

# TIDINGS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AFRICA

Today, more than 60% of all Christadelphians live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Mozambique, a country less populated than the State of California, ecclesias baptize nearly 1,000 new brothers and sisters every year.





**Jessica Miller** (Richmond Chapel Unamended Ecclesia, VA)  
Isle of Skye  
"Mountains make me ponder God's love for His creation, that He chose to give us such beauty to appreciate."

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN  
**TIDINGS**  
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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# TIDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AFRICA

*By Dave Jennings*

**W**HEN I was a young boy, my parents bought an encyclopedia series called, *The Book of Knowledge*. I remember referencing it countless times for school papers, or sometimes just to help me know more about a particular topic. What I will always remember from those volumes was the protective paper cover. It had an artist's view of what the future would look like. Cities with skyscrapers. Helicopters and flying cars! Oh, how I expected to be flying some vehicle rather than driving on the pavement by the time I grew up!

It's funny how we develop a picture in our heads of what the future might look like. For many of us, our vision of the future is only incrementally different. We struggle to think of ways

our lives might exponentially change. Technology has taught us to recognize that what is normal today is going to be outdated in a very short time. So, as I hold my iPhone in the palm of my hand, I assume that in the near future it too will seem like the original "brick" cellular phone I had 15 years ago, which I used to marvel about back then.

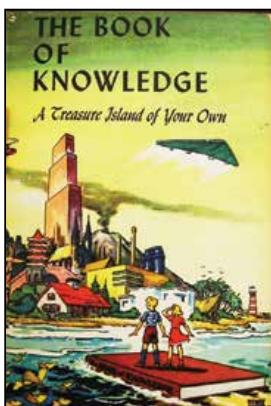
To be honest, I had never really thought much about how our community might change prior to the return of the Lord. Life as a Christadelphian, for me, was pretty stable, and change was, at best, incremental.

But change it has! Since the late 1990s, our community has fundamentally transformed right under our noses. The pace is dizzying.

Today, more than 60% of all Christadelphians live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Mozambique, a country less populated than the State of California, ecclesias baptize nearly 1,000 new brothers and sisters **every year**. That's roughly 20 baptisms every week! The profile of the average Christadelphian is no longer from Western countries. English is no longer the most spoken language, and racially, we are no longer primarily Caucasian. In just over two decades we have already become a much more diverse and global community. This is one of the greatest and most positive developments in the history of our community. We can see the hand of our Lord and his angels at work, and our hearts are filled with thankfulness as we marvel at this answer to our prayers. Christadelphian growth in Africa is consistent with the growth of overall Christianity on the continent. While Christianity is declining in Western countries, by 2050 Africa will represent more than 40% of all global Christians. In less than 30 years, Africa is projected to be home to more than one billion Christians, by far the largest concentration on the planet. In 1900, there were only ten million Christians in Africa and today there more than five hundred million.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Most of us live in societies that are “post-Christian.” As believers, we are programmed to think incrementally,



to accept constant disappointment. We see empty chairs in our ecclesial halls, Bible classes with low attendance, consistently disappointing responses to outreach. We may think this is what is to be expected, the conditions of the Last Days prophesied by our Lord. A time of failing faith and progressive isolationism.

Yet, we must acknowledge that our own experience is not descriptive of the fulness of our community. The Truth is on fire in other regions, such as Africa. The Kingdom of God is not merely a doctrinal argument in these lands—it is a unifying message that blazes within the bosom. It is a viral message being naturally passed along in the marketplace, or across the street with a neighbor. It is, in many ways, the spiritual experience we have all longed for.

So, why is this an important consideration for those of us living in Western society? To answer this question, I reached out to the Christadelphian Bible Mission (CBM) in the UK to help us understand the phenomenal growth in Africa.<sup>2</sup> I am deeply grateful for Bre. Mark Basten (CBM Chair), Paul Boyd (CBM General Secretary) and John Mathias (CBM East Africa Secretary), all who hold important roles with the CBM for Africa. These brethren have shared the history of the Truth in Africa, as well as some of the key challenges and opportunities ahead. I am also pleased

to share with you a moving article by Bro. Peter Ojike from Lagos, Nigeria (see page 602). Bro. Peter describes the growth of the Truth in Nigeria, and I promise you that if you take the time to read his article, especially the dramatic way the Truth grew out of a cave of refuge during the Biafran War, you will have a more intimate picture of how God is working in Africa. We are also pleased to share two short exhortations with you, also from African brethren, in our Exhortation and Consolation section (pages 580-584).

The story of Africa started with small, often individual acts of faith. A brother in Australia placed an ad in Nigeria. Brothers and sisters, continents away, conducted correspondence courses. Local brethren boldly preached to all, including a relative of a royal prince! We can take such great comfort in

knowing how the Lord is working in the world today. The Truth is **not** dying. It is prospering. In the days ahead, we may see challenges far greater than COVID-19 which trouble our Western lands. We may see economic dysfunction, increased violence and continued immorality. Will these generate an unprecedented thirst for the coming Kingdom of God?

I hope you find these articles help open in your mind, as they did for me, the great possibilities of the Truth. I hope you will share with me the excitement about the power of our Lord and his angels. We should never limit in our hearts and minds what our Lord can do. Will we be ready when a similar window of opportunity is created in our own lands?

*Dave Jennings*



*A newly baptised sister in Kamukuywa, Kenya.*

<sup>1</sup> "Sub-Saharan Africa will be home to growing shares of the world's Christians and Muslims" David McClendon, Pew Research Center, April 19, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> This report does not cover the rich history of the countries served by the CBM South Africa, which includes South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

# A DISCUSSION WITH THE CBM ABOUT AFRICA

*By Dave Jennings*

This article is from an interview with Bre. Mark Basten (CBM Chair), Paul Boyd (CBM General Secretary) and John Mathias (CBM East Africa Secretary). We are deeply grateful for their insights into the inspiring spread of the Truth in Africa.

***What were the critical factors in Africa that led to substantial growth in Christianity? What attracts people in these countries to Christadelphians?***

Africa is a continent with great needs. With a hand-to-mouth existence, the average person knows they are not in control of their life and understands their reliance on God. They see God as the answer to problems and the provider of a better future. Thinking about God and talking freely about Him comes naturally to many in Africa, and they are keen to listen to Bible teaching. The culture of talking about beliefs to family and friends means that our brothers and sisters speak about their faith to others. The more believers

that do that, the more the gospel is likely to spread. This attitude fosters rapid expansion in countries with large numbers of brothers and sisters.

Poverty has played a big part in generating interest. Two of the poorest countries, Mozambique and Malawi, account for over half our brothers and sisters in Africa. There remains a noticeable inverse relationship between riches and faith. The more wealth a country has, the less interested people are in God. “*Has not God chosen the poor of the world?*” (Jas 2:5).

Because of wars and internal unrest, the gospel has spread. Displaced refugees have passed the gospel message on to people in other places or learned about



*Ten baptisms in one day in Kamakuya, Kenya.*

it from brothers and sisters where they have ended up. This phenomenon is like the first century, when *“Those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”* (Acts 8:4). God works through man’s weaknesses.

Our African brothers and sisters embrace Christadelphian teaching because it makes sense to them. The fact there is only one God and not a Trinity is logical. The need for adult baptism is a straightforward message, and they are eager to be baptized properly. When they realize the blessings of the Kingdom are the answer to the world’s problems, they often break into spontaneous applause! When they listen to the Bible, they accept the teaching for what it is—the Word of God.

Because of this, *“fields are white”* in Africa! The spread of gospel truth is constrained only by our ability to preach. The role CBM takes is to encourage preaching, whether we are near or far. We can best do this by nurturing the innate abilities of the brothers and sisters in Africa to share their faith with those around them. Through their faithful witness, the true gospel message can only reach those who do not speak English or who cannot read in their own language. In

this way, the gospel can go to *“every nation, tribe, people and language.”* (Rev 7:9).

### ***What factors drove this growth?***

Since just before and during the colonial era (late 1800s-1950), missionary activities have provided a Christian bias in Sub-Saharan Africa. Today Catholic and Protestant/Evangelical teachings are most influential. However, there

is no country where a single religion predominates. Neither Western nor Communist philosophies have any significant influence. In Sub-Saharan Africa, freedom of religion is just that.

Christadelphians have been teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1950s, when some were posted there for work. Preaching started informally by face-to-face discussions with work colleagues, plus ad hoc preaching opportunities. They also used local media, offering a mail-in contact. This method generated a great deal of interest.

Much of the early teaching began by correspondence course. Bro. Stanley Owen, in his book *Into All the World*, comments:

“By August 1956, there had been 148 responses from Central Africa, 442 from East Africa and well over 1,000 from Nigeria, Gold Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Togoland in West Africa. A leader for each country was appointed, and soon there were hundreds of volunteer correspondents sending out Bible Literature and lessons from a 22-part postal correspondence

course.” There are now at least 35,000 active brothers and sisters in Africa, excluding South Africa. The numbers who have actually been baptized and have since fallen asleep would probably bring the total to 50,000 or 60,000.”

Many Sub-Saharan countries had large correspondence teams, with tutors from the UK, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. This method was only practical to reach those with a good grasp of the English language. Visits initially concentrated on calling on correspondence course contacts and holding preaching events. Currently, visits tend to focus on pastoral care, where we facilitate elders’ and sisters’ workshops, Bible schools, youth camps, etc.

Presently, correspondence teaching has declined but local teaching has increased. Radio broadcasts have proven to be an excellent medium to preach the gospel. Sometimes, local radio stations even contact the Christadelphians for their perspective on various issues. In established countries, most preaching today is carried out by brothers and sisters in the language of the area. For instance, the gospel was preached by brothers and sisters from Malawi in Mozambique, as both countries have a common language, Chichewa.

Most converts come from Christian backgrounds, although significant numbers also come from Islam and tribal religions. This varies from country to country, depending on how open-minded their culture is. The African tendency is to talk to family, friends and those they meet regardless

of their faith or philosophy.

***Describe the extent of Bible knowledge in these countries?***

In some countries Bible knowledge is high. In many other countries, there are individuals who have Bible knowledge on a par with those in “developed” countries. The first brother in Uganda, now fallen asleep, knew what was in every chapter of the Bible and often quoted flawlessly. His knowledge was an immense help to him when he became almost blind. Countries like Nigeria have many deeply knowledgeable brothers and sisters.

It would, however, be unreasonable to expect most believers to have this level of Scriptural knowledge. Many have not finished secondary education, and many cannot read. The typical brother is a subsistence farmer who has never learned how to teach others. Baptized education teachers are a great asset to our community and must be encouraged to use their talent to benefit the ecclesia.

Our brothers and sisters in Africa have an uncomplicated faith. Basic living efforts take up most of their time. Brothers and sisters must work all the hours of daylight merely to exist. Rising before dawn to work in the fields and collect water precludes any reading before the day begins. They must rise early, because in Africa, it is too hot to work manually in the fields after 9 AM. (With an absence of machinery, most work is manual). Some may find time to read during the heat of the day, but others need to rest. Then after dark, cooking over charcoal for the family, is a lengthy process. There is usually no light to read by.

A hard life often generates a strong faith. When we asked a widowed sister about the difficulties in her life and what she did when she had no food, she responded that she goes to the next village to preach! When we asked another widow, who could not read, why she needed a Bible, she replied she would get someone to read it to her.

Many Africans have a unique way of approaching basic teaching. For example, one brother, when talking about being buried with Christ in baptism, asked his audience “Would you only bury the head on its own at a funeral?” He got a resounding “NO!” He then said, “So you see why it’s no good just having our heads sprinkled with water. We need to be fully immersed.” They have lovely ways of expressing fundamental teachings.

The role of the CBM is to facilitate the development of the faith of our brothers and sisters through whatever means we can. We are trainers to help lead God’s people to maturity. We have much work to do in this area and are actively trying to plug these “gaps.” Many presentations and written material in English, together with a growing library of translated material are available at [www.cbmmmedia.org](http://www.cbmmmedia.org) and [www.bibleeastfrica.com](http://www.bibleeastfrica.com). Because most of our brothers and sisters in Africa do not have smartphones or access to the Internet, this is only a small help but it is possible for those who do to share material.

More recently, we have produced videos in several languages. For example, in Sierra Leone about sixty videos were translated and recorded in the Krio language. This new initiative provides portable rechargeable video and audio

equipment so that material on the above websites can be sent from the UK on memory sticks and presented at CBM halls. This exciting project has proved extremely popular and upbuilding. As a result, we are commencing trials in Tanzania, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo.

### ***Does the CBM have concerns about Africa? What are the major risks?***

The major concerns for the work of the CBM are the spiritual threats from both outside and within. The most significant danger from outside is the “march of civilization” which threatens to turn Sub-Saharan Africans into Westerners. The key medium of this is social media (and, to a certain extent, television) which takes the “world” into previously untouched rural areas. This change is happening because of greater availability of electricity and mobile networks. When most homes have these facilities, Western values and beliefs may prevail and turn people from God and toward money and what it can buy.

