sup>

For schools, children demonstrate how to be kind and brave when they value the worth of each individual in their community, develop empathy for one another, recognize unfairness, and have the vocabulary and ability to be able to act on it. They learn through picture books to be true to themselves, kind to their friends, and bravely speak up to defend what is good (e.g.: *Peanuts be Kind, Be Brave, Be You*).<sup>3</sup> For the workplace, putting relationships first, being kind, brave and leaning into discomfort are key elements in *Color Brave Space* for creating a safe space when hosting equity focused meetings.<sup>4</sup>

In 2020 we became semi-dependent on a transference of our knowledge

and skills. Like starlings forming a murmuration, we found ourselves constantly changing direction, shaped by an external force which brought us together across the globe via Zoom. Despite our age, we learned to be in the moment, be patient, and lean into our vulnerability and overcome our fears. Together we persevered through trial and error and bounced back after each unforeseen setback. In humility we were bound by faith and reassurance in God's promise that all things work together for good to those who love Him (Rom 8:28).

For our children, they were abruptly physically separated from their friends and in some cases, extended family. The streets became silent, and for the

most part, their social interactions were limited to communication via a screen. In a sense, their world tipped upside down, while globally images of nations in turmoil, protests in response to the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) rallies, demonstrations and riots were frequently shown by the media. Although many of our children may not have been directly exposed to these images, social unrest has continued to percolate and will undoubtedly continue to impact classroom dynamics as schools begin to open again. Even while we strive to wait patiently, take heart and be of good courage despite our fears, this period in our history is a time when conflict has seeped into our everyday lives. Like the strategically



placed yard signs, our children have inevitably seen and heard a divide in both political views and individual response to the pandemic.

Educators across the country and around the world have been working toward embracing an anti-bias curriculum in the classroom for several years.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, based on research which shows that young children begin to develop racial stereotypes and prejudice between three to five years of age (Winkler, 2009),<sup>6</sup> educators of young children began to move towards empowering them to recognize and act upon unfairness and injustice. These biases do not always reflect the attitudes of the adults in their lives (Aboud, 2008),<sup>7</sup> and teachers have struggled with how to weave developmentally appropriate conversations about social justice issues into authentic everyday experiences.

If children's thoughts and actions do not always reflect those of their parents and we cannot totally shield them from external forces, how can we equip them to navigate challenging conversations and make sense of an unjust world? Life is not a level playing field, but despite that, God wants us to seek out that which is good, love one another and strive for peace. An amazing discovery

in March by professional archaeologists in Israel of tiny fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls provides timely and comforting exhortation from Zechariah, "*These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor: execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates: And let no one of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor: and love no*

*false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.*" (Zech 8:16-17).<sup>8</sup>

Fear and frustration are predominately the root causes when young children exhibit challenging behaviors, especially when they do not have all the information they need to understand or respond to a situation without a spontaneous emotional reaction. Although these challenges can seem a l l - c o n s u m i n g , they provide the opportunity to have thoughtful

conversations with our children about their own anxiety, which in turn can lead to nurturing empathy for others. Real-life situations can initiate "teachable moments" which build on the development of character and interpersonal skills. There will be times when our children will feel afraid to do what is right, just as Samuel was afraid in the morning to tell Eli about the message God had given him during the night (1 Sam 3:15). Meaningful stories which children can relate to provide

If children's thoughts and actions do not always reflect those of their parents and we cannot totally shield them from external forces, how can we equip them to navigate challenging conversations and make sense of an unjust world?



inspirational examples of how others have overcome fear when faced with uncertainty or unjust circumstances.

There are many verses in the Bible about being kind, and many about being strong or courageous—but they are not generally used in the same context. To be brave and strong was a desirable attribute Saul looked for in young men when drafting his army (1 Sam 14:52 NIV), and David encouraged his son Solomon to be strong and courageous as he embarked on building the temple (1 Chr 28:20). Many of our favorite Sunday School stories include faithful young heroes such as Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, who bravely spoke to King Nebuchadnezzar about their conviction to only serve God despite the threat of being thrown into the fiery furnace (Dan 3:16-18).

Several young women in the Bible were brave and overcame their fear and vulnerability as a direct result of empathy. Miriam's desire to help her mother save her baby brother in Egypt empowered her to come out of her hiding place and approach Pharaoh's

daughter when she found Moses about finding a nursemaid for him (Exod 2:4-8). The "little" Hebrew maid who had been taken from her family and who waited on Naaman's wife in Syria, bravely dropped a hint about her belief that the prophet Elisha could heal him when she saw her mistress in distress (2 Kgs 5:3). Out of compassion for her people, Esther followed her uncle's instruction to bravely approach her husband, King Ahasuerus while sitting on his throne in the royal house, despite the risk that she might perish (Esth 5:2).

When faced with unfair circumstances, these inspiring examples of kindness and bravery in action were motivated by faith, trust and confidence in God's goodness. Despite the society that they found themselves living within, these young women had grown up with God's truth embedded in their hearts. Advocacy for what they knew to be right, began with their own understanding that God grants mercy in times of need (Heb 4:16). Expecting nothing in return, other than God's will, they intrinsically took affirmative action—despite placing themselves in a vulnerable situation.

With compassion, Jesus instructed his disciples to let the little children come unto him (Mark 10:14 NIV), and with a child's lunch of five small barley loaves and two small fishes he fed a crowd of 5,000 (John 6:8-11). As future ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, our children will potentially, "*Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.*" (Mark 16:15 NIV). God's promise of salvation for both

Regardless of our status, our age, our gender, our perspectives, the color of our skin, a disability, an infirmity, areas of weakness and ongoing challenges, Paul leaves us with a clear guide for showing our children how kindness and bravery can work together for good...

Jews and Gentiles blends race, culture and conviction together within our community. Regardless of our status, our age, our gender, our perspectives, the color of our skin, a disability, an infirmity, areas of weakness and ongoing challenges, Paul leaves us with a clear guide for showing our children how kindness and bravery can work together for good: *“Be on your guard: stand firm in the faith; be courageous: be strong. Do everything in love.”* (1 Cor 16:13-14 NIV). Our loving heavenly Father who first loved us, has blessed us with this window of time during the pandemic in which we can slow down, reflect and care for each other.

Despite confusion and our different perspectives, Timothy’s instruction to be kind and gentle to everyone (2 Tim 2:24), would place kindness at the beginning of a yard sign designed to guide children’s hearts and minds. When, *“compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”* are woven together with love, we have peace in our hearts—and come as close as possible on this side of the Kingdom to embracing each other without bias, in *“perfect unity.”* (Col 3:12-14 NIV).

Kathryn Owen,  
(San Diego County, CA)

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, C (June 16, 2020) Social Good: How one woman’s yard sign became a rallying cry for allies. <http://mashable.com>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella\\_\(2015\\_Disney\\_Film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella_(2015_Disney_Film))

<sup>3</sup> Schulz, C. M. & Barton, E. D. (2018) *Peanuts be Kind, Be Brave, Be You*. Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing Division NY)

<sup>4</sup> Equity Matters (2018) Color Brave Space [www.equitymattersnw.com](http://www.equitymattersnw.com)

<sup>5</sup> Derman-Sparks, L. & Olson Edwards, J. (2019) Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to every facet of your curriculum. Young Children [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

<sup>6</sup> Winkler, E. N. (2009). Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee PACE Vol. 3-No. 3 @ 2009 HighReach Learning

<sup>7</sup> Aboud, F. E. (2008). A Social-Cognitive Developmental Theory of Prejudice. In S. M. Quintana & C. McKown (Eds.), *Handbook of Race, Racism, and the Developing Child* (pp. 55-71). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons

<sup>8</sup> Borschel-Dan, A. (2021, March 16 p2). Bible Scroll fragments among dazzling artifacts found in Dead Sea Cave of Horror. The Times of Israel. Archaeology / IAA Scroll finds ‘a wakeup call’ for more urgent searches. [www.timesofisrael.com](http://www.timesofisrael.com)

# ALL ONE IN CHURCH

## PART 9

# CONSENT

*By Carmel Page*



I have just observed a relationship lesson for ten-to-eleven-year-olds. The children were told that as they get older, it's normal to start having girlfriends and boyfriends but having no interest in romantic relationships is also normal.

We looked at a picture of a girl and a boy balanced on a seesaw. They often go to the movies together, but only one of them ever chooses the film. The class understood that wasn't fair and the teacher talked about "power balance." The see-saw became unbalanced because one child was holding all the power. The teacher asked how the couple could get the balance back. A child suggested they take turns to choose the film; everyone agreed.

The class then discussed a situation where one person wanted to kiss and cuddle, but the other person did not. A girl said it was better to stay with a bad boyfriend because otherwise, you might end up with no boyfriend. The teacher sensitively talked through how it would feel to be in an unequal power relationship and why it might be better to end it. These children clearly trusted their teacher and benefited from time spent discussing power and control in relationships.

Some parents are very anxious about relationship lessons, but my experience was reassuring. I left wishing I had experienced similar lessons as a child. The children learned about control in relationships, consent, the importance



If we impose on young children, they may grow up believing they have to accept physical advances. They may also believe that it is normal for adults to impose themselves on others and do that themselves.

of seeking permission before making physical contact and the right to say **No!** to physical contact. I see this as part of the commandment “*Thou shalt not covet.*” (Exod 20:17)—that we don’t stray toward someone else’s body if they don’t want our advances. Young people need to understand what makes a relationship good or bad and learn how to prevent making or receiving inappropriate sexual advances.

Children also learn about consent when we respect their choices about us touching them. Many people love to hug children, but just because we are bigger, it does not give us the right. Accepting a child’s request not to hug or their attempt to free themselves is important for their long-term sexual safety. If we impose on young children,

they may grow up believing they have to accept physical advances. They may also believe that it is normal for adults to impose themselves on others and do that themselves. Failure to understand consent can cause serious trouble with the law and long-term psychological damage for all concerned.

Anyone can fail to seek consent, and anyone can be the victim of this. We live in a patriarchal society and so it can feel natural for it to be men who make decisions, but it should never be presumed that men alone have the right to decide issues, particularly in relationships with women. Everyone needs to be aware of the need to take other people’s wishes into account. Our role model for this is Jesus. When he wished to be baptized, John did not

accept his request. Jesus did not insist on baptism, but he calmly explained to John that it was the right thing to do. *“Then John consented.”* (Matt 3:15 NIV). When people approached Jesus, he didn’t presume anything but asked people what they wanted from him. This is a fail-safe way to avoid problems with consent.

There is much we can do to teach children how to stay safe and to prevent ourselves from causing distress to others.

