

TIDINGS



Volume 85, Number 1, January 2022

PRAISE FROM THE BEGINNING

Through praise, we attempt to express the unique nature of God, which really is difficult for us, as humans, to contemplate.



Peter Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Jerusalem

"From the Mount of Olives: Overlooking the Temple Mount and all the graves waiting to be opened upon Christ's return."

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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EDITORIAL

MY FRIEND STEVE

By Dave Jennings

LAST month, I learned that Steve passed away due to complications from COVID-19. He was only a few days away from his 65th birthday. Steve was living with his wife in a small town outside Reno, NV. Two weeks later, his wife, Gale, also passed away from this dreaded virus.

I suppose this story is no longer unique. In the US alone, three-quarters of a million people have died from the virus. This virus has robbed families of parents, husbands, wives and other loved ones. To the compilers of data associated with this disease, Steve and Gale were just another couple of data points.

But not to me. While I never met Gale, Steve was once a close friend in my home ecclesia. He was a regular participant at all ecclesial functions. We worked together as teenagers in a restaurant for about a year. We were baptized within a year of each other. Steve was in my wedding party in 1976. We had traveled together, discussed serious topics, and laughed much. We both expected to continue our friendship throughout our lives.

But that didn't happen. A few years after my marriage, I saw less and less of Steve. He moved out of the area. Eventually, Steve left the Truth. Not immediately, of course, but after a series of decisions

he made that did not include the Lord. I suspect he found these decisions led him in a direction he had not willfully chosen. Later in life, he got heavily involved in local government and he became well known in his community. Steve told me during a phone call about a decade ago how he was happy in his life. I held out hope that Steve might return to the Truth, but after that call, it sounded hopeless.

I suppose if you've grown up in the Truth, you too could call to mind people who were your contemporaries, who you anticipated spending the rest of your life with, but you lost track of them. Since Steve's passing, I have asked myself many times what I might have done differently with Steve over the years? I always held hope for him to return, but this will never happen now. I did pray for him, but sadly I must confess that those prayers ceased a decade ago. His fate now rests in the hands of the Righteous Judge.

This leaves me thinking about other "lost sheep" within our ecclesias. It is so easy for them to drop from our minds. There may be a flurry of efforts early on to reach them, but we often fail to continually seek them out. Prayers may dry up. They come off our ecclesial lists. Over the years, unless they are family members, they may be forgotten. Friends like Steve, though once dear to us, can just become nostalgic memories.


There are a multitude of reasons why brothers, sisters and young people leave the Truth. I won't attempt to list them here. But I will say that for some, it doesn't mean they stopped believing. One brother I knew was gone for more

than 35 years, and only returned after the death and funeral of his brother brought him back in contact with brothers and sisters. Another had been gone decades, feeling that we would never accept him again as a brother due to the lifestyle decisions he had once made but were no longer active. It makes me pause and wonder just how many "lost sheep" are waiting for a shepherd's voice to call them back?

I remember a brother once saying lost sheep know where we are located and how to come back. After all, we were still at the same address. All a wayward brother needed to do was walk back through the door. Oh, how I wish it were that easy! For the brother that had been gone 35 years before attending his brother's funeral, he did not return immediately. There were conversations with him over two years. One faithful

brother told him that either he should come back on his own, or he would show up at his front door to bring him. It was this prompting that caused him to return. He later explained to me how overwhelming it was for him to come back into the ecclesia. He didn't know how he would be received. He struggled internally with whether he was still worthy to be back with brothers and sisters. He described coming back through the doors of the ecclesia as the most stressful decision he had ever

He described coming back through the doors of the ecclesia as the most stressful decision he had ever made. It wasn't really a logical battle; it was an emotional obstacle that was keeping him away.



"It is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement..."

made. It wasn't really a logical battle; it was an emotional obstacle that was keeping him away. To be honest, that surprised me a bit, but I will never forget it. When he did come back through the ecclesial doors, he was joyfully greeted by dozens. It changed his life. In that ecclesia, they instituted a wonderful process for reinstating someone to fellowship who had been gone. There was a formal extension of the right hand of fellowship again at the front of the hall. There was not a dry eye in the hall that day. He went on to return to exhorting and participating fully in the ecclesia before he fell asleep a couple of years later.