Technology is a blessing that enables us to preach the truth to the world. But it preaches many things more likely to corrupt than edify. Electricity and technology are mixed blessings in Africa. We fear our ability to preach in Africa long-term will become limited due to the encroachment of technology. Secondly, there are threats from within. The biggest single danger to our African brothers and sisters is the overuse of welfare. Often well-meaning brothers and sisters in the West respond to an individual’s request for financial aid. We can argue from Scripture that a charitable response is the right thing to do. As Westerners, we are often

embarrassed when we have so much, and our brothers and sisters in Africa have so little.

But giving can be damaging. Let's give a couple of examples. A brother was lame because of polio and went around with a stick. He was a lovely, smiling brother who was at every meeting. On one trip, a visitor offered to pay for an operation to correct his injured leg. This was an excellent opportunity for someone who spent most of his life as a beggar. He was tempted by the money, inflated the price and attempted to bring the doctor in on his deception. The doctor was a Christian and alerted us. Soon, he severed his contact with the ecclesia, lost his faith, and then, tragically, his life.

In an area in East Africa, we started a project to alleviate our brothers' and sisters' poverty. We provided training materials and a cow. There was a very high initial investment in the hope of making a difference in their lives. The ecclesia proliferated, followed by

a second ecclesia soon afterward. It is true that the milk helped the children's health. But the attraction of cows became the only draw for many people to the faith. The selection process for the next cow became contentious and soon the harmony was broken. The ecclesial membership eventually declined, and we have few committed members there today. In both cases we had created unsustainable situations for the ecclesias by our love.

We should not be raising the standard of living of a brother or sister above the culture they live in. Doing this creates jealousy, leading to division and people avoiding meeting. Helping in this way can also result in temptations. Any single request that is fulfilled will eventually be followed by further requests because there are always needs. This leads to dependency. And finally, when aid is suspended, despondency and spiritual crisis occurs. It is the spiritual crisis which is the real problem.



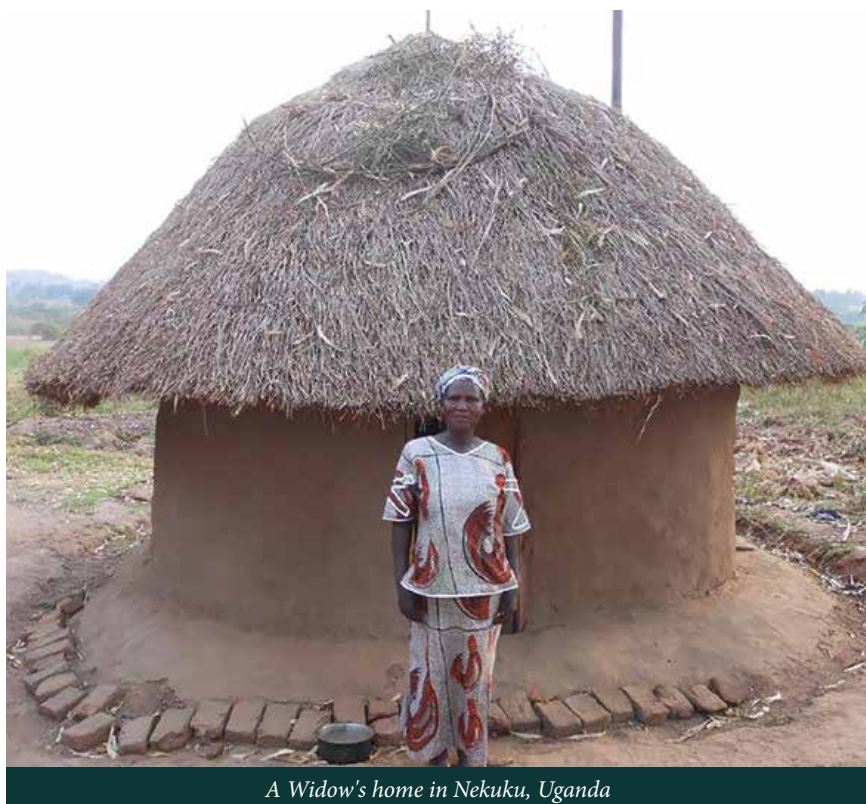
*Christadelphian Ecclesia at the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania*

Another problem arising from too much giving is that it attracts people to the gospel for the wrong reasons. We effectively say, “Become a Christadelphian and we will give you a cow or we will pay for any health problem you have.”

Welfare issues have always been a problem, but now social media and smartphones are making the problem worse. Often brothers and sisters in Africa send multiple requests for help to multiple brothers and sisters in the “developed” world. A situation could well arise where many people respond to one request. This could realize a sum of money far larger than our brothers and sisters have ever experienced—and the temptation then becomes an obstacle.

Every country we work in has a CBM Representative. They know the country and local circumstances well. They also know the individual brothers and sisters in most cases. Therefore, we suggest you contact the Linkman before you respond to requests for help. It is heart-breaking to see the damage caused by well-meaning help. Sending any donation via the CBM will ensure those in genuine need are assisted before those who are rich enough to own a mobile phone!

We can all help our brothers and sisters by keeping them focused on spiritual matters. The media portrays people in the West as having so much material wealth. However, we need to encourage them to be active in their ecclesias and preach to others. We



*A Widow's home in Nekuku, Uganda*

should resist the temptation to help materially. If they ask, it is best to refer them to the Linkman, all of whom can be contacted using the country name before @cbm.org.uk (e.g., uganda@cbm.org.uk). If this does not work, or there is no response, try east.africa@cbm.org.uk or west.africa@cbm.org.uk. All details are on the website [www.cbm.org.uk](http://www.cbm.org.uk). Please pray with us that we will all be guided to help in the right way.



*Young People in the Lagos, Nigeria Ecclesia*

***How has movement from rural areas to big cities in many African countries impacted ecclesias and families in the Truth?***

Cities provide the same problems as in the West, only more so in Africa, because the rural areas have so little. Cities are havens of worldliness. Experience shows that ecclesias in cities generally struggle more than in rural areas; ecclesial membership is more transient and unstable.

Many go to cities to find jobs. They do not realize city life is expensive, meaning long work hours to pay for essentials and also send help back for their families. These people have little time for ecclesial life. In a city, a brother or sister is unlikely to be close to the meeting location, and the costs of travel make attendance difficult. We do experience exceptions, however. In Nigeria, for example, brothers and sisters pay to keep a minibus running to collect the dispersed members from around the city.

There are more brothers and sisters in rural areas and so, these ecclesias grow bigger and stronger. While in a country like Nigeria, ecclesias are well populated in cities and large towns, it does appear that the rural environment is usually less distracting and better for spiritual growth.

***What should every North American brother and sister know about the African experience? What can we do in North America for Africa and what shouldn't we do?***

Besides the numerous African languages, we are also limited by our lack of knowledge of more common languages, especially, Portuguese and French. The number of CBM workers with a knowledge of these languages is low. If anyone wishes to learn one (or both?!) and get involved in the great work of saving lives through the gospel, they will be welcomed with open arms.

There are many other ways you can help the CBM. We have a system called "Project Aid," where projects are

requested by our brothers and sisters in Africa via the Linkman. These projects raise funds for practical support for an ecclesia. You can view the projects available on the Christadelphian Bible Mission at [cbm.org.uk](http://cbm.org.uk). Recurring or one-time donations can also be made via the website. If you prefer, you may donate to the CBM through the Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas ([cbma.net](http://cbma.net)), who will transfer the funds to the UK, and give you a tax deductible receipt.

If, having read this article, you have become aware of ways to assist with any of their activities, please feel free



*Brothers Kim and Joshua in Tanzania*

to reach out through the [cbm.org.uk](http://cbm.org.uk) website.

*Dave Jennings*

# CHRISTADELPHIANS IN AFRICA

Country	Members
Benin Togo	22
Burundi	100
Cameroon	500
D.R. Congo (E/W)	200
D.R. Congo (S)	200
Egypt	1
Ethiopia	20
Ghana	100
Guinea	120
Ivory Coast	18
Kenya	2,700
Liberia	170
Malawi	7,500
Madagascar	2

Country	Members
Mauritius	45
Mozambique	21,927
Nigeria	700
Rwanda	0
Senegal	1
Seychelles	6
Sierra Leone	375
South Sudan	35
Tanzania	250
The Gambia	30
Uganda	1,700
Zambia	450
Zimbabwe	370
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,542</b>

*(This chart does not include the Brethren in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland)*

# 9/11 REVISITED: THE HIDDEN STORY

*By Peter Wisniewski*

September 11, 2021, marked the twentieth anniversary of the terrible terrorist attacks against targets in New York City and Washington, D.C. We are republishing this fascinating article written by Bro. Peter Wisniewski (Toronto Church Street Ecclesia). It is a rare insight into the protective hand of our God and His care for His children.

**I**T was, in many ways, a typical start to a working Tuesday. The sky was blue, it was a beautiful late summer morning, and everything appeared to be business as usual. On this busy, bustling day in a city so large its citizens often think of it as the center of the universe, the day began as so many others before it. The early morning rituals of newspapers and coffees, breakfasts on the run and finding seats on one of the world's busiest commuter transit systems would, by day's end, witness events that would leave an impact that still reverberates to this day.

Two days earlier, however, an incident as apparently trivial as an “accidental” moment of thoughtlessness, triggered another event which few would ever see, let alone appreciate. You see, a lady was coming down her basement stairs and slipped on a hairbrush someone in her household had inadvertently left there. The resultant fall was so hard that she fractured her ankle. The trip back from the hospital emergency was on crutches, wearing a cast. She was told to keep off her feet for several days. The angry frustration toward the unknown family culprit only grew as



she had to miss her important business appointment at 9:30 a.m. on the 11th at the WTC.

That very morning, a copier technician, who serviced both towers, knew it would be a slow day and called in to his boss to say he would take a “personal day off.” Little aware of unfolding events, his boss would exclaim to him, “Turn on your TV...and watch!”

That same day, someone else who was never late for work at the WTC, stopped off for a coffee, but headed back home in apparent need of something forgotten. She never needed to return to the same workplace again.

Not long after this, a lady was ordered off the subway train, only to emerge outdoors to watch the horrific events that were unfolding in the skyline above.

Another gentleman, who worked at the World Trade Center, happened to be at a dentist appointment that very same morning.

A retired couple's flight was turned back from L.A., accompanied by two jet fighters whose pilot's instructions were probably, “shoot to kill,” if the airliner veered off its return course with even

the slightest change in flight plans.

An experienced veteran of the NY Fire Department, who was a high-ranking officer, was notified by the alarms going off at the station and sent his men to what he thought would be a routine situation. Because of his position as a Fire Chief, he was kept from entering the horrific scenario himself.

Somewhere, over the skies to the north in Canada, American air traffic was diverted to its airports for emergency landings. A scared mother and wife were told that her pilot husband would

not be able to return to her until it was safe to do so, being waylaid for a week in the Southern US. North America was gripped in shock and fear. The days of security of homeland protection from air attacks had now come to an end.

In the meantime, the subway train her sister was riding on, also ground to a halt, causing a mass exodus of commuters to evacuate outdoors only to be met by choking ash descending in thick clouds upon them. With babe in arms, she joined the thousands of others on a several mile trek home. Fortunately, she was called to by a lady in a car that went out of her way and

Many are the  
plans in the  
minds of men,  
but it's God  
who will direct  
as He sees fit.

drove her all the way home.

Time and chance? By no means! There were 2,977 lives claimed that fateful day. It is a day that forever lives in infamy, but one whose story has not completely been told. It has been estimated that up to 19,000 people were in the Twin Towers that morning on September 11th, 2001, and that, at any given time, 100,000 could have been working at the World Trade Center. What the world saw that eventful day cannot be diminished as to its horror, fear and sadness. Many suffered loss of life while others still grieve the victims they loved. There, but for the grace of God, would we have gone, the way of all flesh. How tragic that mankind still dies in brutal, horrific, wasteful and unnecessary circumstances. But, let mankind take heed of this. Although this attack was not diverted, our God saw fit to have allowed for the rescue and evacuation of thousands from this tragedy! May the many survivors praise Him for this!

Let the unknown story of those mentioned above still elicit a spark of encouragement for them who are His, called according to His purpose. For, you see, these are the first-hand accounts of brothers and sisters in Christ who had no way of knowing beforehand the events that were to take place and were oblivious to the shadow of the unforeseen hand of providence in their lives. Many are the plans in the minds of men, but it's God who will direct as He sees fit. What to most who have observed this event in history would consider barely a footnote, we see as the invisible hand behind the scenes, protecting and guiding us

in His love. He is still at work in our lives, brethren and sisters, watching over us even when we're not aware. Let this provoke our hearts to witness evermore, so to the fact that our God is an Awesome God, Who is able to perform more than we ask or think of Him.