- Teach children to say, “No, I don’t want you to do that,” so that they know they have a right to decide who touches their body.
- If someone looks like they need a hug, ask them; don’t presume. If a child resists holding, let them go.
- If someone else’s child comes to you for affection just use one arm so they can slip away when ready.
- Teach the **Underwear Rule**: anything covered by your underwear is private and no one can touch you there without permission.<sup>1</sup> Children should even expect healthcare workers to treat them with respect about their private parts.
- Talk to young people about relationships. When watching films or reading books together, talk about who holds the power and whether that is right.
- Use the proper names for body parts. If children think we’re embarrassed, they may come to believe they are not allowed to talk

about their bodies.

- Put up a sign at your ecclesia saying who is your Designated Safeguard Lead so that everyone knows who to talk to if they have concerns. Make this a part of your Child Protection Policy.
- Many adults, as well as children, feel uncomfortable receiving physical contact. When you greet people at church, don’t presume they want to be kissed or hugged. Many people dislike this. If you lean towards them and they don’t lean towards you, they probably do not want a kiss. The Biblical instruction to *“greet one another with a holy kiss”* (2 Cor 13:12) would have been for people of the same sex. Men insisting on kissing women was not intended and can cause distress.
- At least once a year, talk about staying safe to Sunday School scholars, CYC members and have it as a topic for Bible Class.
- Do some fundraising for a charity that supports people who have been abused. This gives a clear signal to everyone that people who have been abused deserve help. You could also offer to volunteer for the charity.

If we respond respectfully to children and they see us being sensitive to each other, we *“in everything set them an example by doing what is good.”* (Titus 2:7 NIV). They will grow up expecting the type of healthy relationships that were part of God’s original plan.

Carmel Page,  
(Chesterfield, UK)

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>

PART 2

# MADE PERFECT IN ONE

By Jim Seagoe

**I**N the first part of this article of this series, we considered the civil war between Israel and Benjamin in Judges 20-21. We noted that Israel continued routing Benjamin until almost the entire tribe was wiped out. Was this really the right thing to do? We'll consider this question and continue with the theme of how we can achieve unity amongst God's holy people.

Consider Judges 20:48:

*And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to. (Judg 20:48).*

*“Men and beasts, all who were found.”* This is what God commanded Israel to do with the original inhabitants of the Holy Land (see Deut 20:16). But

the record of Judges shows they were not always diligent in this. There is also a provision in Deuteronomy 13 commanding Israel to deal this way with an idolatrous city; but again, there is no record of them ever doing that. And remember, one of the places mentioned in Judges 20:1 is Dan, a city with an idol at its foundation!

Yet, there is no provision anywhere instructing Israel to deal with a whole tribe like this. It is not clear that Israel was in any way carrying out the commandments of God at this point. They treated their brethren of the tribe of Benjamin more severely than they had treated the Canaanites. And when they had time to calm down and take stock, they realized the terrible thing they had done:

*Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before*

*God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, and said, "O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?" (Judg 21:2-3).*

There is no record of God answering their question. Apparently, they were left to figure out for themselves how to restore the missing tribe. But in truth, it was not a difficult question for them.

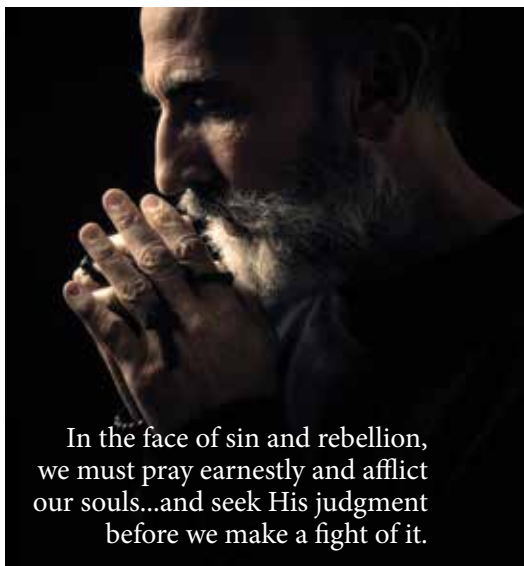
Chapter 21 states that *"the men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, 'No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.'" (v. 1).*

When they took this oath, the men of Israel essentially declared Benjamin to be no longer one of the tribes of Israel; Benjamin was to be treated as an enemy, as a pagan and idolatrous nation. And they pursued and destroyed their brethren as though this were the case.

Again, the Law does not include a provision for dealing with the rebellion of a whole tribe. But there is provision for dealing with wickedness, which might perhaps show the mind of God:

*If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight. (Deut 25:1).*

Even in punishing a wicked man for his crimes, Israel was commanded to remember that he is your brother, **not** your enemy. *"God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* And so, He instructed the judges of Israel to punish even the guilty in measure, but to respect their place among His people. And it certainly was never God's intent that a



*In the face of sin and rebellion, we must pray earnestly and afflict our souls...and seek His judgment before we make a fight of it.*

whole tribe should be annihilated from His holy nation. Each one is precious to Him and must be treated with proper honor, even in the context of judgment and punishment.

To summarize: In response to the horrific wickedness in Gibeah of Benjamin, the tribes of Israel gathered in Mizpah to execute judgment on those wicked men. The record says they gathered *"as one man,"* but at best they were only 11/12 of a man. And when the tribe of Benjamin resisted their judgment, the other tribes essentially

branded the whole tribe as foreigners and idolaters, to be excluded and even exterminated without mercy.

What lessons can we take from this? In the face of sin and rebellion, we must pray earnestly and afflict our souls and rededicate ourselves before God and seek His judgment before we make a fight of it. Correction must always be done in humility and with an understanding of God's purpose in calling us to be His people. We must resist taking up sides, dividing family from family, and declaring one another to be irredeemable heretics and rebels.

That does appear to be what happened in that sad, dark incident recorded in Judges 19-21. The "*one man*" that appeared in Mizpah that day was not the One Man created by God in his own image, but a sad counterfeit. Their "*one man*" was one indeed, but not after the spirit of God, and not a whole man; and his clothing was not the linen of God's priest but the armor of a human avenger. And if an injured foot or hand could disqualify the sons of Aaron from the priesthood (Lev 21:17-21), how much more would the lack of a tribe prevent Israel from fulfilling its role as a priestly nation?

Something very much like this also appears to have happened among the saints at Corinth, where some were said to have resisted the judgment of a notorious sinner; and where there were reports of factions, to the point where brethren would even let one another go hungry while remembering the Lord's flesh and blood. And so, not seeing one another as members together in the body of Christ, they ate and drank damnation to themselves.

To their credit, Israel eventually came

to their senses and set about to recover the tribe of Benjamin from near extinction. That they needed to search out loopholes in all their oaths tells us that they regretted taking those oaths. But above all, they recognized their own part in the tragedy: the Benjamites had been wrong and blameworthy in their defense of Gibeah; but the other tribes were wrong in their overzealous punishment of their brethren.

The Lord Jesus told us, "*It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell.*" (Mark 9:47). But, while this is good counsel for any man, the One New Man is not half-blind, is not maimed or damaged in any way. He is one, to be sure; and he is also healthy and whole, and holy, fit for God's service. That is the vision we are given, and that is the end to which we also must aspire. So, when there is sin among us? No, it must not be allowed to continue; and yes, the law of Christ must be upheld, but the end of that judgment should be repentance and restoration whenever we can find a way, according to the Lord's will.

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* (Gal 6:1-2).

Christ has brought all of us near by his blood; he has in his flesh abolished the enmity for all his disciples. Whenever we remember his body and his blood, let us determine to honor him by acting together, as one man.

*Jim Seagoe,  
(San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*

# REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL MUSIC & MENTAL HEALTH

*By Jessica Gelineau*

**MY** dad, Bro. Phil Sweeny, once attended a job-site training which was focused on employee mental and emotional health.<sup>1</sup> "The Free Three," as discussed in the original training, were three free ways to improve mental and emotional health: nature, humor, and music.<sup>2</sup> Afterward, my dad gave an exhortation on the same topic, through a more specifically spiritual lens. In my dad's exhortation, also titled, "The Free Three," he shared thoughts on the impact of creation, joy and spiritual music on our mental state of being. I have often thought back to this exhortation over the years, as it really rang true to me and offered

practical help I could turn to. Certainly, noticing the beauty of God's creation and spending time outdoors can be a huge boon (boost?) to mental health. I have heard and read many stories of individuals who adamantly believe that daily walks changed their lives for the better. Joy and laughter can also lift spirits when we are in a place to receive and feel those emotions. Little children, with their humorous antics, can be particularly good at encouraging laughter! As for the impact of spiritual music on mental and emotional health, let's consider this in a bit more depth. It will be the subject of our communally written article this month.

When we think of the spiritual music of Biblical times, it makes sense for our minds to turn straight to the Psalms—a large body of documented spiritual songs that we have the privilege of still accessing today. Depending on what source you are consulting, and how you choose to define a “lament,” anywhere from about one-third to two-thirds of the Psalms are considered songs of lament.<sup>3</sup> Typically, these psalms start by expressing an emotion such as despair, confusion, or anguish. By the end of the same compositions, other feelings arise, such as hope in God’s promises, trust in God’s love, praise for God’s righteousness.<sup>4</sup> It is a format or a pattern that we can often see in our own life experiences when we take our emotions to God and can freely express them in His presence, a sense of peace often follows.

How has spiritual music impacted your own mental or emotional health, your state of well-being? I invite you to take a moment to reflect on this question before diving into the beautiful and honest responses that follow, all written by Christadelphian youth. The reflections that have been compiled here are from brothers and sisters who have been baptized for various lengths of time. They are in their teens or twenties, come from three different countries, and are individuals in every other way, with a variety of musical preferences and life experiences. As you read these comments, the common thread you will find is that music with spiritual themes has been a source of light, comfort and strength to each one of these young people. I pray that their examples might encourage you to identify your own strength-giving songs, renew an interest in meditating

on the Psalms, or perhaps even write or compose your own laments and songs of thanksgiving.

**Sis. Lauren Brown (Randolph, NJ—Unamended)**

I believe spiritual music is something that tends to find you when you need it most. When my mother was battling stage three cancer and going through chemotherapy treatments, it was very difficult for me to watch her go through it. I prayed constantly for her but noticed my mental state begin to decline. A song called “Trust in You” by Christian singer, Lauren Daigle was introduced to me by a sister in my ecclesia as this was all going on. This song helped me tremendously to remember to trust God and that He is always in complete control. When our prayers are not answered right away, we must remember that God is working with us and that His plans are greater. There’s a verse in the chorus of the song that says:

“When You don't move the mountains

I'm needing You to move

When You don't part the waters

I wish I could walk through

When You don't give the answers

As I cry out to You

I will trust in You.”