Here are a few questions for us to contemplate.

1. For those who have left the meeting, can we say with certainty that they KNOW we love them and wish for them to return? Has this been communicated clearly, explicitly to them? How would you do this now for those with whom you've lost touch?
2. Are there signs we might see now which would help us to be more proactive with members that may be contemplating leaving? What are the signs? How should they be addressed?

3. How can we keep lost sheep in front of our faces, so that they do not become forgotten? Has your ecclesia made a list of past Sunday School, CYC and baptized members who have left, going back decades?
4. Has your ecclesia committed these lost sheep to regular prayer? I remember hearing of a church locally that created a wall with the painting of a tree, which they called the "Tree of Life." On that tree, they posted the names of all who were once members but were no longer attending and included each in their church prayer list. The members of the church were encouraged to claim one of the posted names and make contact. They celebrated together when a posted name was removed because they had returned, the returnee taking their name off the posted tree.

Not every person contemplating a return to the ecclesia can do this without help. In Corinth, a man was censured by many in the ecclesia because of unrepented sin. We might surmise that this is the same man that had his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-5). It would appear from the record that this man had now repented. Should they wait until he decides to come back?

Paul exhorts them to take the lead.

Most of you opposed him, and that punishment was enough. Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him. Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement. So I would urge you now to confirm your love for him. (2 Cor 2:6-8 NLT).

There is a certain proactivity suggested here by Paul. When sin is repented from, it may not be enough to prompt the brother or sister to return to the ecclesia. They may feel shame or embarrassment. Some sins bring tangible consequences that don't disappear when one repents. It is possible that those who might return will feel that the pathway is uncertain and that it is possible that they are not even wanted. Paul tells us to get them! Find them and confirm our love. Let them know that we have missed them and that we need them.

For ecclesial leaders it is critical to accept the outreach of lost sheep as one of the most important responsibilities on the agenda. Elders are expected to be "overseers" (Acts 20:28). Solomon tells us that we are to be "diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." (Prov 27:23). Any herdsman would know that there is a need for constant oversight and care. Animals get injured and sick and need special attention. They need ample water and pastureland. A herdsman is always surveying the flock, looking for signs that there may be a problem. This requires us to accept oversight as a core

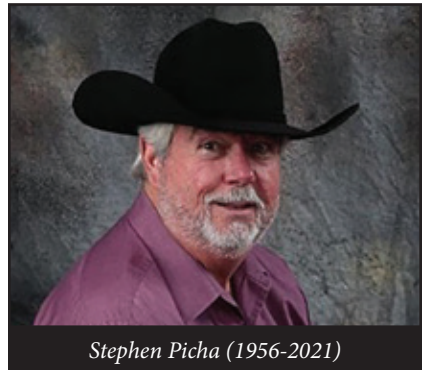
Not every person contemplating a return to the ecclesia can do this without help.

responsibility as ecclesial elders and to stay connected to ecclesial members. When one wanders away, it is the shepherds who are to ensure they are sought out.

I suspect that recovering "lost sheep" represents a significant opportunity for most of our ecclesias. Those lost were almost certainly educated well on the fundamentals of the Truth. Even after many years away, most say that they never believed the false doctrines that other churches taught. They are missing pieces of the body, and we will function more effectively with them back in our midst. Beyond this, it is a constant reminder to all of us that no matter where we are or have been, the door to repentance is always unlocked and welcoming.

When we search the valleys and hills for those who are lost, we are aligned with the work of our Lord. He said, "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt 18:11). May our efforts bring glory to our God. I will miss my friend, Steve. I pray you will not have a similar experience.

Dave Jennings



Stephen Picha (1956-2021)

DECISIONS ABOVE OUR PAY GRADE

By Ken Sommerville



THE United States Government has a detailed classification system for its employees which is intended to grade various levels of responsibility and to designate the compensation range applicable for all government jobs.