Let this be an opportunity to be renewed in thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for His steadfast love, no matter the circumstances, and put in perspective what we consider to be of such importance in our fellowship. Let us look for Him in each day's journey and rejoice in another day of life. He hasn't lost sight of us, and it is our solemn duty to remind each other that God is active and wants to be part of our lives. He tells us that He will be found by those who seek for Him with all their hearts. Let us give thanks for all He has given and continues to give.

Much has happened since that day. We've seen the collapse of governments, the instability of Western economies, the capture and execution of 9/11's master-mind, the escalation of anti-Israeli sentiments, and a worldwide pandemic. We are on the verge of Christ's return. Let us further be impressed with the need to keep our garments clean, to witness to this dying world of our God who has done marvelous things for us and to encourage our brethren and sisters that our King will come!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*Peter Wisniowski,  
(Toronto Church Street, ON)*

# HABITS

*By Joshua Hewitson*

**DO** you ever wonder why the disciples fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane? The man that they believed to be the Messiah repeatedly asked them to keep watch with him. He was clearly under great stress and begged them to support him in his hour of trial. He was close by, fervently praying. They cared deeply about him. Yet, they could not stay awake with him for one hour. Three times he found them sleeping, three times he asked them to watch. How could they fall asleep under such circumstances? Matthew writes that when Jesus found them sleeping the first time, he said, “*So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? Keep watching and praying, so that you*

*do not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* (Matt 26:40-41).<sup>1</sup> Jesus knew they wanted to stay awake, but they could not. Why?

Luke records they were “*sleeping for sorrow.*” There is no doubt that Christ’s recent discussion over his final days was weighing heavily on their minds and hearts. Even so, how could they fall asleep at such a time as this? Luke may provide the answer. Luke 21:37 shows that Christ routinely taught in the temple. Afterward, he would head to Mt. Olivet to spend the night. Luke 22:39 says it was his “*custom*” or “*habit*” to go to the Mt. of Olives with his disciples. It was typical for them to spend evenings in this familiar garden.

It was part of their normal routine. Why did the disciples fall asleep? It was the power of habit.

Humans are creatures of habit. The biggest determining factor of how we will behave is how we have responded in the past. This can be a good or a bad thing. Habits can make performance efficient, but they can also cause us to “go through the motions” without giving meaningful thought to our actions. We all develop habits, but the question is, are our habits drawing us closer to serving our Lord, or driving us away? Causing us to slumber or stay awake?

Research into habits has shown that habits are environmentally driven. If we find ourselves in an environment where we typically respond the same way, it is very likely we will continue that behavior. This is illustrated in the behavior of the disciples in the garden. They felt an intense sorrow at the things Christ revealed to them concerning his impending death. Yet, at the same time, part of their brains was telling them that this was when and where they would usually sleep. They likely all had the goal of staying awake and watching, but with their minds distracted, they succumbed to the habit of falling asleep.

Habits are powerful. In many ways, they define who we are. It is possible to go through a day, or even a week, without really considering what we are doing. If we have good, healthy, spiritually sound habits, this might not

necessarily be a bad thing. In this way it is good to be in a routine. However, if we are out of balance and develop too many bad habits, or even just empty habits (a far more common problem), they can become detrimental to our spiritual health. We need to have good, sustainable habits that draw us closer to God.

**If our habits are taking us away from God, we need to stir things up. We need to change our environment, our state of mind or routine.**

If our habits are taking us away from God, we need to stir things up. We need to change our environment, our state of mind or routine. If you recognize that you consistently fail to behave properly when you are placed in a particular circumstance, you need to change those circumstances. But this is easier said than done. Mark Twain warned us, “A habit cannot be tossed out the window; it must be coaxed down the stairs a step at a time.”<sup>2</sup>

We are living in interesting times. Almost two years ago we all had our routines shaken up whether we wanted it or not. COVID-19 changed how we all went about our day-to-day lives. It has affected each of us differently, but there is no doubt that it has affected all of us. Likely, you developed new habits as you adjusted to a new routine. Now, as we enter a new phase of the pandemic, our routines are being shaken up again. We have experienced a return to many of the activities that have been shut down for so long. Will we take this opportunity to develop new habits that bring us closer to God? As you look back over the past, what habits have you picked up? What habits

have you lost? What habits do you want to keep as we move forward? What do you want to change? How are you serving God in your new routines? Can you keep those habits that have helped you to draw nearer to Him?

The time is now to make a change. God is active in the events of the world. Christ is coming. He could come back next Tuesday at 2:00pm. Will we be ready? When he returns, it will be too late to change those habits. Jesus warns us, *“But be on your guard, so that your hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that this day (of Christ’s return) will not come on you suddenly, like a trap for it will come upon*

We always have the opportunity to make a change for the better, to dedicate, or rededicate ourselves to serving God.

*all those who live on the face of all the earth. But stay alert at all times.”* (Luke 21:34-36). We need to be awake and watching and ready. We always have the opportunity to make a change for

the better, to dedicate, or rededicate ourselves to serving God. What is unique about this particular time is that many of us are being forced to change our routines and habits anyway because of the pandemic.

Other research on behavior has shown that habits are controlled in a different part of our brain than goal-driven behavior. We have to make a conscious effort to align our habits with our goals. This takes some honest introspection. Sometimes the hardest person with whom to be honest is yourself. We are good at justifying our own actions. This is especially true with our habitual

behavior. Habitual behavior can be the most difficult to change. It gets ingrained into our brains. Since habits are environmentally driven, if we want to make a sustainable, long-term change to our behavior, we may have to find a way to make concrete changes to our environment. Examples may be not hanging around a certain group of friends, or going to a certain place, or spending less time on your smartphone. Making such changes almost always involves relying on others for support.

Paul exhorts Timothy to *“discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily training is just slightly beneficial, but godliness is beneficial for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”* (1 Tim 4:7-8). He compares our striving for godliness to the training of an athlete. The athlete who performs at a high level makes training and good habits a part of their everyday routine. It is more than working out once a day. It affects how they eat, how they sleep, what activities they take part in. In the same way, as we strive for godliness, our daily habits and disciplines should reflect that goal. It is not something we do once a week or even once a day. It needs to be an active and regular part of our life.

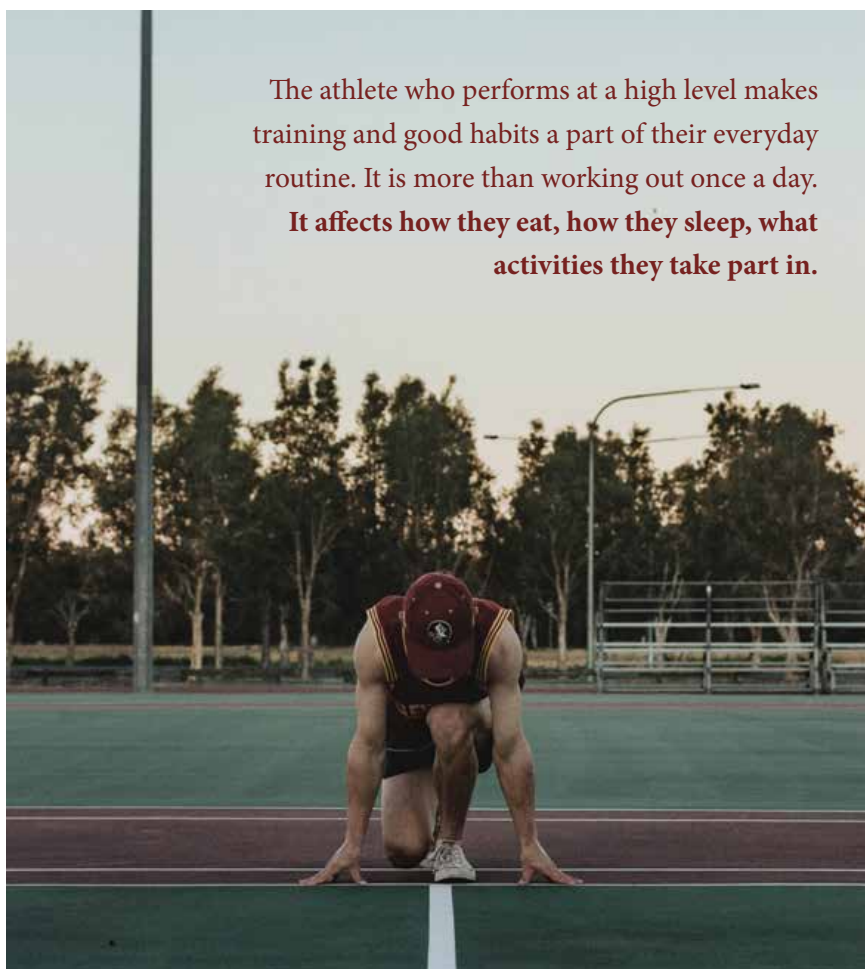
Paul continues: *“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all mankind, especially of believers.”* (1 Tim 4:10). Training in godliness requires work. We need to labor and strive to be godly. We do this because we have a living God who wants to save us. He wants us to be successful. He will support us if we rely on Him.

Paul also reminds Timothy, “*Prescribe and teach these things...in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give your attention to the public reading, to exhortation, and teaching...Take pains with these things, be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will save both yourself*

*and those who hear you.*” (1 Tim 4:11-16). Being attentive to the teaching of God and persevering in godliness is not just for our own benefit; it is for the benefit of those around us as well. Our good habits serve as an example and are an encouragement to our brothers and sisters. They too can be an encouragement for us.

Paul gives another exhortation about habits, “*Do not lie to one another, since you stripped off the old self with its evil*

The athlete who performs at a high level makes training and good habits a part of their everyday routine. It is more than working out once a day. **It affects how they eat, how they sleep, what activities they take part in.**



practices.” (Col 3:9). When we put on Christ, we put aside the deeds and habits of the old man and put on the new man, with new habits. Sometimes that old man creeps back into our lives. The nature of flesh is to trend towards evil, as Jeremiah 17:9 tells us. If we are not active in our service to God, we will naturally slip back into some of those old habits. Paul continues his thoughts on how to overcome the old self. *“Let the peace of Christ, to which you were indeed called in one body, rule in your hearts; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you... Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”* (Col 3:15-17). We know the heart is deceitful. How do we overcome it? We let the “peace of Christ” “rule in our hearts” and we “let the word of Christ dwell richly within us.” We make it a habit to do everything in the name of Jesus and to give thanks to God. Finally, Paul writes, *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”* (Col 3:23-24). If we keep our goal in mind and whom it is that we serve, we will have the motivation we need to adjust our habits.

The author of Hebrews also provides encouragement about habits. He writes, *“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a*

*new and living way...let’s approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...Let’s hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”* (Heb 10:19-25). Our attitude is so important. We can have confidence that God will support us. We can be bold, with no wavering in our resolve. Why? Because God is faithful. He will not let us down.

Hebrews 10 continues *“and let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* (Heb 10:24-25).

It has been more difficult than normal this past year to encourage one another in love and good deeds. We have been blessed with the available technology and have used it to continue to see one another. But there is something lost when we are not physically together. One-on-one conversations have been more difficult. Often, these conversations are where we get the most encouragement. We don’t want to make it a custom or habit to not meet together, as some were doing when Hebrews was written. We want to be in the habit of encouraging one another as we see the day draw nearer. In verse 25, “habit” or “manner” as the King James Version says, is the same word that was used in Luke 22, where it talked about Jesus’ habit of going to the Mt. of Olives. As Jesus developed a habit of escaping from the

**We don’t want to make it a custom or habit to not meet together, as some were doing when Hebrews was written. We want to be in the habit of encouraging one another as we see the day draw nearer.**

busy world and meeting regularly with his disciples in a quiet place of rest and contemplation, may we do the same.

Jesus states *“The kings of the Gentiles domineer over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way for you; rather, the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”* (Luke 22:25-27).

How can we be better servants in our day-to-day lives? We are not like the athlete who seeks something incrementally beneficial. We seek the true reward. Daily, what can we do to acknowledge God in all our ways? How can we serve better? Let’s really consider our lives. Consider the environments we put ourselves in. If we

find that we need forgiveness, Christ is always waiting. Jesus tells Simon Peter, *“I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail; and you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”* (Luke 22:31). Jesus knew that Peter was going to need faith in God’s promise of forgiveness. And he knew that once he was forgiven, Peter would have the strength and conviction to help and encourage others. We can do the same. We can trust that God’s mercy never ends. His compassions do not fail; they are new every morning.

As this pandemic begins to wane, let us take the opportunity to examine ourselves and see where we can create new habits that bring us back to God. Let’s commit to habits that allow us to serve and encourage one another.

*Joshua Hewitson,  
(Baltimore, MD)*



<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.selfcarequotes.com](http://www.selfcarequotes.com)

# IS THE END OF THE WORLD NEAR?

*By Fraser Solobala*

**T**HE Bible tells us about our future on earth. In Isaiah 46:10 we read, *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”* Also, in James 4:14 we read, *“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”* When we are in Christ, we read in the Bible about the end of the world. It doesn’t mean the end of planet Earth, but the end of wickedness, when the kingdom of God will rule over the earth.