Those lyrics hit home to me, and I think that they are a great reminder to us all. I praise God that my mother is now healthy and cancer-free for almost five years! My hope is that everyone can experience the peace and comfort spiritual music has to offer.

**Bro. Danny Sanchez (L.A. Hispanic, CA)**

I came to Idyllwild Bible School in 2019, and [the musical praise] was so warming and touching for me. It felt like God's presence was there, and it felt for me like the Kingdom, or at least a glimpse of it. Fast forward to 2021, and it still feels like that. Now that I've studied the Bible more, I feel that it has a bigger impact because now I understand the words that are being said [within the songs we sing] and the message behind it. God's music, to me at least, resonates and tells me how I should be wherever I am, and it's a constant reminder that God is truly listening and watching.

I love it when we get together, whether it's at meeting or at a conference. It's always so heartwarming to hear brothers and sisters and friends praising our one true God. I always cry, and it's just hard not to since I'm human. Sometimes I self-reflect and realize I'm not perfect, even though I want to be. It's just the constant battle that we have inside ourselves. I enjoy [when spiritual music is sung at a gathering] because it's a time of praise and a time for really letting go of our troubles and asking for God's help in our lives.

**Bro. Daniel Andrews (Ottawa, ON)**

For me personally, spiritual music can be defined as any music that simply has a spiritual message. As to the question of whether spiritual music has had an impact on my mental health, I would say absolutely.

Some experiences from my own life that pertain to this in how I have felt

some pain in the past from just being surrounded by so much darkness in the world that we live in. Even more so than that, at times I've felt angry at myself because I feel like I'm not doing enough for God. A "spiritual" song that has really helped with this is a song by one of my favorite groups Twenty-One Pilots called *Hometown*, in which the lead singer, Tyler, acknowledges he comes from a dark place but despite this, he asks God to light a fire in his life. The takeaway from this is that good music can give you something to relate to for the better, and I would highly recommend to someone who has never listened to music in their lower points in life to try it.

**Bro. Seth Spry (Brant County, ON)**

From a young age, music has been an important part of how I dealt with the anxiety and stress that I was feeling. It became very therapeutic for me, such that I developed an admiration for the incredible blessing of music. However, I rarely used spiritual music when I felt spiritually low. But this changed around three years ago. I was at a low point in my spiritual life. My joy or passion for the truth was at a low. I felt like when I was praying, it was to myself. There was a feeling of being disconnected and alienated. It was a difficult time in my life, and I wondered whether I still believed in God. I felt helpless, deep down I knew God was there, but I felt so much doubt in my heart.

This changed for me one night when I was walking back from one of my classes at university and I decided to listen to a Christian playlist. A song came on called *Help me Believe* by the artist Strahan. The song is about his

struggle with belief in God, it talks about how he knows God and he grew up knowing God but was doubting his belief. Similar to the words of the man in Mark 9:24, who believed yet struggled, a part of the lyrics read:

“Lord, I believe

Could you help me believe?”

The song summarized everything that I was feeling at that moment. The desperation, the feeling that deep down I knew God existed, but I needed help. I needed to be reminded that I’m not alone, that God knows when I’m struggling. Of course, we know this principle is found all throughout the Bible but for some reason, it didn’t stick out to me until that moment and in that song. It spoke to me differently than any words that I had read up to that point. I can’t fully explain why it struck me then, rather than any other time. But looking back, I feel like God was working in my life such that I listened to that song in a new light. From that moment on, I started to use music more in my spiritual life. Anytime I felt spiritually or mentally low, I used it to communicate with God and express what I was feeling. I can honestly say that music has helped to save me numerous times and has helped to restore my relationship with God again.

My encouragement to you is to use spiritual music every day outside of our weekly services. Find music that can help you, create a playlist or CD that can really speak to you and build that relationship with God. Music speaks and sounds different to everyone so find spiritual music that fills you not only with joy but also sadness. Spiritual

songs are unique in their combination of both words and music; they work equally together to create such a beautiful and meaningful way that we can express ourselves to God. So, use music, let it show God our appreciation, our sadness, our struggles, and the love that we have for him.

**Bro. Michael Ash (Kings Heath, Birmingham, UK)**

Music is very much a part of me, and over the years I’ve developed a deep and intense spiritual connection with God and Jesus through it. It comes with me everywhere—whether that’s as a tune stuck in my head, a beat drummed on a desk, or just belting out my favorite songs on a long drive! It’s a form of expression that allows me to really feel my feelings, understand my thoughts and express my faith and my doubts.

For me, my mental health is intrinsically linked to the music I listen to and write. Weaving my feelings into melodies helps me to visualize my worries and abate derealization (a dissociative mental health condition where you feel like you’re living in a dream, and nothing feels real!). [It helps me] to stay in the present and focus on how I can live my life and enjoy it, while making life more comfortable for others. I write about what’s going on in my head, my life experiences as a teenager, crippling doubt and fear, and incomprehensible love! Some say my music is relatable and helps them address their own feelings, something which I will forever be grateful for. I’d encourage you to really feel your feelings the next time you listen to music—whether it’s spiritual or not, instrumental, lyrical, or simply nature’s melodies in birdsong.

See what you can feel, what questions you can ask yourself and God, and let your emotions breathe. Spiritual music might not resonate with everyone, but it always gives you something to think about and provides a safe space for you to connect with yourself and God.

To listen to the songs Michael references writing, find it on Spotify or visit:

[www.route66movement.co.uk](http://www.route66movement.co.uk).

*Jessica Gelineau,  
(Simi Hills, CA)*

<sup>1</sup> Bro. Phil Sweeny attends the Atlanta North Christadelphian Ecclesia in Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> Therapy, counseling, and medication, generally speaking, come at a financial cost and therefore aren't included in this list focused on "free" resources. The original presenters and I would like to emphasize that this statement is not meant to detract from the fact that these approaches are important and at times, imperative. There should be no implication here—or anywhere in this article—that spiritual music should be expected to cure diagnosed mental illnesses; for example, that a severe case of anxiety should be expected to go away after a person spends time listening to spiritual music daily.

<sup>3</sup> Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Zondervan, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Psalms 61, 69, and 102 are examples of Psalms that follow this pattern.

Since publishing the article "Reflections on Treasured Hymns," which can be found in the June 2021 issue of the magazine, we continue to receive beautiful thoughts from our community about the special impact of hymns. Here is one more such reflection. All hymn numbers refer to the 2002 Christadelphian "Green" Hymn Book.

We have been married for 61 years. Together we have more than 128 years of living in the Lord. This remarkable experience has humbled us to the extent that now we have allowed Him to fill our lives with the wonderful faith of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The Hope of the resurrection has and still sustains us.

Our lives have not always been easy. We have had many life and death health challenges. Happily, we can thank and praise God for His lovingkindness and cures. Nancy is now a four-time cancer SURVIVOR, and we are so thankful. Recently I have been diagnosed with multiple myeloma and we are confident of

heavenly care. Hymn 374 seems to sum up our thankfulness. "Behold th'amazing gift of love the Father hath bestowed!" The wonderful pleading in Hymn 3, "Lead me Lord, lead me in Thy righteousness, make Thy way plain before my face. For it is Thou, Lord, Thou Lord only that makest me dwell in safety." This is another one of our favorites. Psalm 23 is expressed in words beyond human understanding in Hymn 9. These words are all-encompassing and a guide to a wonderful way of life that leads to the Kingdom.

All hymns are a guide and comfort to us.

*Bob and Nancy Davis  
(Boston, MA)*

## PART 2

# THE BELIEVERS AND THE SERVANT

By Jason Hensley

**I**n the last article, we saw how the apostle Paul harnessed the prophecy of Isaiah to support his ministry and prove that God had sent him. However, there is more here than Paul simply quoting the Scripture about himself to prove that he is a fulfillment of it. Indeed, Isaiah 49 further legitimates his preaching, but there is an even more profound way that Paul understands Isaiah and uses it when speaking to the Galatians. This article will go deeper into how Paul used the prophecy of Isaiah—and will consider how this use of Isaiah further the main argument of Galatians of salvation by faith.

## THE BELIEVERS AND THE SERVANT

This deeper use of Isaiah is perhaps indicated when Paul first applies Isaiah 49 to himself in Acts. Notice who Paul applies it to: *“For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have*

*made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”* (Acts 13:47). Paul **and** Barnabas saw the passage as about both of them—this prophecy about Jesus was being fulfilled by what **both** were doing. In fact, this appears to be how Luke attempts to get his readers to understand the fulfillment of Isaiah 49 and the servant songs. Just consider the progression here: first, Luke applied the words to Jesus (Luke 2:30-32). With that in mind, consider what Luke does next: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8). Do you recognize the end of this verse? It’s a quotation from the same verse in Isaiah 49—the same verse applied to Jesus, Paul, and Barnabas. Thus, Luke takes this servant’s mission and applies it, not just to Jesus, but to Jesus’s apostles.

Even more, Luke, in both instances—Acts 1 and Acts 13—essentially has Jesus divinely giving this interpretation of Isaiah 49 to his disciples. Reinforcing this interpretation is Jesus’s description of the disciples: “*you will be my witnesses*,” which is another quotation from Isaiah about the servant:

*“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” (Isa 43:10).*

*“I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and I am God.” (Isa 43:12).*

*“Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” (Isa 44:8).*

The servant songs were being fulfilled, not just in Jesus, but in the disciples. But how? How was it that a prophecy about Jesus would be fulfilled in the disciples? Just because they were following in his footsteps? With that in mind, consider Galatians and the way that Paul understands this application of Isaiah: “*But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.*” (Gal 1:15-16). As already noted, this is one of the places where Paul applies Isaiah 49 to himself—both when he

references being called before he was born, and when he recalls his preaching among the Gentiles. At the same time, Paul also explains this calling and prophetic application in another way: God was pleased “*to reveal his Son to me.*” Unfortunately, however, reading a translation can obscure something crucial here. The Greek for this phrase is as follows:

ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ

There are two things to notice here—the second to last word is the preposition *en*, which is typically translated as *in*. Thus,

*To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. (Gal 1:16 KJV).*

*To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. (Gal 1:16 NKJV).*

*To reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. (Gal 1:16 NASB).*

There’s more to this verse, however, that cannot be seen in any translation. In Greek, there are specific ways to emphasize a concept. Paul wrote *en emoi*, which translates to *in me*. But it also has emphasis. If one simply wanted to write “in me” in Koine Greek, they would write *en moi*. However, Paul wrote *en emoi*—and the epsilon that has been added to *moi* adds emphasis. Paul was stating that God revealed Jesus *in me*.