Asking an employee to do a specific task or express an opinion on a matter that was really outside his or her purview, has become a common expression used in similar situations unrelated to government work. There may be many reasons why a task or question is not something we should undertake or express an opinion about. Being aware of this fact can guide our decisions and responses in some situations and save

us a lot of needless worries. Or, worse yet, doing or saying things when we really should not have said or done anything at all. In fact, it was a task assigned to someone else. It was “over our pay grade.”

Knowing what is within our pay grade, and what is not, is a personal responsibility we each have. The following thoughts are to illustrate this principle with Scriptural incidents from the past and our lives today of similar situations for our reflection.

ACTING ABOVE OUR PAYGRADE

This action can get us into serious trouble and cause real upset in our lives today. And it has had extremely

profound consequences recorded in the Bible, as well.

We'll begin by looking at the account of Aaron and Miriam becoming upset with Moses.

And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married. "And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?" Hath He not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. (Num 12:1-2).

Aaron and Miriam were claiming they were equal to Moses. This was not just someone acting above their station, as it were, but a straightforward assertion of self-promotion to a much "higher pay grade." The suddenness and the severity of God's condemnation of their effrontery should have served as a caution to all who followed. Miriam was immediately struck with leprosy. Aaron asked Moses to pray for God to forgive Miriam and himself and God did so. The leprosy was cured, but Miriam had to stay without the camp for seven days. Miriam, and all Israel, were put on notice.¹

Not too long after, we have Korah, Dathan and Abiram challenging Moses' position. They were attempting to lead a rebellion and they had 250 "princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown" in their train. (Num 16:2). They had been doing quite a little politicking and sewing

Aaron and Miriam were claiming they were equal to Moses. This was not just someone acting above their station, as it were, but a straightforward assertion of self-promotion to a much "higher pay grade."

seeds of rebellion in the camp. These 250 "leaders" had quite a following as we shall see. Again, God's reaction was swift, decisive and deadly. In Numbers 16:20 we read: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment.'" Moses and Aaron interceded for the people and God's punishment was limited to those who refused to separate themselves from the rebels. The earth opened and swallowed Korah and his company, fire consumed

the 250 princes, and a plague slew 14,000 more people before this was over.²

In 2 Chronicles we read how Judah's King Uzziah took it upon himself to go into the temple of the LORD and burn incense, even though he knew better and was warned by Azariah the chief priest and eighty of the priests who were brave enough to confront the king. Their warning was: "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the Sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God." (2 Chron 26:18). Uzziah was struck with leprosy.

I say to myself "I would never do anything they did." Would you? No, we wouldn't, not exactly like that. But then our situation is so different from Korah

and Uzziah's that their choices are not options we might have. However, we do have the same human nature they had. Jealousy, ego and pride did not go down into the earth with Korah and company. Many of us will have heard of or even participated in politicking at the workplace and in our ecclesia to get our own way.

CLOSER TO HOME

Much more mundane situations can affect our ecclesia and our workplace. Our ecclesial life requires a certain amount of organization and structure. Our normal structure is to have a recording brother and a number arranging brethren. Our forefathers were guided in the main in forming our first ecclesias by Bro. Roberts's *Ecclesial Guide*.³ The overall purpose of the Guide is to set forth principles (guidelines, not rules) for the administration of our ecclesias.

Bro. Roberts was also careful to recommend checks and balances that, in the terms of our "pay grade" analogy, would carefully differentiate between the responsibilities of the recording brother, arranging brethren and the ecclesia at large. The titles of some of his sections illustrate his concerns in these areas. "Mutual Consent the Basis of Order," "Exercise of Authority Out of the Question," "Serving Brethren, not Rulers", and "Ecclesial Control" all suggest how ecclesias can organize themselves for optimum administration. Not exactly the definitions of pay grade responsibilities, but a recognition of the need for each to know their role and what duties belong to others. Ecclesias serve their purpose best when each discharges their responsibilities properly, with Scripturally-based judgment, and none are ignored, minimized or exceeded. A recording brother who decides not