In Matthew 24:3-7, the disciples of Jesus asked him about the end times. Jesus didn’t give the exact time, but he told us what would happen. It is happening

right now. There will be wars, nations rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be food shortages (hunger), earthquakes and diseases (see Luke 21:11).

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, that there would be in the last days difficult times, which would be challenging to sustaining faith. The Apostle Paul described how people would behave as being selfish, loving money, not loyal, lacking affection for their family, loving pleasure more than God, being violent and aggressive, pretending to love God but refusing to obey Him. We see in the communities around us these behaviors.

The Prophet Daniel was told, *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many*

*shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”* (Dan 12:4). This is written about the Last Days, when people will understand the Bible and knowledge will become abundant. This appears to be speaking about the Last Days, when Jesus said that the Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth (Matt 4:14; Luke 21:17; Rev 7:9).

Armageddon is the time when God will remove all wickedness, and Jesus and his powerful angels will destroy people who disobeyed God.

We are further told in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, *“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Those who obeyed God and accepted Jesus will see every promise of God come true (Rev 20:1-3, Rev 21:3-5).

God wants us to learn more about Him (John 17:3; Heb 10:24-25). He wants us to make changes to our lives to follow the teachings of Jesus (Jas 4:8). The Apostle Paul explained that the

destruction of the wicked will come when most people don't expect it. It will be as a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:2).

Jesus prophesied that many people would ignore this evidence that we are living in the Last Days. He said, just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the son of man will be (Matt 24:37-39). Jesus warned us that we should not become distracted with overeating, heavy drinking, and the anxieties of life. He told us this will come upon all those dwelling on the face of whole earth. We should keep awake at all times. We are in end times. Let us have faith in Jesus Christ and God, so that we shall inherit God's Kingdom, which is coming soon.

Fraser Solobala,  
(Blantyre, Malawi)



# THE KEY

## TO OUR FAITH & SALVATION

Jesus Christ has all  
the answers for our  
understanding of the  
Scriptures

*By Homolesse Langane*

**W**HAT would you write if you were asked to do a short essay that would so affect the reader that they could understand, believe and be baptized into the eternal Kingdom that is coming soon with Jesus Christ?

Sometimes people think that we can only believe in the First Covenant, and not in the Second, or vice versa. They think this without knowing that it is the very Word of God that the ancient prophets heard and wrote in the First Covenant, just as the apostles did in the Second. Who is this Word? Yes, it is Jesus Christ himself, who in the beginning existed in

the mind of God, and it is through him that God created all things in the world and in the heavens. As John wrote,

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have*

...shouldn't we also  
know what the truth  
is? We can do nothing  
without truth.

*fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* (1 John 1:1-3).

The timing of this is very important. We are told, *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”* (Jer 31:31).

But first, shouldn't we also know what the truth is? We can do nothing without truth. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) Also, he said, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing,”* (John 15:5).

So let us directly hear the key to our faith and salvation in Romans 10:9, where the Word says; *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* Also, in Acts 4:12, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

So, did the First Covenant talk about Jesus Christ? Yes. Because he was the Word at the time. Furthermore, he was the Seed referred to in Adam's time. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* (Gen 3:15).

The offspring of the serpent is sin, and that of the Woman is Jesus Christ. Jesus even called the sinful Pharisees serpents (Matt 23:33). Jesus is the Seed

of the Woman, especially because Mary gave birth as a virgin. The same promise of the offspring was to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and to Mary herself, the mother of Jesus (Gen 13:15, 2 Sam 7:12-13, Luke 1:31-33).

Could it be that the prophet of the Law, Moses, expected that one day after him another prophet more important than he would appear? Yes. *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”* (Deut 18:19). So, did Moses refer to Jesus Christ in those words? Paul writes,

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.*

*He saith not, And*

*to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.* (Gal 3:16-18).

Further, we are told in Acts 3:22-23,

*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which*

*...the key to our faith is the voice of God, which after the passage of time became flesh in the one human being who is the great King.*

*will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

That's why the key to our faith is the voice of God, which after the passage of time became flesh in the one human being who is the great King. This was the same Jesus Christ, who the Jews expected to come, but when he did come, they didn't believe in him. John wrote, *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14).

It may happen that when we will encounter misunderstandings while reading the Bible, instead of asking for a new prophet, we should ask the old ones. We must not forget that it was the

same Jesus, foreshadowed by the Voice of God, which spoke of the prophets in the first covenant.

Jesus Christ has all the answers for our understanding of the Scriptures. Do we want to know about marriage (Matt 19:5-6)? Food (Matt 6:25-34)? Fasting (Matt 6:16-18)? Prayer (Matt 6:5-8)? Where will the Kingdom be (Matt 5:5)?

Jesus is now in control of this world. As it is written *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* (Matt 28:18).

*Homolesse Languane,  
(CBM Secretary, Mozambique)*



# VOICES COMBINED IN PRAISE

By Jessica Gelineau

In the following interview on October 18, 2021, Bro. Levi Gelineau interviews Sis. Elle Wilson about her experience in founding the Southern Ontario Combined Christadelphian Choir (SOCCC). Originally from Brisbane, Australia, Elle moved to Ontario, Canada seven years ago when she married Bro. Craig Wilson, and is now a member of the Cambridge ecclesia. Elle shares her experiences of an ecclesial life rich with music and offers a few thoughts for any readers who might be interested in starting their own choral group. Listen to the full interview on the December 2021 episode of the *Good Christadelphian Music* podcast.

**Levi:** Elle, what was music like for you as a younger person in Brisbane?

**Elle:** I grew up in a pretty musical family. I'm the youngest of three, and we all learned piano from about five or six. Our ecclesia (Wilston) was also quite musical; a lot of our pianists were very talented. At the end of every Sunday School year, all the classes would learn and sing a new song. If there was ever a study weekend or a baptism, anyone in

the ecclesia was invited to come learn a new song on the theme of the weekend.

**Levi:** So, music was part of your experience with ecclesial life from the beginning?

**Elle:** For sure. Then as we got a bit older, there was an ecclesia in Brisbane that started a choir for all the ecclesias in the area. The first time I joined I was probably 14 or 15 and we sang Handel's Messiah. It was amazing!



*The inaugural performance by the Southern Ontario Combined Christadelphian Choir, May 2019*

**Levi:** How many people were in that choir when you joined it?

**Elle:** The first time it was big—I'm going to say over one hundred. And then I sang Messiah again, maybe eight years later, and it was a bit smaller, maybe 50 or 60. It was also a really good preaching tool. I remember I invited a friend from high school who I'd continued to be friends with. It was just a nice way to invite someone along without it being anything too heavy.

**Levi:** So, then you traveled around and met Craig and moved to Canada. What year was the SOCCC founded, and how did it start?

**Elle:** I was missing the musical element I'd grown up with. There's something about coming together to sing or to make music in an orchestra or a choir, it's just such a happy place. The people who are there are generally people who are really into it, and it's very inspiring. I missed working together on a project that was really fun and uplifting, and—I'm sure every ecclesia has its issues—but before I came here, I obviously

wasn't really exposed to the Unity issues in Southern Ontario. I thought getting together to sing would be one way that people from different backgrounds or different perspectives could potentially come together in a group and work on something that was positive.

I floated the idea to a few people at my ecclesia who I know are into music and said, "What do you think? Do you think we could get this bigger than our ecclesia?" They were all on board. Then, I contacted musical people from other ecclesias and said, "Would you be on board if we got a Southern Ontario choir going?" Most people were pretty supportive.

I was able to use the resources and music that I'd used in the choir from back home in Brisbane. I contacted the conductor there and got all that set up. So that was an advantage for sure, to already have the resources there, and I'd sung it before. It wasn't new to me.

I wanted to play the piano, so I didn't want to conduct and play. So, I had to find the conductor, Sis. Carolyn

Jackson, Mississauga West ecclesia. Then I just had to recruit people to actually be in the choir. We started at the end of 2018 and then we performed in May 2019.

**Levi:** How many practices did you have, and where would you hold them?

**Elle:** We practiced from December to May, roughly every second week. Because we're so spread out, I asked if there was anyone who would be willing to run practices in their own area. For example, we had a group of people on Manitoulin Island and there was someone there who could play the piano, so they organized practices for their group. There were groups in Mississauga, the Cambridge/Kitchener area, and Hamilton. We ended up having 40 in the choir, and we split into geographical areas for practicing. Then once every six weeks we tried to all get together in a central location to practice. When we got together for those combined practices, it was very encouraging to have the full force of the choir there. I think it gave everyone a boost and then they went back to their areas to do their practices in between. In total we had seven ecclesias represented and members ranged in age; the youngest was fifteen and the eldest was in their seventies.

**Levi:** You hit on this earlier when you were talking about the choir you grew up with in Brisbane. Just how it brings people together, working towards an event. And I think it's really interesting how that's cross-generational, and how it's kind of an equalizer as well. So, it's a unifier. A choir—a performance or a project like that—is a unifier and an equalizer.

**Elle:** I think that's one of the things that makes music so beautiful. You're never too young or too old to love music and to make music.

**Levi:** Did you get help from people you didn't expect?

**Elle:** I have a couple of people at my home ecclesia at Cambridge who are very musical and who always are on board. Sis. Sue Brokaw, she's a very good pianist and she was super encouraging as well, which is important, because sometimes when you are trying to get something off the ground, you can second guess it. I think, "Oh no, was this a good idea? Maybe I've bitten off more than I can chew. I don't know if people will be interested." Sis. Carolyn Jackson, the conductor, was also really fantastic and encouraging, as being a very steady hand on the choir. I would definitely ask to team up with her again.

**Levi:** You got ready for your May 2019 performance. What was that like? Where was it? How many people came?

**Elle:** We rented a church between the choir practice locations. This ended up being amazing because it had such good acoustics! Sometimes when you do so much hard work and then you sing in a rec hall or something, the sound can be flat. When we did a dress rehearsal on the afternoon of

**In total we had seven ecclesias represented and members ranged in age; the youngest was fifteen and the eldest was in their seventies.**

the performance, everyone was just so excited because we sounded as good as we could possibly sound! It was all set up to accommodate a choir. There were microphones and a little stage, there was recording equipment. There was a grand piano. So that was really exciting as choir members to perform somewhere like that.

We had to sell tickets because the place had a capacity limit and we sold out—150 tickets! We had refreshments. A couple of sisters baked all these delicious treats and had it all set out beautifully for afterwards. It was so exciting to see the people who turned up. There were babies all the way to elderly. There were people who had wanted to be in the choir but were in isolation and couldn't quite make it to practices, so they'd come for the actual performance. There were people there who hadn't come out for a while. There was a big range of ecclesias represented. It was super exciting.

**Levi:** Wow, that performance became quite a thing. I love that feeling. I've experienced it in smaller ways, just building up to that big event. As you said, you're working together with people you may not even normally work with.

**Elle:** It was really good for other people to see what we'd been working on because it was something new. The reaction was "Wow, we really enjoyed tonight. Please do it again." People had heard there was a choir going on but hadn't quite realized the scope of it and how many people were involved. I really enjoyed the cantata. It's called Jesus of Nazareth. It's a really good set of songs, in which there's something for everyone. It was a very uplifting night:

socially, musically, spiritually.

**Levi:** When was the second performance going to be?

**Elle:** A similar timeframe—around May. We'd rented the same venue again for the performance. The lady at the church said, "Oh, would you mind if I brought my family along for the performance?" And then we also had one of the arranging brothers after the first performance, ask, "Would you be prepared to do the performance again, but we open it up to the public?" They said, "It's such a good message. It's the gospel, it's the hope, it's Christ's birth, death and resurrection. It's everything in a nutshell." So yes, we had made plans to potentially do it later on in the year as a preaching effort. It was an interesting concept and I had never really thought before that it could have been a very effective preaching tool.

**Levi:** Yeah, it does feel like the kind of thing where if you've done all this work, you should repeat it like four times. Take it on tour, in a way.

So, the pandemic happened. How has that worked out? What is the choir doing now?

**Elle:** Recently, a couple of choir members asked me about getting it going again, because we're back in person at our ecclesia. In the past I had started it a bit before Christmas. So, I'm actually undecided. I don't know whether to bring back the songs we started to sing last year, or to get a completely new set of songs.

**Levi:** Do you have any advice, for someone who's thinking, "Maybe I could do this in my area, or help do this, or find a team to start a choir with." What would you tell them?

I'd like to,  
every time we  
do something  
like this, start  
a library where  
other people  
could borrow  
the music and  
do something in  
their own area. It  
is a lot of work,  
but I found it  
very rewarding.

**Elle:** Absolutely go for it! It's such a joyous way to bring people together and to praise God. So, if you have an opportunity to do that, it doesn't have to be on such a big scale. You could do something much smaller. I will say that if anyone is wanting to start a choir, and they want 50 copies of

Jesus of Nazareth to give it a go, I've kept all the copies of music. I'd like to, every time we do something like this, start a library where other people could borrow the music and do something in their own area. It is a lot of work, but I found it very rewarding.