Why did he emphasize this? Perhaps because he was showing that this was how Isaiah 49 was being fulfilled. God was revealing Jesus **in Paul**. It wasn't that Isaiah 49 was written with Paul in mind. It was that Christ had come to live within Paul and that because of this, Paul was now fulfilling Jesus' work! Thus, in the next chapter, notice how Paul makes this clear: *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20). Jesus was alive in Paul. But he wasn't just supposed to be alive in Paul. *"My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!"* (Gal 4:19). God had formed Christ in Paul. Jesus was living in Paul, and because of that, Paul was a fulfillment of Isaiah 49. And yet, this was the same process that not just Paul and the disciples were to undergo—it was the process for the believers in Galatia as well! In other words, Isaiah 49 was also meant to be about them, not because it was literally about them, but because it was about Jesus, and Jesus was supposed to be alive in them. Just as Jesus passed his mission to the disciples, so the mission of the servant

in Isaiah would be given to the ecclesia. And yet, unlike what we had seen with Paul's use of Isaiah to demonstrate his authority, what did the Galatians fulfilling Isaiah have anything to do with the central issue in Galatia? How was this connected to salvation by faith and salvation by works? Lord willing, we will explore those questions in the second article.

## THE MOTIVE FORCE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

To understand how Isaiah relates to Paul's primary focus with the Galatians, consider Paul's reference to another chapter in Isaiah: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."* (Gal 1:3-5). This is Paul's customary greeting. However, he has added something to it:

*To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Rom 1:7).

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor 1:1).

Essentially, Paul brought together Isaiah 49, with Christ living in him, and showed the **motivation** for Jesus living in him. Jesus's sacrifice was the motive and how all of this could happen. Paul was a fulfillment of Isaiah 49 because Christ was living in him. And Christ was living in him because of his sacrifice.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 1:2).*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 1:2).*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:2).*

Do you see what Paul has done in Galatians? He doesn't just give his customary greeting but adds to it something urgent because the Galatians were dealing with a very specific problem: *"who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."* This was what the Galatians needed to know and remember—this was the solution to their problem.

And, the reason that this is so important for our considerations is that this appears to be an allusion right back to Isaiah: *"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."* (Isa 53:10). Jesus' death was according to the will of God, and it was an offering for sin! The Greek even utilizes the same word here for gave (δίδωμι). This was what the Galatians needed to understand—Jesus gave himself for our sins. With that understanding, righteousness from the law was worthless because there was a new way. And that way found its basis in Isaiah. But how does that connect to Christ living in the Galatians and **them** fulfilling Isaiah? All of this comes together in the next chapter: *"I have*

*been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Gal 2:20). We have already seen how Paul used this verse to explain how **he** fulfilled Isaiah. But now look at what else is there—do you see Isaiah 53? Essentially, Paul brought together Isaiah 49, with Christ living in him, and showed the **motivation** for Jesus living in him. Jesus's sacrifice was the motive and how all of this could happen. Paul was a fulfillment of Isaiah 49 because Christ was living in him. And Christ was living in him because of his sacrifice. All of this found its basis in the prophet Isaiah.

## CONCLUSION

These quotations of Isaiah are not simply support of Paul's authority. They explain the process of salvation—they are a description of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the possibility that this sacrifice offered of Christ living in the believers. Thus, these were not just quotations—they were prophecies of a time when lives would completely and entirely change, and religion wouldn't be connected to ritual. Instead, religion would be about Christ living in the members of the ecclesia.

But there is still more significance to Isaiah in Galatians. Not only did the prophet teach the people about the means of salvation, but it would remind them of **why** salvation was so essential. Lord willing, that will be the subject of our next article.

*Jason Hensley  
(Simi Hills, CA)*

# THE SABBATH FIRE

*By Bruce Waite*

The Sabbath, as we know, was a day set aside by God as a day of rest. Indeed, it was instituted to reflect a far-reaching example that is filled with deep meaning, *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* (Exod 20:11). On the surface, it was a day of rest from the weary tasks of everyday life that one faces week by week. But it also reached forward to encompass the design of selflessness and reflection on the glories of our Heavenly Father, while affording a fleeting glimpse of His Kingdom to come.

Of the many passages and references we find throughout the Scriptures there is one that stands out with a curious feature. Exodus 35:2-3 reads, *“Six days*

*shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to the LORD; whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.”* The mention of not kindling a fire seems to be injected almost in redundancy with regard to the previous verse. Yet we know that the Scriptures do not waste time on insignificant detail. There is limited space, and our Heavenly Father uses all of it with intricately, wonderful purpose. So, what may be a reason for this to be related at this juncture?

As was noted above, perhaps this refers to an emphasis on not serving oneself but dedicating all ones’ efforts into contemplation and worship of our Creator. Truly, this must be part of the

puzzle, but can that be all there is to it? If this is the case, then we do see a conflict arise when Jesus addresses this as a sole issue of meaning regarding what is meant by work on the Sabbath. Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath day and was reproved by the ruler of the synagogue for working on the sabbath day. Jesus defends his action by stating, *“Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”* (Luke 13:10-17). He leaves his detractors speechless and ashamed of their apparent interpretation and application of Sabbath laws.

Again in Mark's record we read of the instance where the Pharisees denounced Jesus' disciples for picking ears of grain to eat as they passed through a field (Mark 2:23-28). They rightly interpret that they were allowed to glean according to the law (Lev 19:9-10), but missed the mark entirely when applying the sabbath law regarding the

prohibition of work. The astute reply that Jesus forwards is most telling, *“Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.”* (Mark 2:25-27).

If we apply this principle to the Sabbath law concerning the kindling of a fire on the Sabbath we begin to see that there must be something more intended. Fire was used in the home for heat and cooking. It does not seem that our Heavenly Father who is, *“merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation,”* (Exod 34:6-7), would never intend for



His children to starve or freeze. His laws are not enacted to be a burden to make our lives hard and difficult. A deeper meaning, therefore, must reside in the words of this passage.

Perhaps if we contemplate one of the significances of the overall import of the Sabbath, we can visualize an allegory pointing to the time of the Kingdom. The six days leading up to the Kingdom period can represent the time from creation onward. The six days of creation point to this same understanding. Both of these periods lead to the Sabbath rest. Paul writes in Hebrews 4:1-11 about the Sabbath rest to come, *"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest."* So the Sabbath comes to represent the time when God's Kingdom will be established here on the earth through His Son Jesus. Viewed in this way, a

light begins to be shed on the passage we are considering.

One of the first things to understand is that Exodus 35:3 does not place a ban on **having** a fire. It is only a directive that prohibits a fire to be started. Why is this little detail so significant? Though there is definitely a bit of work involved in starting a fire from scratch, can this be its only import? A search of other laws given to the children of Israel may begin to reveal a deeper meaning.

The law concerning the golden lampstand within the Holy Place in the tabernacle is a good place to start. The people and priests were directed to, *"And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually. In the tent of meeting, without the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall set it in order, to burn from evening to morning before the LORD; it shall be a statute forever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel."* (Exod 27:20-21, compare. Lev 24:2-4). This symbolized, in part, the light of God's word that was to shine at all times in their lives. If we apply this principle to the passage in 1 Samuel 3:2-3, the details now begin to come into focus.

Israel at this time had neglected their worship and were losing their remembrance and understanding of God's word. One of the jobs of the priesthood was to teach these principles to the people continually. However, we note that, *"And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see."* (1 Sam 3:2). Eli, the High Priest, was "blind"



in this duty. He could not “see” God’s word clearly anymore. As a result, *“the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD.”* (1 Sam 3:3). The symbol of the knowledge and wisdom associated with God’s word, was allowed to go out! Truly, the knowledge of God was dimming in the nation!

The symbol of the light of the knowledge and wisdom of God’s word is reiterated often throughout Scripture, but never so poignantly as when Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:1-2. In Matthew 4:14-17, he applies the passage to Jesus, the great teacher, when he writes, *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”* Jesus brought back the true knowledge and wisdom of his Father’s word in his teachings!

Another item that was to burn continually was the incense within the tabernacle. The altar of incense was placed in the tabernacle in the Holy Place, before the veil that separated it from the Holy of Holies where the ark resided. Aaron was instructed to *“burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.”* (Exod 30:7-8). The burning of the incense represented

the prayers of the people which were to continually rise up to God. Indeed the Psalmist notes this when we read, *“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense.”* (Psa 141:2). One of the most powerful citations, in my opinion, regarding this can be found in Revelation 8:2-4, which directly hearkens back to the tabernacle, *“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”*

There was yet another item that was to burn continually which was the fire on the altar of sacrifice. Leviticus 6:9 states, *“Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.”* The NIV renders this passage, *“and the fire must be kept burning on the altar.”* Sacrifice was made as a recognition of sin and the need for forgiveness, without which the outcome was death. Paul, once again, states in his letter to the Romans, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 6:8). The people were to continually acknowledge that they had a sinful nature, but that forgiveness was still possible by turning to their Heavenly Father in sincerity. Jesus’ sacrifice is a perpetual one that lasts

The five foolish had not prepared completely for his coming. They had their lamps, but without preparing more fuel the lamps went out. They scrambled to replenish the oil.



for all time! Paul's letter to the Hebrews brings this out in Romans 9:25-26, "*Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*" Thus, the symbol burned continually, pointing to the perpetual forgiveness achieved in the death of our Lord and given to those who seek it!

Now let's turn back to the law of the Sabbath fire. If we apply the principles we have just considered, an amazing allegory unfolds. If the Sabbath points ahead to the Kingdom, then the time for preparation for it is over. It is now too late to seek the knowledge and forgiveness that God has previously tried to offer. Consider the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The five wise virgins had prepared themselves for the bridegroom's arrival

by taking oil with them to continually give light. When he arrived, at an hour that none had anticipated, all ten "*slumbered and slept*" their lamps were still burning. The five foolish had not prepared completely for his coming. They had their lamps, but without preparing more fuel the lamps went out. They scrambled to replenish the oil. Yet when they feel that they now have amassed enough they hear those fateful words from the other side of the door now closed to them, "*Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*"

As a digression, two other parables are recorded in this same chapter. Matthew appears to have done this with purpose. The next parable is the parable of the talents (v. 14-30). All the servants were given funds to use by their Lord, yet only two use them and are rewarded for it. The third neglected his and was condemned! One layer of meaning is that God does give us tools to use in His service. Some more than others and all different, but all are given them.