It is common for us to be asked our opinion about something that we are under no obligation or competency to answer. However, just because most questions are put forward to get a agree or disagree response, it is very important to remember that in many cases **we do not have to do either.**

to share certain communications with the arranging brethren or arranging brethren who do not report faithfully to the ecclesia at the business meeting, can be usurping some responsibilities that rightfully pertain to all the brethren and sisters in the ecclesia. In an ecclesia where the members fail to perform their responsibilities, or do not attend business meetings and leave everything up to the few, can be failing to meet their personal requirements as being part of the body of Christ.

A PERSONAL LEVEL

We can spare ourselves a certain amount of unnecessary consternation if we keep in mind this pay grade analogy and apply it in our personal lives. For example, it is quite normal for us to be asked if we agree, or disagree, with an opinion in a discussion. The question may, and usually is, put in sincerity, and the expected and normal reaction is for us to state our agreement or disagreement with the idea. Do we approve or disapprove? Usually, these issues are straightforward and fall within our pay grade. Therefore, our response should be forthcoming. However, it is common for us to be asked our opinion about something that we are under no obligation or competency to answer. However, just because most questions are put forward to get an agree or disagree response, it is very important to remember that in many cases we do not have to do either. We can “take it under advisement” to think about it for a while. We can just leave it an open question.

We sat next to a visitor in a Bible class who volunteered that her leg had been

lengthened by a Holy Spirit miracle. I did not respond, nor do I recall anyone else responding. What could one say?

I did not have to disagree with her even though Scripture leads me to think that those kinds of miracles ceased many years ago. A better option is open to me. I do not have to decide one way or the other. I have not been hired to have an opinion about every situation or phenomenon that occurs or has been asserted as having occurred. Granted, I must use good judgment and, where it is my place and my responsibility, I do need to step up, examine the matter, and express my opinion. To do otherwise would be to fail in my duties. But remembering that one does not have to agree or disagree with every question put to them can eliminate some needless concerns. What is within our “pay grade” is to carefully consider any important doctrinal assertion based on whether it is consistent with the overall context of the word of God. “*Search the scriptures*” (John 5:39) is what our Lord encouraged us to do. We might do well not to react to every strange occurrence that is reported to us. We have not been called to make sweeping, blanket assertions about every phenomenon that occurs.

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ADDING SOME OLD TESTAMENT STORIES

We should use great caution in our comments on the actions of some of the patriarchs in the Old Testament. It is understandable, but uncomfortable, when Abraham is referred to as having sinned when he sojourned in Gerar, and told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister. He may have. It does look like he did. But he wasn't condemned in the Word of God, so it may not be useful to assert that he sinned as a fact. Rachel and Jacob in Genesis 25 are another example of recorded actions that look wrong but were not condemned anywhere in the Bible. There are ample examples elsewhere that would attest to the importance God puts on honesty that are black and white. There might have been other factors in play that did not appear in the brief account explaining why these people were not condemned by God for their actions.

The example of Job's friends is a cautionary tale along these lines. All agreed, including Job's friends, that the righteous prosper and sinners suffer. That was why Job was so perplexed by what was happening to him. Had we been there and left before the end, we might well have been giving exhortations warning against what

befalls sinners and citing Job as a prime example. But when Job's trials were over, we would have had to go to Job and ask him to pray for us. Better to say less. I'm sure Job's friends wished they hadn't waxed so eloquently or profusely.

FINALLY, FUNERAL EULOGIES

Giving a eulogy at a funeral can be a challenge. On the one hand, one wants to emphasize our sure hope in the promises of God into which we have been baptized and the consoling hope of resurrection to immortality. When we are now considering our beloved, who now sleeps in Christ, however, it is best if we remember that the decision about our ultimate future has been delegated to only one man, our Lord Jesus Christ. We may think we know a person, and we may be right in what we think we know, but we cannot read men's minds, hearts and intentions. Thank God our judgment rests with His Son. We do well to emphasize the love and mercy our God has manifested to us all and rest our hope on these assurances. It's wise to be careful not to speak in ways that imply a favorable judgment has already occurred. That is way over our pay grade.