When starting something new a lot of people are not necessarily on board right away. They need to be convinced or see it happen once. Then they say, "Oh, wow. That was amazing. I'd love to be part of it now," which is great for the second time round. But the first time can sometimes feel like an uphill battle. So definitely if you have even one or two people who are always keen, it's very refreshing. If you're the person who's always keen and enthusiastic, I don't know if you realize, but it's so helpful. Everyone knows what it's like when you sign up to do something—sometimes it is a drag. Even if it's something you want to do, it can sometimes conflict with other appointments or things that

you're trying to do in your busy life with your family. Don't be discouraged if some weeks only half of your choir turns up, it's very normal. They will definitely turn up on the night of the performance!

From a practical point of view, make sure you've done all your homework with copyright of music. Make sure that you know your music very well before you start teaching it to other people. One thing I found helpful was, I had a recording from when we'd sung the cantata back in Australia that I was able to send to the choir and say, "Here're the songs, listen and get familiar with the sound of them." And then for some of the songs that had particularly intricate four-part harmonies, I did record the soprano, alto, tenor, bass separately and sent those recordings to each group.

**Levi:** What do you hope for the future of the choir?

**Elle:** I would love to keep it going. I'd love for it to get bigger and include a wider range of people. I would love a way for people who are in isolation right now, or who are in small ecclesias, to be part of it and to be able to sing on the final night with fifty or a hundred people. That would be amazing. One really great thing about last year, when we did get it going for the second time, we had some younger people in it. The youngest was maybe ten. We had a couple of younger kids and then we also were hoping to include a couple of songs for children. The thought was that they would practice in Sunday School and be part of the performance on the night, sing their couple of songs and then the adult choir would take over.

Hopefully, we'll get it going again this year, and then do a performance next year. We're also looking at maybe getting some instruments involved as well.

**Levi:** Well, thank you, Elle. You've said a lot of really impactful things. What you've already shared is definitely awesome. If someone did want to start a choir, could they get in touch with you?

**Elle:** Absolutely! I can give you tips on running the choir, even just little things that I learned along the way about how to run a choir and conduct a choir and inspire a choir. I learned a ton, because

I'd never conducted or run a choir, I'd only been in them. There are tasks from sourcing the material, to making sure everyone had their music, prepping a plan for choir practices and booking a venue. I'm more than happy to help or chat and be a cheerleader for anyone who's even thinking of doing it.

Sis. Elle Wilson can be contacted at [clarke.eleanorj@gmail.com](mailto:clarke.eleanorj@gmail.com). We thank her again for sharing her story and experience!

*Jessica Gelineau,  
(Simi Hills, CA)*



## ISAIAH IN GALATIANS—PART 3:

# FREEDOM IN CHRIST

*By Jason Hensley*

**S**O far, we have seen that the apostle Paul applied the prophecies in Isaiah both to himself and the believers. This application supported his own ministry and demonstrated his authority, and yet it also pointed towards the means of salvation. Salvation would be through the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in his life—Christ would live in them. Works, therefore, could not save.

But there was more. This article will explore the additional support that the prophecy of Isaiah gave to Paul's argument—and how it brought urgency to the message.

## ISAIAH'S EXODUS

The latter portion of Isaiah has numerous themes. At least one of those themes is incredibly relevant to Paul's argument: throughout these last chapters of Isaiah, the prophet describes God's work with His people using **exodus** language.

*But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (Isa 43:1-2).<sup>1</sup>*

While these verses echo Israel's trek through the Red Sea and the Jordan River, the next verse was about the redemption they experienced in the Exodus: "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you." (Isa 43:3). In the first exodus, Egypt was given for their ransom. Now, in this second exodus, Cush and Seba would be given. And so, the prophet speaks of Israel's journey back from the nations: "Fear

*not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth.”* (Isa 43:5-6). This is a new exodus:

*Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot*

*a new oppressor: “Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy.”* (Isa 47:5-6). And yet this oppressor is just like Pharaoh: “*Can the prey be*



*and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: ‘Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.* (Isa 43:16-19).

As a new exodus, it recalls the old exodus but simultaneously involves

*taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? For thus says the LORD: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.’”* (Isa 49:24-25). Bringing all of this together, the servant songs of Isaiah paint a picture of God saving his people from bondage—bondage that is **like Egypt**, but a new oppressor. Somehow, Paul was showing that this exodus was about the believers.

## WORKS-BASED RELIGION AND IDOLATRY

But how? What was the bondage like in Egypt? From what had these new believers been delivered? Paul explained: *“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years!”* (Gal 4:9-10). They were delivered from their own tendency to slavish obedience to the Law! They followed the commandment without developing a relationship! Following the Judaizers was putting themselves back into slavery—as if they were deciding to return to Egypt and Babylon.

But perhaps that didn’t sound that bad. For us, sometimes familiarity with the exodus story prevents us from recalling the terror that the Israelites experienced at the hands of the Egyptians. Maybe it was the same for the Galatians. But Isaiah reminded the people of what Egypt was like: the oppressor showed no mercy, and the king was a tyrant. Though it may not have seemed as if works-based religion presented a similar threat, this is how God viewed the Judaizers! This is the same condemnation that Jesus gave to a group of Pharisees focused on salvation by works—they bound **burdens** too heavy to bear on people (Matt 23:4). They made people slaves and showed them **no mercy**. That’s the way that Scripture sees salvation by works.

The ecclesial Israel was returning to slavery, just like what the Israelites demanded in the wilderness. And just

like the Israelites of old, there was a further spiritual struggle. Throughout the servant songs in Isaiah, the prophet emphasizes that God’s people are trapped in idolatry. God’s power is repeatedly contrasted with the power of idols (Isa 42:18-25; 44:9-28) because the people at the time struggled with following the worship of the nations around. This is further indicated by the fact that Scripture declares that idols cannot see or hear, and those who make them are like them (Psa 115:8), and so God’s servant Israel is described in Isaiah as blind and deaf (Isa 42:19; 43:8). Isaiah repeatedly contrasts God with the **blind** and **deaf** idols—and because the people worship the idols, they too are blind and deaf.

Yet, how could this apply at all to the first-century Galatians? Literal idol worship had been cast aside in Judaism ever since the Babylonian exile. The Galatians were intent on worshipping the God of Israel. They were following the law that God had given to Moses. And yet, that is the crux of the argument here: just as the Israelites in Egypt worshiped the Egyptian gods, so the believers who were being freed from the Judaizers’ religion were still worshipping the Judaizers’ gods. They were still in bondage. They were **still** in spiritual Egypt and spiritual Babylon—still living in the land of the Judaizer and slaving away to the Judaizers’ God.

## BUT WHO WAS THE JUDAIZERS’ GOD?

It was themselves. Because legalism is idolatry.<sup>2</sup> Legalism takes God’s rightful place at the head of our religion and worship and replaces Him with our pride. We honor ourselves for

keeping all of the commandments. We glorify ourselves when we check a commandment off of our to-do list. We start to judge others who don't follow our understanding of the commands—again displacing the Lord as the judge (Jas 4:11-12).

But that was never what the law was meant to do. It was not to be an end in itself. It was not to be bondage! The law was to be part of their freedom—God gave it after they were freed from Egypt! As Paul argues, it was to train them, as the children of God, to create Christ in them (Gal 3:24). And yet, the law in itself became the object of worship. It brought them right back to Egypt.

## FREEDOM

Instead, God's people were to be **free**. But free to do what? Consider again the way that Isaiah writes about Israel and God:

*But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners,*

*saying to you, 'You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.' (Isa 41:8-10).*

This is about a **God** who will strengthen and uphold His people. It is about a God who is a savior to Israel, who leads them on an exodus out of slavery. Over and over, God is the deliverer of His people. Twice in the following few verses, God declares again that He is the one who helps them (v. 13, 14). He is the one who will provide water to the one who has none (v. 17). He will recreate the earth for the sake of His people (v. 18-19) so that those people will recognize that the Holy One of Israel has acted. God declares that He is active in the earth and knows the end from the beginning (v. 21-29). God is great, and no others are.

Again, God's power is emphasized in the next chapter. He is mighty (Isa 42:13). He will recreate the earth (v. 15-16). And His salvation would go to the Gentiles (v. 1, 4, 6). This section



of Isaiah focuses on God's greatness, His salvation, and His power. Yet this glorious God is the one who declares that He will hold their hand. He is the one who states that Abraham was his **friend**.

What is Israel free to do? Israel has been freed from its bondage so that it can **have a relationship** with its God. It's been given the freedom to **love**. There's no love possible in slavery. And so, Christ had set them free—he could live within them, and in doing so, they could become **God's children**. Isn't that Paul's argument in Galatians?

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Gal 4:4-7).*

In Christ, the Galatians had the opportunity to know God as a Father. They were free to have a relationship with the God of salvation. Instead, they were going in the opposite direction. They were returning to their slavery and leaving God's family.

This is the power of Isaiah's prophecy: it creates the opportunity to parallel salvation by works with Egypt, Babylon, and idolatry. This parallel powerfully reinforces the evils of works-based religion. When we give in to works-based religion, we have

set ourselves up as our own God. In addition, using Isaiah also allows the apostle to emphasize the importance of a relationship in our worship of God. God has freed His people. He has provided salvation. And He has done this because they are the children of His "friend." God wants us to know Him and to know Him intimately.

## CONCLUSION

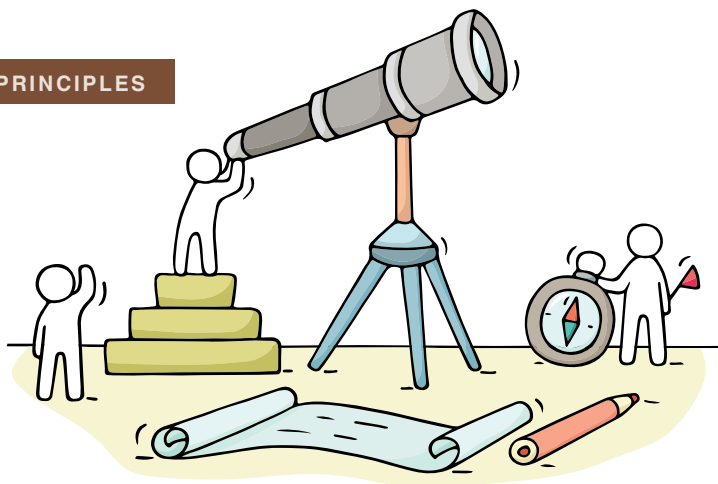
So, let's wrap up what we have discovered in these three articles about Paul's use of Isaiah in Galatians. First, the presence of Isaiah in Galatians has opened up the possibility for us to see ourselves in Isaiah's prophecy: we can be part of the one who proclaims salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus can live and work in us. That is just not some abstract idea—it is real. Rather than simply being ourselves, we can have Christ living in us. We can see ourselves as part of the fulfillment of prophecy!

Second, Isaiah's picture is powerful. We have been freed from Egypt and Babylon. How could we return to slavery by living a works-based religion? Instead, something so much better has been offered to us. Through Jesus, we can be the children of God. We can know Him. We can have a relationship with Him. We can leave the slavery of works and live by the motivation of love.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural references from the English Standard Version.

<sup>2</sup> Jason Hensley, *Giving Grace* (Seattle: Kindle Direct Publishing, 2020), 84-101.



## PART 7

# TRUE PRINCIPLES & UNCERTAIN DETAILS ABOUT PROPHECY

By Joe Hill

**T**HE Continuous Historic approach to understanding Bible prophecy has long been the most widely held view among Christadelphians. Bro. John Thomas adopted this view in *Eureka: An Exposition of the Apocalypse in Harmony with the Things of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Anointed*. Some brothers and sisters ascribe the highest of honors to this impressive three-volume work. For example, Bro. H. P. Mansfield wrote,

“With many Christadelphians, we believe that though *Eureka* is not inspired as the Scriptures are inspired, its author was divinely guided in the interpretation set forth. That does not mean that we necessarily endorse every detail

of it; but it does mean that by and large, we accept it as the true meaning of the Revelation.”<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, a few go too far, even suggesting that if you don’t agree with the Continuous Historic approach, then you aren’t a “true” Christadelphian and you shouldn’t be in fellowship. We must avoid such extreme views. There is nothing in our Statement of Faith that requires us to accept the Continuous Historic interpretation of prophecy, so it should not be a test of fellowship.