We will never be right in stating at the seat of judgment that we were never able to work in God's service during our lifetime because we never had the ability and talent to do so.

The third parable in the chapter depicts the Judgment Seat itself (v. 31-46). Two groups of people are noted, some on the Judge's right hand and some on his left, i.e., the sheep and the goats respectively. Those on the right are told that they had done well in his service and hear those wonderful words, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."* These people are astonished because they did not even realize what they had done. They had dedicated their lives in everyday service in a way that was second nature to them. This dedication was not viewed as work with pay, but a way of life in God's service. The ones on the left, the goats, hear the resounding words of judgment, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."*

They had dedicated their lives in everyday service in a way that was second nature to them. This dedication was not viewed as work with pay, but a way of life in God's service.

They too are astounded because they thought they had worked throughout their lives in God's service and now deserved recompense for time spent. The problem is that they had done these things in their own way, not in the way the Master had directed. Even though they thought they had done everything right, it was done as a burden and in their own way!

Linking these three together, a wonderful picture unfolds. Matthew has recorded that Jesus taught us to be ready for his return, that we have been given various abilities to work in God's service, what we should be doing and the frame of mind we should have while approaching our service, for it is life itself!

So, then this little verse in Exodus 35 reveals quite an astonishing lesson. Our preparation for the Kingdom is now. We need to have our lampstands burning with the oil of God's knowledge at all times, for all to see. We need to never forget to let our prayers cease from rising in words of comfort, assistance and praise! We need to continually seek forgiveness and realize that when we do it in sincerity, it is readily given. We also can understand that this is a way of life that can be filled with peace and joy in God's service. Each week when the Sabbath came round, it would be a gentle reminder of a time to come that was being prepared for every day. Pity those poor

individuals who forgot to keep their home fires burning and found them out on the Sabbath. As they sat in the cold and darkness feeling the shame of their neglect, seeing their neighbors who had prepared their fires. It would also be a stark reminder of what the portion was for those rejected from a future Kingdom. The lesson, though hard and humbling, would be one that they would not soon forget. This would prepare them perhaps even more in the years that followed to never neglect their service but make it a way of life.

Let us therefore, remember to keep our fires burning now. Paul's words in Hebrews 2:3 serve as a gentle reminder, *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began*

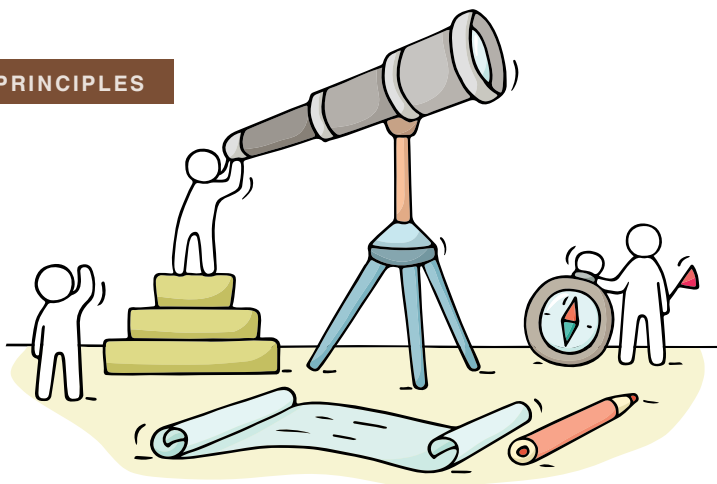
*to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."* We do not know the hour of our Lord's return. We also do not know when this life will be over for any one of us. We do know however, that when either of those events take place, it will be too late!

Let us sing with a renewed heart the words of Hymn 396,

*"Life is the time to serve our Lord,  
to do his will to learn His word;  
in death there is no power to know,  
far less in wisdom's way to go."*

*Bruce Waite  
(Southern New Hampshire, NH)*





## PART 6

# TRUE PRINCIPLES & *UNCERTAIN DETAILS* ABOUT PROPHECY

By Joe Hill

**S**O far in this series of articles, we have gone through the Truth to be Received Clauses #17-#30 and the related Doctrines to be Rejected. We have emphasized the principles that we all agree are essential and distinguished them from the uncertain details that we must not impose on others. As far as the interpretation of prophecy is concerned there are still a few outstanding topics to be discussed:

- a. Doctrine to be Rejected #33 about the English being the ten tribes of Israel.
- b. The Millennial Temple.
- c. The Continuous Historic and other approaches to prophetic interpretation.

The first of these was covered by Brothers Peter Bilello and Peter Hemingray in their *Tidings* series on the Doctrines to be Rejected.<sup>1</sup> I will address the second topic in this article and the third topic in next month's magazine, God willing.

### THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

A few brothers and sisters teach and preach Bro. Henry Sulley's interpretation of Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 40-48) in first principle classes, in Sunday School classes, and in public lectures.<sup>2</sup> They believe his view is a fundamental part of the truth; it is essentially equivalent to their understanding of the Kingdom of God. To them, those who do not agree with this view do not truly understand the

gospel. In their opinion, those who do not accept Bro. Sulley's interpretation should not be in fellowship.

In contrast, many who agree with Bro. Sulley's view acknowledge that it is not a first principle. For example, Bro. Roberts distinguished the uncertain details from the true principle concerning the millennial temple:

"THE GENERAL TRUTH—That Christ will build the temple of the future age as a house of prayer for all people.

"UNCERTAIN DETAIL—What will be the size of it? What will be the shape of it? There are no grounds for absolute certainty. There are strong grounds for the view presented by brother Sulley in his temple book: but we should not be justified in making the reception of this view a condition of fellowship. It is sufficient that the general truth is received. Any view that may be entertained as to details is not inconsistent with the general truth."

The general principle that Christ will build a house of prayer for all people is based on the words of Isaiah: "*For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*" (Isa 56:7c); Jesus quotes this passage when he casts out

the money changers from the temple (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46). "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*" (Isa 2:2).

This principle is also related to the promises to David: "*He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*" (2 Sam 7:13a). James emphasized this point at the Jerusalem Conference:

*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.* (Acts 15:14-17).

On the other hand, it is essential that we do not impose uncertain details on our fellow believers. No matter how confident we may be personally on the interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48, we should not treat it as a test of fellowship.

No matter how confident we may be personally on the interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48, we should not treat it as a test of fellowship. Even though Bro. Sulley's interpretation is the traditional Christadelphian view, that is not sufficient to justify making it a first principle doctrine.

Even though Bro. Sulley's interpretation is the traditional Christadelphian view, that is not sufficient to justify making it a first principle doctrine. In fact, to some brothers and sisters it is disturbing that this interpretation is treated with the veneration many give it. Here are some issues that might cause one to have second thoughts about it.<sup>3</sup>

### PROBLEMS WITH EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE BEING THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

**No Gentiles.** Ezekiel explicitly rules out Gentiles worshipping in the temple he describes: *"Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel."* (Ezek 44:9). This command contrasts with the temple being a house of prayer *"for all nations."* It also contrasts with well-known passages like Isaiah 2: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."* (Isa 2:2).

**The Sacrifices of Animals.** Christ offered himself once for all time, having perfected forever those who are sanctified. No further sacrifices are needed (especially of animals):

*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the*

*people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.* (Heb 7:26-28).

*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* (Heb 9:24-28).

*But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* (Heb 10:12-14).

To avoid this problem, it is often suggested that the sacrifices associated with Ezekiel's temple are not efficacious for the forgiveness of sins. But the text itself says otherwise: *"The prince... shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the*

peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.” (Ezek 45:17); the word “reconciliation” is rendered “atonement” by many English translations (e.g., RV, NRVS, ESV, NIV, NASB, NET). Beyond this explicit statement, the terminology of sacrifices (i.e., sin offerings, burnt offering, and peace offerings) is used throughout Ezekiel 40-48; if these aren’t for the forgiveness of Israel’s sins, then the language is misleading.

**The Priests.** The saints are to reign with Christ as kings and priests during the millennium: *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* (Rev 20:6; cf. Rev 1:6; 5:10).

The laws Ezekiel gives concerning priests are inconsistent with what we know to be true about the saints in the Kingdom Age.

*Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.* (Ezek 44:21-22).

Priests not being allowed to drink wine contrasts with Jesus’ statement about the Kingdom Age: *“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* (Matt 26:29).

Priests taking wives contrasts with Jesus’ statement about the Kingdom Age: *“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in*

*marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”* (Matt 22:30).

Priests leaving widows behind implies they die, which contrasts with the saints being immortal in the Kingdom Age: *“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.”* (Rom 2:7).

Given these inconsistencies, there would need to be two orders of priests in the Kingdom Age, with Christ and the saints being one and those described by Ezekiel being a second. Is there any other evidence for this or is it just an expedient way to maintain the millennial interpretation?

**Another possibility.** If Ezekiel isn’t describing the Millennial Temple, then what is he describing? One possibility is that he is giving the pattern for the



temple that should have been built during the restoration of the nation following the Babylonian captivity.<sup>4</sup> If this were the case, it would clarify the issues raised above. It would also explain Ezekiel's emphasis that these chapters were addressed to the house of Israel, in particular so they would acknowledge their sins:

*Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. (Ezek 43:10).*

*And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations. (Ezek 44:6).<sup>5</sup>*

No matter what the Millennial Temple might look like physically, it is clear that it will reflect a deeper spiritual lesson concerning Yahweh's dwelling place in the earth.

## THE TEMPLE OF CHRIST AND THE SAINTS

No matter what the Millennial Temple might look like physically, it is clear that it will reflect a deeper spiritual lesson concerning Yahweh's dwelling place in the earth. For example, Isaiah tells us where God intends to dwell:

*Thus saith the LORD, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa 66:1-2).*

So, Yahweh looks to make his abode in those people who are poor and of a contrite spirit. Of course, this starts with our Lord Jesus Christ and extends through him to the saints:

*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works... And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:10, 16-17).*

Paul describes the spiritual temple of Christ and the saints.

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God*

*dwelleth in you? (1 Cor 3:16).*

*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Cor 6:16).*

*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22).*

John explains that New Jerusalem, the household of Christ and the saints, in whom God dwells, is the true temple of God in the earth, the glory of God and the Lamb providing light:

*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and*

*be their God... And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. (Rev 21:3, 22-26; cf. Isa 60).*

John goes on to use an encouraging image taken from Ezekiel 47:

*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:1-2; cf. Ezek 47:1, 12).*

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<sup>1</sup> "Doctrines to Be Rejected (36) #33 British Israelites," Tidings, November, 2018, pp. 485-486 ([https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2018\\_11\\_Nov.pdf](https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2018_11_Nov.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> Henry Sulley, *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, originally published in 1887.