*Ken Sommerville
(Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA)*

¹ Josephus in "Antiquities of the Jews" book 2 chapter 10 relates that before Moses fled Egypt, he was a general in Pharaoh's army. In his account, Moses was leading an attack against an Ethiopian army and in the ultimate resolution of the battle, he took an Ethiopian wife as part of the negotiations and Egyptian victory. I can't say this is true or false. I wasn't there and it is well over my pay grade. Jewish scholars wrote comments in the Soncino which have another suggestion.

² Evidently some of Korah's sons did not support their father's rebellion and were spared. Referring to the rebellion in later chapters Num. 26:10,11 states: "And the earth opened up her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured 250 men: and they became a sign. Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not." Hundreds of years later we have the 11 Psalms "for the sons of Korah."

³ *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*, Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 8SZ, 1883

HOLINESS IS A WAY OF THINKING

By Jason Hensley

Holiness acknowledges that there is a good way to think and a poor way to think—there is right and there is wrong. Holy thinking is the recognition of this separation.

But holy thinking is personal. Consider the problem in Isaiah's day:

I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices...who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are

a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. (Isa 65:2, 5).

The people misunderstood holiness. Not only did they live in a truly unholy way (v. 3-4), but they looked at others and judged whether or not others were holy. There is irony in this: by judging others, they nullified their own holiness!

Thus, holiness requires that we think differently about ourselves. It demands we consider our own motivations and actions. Holiness necessitates that we

ask ourselves why we make the choices we do and what principles are at play in our decisions. It means we ask ourselves how our choice glorifies God. We consider if we make choices out of faith or not (Rom 14:23). The way I apply these principles and act in faith will look different in my particular context than it will look in yours.

This is why holiness is not one specific way of acting. It isn't a book of rituals. It isn't a member's handbook. Indeed, holiness manifests itself in actions (1 Thess 4:4; 2 Pet 3:11). But those actions are actions that are motivated by faith. It's all about the motivation and the recognition that for me, there are things that would blur the line between my faith and the world. For you, those things might be different, or they might be the same. Each person individually, at each point in their lives, must determine for themselves what it means to think separately. What does it mean for you to think differently than the world? How do you show the principles of love and kindness? How do you live God's character?

These differences in application are critical. Without recognition of these distinctions, holiness can be solidified as a set of laws or rules that everyone must follow. Those who adhere to the laws are seen as holy—and those who do not, aren't. Adherence to the rules could mean faith for some but could be done without faith for others. Holy thinking must stem from faith.

Holiness isn't as easy as establishing a code of rules. It requires constant awareness of motivation and intention. It requires consistent consideration of principles. And it is specific to each person. Thus, every individual must determine how they implement holy thinking—God's character—in their own situation. Without doing so, as the apostle warned, no one can see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