The fact is, Bro. Thomas was heavily influenced by the most popular view of his day. For example, many of the historical interpretations in *Eureka* are the same as those in *Horae Apocalypticæ* (i.e., *Hours with the Apocalypse*), a

four-volume scholarly masterpiece by English clergyman Edward Bishop Elliott (1793-1875). Charles Spurgeon called it “the standard work on the subject.”<sup>2</sup> Seventh-day Adventist historian LeRoy Edwin Froom (1890-1974) said it “is doubtless the most elaborate work ever produced on the Apocalypse.”<sup>3</sup>

Bro. Thomas’s dependence on Elliott and others does not invalidate the approach; it merely emphasizes that the Continuous Historic interpretation was (and is) not uniquely Christadelphian. One major thing that Bro. Thomas did, which he rightly stressed in the extended title and throughout, was to correct doctrinal errors found in the mainstream commentaries. As a result, *Eureka* properly aligns with the first principles of the gospel. Of course, so do other interpretations that have been suggested by brothers and sisters.

Although the Continuous Historic approach is still the most commonly held among us, there are other views that are accepted by an increasing number of brothers and sisters. Examples of Christadelphian books presenting other approaches include *Revelation: A Biblical Approach* by Bro. Harry Whittaker, *Apocalypse for Everyman* by Bro. A. D. Norris, and *Exploring the Apocalypse* by Bro. Peter Watkins. This comment is not meant to endorse these alternative views other than to encourage all of us to have a broader perspective by considering other options in addition to the Continuous Historic view. We need to be able to openly discuss all gospel-compliant possibilities in a Christ-like manner.

## EXPLAINING THE 2,000 YEAR GAP

The Continuous Historic perspective is one way to address the problem caused by Jesus’ repeated, “*I come quickly.*” (Rev 2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12). It does so by setting out to find fulfillments of the prophecies in the course of history from the time of John to the present age. Elliott claimed that by successfully doing so he had provided a convincing proof of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Though laudable in some regards, such an approach can have a major drawback: by looking backward at history to find fulfillments of the words of Scripture, we may have a propensity to find them whether they’re there or not. It’s like being told there are elephants in the clouds; as soon as you’re told to look for them, sure enough, you find them. *Apocalypse for Everyman* includes criticisms of many of the Continuous Historic explanations of historical events; these were provided to Bro. A. D. Norris by his cousin and historian Bro. J. B. Norris.

The rest of this article describes some of the methods that the inspired authors of Scripture dealt with delays in the fulfillment of God’s plans, and how these methods can help us understand why Christ hasn’t returned yet.

## GOD REPENTS

Yahweh tells Jeremiah to watch the

Although the Continuous Historic approach is still the most commonly held among us, there are other views that are accepted by an increasing number of brothers and sisters.

potter handling the clay in order to teach him how He interacts with nations (Jer 18:1-11). God explains:

*At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

*And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jer 18:7-10).*

This idea runs throughout the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

When God repents, His original plans may be deferred. For example, Israel's unbelief at Kadesh caused God to delay their entrance into the Promised Land by 40 years. Because Hezekiah prayed, God delayed his death by 15

years. Because Nineveh repented in sackcloth and ashes, God postponed their destruction for over a century.

This is perhaps the most important reason Christ hasn't returned yet. The second coming depends on the repentance of Israel (Acts 3:19-21 NRSV), so as long as Israel remains unrepentant, Gentiles will continue to be called into the family of God:

*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? (Rom 11:7-12).*

Notice that it is God who is blinding Israel, thus extending the riches of the Gentiles. Bro. Thomas explained:

“Had the nation continued to obey the Lord's voice and to keep the covenant, and when Christ came received him as king on the proclamation of the gospel, they would doubtless have been in Canaan until now; and he might have come ere this, and be now



reigning in Jerusalem, King of the Jews and Lord of the nations. But had this been the case, we Gentiles would have had no part in the kingdom. We might attain to eternal life at the end of the reign; but in the glory of the kingdom, and in the administration of its affairs, as heirs of the world with Abraham and his seed, we should have had no part; for it was the unbelief of the forty-second generation of Israel that became the riches of the Gentiles.” (*Elpis Israel*, p. 309).

While we all long for the time when Christ has returned to fulfill the hope of Israel, until then, we should be thankful that we have been included in that hope.

### TIME FROM GOD’S PERSPECTIVE

Peter faced the same issue we do: *“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?”* (2 Pet 3:3-4a). As part of his response, Peter explained that, on one hand, God can cause the activity that would normally take 1,000 years to happen in one day; and, on the other hand, He can wait 1,000 years for the activity of one day to happen: *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Pet 3:8-9).

### APOCALYPTIC RE-APPLICATIONS OF UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES

As we saw in an earlier article in this series,<sup>5</sup> the basic process of apocalyptic literature is to take unfulfilled or partially fulfilled prophecies of the past and re-apply them to present or future circumstances. Here are a couple of examples.

(a) In Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel re-applies Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years captivity by re-interpreting it to be an updated prophecy concerning  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years.

(b) Peter applies Joel’s prophecy of God pouring out his Spirit upon men and women so they could prophesy to the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21).

(c) The inspired New Testament writers re-apply Daniel’s allusions to Antiochus Epiphanes setting up the abomination of desolation (Dan 11:30-39; 7:8, 20-21, 24-25; 8:9-12, 23-25; 9:27; 12:11; see also 1 Macc 1:10-64) to the Roman destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Thess 2:1-12; Mark 13:14; Matt 24:15).

(d) Similarly, John envisions a composition of Daniel’s four beasts to represent the Roman Empire (Dan 7; Rev 12-13).

In this way, God’s plan can appear to skip past long periods of time, leaving big gaps in the fulfillment of prophecy. This is a key idea underlying Futurist interpretations of Revelation. New Testament expectations are re-applied to the last days leading up to

Christ's return. Sometimes these re-applications entail adaption and re-interpretation of some elements of the prophecies.

### **THE DAY-FOR-A-YEAR PRINCIPLE**

The idea that days represent years in prophetic time periods is a key ingredient to the Continuous Historic approach. The evidence for the principle comes from three passages (Num 14:34; Ezek 4:4-6; Dan 9:24). In the first of these, Israel was to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, one year for each day the spies were in the land. In the second, Ezekiel was to lie on his side for 390 days, one for each of the 390 years Israel was going to be punished, and then 40 days, one for each of the 40 years Judah was to be punished. In the third, Daniel is told that there will be 70 "weeks" corresponding to 490 years. This day-for-a-year principle is then applied, for example, to the 3 ½ times = 42 months = 1260 days (Dan 12:7; Rev 11:2; 12:14; 13:5) to get 1260 years, as well as to the 1290 and 1335 days (Dan 12:11-12) to get 1290 and 1335 years, respectively. Such an approach has been challenged.<sup>6</sup> One problem with it is the many prophecies in Scripture where the times are clearly meant to be taken "literally" (Gen 15:13; 41:29-30; Isa 38:5; Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; Jesus being raised on the third day; etc.). One particularly unfortunate application of the principle led Bro. Thomas, following Elliott, to predict the return of Christ around 1866. Sadly, this same error has been repeated many times by our community. In contrast, the actual Scriptural principle is more like "so many days for individuals corresponding to so many years for nations."

### **PROGRESSIVE DEFERMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ERA<sup>7</sup>**

The New Testament coverage of the last half of the first century A.D. illustrates the ongoing deferment of God's plan. There were those who claimed they were already in the kingdom (1 Cor 4:8), the day of the Lord and the resurrection having already occurred (2 Thess 2:1-2; 2 Tim 2:16-18). They didn't believe in bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15). They had to be comforted when some died (1 Thess 4:13-18). They had stopped working (1 Thess 4:11-12; 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6-15), had a shared purse (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37), and ultimately became known as the Ebionites, "The Poor Ones" (Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26).

Paul's letters are full of exhortations against these ideas. It is likely the reason he has so many negative things to say about the kingdom (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:19-20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5).

In addition, against this view, Paul, Mark, and John demonstrate that they were still in the first of three phases; and as God delayed the coming of Christ, the first phase continued to be extended. We have three stages of this progressive development of God's plan in A.D. 50-100.:

- (a) 1, 2 Thessalonians, c. A.D. 50-51 outlines the three phases (2 Thess 2:1-12; 1 Thess 4:13-5:11), and is based on the sequence of prophetic events in Daniel (some of which were mentioned above).
- (b) Mark 13, the Olivet Prophecy, c. A.D. 70 is also divided into the same three phases (Mark 13:5-13, 14-23, 24-27), and includes many verbal links to Thessalonians and

Daniel. Mark 13:9-13 extends the first phase by recalling Jesus' prediction of the events that would occur during the 50s and 60s, as recorded in Acts.

(c) Revelation, c. A.D. 69-96 has the same three major phases (Rev 4:1-11:14; 11:15-15:8; 16-22), each introduced with a vision in heaven, and including verbal links back to the Olivet Prophecy, Thessalonians, Daniel, etc. The Trumpets (Rev 8-11) extend the first phase by describing events that occurred during the 70s, 80s, and 90s, covering the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, including, for example, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Titus's comet, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, the horrible plague in the reign of Titus, and the notion of Nero Redivivus.

This progression shows how the New Testament writers were inspired to deal with the increasing delay of the return of Christ and the ensuing consummation of all things. They described the events that took place during the incremental gaps between their present time and

the writings that had come before. In essence, this is what our "signs of the times" watchers do today.

## CONCLUSION

This article and the others in this series have emphasized the difference between prophetic ideas that are true principles that we must all agree on and those which are uncertain details that we must allow for flexibility. The true principles are those that are essential to salvation, those that we rightly treat as tests of fellowship. They include first principles like the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the just and unjust, the Kingdom of God in the earth, etc. The uncertain details include topics like the design of the temple in the Kingdom Age and the various approaches to interpreting prophecy.<sup>8</sup> These are not in our Statement of Faith and should not be made tests of fellowship. We must allow differences of opinion on these non-essentials. We must be able to discuss them in a Christ-like manner.<sup>9</sup>

Joe Hill,  
(Austin Leander, TX)

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<sup>1</sup> *The Christadelphian Expositor, The Book of Revelation: The Apocalypse Epitomised*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Commenting and Commentaries*, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. III, p. 716.

<sup>4</sup> Joe Hill, *Tidings*, August, 2017, pp. 326-332 ([https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017\\_08\\_Aug\\_Special.pdf](https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017_08_Aug_Special.pdf)).

<sup>5</sup> Joe Hill, *Tidings*, March, 2021, pp. 142-143 ([https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/March\\_2021\\_tidings.pdf](https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/March_2021_tidings.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> Joe Hill and George Booker, "Does the 'day-for-a-year' principle pass the Scriptural test?" ([http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art\\_less/d06.html](http://www.christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art_less/d06.html)).

<sup>7</sup> This section takes some material from my article, "God Repents," referenced in endnote 3.

<sup>8</sup> The Continuous Historic, Preterist, Futurist, Progressive Deferment, and other approaches all have strengths and weaknesses, which is one reason that none of them should be elevated to an essential doctrine that must be accepted by everyone in our community.

<sup>9</sup> See the special issue, "When We Disagree: Ensuring Love Prevails," *Tidings*, October 2021 (<https://tidings.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-10-Special.pdf>).

# THE MIRACULOUS STORY OF NIGERIA

*By Peter Ojike*

**T**HE world is already dark enough. I find stories of those who by the grace of God made significant attempts to illuminate their corner of this world to be very inspiring. With the support from Christadelphians through the CBM (UK), the Truth has continued to blossom in Nigeria.

The seed of the Truth first germinated in Nigeria in 1957. In this article, I'll discuss the history of the Christadelphians in Nigeria with a special focus on the growth of the Truth during the Biafran War.

The whole world, even up until today, remembers pictures of starving Biafran Children. It was so horrific that in 1968, Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple inc., stopped believing in God after he saw the pictures of starving children in the 1968 cover of Life Magazine.<sup>1</sup> While this war may have made many lose their faith, to the Christadelphians in Nigeria the terrible sounds of bombs and explosives during the war was ironically the same boom the Almighty used to ignite the fast spread the of truth in Nigeria and beyond.

### **1950s: THE SEED OF THE GOSPEL SOWN AND THE FIRST BAPTISM**

In 1953, Bro. Jonathan Chukwuani, who was a member of God's Kingdom Society (a breakaway Millennial group from the Jehovah's Witness church), got a free book distributed by a zealous Australian Christadelphian, Bro. Charles Henry French. This pioneering work Bro. French did independently had a huge impact on Nigeria.

The CBM established a more globally coordinated advertisement scheme, with Bro. Hubert Taylor as the pioneer head of the Nigerian Team in 1956.<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of people showed interest in the Truth in April 1957, and the CBM sent Bre. Harry Tenant and Alfred Norris to visit Aba in Eastern Nigeria. This resulted in the baptism of Bro. Stephen Ekweweke Onuoha in 1957.<sup>3</sup>

### **1958: BRO. GODWIN ONWORDI BAPTIZED**

Godwin Onwordi was a relative of the traditional ruler in Ubulu-Uku, now in Delta state of Nigeria. The royal palace had a library of sorts. One day, when perusing some of the books, he came across a Christadelphian leaflet tucked inside one of the books. He read it with great interest, and this led to extensive correspondence about the gospel.