<sup>3</sup> Besides the issues raised below, there are also problems with Bro. Sulley's understanding of the architectural design of Ezekiel's temple. See, for example, Bro. Harry Whittaker, "A Fresh Look at Ezekiel's Temple" on the Christadelphian Agora website ([http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/haw/ezek\\_temple/index.html](http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/haw/ezek_temple/index.html)).

<sup>4</sup> See Harry Whittaker's articles cited in Endnote #3, and Bro. Duncan Heaster's article, "The Exiles Who Returned" on the Carelinks Ministries website (<https://carelinks.net/doc/biblelives-en/108>).

<sup>5</sup> One reviewer of this article commented, "Ezekiel is told to show the house to the house of Israel, its sum or pattern (Ezek 43:10-11). That was, in itself, a message that was to lead them to repentance and make them ashamed of their sins. I have long wondered if the prophecy was to be about a real, physical temple, or perhaps always as an illustration for leading them to repent. There are several of these in Ezekiel's prophecy, including play-acting messages to help them to understand that Jerusalem was about to be destroyed."

# WHAT ARE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES?

By George Booker

This article is a continuation from the October Special Issue  
*“When We Disagree: Ensuring Love Prevails”*

When we search out the true fundamentals which constitute the gospel, we find that they are characterized by their simplicity—what Paul called *“the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor 11:3, KJV). These simple truths for beginners are compared by Peter to *“the pure [sincere: KJV] milk of the word”* (1 Pet 2:2)<sup>1</sup>, which can nourish the “little ones” (Matt 10:42; 18:6-14; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2), whom Christ has called to follow him.

The question has often been asked: “How do we define first principles?” The contrast between “milk” and “solid food” (or strong meat: KJV) (Heb 5:12,13; cp. 1 Cor 3:2) helps

here. When it comes to food, there is a definite contrast between what is good for babies, and what is useful for adults, and so it is in spiritual matters. It is good to grow up in Christ and be able to “digest” more solid food, but it is not good to expect newly baptized believers to partake of the same food as the grown-ups—certainly not for a while. When it comes to fundamentals, our motto should be: “Keep it simple.”

And here is the dilemma: On the one hand, the Bible plainly speaks of those who are “newborn babes,” still “unskillful in the word of righteousness,” still in need of “milk” rather than strong meat. Nevertheless,

we must acknowledge that—despite their inexperience—these new converts are still *"in Christ," "brothers and sisters,"* and *"partakers of the heavenly calling"* (see 1 Cor 3:1; Heb 3:1; 5:13).

On the other hand, fellowship matters are invariably decided by ecclesial elders, who have 30 or 40 or 50 years of learning, accompanied perhaps by the desire to display that learning. At the same time, it is quite possible that these respected elders may have given very little thought as to what infants or babes in Christ need.

Somewhere in the middle, between "the simplicity in Christ" and the "strong meat," right-thinking leaders should be able to draw lines to divide essential beliefs from non-essential. Is such a task impossible? Is there no Scriptural guide to follow?

In one of his last articles, Bro. Robert Roberts lamented this difficulty of discerning between essential and non-essential Bible teachings. He wrote:

"It is possible to go too far in our demands on fellow believers. How far we ought to go and where to stop, is at one time or other a perplexing problem to most earnest minds."<sup>2</sup>

Have we as a community of believers been able to rightly divide the Word of God, and determine where this seemingly mysterious boundary lies? Our long history of one division after another seems to offer the answer, loud and clear: "No!"

Is it really that difficult? Or have we not really tried to find the answer to the question? "How far to go? Where to stop?"

## RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF GOD

I will start with something which is indisputable. The Bible proves, and it is unanimously believed by Christadelphians (as far I know), that true belief of the gospel must precede true baptism (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-42; 8:4-12, 26-39; 16:13-15, 23-34; 18:4-11; etc.).

Therefore, we can conclude that the teachings essential for salvation—what we call "first principles"—are the same teachings which are essential for Scriptural baptism, no more and no less. Furthermore, we shall assume that the purpose of what we call a "statement of faith" should not be to define everything that might possibly be believed, but rather to define only what **should** be believed as a prerequisite for baptism and admission to fellowship.

Ideally, these three items should be perfectly equivalent:

- teachings essential to salvation,
- teachings to be believed before baptism, and
- a Bible-based "statement of faith."

To continue: If we can find in the Bible either a "statement of faith" (in the words of Scripture), or if we can determine the doctrines that were required to be believed before being baptized, then we shall have found a Biblical answer (not merely an intuitive or subjective or traditional answer) to the question: "How should we define first principles?"

Then we will have solid evidence with which to compare any "statement of faith." In other words, does the statement in question go too far, or not far enough, or is it "just right"?

In his previously mentioned article, Bro. Roberts wrote:

“[Men of God] are afraid on the one hand of compromising the truth in fellowship; and on the other, of sinning against the weaker members of the body of Christ. The only end there can be to this embarrassment is found in the discrimination between true principles and uncertain details that do not overthrow them.”

Bro. Roberts then proceeds, in his lengthy article, to give some examples both of what he considers “true principles” and what he considers “uncertain details.” He accomplishes this, to good effect—insofar as he goes. His article, cited above, is still well worth reading. But he does not attempt to describe any characteristics which would prove a doctrine essential for salvation (or fellowship, for that matter).

It may well be that he intended to develop this idea further when he had the opportunity. But sadly, he was unable to do so because he died in 1898, very shortly after this article appeared in *The Christadelphian*. If we are to take his idea further, then we must start where he had to leave off.

### **DEFINING FIRST PRINCIPLES**

What are the first principles? And how can we identify them as such? My book (under the same title as this article,) is a serious effort to answer both questions, by allowing the Bible itself to provide the answers. My book also compares the results with the most common Christadelphian statement of faith, the BASF (and with its closest

variation, the BUSF)—so that we can answer the vexing question: “Does our statement go too far, or not far enough, in defining essential doctrine?”

The Apostle Paul’s “summary of faith” is the nearest thing in the Bible to a true statement of faith. It is found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesian believers, in which he appeals for unity of mind and fellowship among believers there based on their mutual acceptance of seven “ones”:

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph 4:4-6).*

These seven “ones” do indeed provide an outline of what RR called “true principles”, which guided me to consider, in turn, each of the seven items—basing my inquiry on what else the Apostle Paul had written elsewhere about each one, from “one body” all the way through to “one God”.

But there is more to be found in the Bible, along the same lines...

### **THE APOSTLES’ “FIRST PRINCIPLES” LECTURES**

By far the most fruitful of these investigations is what I designated by the subtitle above. I found that there are nine such “lectures” in the Book of Acts. Each one is characterized by the preacher’s intent to present the gospel, and thereby to convince his listeners to believe, repent, and be baptized. Of these nine lectures, there are:

- three by Peter: in Jerusalem (Acts 2:22-42), in Jerusalem again (Acts 3:12-26), and to Cornelius and his

family (Acts 10:34-48);

- one by Stephen: in Jerusalem, just before he was executed (Acts 7:2-56);
- one by Philip: to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:30-39); and
- four by Paul: in Antioch (Acts 13:15-39), in Athens (Acts 17:22-31), to Felix (Acts 24:14-21), and to Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:2-27).

In most of these cases, the "first principles" lecture is supplemented by direct quotations from Old Testament passages, and these passages are of course taken into consideration in this study.

## THE APOSTOLIC STATEMENT OF FAITH

We now have the raw materials with which to construct an apostolic statement of faith, using the approaches outlined above to determine which Bible teachings are essential for salvation.

The following statement leans heavily on the "Acts statement of faith" as well as Paul's Ephesians 4 summary. (I have omitted the Bible references to save space, although the most relevant passages are included in the book itself.)

- 1. The Bible:** The Bible is the Word of God, directly inspired by Him in all its parts. It is powerful to instruct man in righteousness, and to accomplish God's purpose in those who believe.
- 2. God:** There is only one God, the Father, who created all things. He is the Eternal King, all-wise and all-powerful. He has a definite plan which He will bring to pass by His mighty power. He desires that man might seek Him and be saved.
- 3. The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the power of God, the means by which He carries out His will. It is not a distinct "god" or "person" but is part of the Father Himself.
- 4. Jesus, the Son of God:** God—in accordance with His eternal plan, and in His goodness and kindness and grace—manifested Himself through a Son. Jesus of Nazareth is that unique and holy Son of God, begotten of the virgin Mary by the power of God, without a human father. He is not the second person of a "trinity" of "gods", and he had no pre-human existence except in the mind and purpose of his Father.
- 5. Jesus, the Man:** Although he was the Son of God, Jesus was also truly and altogether a man; he shared our mortal nature, with all its sorrows and griefs.
- 6. Sin and Death:** The first man was Adam, who disobeyed God and was condemned by Him. Adam was responsible for bringing sin and death into the world.
- 7. The "Soul":** There is no consciousness or other existence in death. The "soul" simply means the body, mind, or life; it is not immortal. Souls die.
- 8. "Hell":** "Hell" means the grave, or absolute destruction. There is no eternal torture for the wicked. The wages of sin is death.
- 9. The Sacrifice of Christ:** Although he was of our weak and sinful nature, Jesus was enabled, through faith in and love for his Father, to overcome all temptation and to live a righteous and sinless life.

His crucifixion—accomplished by wicked men but according to God's plan—was the means by which he was saved, and by which those who believe in him may be saved, from sin and death. God was working in the sacrifice of His Son to express His love and grace and forbearance toward all men—not His wrath against them.

**10. The Resurrection of Christ:**

Because of his perfect righteousness, it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death. God raised him from the dead and glorified him. Later Jesus ascended to heaven.

**11. The Mediatorship of Christ:** Being exalted to God's right hand in heaven, Jesus is the only priest and mediator between God and men.

**12. The Second Coming of Christ:**

Christ will remain in heaven until the time for restoring all things, including the kingdom to Israel. Then he will return to the earth in glory—personally and visibly—to fulfill the hope of all true believers.

**13. Resurrection:** After his return, Jesus will raise many of the dead, the faithful and the unfaithful. He will also send forth his angels to gather them together with the living to the great judgment.

**14. Judgment and Reward:** The unfaithful will be punished with a second, eternal death. The faithful will be rewarded, by God's grace, with everlasting life on the earth, receiving glorified and immortal bodies.

**15. The Promises to Abraham:** The promises made to Abraham,

confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, require a literal inheritance in the earth for Christ and all the faithful, who are the spiritual "seed of Abraham". The righteous do not go to heaven at death.