*Jason Hensley,
(Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA)*

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FELLOWSHIP

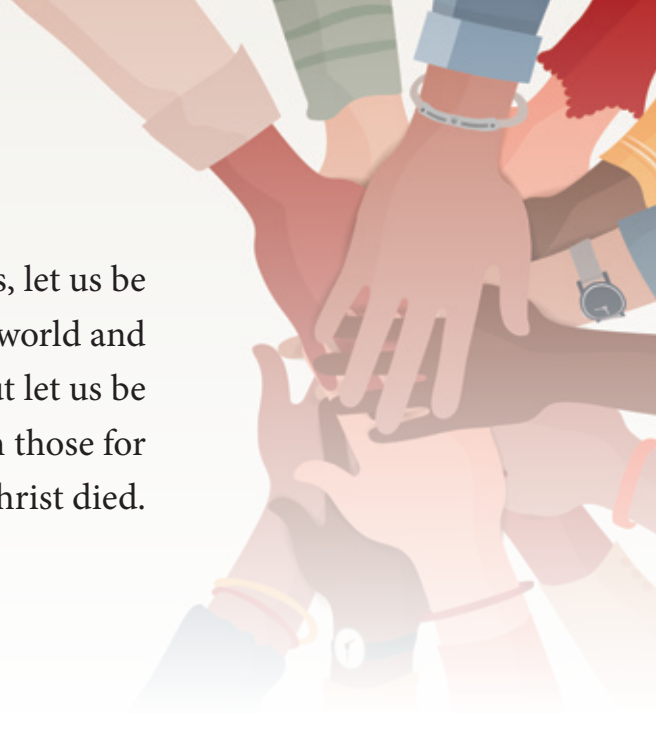
By W. J. Owen

*Following is an excerpt of an exhortation given nearly 100 years ago, dealing with an issue that continues to this day—the issue of **intolerance**. This was shared in North America by Bro. Harry Tennant (Watford, UK) in 1989, as part of an Ecclesial Eldership study day. ~ Editor*

THIS question of tolerance is one of the most difficult with which we are confronted in the brotherhood. There is the danger that in our endeavor to avoid the tolerance of the world, we may become intolerant amongst ourselves. There is a sort of Christadelphian tradition, if one may so speak, that intolerance in the brotherhood is proof of piety, and of zeal for the Truth. It may be so, but most often is not.

There has grown up much intolerance in the matter of fellowship. We have

had much evidence of it in recent years, and we feel that if it continues there will be so much disintegration that the work of the preaching the gospel must cease. It makes one wonder whether we have a right conception of fellowship. Brethren and sisters should be in fellowship with each other **because** they are in fellowship with God, and with Christ. The basis of that must be God's law and Christ's commandments. And yet we are forced to witness the painful spectacle of brethren subscribing to the same statement of fundamentals,



By all means, let us be
intolerant of the world and
its practices but let us be
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whom Christ died.

and honoring the commandments of Christ, denying fellowship to one another. We are forced to read that some ecclesia in a distant corner of the world has decided that it will not fellowship brother So-and-So of another ecclesia; and, not only that, but it will not fellowship those who fellowship him, nor those who fellowship those that fellowship him, and so on. What is this but the tradition of intolerance gone mad? We shall have to stem the tide, or there will be ruin! And if to do it we must forget tradition—let tradition be forgotten!

Christ and his apostles could be both tolerant and intolerant as the circumstances needed. So must we. Christ was very intolerant of the scribes and Pharisees and lawyers in their hair splitting arguments, but very tolerant to those who loved him and put their trust in him, even when their

understanding of him and his teaching was very incomplete—yes, even when through weakness they denied him and forsook him and fled. By all means, let us be intolerant of the world and its practices but let us be very tolerant with those for whom Christ died.

Brethren and sisters, this is one of the things which has troubled us during the past year, and it is sure to trouble us again in the coming year. Let us be prepared for it. Let us in our self-examination enquire concerning our fellowship with God and with Christ, and with the brethren, and if we find anything wrong, let it be our resolution to put it right.

*W. J. Owen (1885-1932),
(Birmingham, UK)*

PRAISE: FROM THE BEGINNING

By Jeff Ramirez

In the beginning, God created the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. Among the myriad of things that God created are our needs and desires as people: to work, to raise a family, to parent, to play or experience joy. Even athletics are found in the scriptures! It is God, then, who created us with the ability to sing and with the ability to make music, which is an important part of worship and praise. Verses referencing music are found throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Since musical praise has existed since the foundation of the world and is still a vital part of our lives and our worship today, let us consider together the origins and importance of praise and music as explained to us in scripture.

THE ORIGINS OF MUSICAL PRAISE

Within the very first generations of man, we are told of Jabal, the father of those that have livestock. We also hear of Tubal-Cain, the ancient blacksmith, working with bronze and iron to forge tools of many kinds (Gen 4:20-23). How easy it is for us to consider these two professions as key to our survival! Raising livestock as a food source, along with the manufacturing of tools for tilling, are livelihoods essential to the growth of agriculture. When considering livestock and tools together, we see the key foundations of farming, the basis of food production for the feeding of our bodies. In other words, they represent what our flesh needs for survival.