By the grace of God, he was baptized on June 28, 1958, under the guidance of Sis. Florence Walker, his tutor from

Canada. Little was known of him. In 1957, there is only a vague report of a young man in Eastern Nigeria that had learned the Truth through a North American sister. "Sometime before the Christadelphian Bible Mission was formed, a gentleman in Eastern Nigeria obtained a leaflet advertising Christadelphian literature and came into contact with a sister. He appeared to learn a good deal of our teaching and was speaking of it to others at the time when the sister asked us to get in touch with him."<sup>4</sup>

Convinced that he was the only Christadelphian in West Africa, Bro. Onwordi began to preach. Some of the ecclesias he helped establish were the Urhonigbe and Benin ecclesias, which are still in operation today. In 1967, Bre. Alan Hayward and Stanley Owen visited him and called him "brother." He recounts that it was the first time someone (a Christadelphian) ever called him "brother." Bro. Onwordi fell asleep in the Lord in 2003.

### **1960: IJUODO ECCLESIA FOUNDED, BRO. EMMANUEL ODUWALE OLATUNJI BAPTIZED**

Bro. Emmanuel Oduwale Olatunji was an honorable man who insisted on paying for every material he received from the Christadelphians. He started the correspondence lessons in 1957 through Bro. Stuart Cowlshaw. In

There are currently 24 Ecclesias in Nigeria:

Aba, Alayi, Ampfuike, Asaba, Asa Amator, Azumini, Benin City, Calabar, Enugu, Iju-Odo, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos, Ninga, Odochala, Okwe Oborro, Okwe Ikwueke, Owerri, Ozaumnebuku, Port Harcourt, Urhonigbe, Umuahia and Warri.

1960, after completing his lessons, he asked one of his pupils to baptize him according to the steps in the Ecclesial Guide. His wife was also baptized, and they broke bread every Sunday morning.

Bro. Oduwale went on to translate several Christadelphian booklets, including the postal correspondence course and “Preaching the Truth” into his native Yoruba language. He was a man of great zeal and conviction, as he preached extensively in Ijuodo to neighboring communities. Unfortunately, he fell ill around 1960 and news of his death was received by the CBM in 1962.<sup>5</sup> Bro. Oduwale had but two short years of active service, but his legacy lives on today.

### **1962: BRO. JONATHAN CHUKWUANI INTRODUCED THE GOSPEL PUBLICITY LEAGUE CHURCH**

Bro. Chukwuani responded to a Christadelphian advert in the newspaper, which I learned from his nephew brother Jachin Chukwuani, who lived with him at that time and later got baptized in 1966. The ad was placed by Bro. Charles Henry French from Australia. It was this same Bro. French who patiently taught Bro. Chukwuani the gospel. In 1962, when Bro. Chukwuani was ready for baptism, Bro. Charles French asked his non-Christadelphian friend, Mr. Hunter, to baptize Bro. Chukwuani into Jesus Christ. Bro. Chukwuani established Umuahia ecclesia and called the new

church “Gospel Publicity League.” Bro. Chukwuani loved the Truth so much. After the Biafran War, he founded the Enugu ecclesia, which together with the Umuahia ecclesia is still alive today. Bro. Chukwuani fell asleep in 1981.<sup>6</sup>

### **1965: BRO. JOHNSON OGUNJI BAPTIZED**

The Bible Missionary reported that 3,740 Nigerians were in touch with Christadelphians via correspondence in 1964. Since April 1963, Bro. Cowlishaw had temporarily moved to Nigeria from Britain for 2.5 years as a missionary. The work was tedious, but their labor was certainly not in vain. In 1965, Bro. Cowlishaw met Bro. Johnson Ogunji in Ijuodo, the brother who learned the Truth

from Bro. Emmanuel Olatunji. Bro. Johnson was baptized the same year (1965) by brother Stuart Cowlishaw. Bro. Ogunji became a huge blessing to the Christadelphian community, not just in Ijuodo and the Western Region, but later to the whole Nigerian community. He translated even more Christadelphian literature into the Yoruba language and established the Ijuodo Ecclesia. He was a man of great faith, who committed his life to the advancement of the truth. He fell asleep in the Lord in 2003.

### **1966: BRO. ELIJAH EZEH BAPTIZED**

In 1959, Bro. Elijah Ezeh received Christadelphian booklets from his friend in Aba. He read them while in Lagos in 1964. After he quit his job, he became very depressed and attempted

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suicide on several occasions. It was in the midst of this turmoil that he stumbled upon the booklets given to him by his friend Mr. Madukwe in Aba, 1959. After reading the booklet *Key to Understanding the Scriptures*, he told me in his words “I jumped up and rejoiced and I said to myself ‘This is the true Christianity, not what we were doing in Methodist church!’”

Sis. Florence Young, his tutor from Canada, was a passionate teacher. She went a step further to set-up a library for Bro. Elijah. She sent him *Elpis Israel*, *Christendom Astray* and many books which Bro. Elijah voraciously read.

In 1966, Bro. Elijah was ready to be baptized. In 1966, there was a great political crisis in Nigeria. There were reports of riots in Nigeria, where people of Igbo origin were targeted and killed. Bro. Elijah's in-law in Kaduna sent him a message and asked him to abandon whatever he was doing in Lagos immediately and run to the East for his safety. Because of this, Bro. Elijah chose to be baptized in Umuahia by Bro. Jonathan Chukwuani. He was now leaving Lagos, but before leaving he preached to many of his kinsman in Lagos. They laughed at him and informed him that they were not ready to leave the Methodist Church.

Bro. Jonathan Chukwuani baptized Bro. Elijah on March 6, 1966. Bro. Chukwuani found in Bro. Elijah, a great friend and brother in the Truth. An enlarged picture of Bro. Chukwuani hangs on the wall of Bro. Elijah's sitting room many decades after the former's death, and even up till today.

They preached to anyone with ears, without distinction. Dr. Michael

Okpara was the Premier of the Eastern region of Nigeria. He was briefly detained after a failed coup in 1966. When he was released, Bro. Chukwuani and Bro. Elijah paid him a courtesy visit. They came as ordinary preachers and were permitted in to see him. They spent quality time with the Premier, telling him about the hope of Israel. He appeared to love the message and they gave him a copy of *Elpis Israel*. His Personal Assistant begged to receive a copy too, and they promised to give him one but had difficulty doing so as the crisis intensified. This demonstrated the zeal and conviction many had in those days. Even now that the Christadelphians are registered and established, not many people would think of preaching to top political figures in their home.

## OCTOBER 1966: LAGOS ECCLESIA FOUNDED

Very great was Bro. Elijah Eze's zeal. I didn't fully understand him when he told me he preached to a lot of people in Lagos. But Bro. Stanley Owen, who visited Ikeja, Lagos with Bro. Alan Hayward in 1967, wrote:

“In Lagos Bro. Alan and myself found four young brethren who, through one Elijah Eze, had learnt the Gospel from 1964 onwards. When the riots started in 1966, they became afraid for the future, and after a postal interview, and on advice from brethren and sisters in California who had been in contact with them, they baptized each other in October 1966. Great was our surprise when we found that they had acquired a Christadelphian Hall, and a well-

organized ecclesial life. We sang hymns from the Christadelphian hymn book, exhorted each other, and spent many hours examining the basis of their faith. We found them to be expert in preaching the Truth to others, and able to use their Bibles in a workman-like manner”.<sup>7</sup>

This story makes you understand the conviction and zeal found in the man who later became our Bro. Elijah Ezech. The light in Lagos Ecclesia has continued to shine ever since then.

### **1967: ABA ECCLESIA FOUNDED, BRO. ALAN HAYWARD AND BRO. STANLEY OWEN’S MISSIONARY TOUR**

Bro. Elijah founded Aba ecclesia in 1967. He preached to his neighbors, and the ecclesia grew to five brethren and some friends. Bre. Hayward and Owen wrapped up their Nigerian mission after visiting the Aba and Umuahia Ecclesias. Unfortunately, the war was so imminent that they later discovered that their flight was the last commercial flight that left Enugu!

### **1967–1970: THE NIGERIAN BIAFRAN WAR AND ALAYI ECCLESIA**

Aba fell to Nigeria in August 1968. That same year Bro. Paul Richards and his wife moved to Ibadan, Nigeria from Britain as missionaries; Bro. Paul was a university lecturer. Bro. Elijah fled to his country home in Alayi but would cycle to Umuahia from Alayi (36km) to break bread with Bro. Chukwuani, then proceed to Aba (67km) to break bread with the brethren he left there. He would then cycle back to Alayi (90km) the following day! He did this

every week until Aba completely fell to Nigerian forces.

In Alayi, Bro. Elijah who was a lay preacher in his fifties, was called upon to preach in the Methodist Church. He prepared a long lecture on the kingdom of God, and after his sermon many people followed him to learn more about his “strange” teaching.

### **ULUCHUKWU: ELIJAH’S CAVE OF REFUGE**

The invasion of Alayi on June 15, 1969 was very devastating.

Everyone, including two recent converts of Bro. Elijah, fled their homes and found refuge in a cave known as Ulochukwu, or God’s house. This cave, deep in the forest, was right in the middle of terror, chaos and extreme poverty. Yet, men and women came to hear Bro. Elijah speak of the future kingdom of God, where peace will flow like a river.

Many believed him and were baptized. According to his records, there were seventy baptized and a host of friends were connected. They broke bread every week with pieces of yam, which they harvested from the farm, and palm wine. In those days, due to the economic blockade of Biafra by Nigeria, biscuits and carbonated soft drinks were not only luxurious, but literally nowhere to be found.

To further understand how undeterred their faith was, Bro. Kalu Mba Eze fell

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asleep in 1969 from starvation. Shortly before he died, he gave a verbal will to Bro. Elijah. He said, “Give everything I have to the Christadelphians.” His wall clock, which was his costliest possession in the forest, was given to the Christadelphians.

Bro. Elijah told me that miraculous things happened in those days. For example, during the War, he gathered people for a public lecture on Revelation 11. As he got to verse five in his exposition and said “Fire...!”, a Nigerian soldier by the name “Olukolu” stormed the gathering and screamed “What are you guys doing here?!” Bro. Elijah showed him from the Scriptures that they are only studying their Bible. The soldier left them alone, however,

he told me that it was miraculous that they survived the event and continued their studies.

He also told me that after the war around March 1970, he organized a public lecture for every survivor in Amaururu, Alayi. A lot of people turned up for the event, however they were more worried that there had never been a rainfall since 1969 Harmattan season (a dry eastern wind on the African coastal plain). He told me that he didn’t know what took over him, but he told them that they shouldn’t worry, rain would fall on that day. Lo and behold, rain fell on that day! He acknowledged that “it looked so much like nothing but a miracle.”



*The "Elijah Cave" in Nigeria that brethren hid in during the Civil War*

## POST WAR

The war ended on January 15, 1970. It was feared that the little flock that disappeared into Biafra may never come out again. Although a few brethren went missing, Bro. Elijah Ezech came out of Alayi with exactly seventy baptized members that were sound in faith, and with many friends.

The first CYC was held in Enugu in 1971. The Alayi Ecclesia arrived with two trucks of young people!

It turned out that God, in His wisdom, had used a human tragedy to spread the Truth in that region. The growth was miraculous. In 1972, the CBM was surprised about the growth in the former Biafra, and they reported:

“Present ecclesial membership in Nigeria totals around 108, of whom 87 are in the East-Central region. And this is the more striking from the fact that it is in this

region that the development has taken place most spontaneously, with the least benefit from the presence of missionaries as such. Which in no way reflects on the fine good work and wise guidance which Brother Paul and Sister Sue Richards have given, in the West and overall, during their long stay in the country. It seems likely that this stay will continue throughout the major part of this year (1972), and we are deeply grateful for their loyal help.”<sup>8</sup>

Bro. Alan and Sis. Peggy Hayward visited the Ulochukwu cave in Alayi after the war. Bro. Elijah described his ordeals and the miraculous conversion of many people in that cave, and the baptisms that took place in the river that flowed from this House of God or Ulochukwu. Bro. Alan, standing in the midst of the cave, made this prayer:



*Young people from the Aba, Nigeria Christadelphian Ecclesia*



*Baptisms in Kamukuywa, Kenya*

“Thank you, Lord, for this awesome place you have created. In this dim light you hid men and women from their enemies. In these gloomy depths you showed some of them a greater Light. They fled here in fear of death—and they found here the way of everlasting life. ‘For all the mighty works you have wrought here—thank you, Lord.’”<sup>9</sup>

Bro Elijah Ezech fell asleep in the Lord on June 5, 2016. On the day he went into a coma, maybe coincidentally, he had led the prayers and asked God to make the life they will live on that day be like their last.

### CHRISTADELPHIA IN NIGERIA TODAY

By the grace of God, we have about thirty ecclesias in Nigeria with almost a thousand members. This number is quite insignificant compared to the 200 million population of the country and the great desire of the people, both Muslim and Christian, to hear the word of God. A lot certainly needs to be done.