**16. The Promises to David:** The promises made to David, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, require Jesus to sit on David's throne and rule over God's Kingdom, which is the kingdom of Israel restored. Jerusalem will be the capital of this kingdom.

**17. The Kingdom of God:** Jesus will be assisted by his immortal brothers and sisters in ruling over the mortal peoples in the Kingdom of God. This kingdom will result in everlasting righteousness, happiness, and peace. Finally, all sin and death will be removed, and the earth will at last be filled with the glory of God. The earth will not be literally burned up or destroyed.

**18. The "Devil":** The "devil" is another name for sin in human nature; it is not a separate supernatural being or fallen angel. Christ overcame this "devil" in himself by defeating the tendencies to sin in his own nature. Therefore, he can provide us with a covering for our sins.

**19. "Satan" and "Demons":** "Satan" is a Hebrew word which means an adversary; it is used about people and circumstances which oppose God's will. "Devils" (Greek "demons") are not agents of any supernatural "devil" or "god" of evil. In New Testament times, people who had mental illnesses or

disorders were referred to as having "demons."

**20. Justification by Faith:** Man can obtain justification, or righteousness, only by the grace and mercy of God, through faith in Christ. Man cannot save himself by his own works alone, no matter how good or numerous.

**21. Baptism:** There is only one true gospel, which cannot be altered. Belief of this gospel, true repentance, and baptism (total immersion in water) are essential for salvation. In baptism we turn to God, our sins are forgiven, we become heirs of the promises to Abraham and his spiritual "seed", we identify with Christ in his life and death, and we are born again in him. The sprinkling of babies is not true Scriptural baptism.

**22. The One Body:** Those who believe the gospel and are baptized into Christ become "brethren in Christ", without regard to nationality. They also become a part of the "one body," with Christ as their head. God calls them His children, and they become partakers of His grace and love.

**23. The Breaking of Bread:** The breaking of bread and drinking of wine, in remembrance of Jesus, was instituted by him for his true followers. It is a means of affirming their status as members of the "one body" of Christ.

**24. The Jews:** The Jews are God's chosen people. Though scattered because of disobedience, they will be purified (after repentance and faith), regathered, and made ready for the coming of the Messiah.

**25. The Commandments of Christ:** All those who believe these teachings should strive also to live godly, Christ-like lives. This involves the keeping of Christ's commandments, and separateness from the affairs of this world, including its politics and police and military service. The commandments of Christ, including those of his apostles, are therefore an important part of any Statement of Faith.

## CONCLUSION

The reader will note that the above statements resemble the corresponding clauses in the BASF—so much so that we might safely say the ASF (Apostolic Statement of Faith), and the BASF are 98-99% alike.

But there is still something to be learned by considering where the ASF and the BASF differ, even if only slightly. Here are a few examples:

a. The BASF does not have a clear statement about the fundamental Bible teaching of justification by faith. Corresponding to this is its failure to mention conversion or repentance in connection with baptism. These oversights may reinforce an unfortunate Christadelphian tendency—that is, to visualize, and perhaps to proclaim, salvation as a legal or mechanical process ("learn the facts, and then be baptized") more than as a moral awakening ("change your life, and then be reborn").

b. In not one single clause does the BASF mention "love" as a motivation of God or Jesus Christ in their work. Also, there is a complete absence of "mercy" as an attribute of the Father and the Son.

c. While omitting Bible words such as “love” and “mercy”, the BASF does use uncommon and difficult words, suitable perhaps for a legal document of the Victorian era, but not nearly so suitable in a document which we hope will be read (and understood!) by people today. These are words such as: **extant, bequeath, underived, abolition, immaculate, and abrogate**. Possibly, some older readers can define these words, but do our Sunday school students and our newly baptized members understand them?

d. The BASF has no real counterpart for the ASF clauses 22 and 23, concerning the One Body, fellowship, and the breaking of bread. In my opinion, this is a major shortcoming. Historically, this omission of the positive doctrine of fellowship may account for our serious preoccupation with the negative aspects of “fellowship” (that is, which believers ought to be excluded). In short, Christadelphians seem to have always been very concerned with cutting off fellowship from others who might be in error—much more concerned, that is, than seeking fellowship ties with others who believe as we do and are also part of Christ’s One Body.

I will take the liberty to editorialize for a moment: I must say, for myself, that I would much rather stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ with a record of being too lenient than with a record

of being too strict. I offer six texts:

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17).*

*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Matt 7:1-2).*

*Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. (Rom 14:4).*

*You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat... Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way. (Rom 14:10, 13).*

*Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! (Jas 2:12-13).*

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matt 6:14-15).*

George Booker  
(Austin Leander, TX)

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> “True Principles and Uncertain Details,” *The Christadelphian*, May 1898, Vol. 35, No. 407, p. 182

Greetings Bro. Dave,

I came across the digital version of the *Tidings* Magazine while doing a search for Christadelphian apps. Enjoyed reading many of the articles and checking out the resources. I saw the Sunday School book and I purchased a copy.

COVID-19 has been a challenge to our ecclesias, but here in Western Australia we have not been touched severely by the virus, the main restriction has been upon travel. I certainly plan on visiting our Sri Lanka mission area as soon as it is possible to travel there. It is wonderful to appreciate how our God is working in many parts of the world and in many people's lives.

I was not brought up in the faith, but as a young man in my late teens, some 40 years ago I came to the faith with three of my four sisters. My mother and father opposed the true message of the Bible until their passing. Our mother passed away this year at 94 years, well and active to the end, but now gone forever.

If the chance arrives, I will visit North America one day. My wife has had a brief visit to San Francisco several year ago.

Keep up your good work in the Lord's vineyard.

Chris Carmody,  
(*Gosnells Ecclesia*,  
Perth, Western Australia)

# A YEAR IN BOLIVIA

*By Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell*

**L**IVING in La Paz, Bolivia for a year (with the support of the CBMA) was vastly different from what we were expecting, yet so rewarding. Everything changed when the pandemic suddenly shut down the world; we arrived on March 18th, 2020, on the day the Bolivian borders closed. We had planned to spend lots of time with the brothers and sisters, to share Bible classes and fellowship together and to further preach via public lectures etc. Suddenly, we were stuck inside, only permitted to leave our apartment once a week for groceries and other necessities. This turned into several months of solitude before the restrictions relaxed slightly to a “new normal.”

Looking back now though, we wouldn't change a thing. While at the time it perhaps seemed a little frustrating that we couldn't get out and interact personally with others, the shut-

down of the country opened so many opportunities that would not have happened otherwise. People suddenly had time on their hands, uncertainty in their hearts, and the Internet at their fingertips. More people were reaching out searching for answers and signing up for online Bible courses.

The whole situation opened an opportunity for a family of four sisters living in Cochabamba, Bolivia, which is about an eight hour's drive from where we were living. The youngest sister had worked in La Paz for a while and had been introduced to the truth while she was living there. She subsequently returned home and continued studying the Bible, at the same time preaching to her family. A few months after we arrived in Bolivia, one of her older sisters asked to start learning more about the Bible too, and so Rosie started classes with her twice a week via Zoom. These were going well

with both sisters, but not a whole lot of interest was being shown from the rest of the family. However, in December of 2020, very suddenly and tragically, the fifteen-year-old son of another of the sisters passed away. While this was a very difficult time for the entire family, God meant it for good. Before too long, the boy's parents decided they wanted to learn more about the Lord and His message of salvation through the Scriptures. As neither of them were working at the time, they were able to do classes with both of us over Zoom three times a week!

So has grown a great thirst for learning the Scripture within the extended family, even including the children. Twelve-year-old Jessica (daughter of the oldest sister) was telling Rosie that these days her uncle now reads the Bible with her nine-year-old cousin, Jose Maria, after dinner every night. The other evening, Jose Maria came and found Jessica and told her that his dad had fallen asleep on the couch while they were doing the readings, and asked her, "Do you want to come and read the Bible with me?" They apparently spent a couple of hours reading together, comparing the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism, then reading about Solomon's life before finishing off with the story of Jezebel and Ahab. Quite the selection!

We were also doing several other classes with various people within Bolivia (and in other countries) over Zoom every week, which would never have happened to that extent, had people not suddenly had so much free time. God works in wonderful ways. Now that life is returning to normal in Bolivia, with people back at work, the

frequency of classes has diminished with classes dropping to perhaps once a week, but there still seems to be interest. We pray that God continues to work in these people's lives.

Perhaps the most encouraging points of our stay in Bolivia were the three baptisms that happened. Two sisters joined the family of Christ in November 2020, and another sister in January 2021. These were hugely edifying for the ecclesia, in a season of so much difficulty and uncertainty. At a time when death seemed very real to many, we had three new births. It really lifted all our spirits and strengthened the bond of the brothers and sisters. If the Lord wills, the Lampstand in Bolivia will continue to grow; there is currently one other young man studying for baptism, and we pray that others will also choose to take on the saving name of Jesus Christ.

While we had few opportunities to meet physically with the ecclesia throughout our time there (the majority of meetings and Bible classes were held over Zoom), we still grew to really love them, and they definitely became family to us. They were so excited when we told them that we were expecting a baby and were ready to claim it as their own. When Rosie broke her arm, and we suddenly changed our plans and decided to return to New Zealand, they were so supportive and brought around meals to help until we left. What a wonderful witness they were to us of the love and family we have in Christ. We greatly miss them! We continue to break bread with them over Zoom from here in New Zealand. It is always wonderful to see and hear them all. They love to see our daughter

Dalia (who was born in April after we returned to NZ and is named after one of the sisters in Bolivia) and they call her their “Paceñita”: their little La Paz girl. Bolivia will always hold a special place in our hearts. At present, it is nigh on impossible for us to get back into the country, due to border restrictions. However, if the Lord wills, we hope to be able to return to visit them in the future, if Jesus Christ hasn’t yet returned. We ask for your continued

prayers for the ongoing growth of the ecclesia, both spiritually and physically. And if you are ever in South America, we can personally tell you that you would be welcomed with open arms!

*Written by Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell,  
recent Fieldworkers in Bolivia*

*Submitted by Jan Berneau,  
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

TEACHING AND PREACHING

# MISSIONARY LIFE IN BOLIVIA

*By Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell*

**I**MAGINE sitting down for afternoon tea at someone’s house, and as you lift your hot drink to your lips, you glance around the room and notice a human skull staring back at you. In Bolivia, this is a very real possibility.

The animistic beliefs of the Aymara and other indigenous groups, contribute hugely to the culture of Bolivia. *La Pachamama* (Mother Earth) is worshipped as the life-giver, and spirits are said to inhabit many things, one of those being human skulls. Many families are in possession of such craniums, often those of their ancestors. They are passed down from generation to generation, in the hopes that they will endow good fortune upon those

that care for them. November 1 is the Catholic All Saints Day. To the Aymara, it is the Day of the Dead, honoring their ancestors’ return to earth and remembering forgotten spirits. As part of this celebration, the skulls are taken to visit the city cemetery where other human craniums have been unearthed from communal graves. The day is passed with dancing and much gaiety, with the displayed skulls dressed wearing hats or sunglasses. Back at home, later in the day, many are invited to celebrations akin to a birthday party, the “honored guests” being the skulls. Displayed on a table, the craniums will sit surrounded by offerings and enjoy a view of the festivities.

While the Catholic Church supposedly frowns upon this tradition, they still hold special services for worshippers and their *ñatitas* (the skulls), including readings from the gospels. This is an interesting example of how the Catholic and Aymaran beliefs are so often intermingled. When the Spanish Conquistadors arrived in South America bringing Catholicism with them, the Aymaran and Quechuan people only pretended to adopt Catholicism to avoid punishment while holding fast to their own beliefs. La Pachamama became portrayed as Mother Mary. The God of the Dark Places was portrayed as the Devil. With time, the line between Catholicism and animism became blurred, and almost total syncretism has occurred. For example, Catholic priests will bless Pachamama offerings being burnt at any significant event (wedding anniversaries, business openings, the completion of a new house etc.), with most people hiring a Catholic priest and an indigenous “*yatir*” to complete the celebration. The ex-president (and current president for that matter) embraced this dual faith, often attending a Catholic ceremony and then the next minute, sacrificing a llama for a pagan ritual. We found it intriguing, living in a country that is still so boldly pagan.

Now, it so happened that Bro. Francisco, a wonderfully faithful member of the La Paz ecclesia, had passed away the previous year on All Saints Day/Day of the Dead. One afternoon, his eighteen-year-old granddaughter, Cami, mentioned that the anniversary of Bro Francisco’s death was approaching and invited us to attend his memorial. We had no idea what to expect, but

wanted to go for Cami’s sake, as she had always attended meetings with her grandfather and was also doing first principle classes. The memorial was to be held at her grandmother’s house where Cami also lived. Cami had previously told us of her reluctance to travel in her home district after dark. As the memorial was to be held during daylight hours, we decided to make a show of support, praying for God’s guidance and protection.

The day dawned. It was with some trepidation we set out for our journey across the city to one of the poorer parts of La Paz. As we approached Cami’s neighborhood, I was very conscious of the fact that we were going to stand out: we are tall (in comparison to the Bolivians), white, and very obviously foreign. However, stepping out of the taxi, the streets didn’t look too different from other parts of La Paz. The dusty roads were lined with one story houses, all contained behind brick walls. Being a public holiday, it was fairly quiet. The only sounds were barking dogs, distant shouts of kids playing soccer, and the odd vehicle rumbling by. As we were ushered through the gate of Cami’s house and welcomed into their humble home, we were greeted by her grandmother (a staunch Catholic, whom we had not met before) and asked to sit down in their living room. Looking around, we were glad to see no skulls staring at us, just pictures of various saints tacked onto the green walls, a small table at the front of the room displaying a photo of Bro Francisco, and a few candles burning alongside some fruit and flowers.

It quickly became apparent that we were the guests of honor. We were

given the best seats, and when it came time to eat, we were served the largest plates of food. At the time, I was three months pregnant, and Cami's grandma, being aware of this fact, served me twice as much as anyone else! Now when you know that the money for food is sometimes hard to come by you feel compelled to eat what is given to you to show appreciation for such generosity. I was, however, having great difficulty finishing my helping. I quietly asked Cami if her grandmother would be offended if I wasn't able to completely finish my food. She told me not to worry, that she would quietly take it out to the kitchen; however, a few minutes later Cami returned with my plate, to which she had added even more food—there was some sort of miscommunication there! While I was inwardly groaning at the amount of food I was trying to finish, friends and relatives dropped by to pay their respects and neighbors arrived to share food and to chat for a while. They were humble circumstances but full of warmth and cheer.

As we ate, we were regaled with tales of what it was like to live in their neighborhood. Once, Bro Francisco's wife had been robbed at knifepoint in broad daylight, with people just walking by feigning ignorance, not wanting to become a victim too! There were wild stories from Cami's uncle that had everyone in stitches. We were told afterward that we could only believe about 20% of what he said, as the rest was an exaggeration. We found it interesting that there was such jollity at an occasion which we had assumed would be a somber one. At some point,

Bro Francisco's wife asked Isaiah if he would say a few words, as he held the same faith that her late husband had. This became a marvelous opportunity for Isaiah to briefly share what Bro Francisco had believed and what our hope is for the future. We read from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and talked about the resurrection and the kingdom.

In Bolivia, a pagan country that the locals say still practices human sacrifices in secret, you can never be quite sure what to expect. We didn't know what might come of the afternoon we spent at the late brother Francisco's house, but we were shown great hospitality, and God even opened an opportunity to share what we believe. For many Bolivians, All Saint's Day is a time to remember those who have died, to pray for deceased relatives' direct passage to heaven, and to "connect" with the spirits dwelling in skulls. For those who understand the true message of the gospel, we need not be concerned for the dead, because we eagerly anticipate the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when those that sleep in the dust will be raised. We are looking forward to seeing our Bro Francisco again, and many others who have fallen asleep in Christ.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*Written by Isaiah and Rosie Tunnell,  
Recent Fieldworkers in Bolivia,*

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,  
CBMA/C Publicity*

# Thoughts on the Way Bread and Wine

**L**EAVENED bread, unleavened bread, or matzo? Mogen David, Moscato, or grape juice? Who knew the Memorial Service could be so complicated?

My earliest memories were of one cup of wine, and brothers or sisters worrying about the germs that would be shared. Sometimes the coughing and/or sneezing member or members would move to the back of the hall and take the cup last.

In the ecclesia, there was the brother who always insisted on having the cup given to him last, germs and all, so that he could drain the cup. Was he a wino? No, he just thought that Jesus' command, "*Drink ye all of it*," meant that not a drop of wine should be left!

In another meeting, we shifted from a single communion cup to many small cups. One sister was especially insistent on this; her previous meeting had always had individual miniature cups, and why not? So, we changed, and reduced anxiety considerably. This also had the effect of allowing for certain cups (in the very middle of the tray) to be set aside for grape juice and not wine—since, over the years, some folks asked for this especially.

One sister, being the efficient table preparer, worked out a scheme for rapidly filling many small cups: using a small squeeze bottle that had once held honey, and was now filled with wine. The squeeze bottle was in the form of

a bear, I suppose because Winnie the Pooh loved honey. My contribution to this: I named the bear: "Nehemiah, the wine-bear." (You can think about that for a moment).

Wine or grape juice? Some years ago, we had an ecclesial "Passover" meal—more or less like the Jews do; that was the point. Of course, everyone participated—adults and children alike. There were supposed to be four cups of wine (everyone with his or her own cup). Careful preparations were made: pitchers of wine for the adults, and pitchers of grape juice for the children. But someone wasn't paying attention, and one little boy got into the real wine, and polished off several cups. The mistake was discovered when he became especially boisterous while singing the Passover songs. His mother sniffed his cup and realized the problem, and his parents took him home where he slept it off. No lingering effects, apparently; he is a brother today. But he still recalls his first Passover.

In the new ecclesia, the type of bread was left to the sister in charge of the table, and over the years I've seen a wide variety of types (types of bread, that is, not types of sisters!). We have had a single slice of white bread; a single slice of white bread, but with no crust (why the crust was cut off, I don't know); a small loaf; a large loaf with the crust removed (now that was a real operation); saltine crackers; and, of

course, unleavened kosher wafers. There has also been accommodation for those with the need for gluten-free bread.

Should the bread be broken by the presiding brother? Almost certainly, in the upper room, the bread (unleavened)

was broken by Jesus, and handed, personally, to each disciple. Or should it be broken by each individual? The questions can go on and on—until it seems that **method** has swallowed up **purpose**, absolutely.

Which brings up this question: Should our service be, as much as possible, like the one in the upper room? The first answer might be, "Yes, of course, we ought to get back to the original!" But the follow-up questions would be: "But how far back? When does **form** take the place of **substance**? **When does the right way push aside the right attitude**? Should we, for example, have nighttime services while reclining on the floor?" Of course not; that would be foolish! And who should make the final decisions?

Seriously, do we sometimes give too much attention to details, and way too little attention to the **meaning**? Do we argue about the type of bread, and give no thought to the "body of Christ"? Do we discuss varieties of wine, and forget about Christ's shed blood? Do we stop long enough to think, why are we doing this?

*Do we sometimes  
give too much  
attention to **details**,  
and way too little  
attention to the  
**meaning**?*

I remember reading, years ago, about Bro. Elijah Eze, in Nigeria. He was a brother, in isolation in a small village, who fled to the hills and lived in caves with his fellow villagers during a brutal civil war. The armies swept back and forth, through

the village, and the villagers hid in the caves, and came out at night to find food and water. During this long period (six months, I think) he spent his days reading his Bible and talking to every one of his neighbors about his faith, with the effect that, when the war came to an end, and the villagers returned to their homes, there were quite a few new Christadelphians along with Bro. Elijah.

How did they remember their Lord while in the caves? With water or mango juice instead of wine, and with various kinds of edible roots instead of bread. Under those circumstances, would anyone object to these substitutes?

Unity of faith and practice is a precious thing. Surely, we should do everything we possibly can to encourage it. Finding a way so that the type of bread we eat, and the type of grape product we drink, does not create a problem—that would be a big step in the right direction. Then we could focus our minds where they belong: that is, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who laid down his life for all of us.

*George Booker,  
(Austin Leander, TX)*

# CHRISTADELPHIAN ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Protecting ecclesial members from abuse is important to our God. Sadly, many institutions have invested insufficient attention to preventing and responding to abuse. Abuse has grabbed headlines across the world and we know it can occur at any age: to children, teens, adults and seniors. It happens within our schools, community service settings, workplaces, homes, and even in ecclesial environments. We need to engage all members in understanding how abuse occurs and what can be done to prevent it.

*The Christadelphian Tidings* is pleased to announce an important new resource for ecclesias: Christadelphian Abuse Prevention Program. This program includes awareness and education for ecclesial leaders, members and children. Videos, sample written policies and other tools and resources will enable ecclesias to conduct thorough training and implement their own effective prevention program.

**COMING early next year,  
Lord willing.**

*Stay tuned for more information.*



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