### PREACHING EFFORTS TODAY

Today, we usually have a national CYC organized every two years. Also, we have a national Fraternal Gathering every two years that alternates with CYC. Christadelphian ecclesias in Nigeria are divided into Northern, Western and Eastern zones. Each of these zones also organize their own Fraternal gathering.

In addition, the Eastern ecclesias host Bible campaigns each August, which is a Gospel publicity event held in Aba every year. There is also a radio program called “Preaching the Truth” that is broadcast every week in the Eastern region.

There are other events like Gospel in Songs in Aba and weekend Family gathering in Lagos.

### CHALLENGES

It is very obvious that there is poverty and economic hardship in Nigeria. Yet, this economic hardship makes Nigeria a fertile ground for Pentecostalism and Prosperity Gospel ministries. This movement is very popular here. Many Pentecostal megachurches found

elsewhere in the world originated from Nigeria. It is reported that the largest evangelical church auditorium, with a 120,000-seat capacity, is in Nigeria. In fact, 60% of the largest Evangelical church auditoriums are in Nigeria.<sup>10</sup>

There is little understanding of the hope of Israel and the message of the Kingdom of God. Because there is poverty and corruption everywhere, people are initially amazed that we preach the Kingdom of God will be established here on this evil earth. However, the corruption and excesses of the Pentecostal preachers makes a lot of people desire to know the truth of the scriptures.

It has not been easy for the national body to meet like we used to due to COVID 19 restrictions. But there is a weekly virtual Bible study class organized by Lagos Ecclesia. Also, a virtual platform for online learning and correspondence has been developed here in Nigeria, with almost 200 people taking the “Preparing for Baptism” study course. Anyone can access it at [www.preachi.com](http://www.preachi.com). This website has the capacity of serving Christadelphians outside Nigeria too. There is an ongoing plan to produce video materials and develop a mobile preaching application.

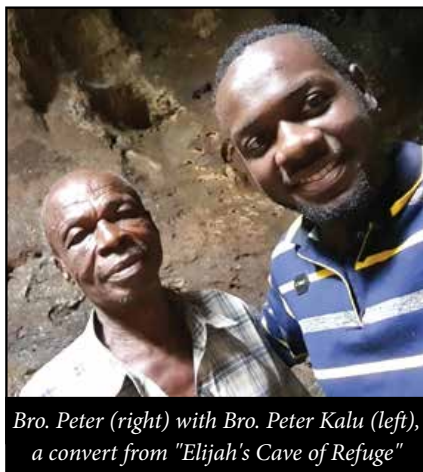
There is also an ongoing resuscitation of what I will call the spirit of Elijah,

among the youths. The conviction and need to preach the Truth of Jesus like the pioneer Christadelphians here and the pioneer UK Advertising scheme. Christadelphians in Nigeria are generally strong in faith, with great expositors of the Word in every ecclesia, but largely unknown in the outside world.

On a closing note, the CBM UK has continued to nurture and support the ecclesias here both materially and spiritually. Their labor is not in vain.

What more can we say? For all the mighty works God has continued to do in calling out people to Himself here in Nigeria and beyond, we say “Nagode! Imeela! Eshe! Thank you, LORD!”

*Peter Ojike,  
(Lagos, Nigeria)*



*Bro. Peter (right) with Bro. Peter Kalu (left),  
a convert from "Elijah's Cave of Refuge"*

<sup>1</sup> Isaacson, Walter. *Steve Jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. Pg. 14 & 15.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 2, October 1956, Page 41). Also worthy of mention is the pioneering works of brother Stuart Cowlshaw in this regard.

<sup>3</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 4, August 1957, Page 41.

<sup>4</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 4, August 1957, Page 94.

<sup>5</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 4, August 1957, Page 94.

<sup>6</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 16, March 1962, Page 23.

<sup>7</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 28, October 1967, Page 18.

<sup>8</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 44, April 1972, Page 17.

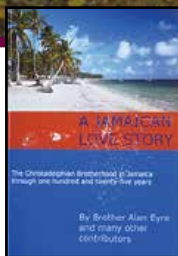
<sup>9</sup> *The Bible Missionary*, No 51, January 1974, Page 17.

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_the\\_largest\\_evangelical\\_church\\_auditoriums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_largest_evangelical_church_auditoriums)

# A JAMAICAN LOVE STORY

(BY ALAN EYRE)

*By Nigel Patterson*



**T**HIS is a about the Christadelphian Brotherhood in Jamaica over a period of 125 years. It is stimulating and motivating, whether you are an inhabitant or a never-been. It has been mostly written by Bro. Alan Eyre, but there are a number of other contributors. Bro. Alan fell asleep in June 2020, having been ill for four years following a stroke. During this time the whereabouts of his unfinished notes were unknown until they were discovered on his younger son's laptop. With the permission and cooperation of his daughter, Jennifer, the manuscript has been completed and now published. It makes for fascinating reading. It chronicles the lives of about forty brothers and sisters who played their part in enriching ecclesial life in Jamaica, and the Caribbean, very

nearly all of whom are now asleep in the Lord.

Bro. Alan was born in Yorkshire in 1930 but emigrated to and settled in Jamaica early in life. He

was co-founder of the Department of Geography at the University of the West Indies, Kingston. There is a substantial write-up of his academic life on Wikipedia.

Living most of his life in Jamaica enabled him to see ecclesial life there in all its varied hues and allowed him to build up a store of recollections of brothers and sisters over a period of time, stretching back to the late 19th century. This book brings to life some extraordinary people who came to the Truth in widely differing circumstances—some of them quite miraculously.

We meet a brother (born in the mid-19th century) who trained at a Baptist Theological College. The more he studied the more he knew he was not going in the right direction. Then, he discovered in the college library copies of the original confessions of faith of the Baptists, which bore little resemblance to what was then being taught at the college, but which were much nearer Bible truth and would be recognized by Christadelphians (I recall that my own father had the same experience when asked to give a talk at a local Baptist chapel in Yorkshire). This brother did not rest until he found a community that shared his beliefs. His new-found zeal for the Truth, as well as his work, took him to places far from Jamaica—West Africa, Europe, Russia, UK, Trinidad, South America. His story is astonishing!

In the midst of destitution, hurricanes, poor health and prolonged illness (with special reference several times to the long-term patients at Slipe Pen Tuberculosis Hospital), we are in the company of those whose hold on the truth and their Saviour was determined and tenacious. They came from a wide range of backgrounds but were made one in Christ. Then there is the story of a simple cane cutter in the west of the island, who lost the sight in one eye through an accident in the cane fields and had a terrible speech impediment, but who yet “with stammering lips” as Isaiah has it, spoke to whoever would listen, both young and old, and whose manner of life and work among the local community and the wider Christadelphian body made him “a preacher without words” respected at home and abroad. His life was callously brought to an end on a local road.

We are introduced to a brother whose ancestors in the 16th and 17th centuries were some of the most powerful in Europe. We meet three young brothers who served the Kingston ecclesia, who were brutally gunned down during a period of political violence in the city. We are allowed to “hear” an exhortation given by one of them—well worth reading.

Every now and again, we learn of the influence and help of brothers and sisters from elsewhere— Canada and the UK, for example. We also have our attention drawn to those circumstances that lead to the decline of some ecclesias and the final snuffing out of their light-stands. Such examples are familiar in other parts of the world.

This is but a sample of the characters that fill the pages of *A Jamaican Love Story*. It is brought to a conclusion with a miscellany of short, but delightfully reflective writings by past and present Christadelphians.

When you read this book in its entirety, you will feel driven to ponder the quality and persistence of your own discipleship, perhaps with some sense of unease. Those of us who have read his books *The Protesters*, *Brethren in Christ* and *At Last, True Christianity* will know that brother Alan tells a good story. He still does.

Nigel Patterson,  
(Newquay, UK)

**To get your copy of this book,  
visit the Thousand Oaks**

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available from the current printing.*

# NEWS & UPDATES

## **Los Angeles (Hispanic Ecclesia), CA**

With great joy we report the baptisms of three new sisters in Christ. On September 4, 2021, Phoebe Cuadra, daughter of Sis. Edyth Melgar, and great-granddaughter of Bro. Carlos and Sis. Margarita Perez, was immersed into the saving name of Jesus. Phoebe developed a great love for the Scriptures while growing up in our Sunday School and CYC. She is one of probably very few Christadelphians to have received the right hand of fellowship from their great-grandfather—while sitting beside him in a Zoom meeting!

Then on October 2, we had the pleasure of baptizing two long-time students, Edith Bolaños and Cecilia Maldonado. Each had spent ten years faithfully doing postal courses and having telephone Bible classes. They are delighted to be part of the family of the faith. It has been wonderful to welcome three new members into our meeting and the worldwide Christadelphian community. May God bless and guide them in their walk to the kingdom.



# Thoughts on the Way One Verse Only?

**S**HOULD an important Bible teaching be based on one verse only?

There are good reasons why we do not consider a single verse or phrase to be sufficient evidence for a first principle. For example, there is the issue of judgment. Understanding God's judgment can be a tricky matter if we focus on one passage here or there, the main reason being that not every single relevant point is taught in every single relevant passage. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, Paul says:

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will...meet the Lord...And so we will be with the Lord forever.<sup>1</sup>*

If we read these two verses alone, without comparing other scriptures (some of Paul's included), then we might conclude that there is absolutely no judgment at all intervening between resurrection and glorification, and that everyone who is raised must be glorified.

Of course, this conclusion is contradicted by Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 10:42; Romans 14:10-12; and 2 Corinthians 5:10, among other passages. There will plainly be some sort of judgment intervening between resurrection and

the Kingdom of God although there is room for some different opinions as to:

- Where the judgment takes place,
- How long the judgment will last, and
- The procedure and order of such a judgment.

So, in 1 Thessalonians 4, why does Paul leave out any reference to judgment at all? Has he forgotten that there will be one? Of course not. He didn't mention it because it wasn't the main point he had in mind at that time. He was intent on comforting some believers who were grieving for those who had died. He did this by simply reminding them that, when Christ returned, they would all be reunited—both living and dead together. Dying before Christ returned would be no barrier to entering his Father's eternal kingdom; those who died in faith would be raised from the dead!

I think Paul did not feel the need to say, once again,

“Oh, by the way, as you already know, there will be a gathering together of all those who are responsible, living and dead, and a great judgment before the Lord's tribunal, where every man and woman will stand and give some account, and—by the way again—some of those who are raised will be rejected and condemned to a second death before the rest of us will be given the blessing of immortality, etc.”

Such a digression would have spoiled Paul's message, or at least introduced a negative element in what Paul intended to be very positive and comforting.

Think of it this way: let us say that Dad is going to work one day, and the little kids know that he will be near their favorite ice cream store. So, they beg him, "Please bring home some ice cream this evening." And he says, "I will," and he does.

Now, to the little children, all they care about, and in some sense all they "know," is that: (a) Dad went off to work; (b) Dad bought ice cream, and (c) Dad brought it home for us!

They don't know, nor at that point do they need to know, that between the time Dad left home and the time he returned, he made a dozen telephone calls, wrote nine letters, had five conversations with fifteen people, and ate lunch himself. All they want to know is: **Where's the ice cream?**

So sometimes, with complicated subjects, or subjects that span the whole Bible, it is a mistake to assume that, since such-and-such isn't mentioned in a particular place, then it won't happen at all. But this argument from omission is a notoriously unreliable argument. It may well be that, just a few pages further along, our Bible will fill in the "missing link" that helps us make sense of the questionable passage. Until that time when more light is shed on the difficult passage, we may suppose that God just hasn't told us everything yet. Why? Because:

- It isn't necessary for us to know, or

to think about at this time;

- It would detract from His main message at this point;
- We are expected to compare one Bible passage with another, and figure out for ourselves that, yes indeed, such-and-such will happen too—because it says so "over there" if not "right here!"

Donald Arthur Carson (1946 - ), Emeritus Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a writer and editor of numerous Bible commentaries and textual studies, wrote:

"Suppose a particular doctrine is based on just one verse: Would that not place the doctrine in jeopardy? Yes, I suppose it would. This never happens, however, for the simple reason that established doctrines are never based on just one verse. Few are likely to formulate a doctrine that depends on only one passage. 'What!' someone replies, 'How many times does the Bible have to say something for it to be true?' The answer of course is that the Bible does not have to say it at all for it to be true. Either it is true, or it is not. But the Bible may have to say it several times, and perhaps in different ways, for us to understand unambiguously and precisely what truth is being taught. And that is precisely why doctrine is not based on just one verse."<sup>2</sup>

George Booker,  
(Austin Leander, TX)

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are from the New International Version.

<sup>2</sup> D.A. Carlson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*, 1979, Baker Books, p. 65.



### **Meal-a-Day Partner blueEnergy's Story:**

This picture captures a special moment as Meal-a-Day partner blueEnergy officially hands over the keys of a new solar pumping station to an indigenous community in Nicaragua. Because of Meal-a-Day's partnership made possible with help from people like you, this community now has safe, clean drinking water after the installation of this solar water pumping system.

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