In addition to tools used for agriculture, we know that tools of bronze and iron allow for the ease of shelter construction, or can be weapons for hunting, protection, and fighting. The works of Jabal and Tubal-Cain are clearly important keys in the survival of any society. Sandwiched between the mention of these two men with undeniably important skills, we have Jubal (Gen. 4:21), described as *“the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.”*¹

It doesn't take long when opening the Bible to see the importance of music in the life of God's people. Here we have it in the book of Genesis, mentioned in the same breath alongside essential trades. Music is not an unproductive activity. It is not something to be done only when all other crucial things have been completed. It is not simply a pleasant compliment to other more important ecclesial activities, but rather an expected and important aspect of living a Godly life.

There is no reason, Scripturally, to expect participation is limited to the musically talented or inclined. Although the Bible does show that at times some were appointed for musical duties, it also makes it clear that this is something for all believers. The Scriptures teach that music and praise are an expectation that God has for all of us, on some level! As the last verse of the Psalms declares, *“Let everything that has life and breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”* (Psa 150:6).

SO, WHAT IS PRAISE?

When we think about praise in the Scriptures, we should also consider synonymous words such as bless, exalt, extol, glorify, magnify, thank,

and confess, to help us visualize the entirety of what praise can look like. In addition, praise and music are often considered together, but praise can also occur separately from music or instrumentation. For specific examples of what it looks like to praise God, we may read and meditate on the last six Psalms. In those Psalms there is no lamenting, no petitions, no references to self, just pure praise to God. They begin, *“I will extol Thee my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name forever and ever, every day I will bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised for His greatness is unsearchable.”* (Psa 146:1-3).

Through praise, we attempt to express the unique nature of God, which really is difficult for us, as humans, to contemplate. We are attempting to capture His character with our limited knowledge and ability; characteristics such as His majesty, His mercy, the enduring nature of His Truth, His goodness, the justness of His ordinances, His covenant faithfulness, His everlasting love. In doing so, phrases such as the following are expressed:

“all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours”

“riches and honor come from you”

“in your hand are power and might”

“you are exalted above all”

(1 Chr 29:11-12).

We know that praise is so important to God that David appointed a portion of the Levites to the purpose of praise. That was their job, to praise and thank God (1 Chr 16:4).² God's nature, all that He is, is fully worthy and deserving of



Through praise, we attempt to express the unique nature of God, which really is difficult for us, as humans, to contemplate.

our praise. Here are just a few scriptures that express this truth.

For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised. (Psalm 96:4).

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. (Psalm 145:3).

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised. (2 Sam 22:4).

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Rev. 4:11).

We are to call attention to His glory, His greatness. What can be said to

capture His glory? What can He be compared to that properly captures the greatness of our unseen God? Nothing, really, but we are asked to try, and in our attempts, praise is found. A multitude of methods to give praise, if sincere and based on truth, are all acceptable: musical lyrics or poetry, our use of musical instruments, even our silent meditations. We are sons and daughters doing our best to please the Father.³

Think about how a small child will create something at school—a picture, maybe some collage out of construction paper and glue to bring home as a gift for mom or dad. Parents accept these

gifts joyfully and with a smile, not because they are items of use or of monetary value, but because they are expressions of the child's love towards the parent, which is the real gift.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PRAISE?

Praising God has a beneficial impact on us in many ways. It serves to remind us of His greatness and our position before Him as loving and grateful children. It is an expression of faith, an acknowledgement that He is the Creator of all, and a reminder of God's greatness. It is a recognition that our existence is surrounded by and subject to those things which are of God. We are inclined to be self-focused. Praise takes the spotlight off us and places it where it belongs, on our heavenly Father. It removes any praise we might apply to ourselves, allowing it to be a productive way to push away pride. Of course, we are not expressing to God things He is not already aware of, but this is not the purpose of our praise.

Praise is a way we show we are God's people; the whole reason we were created was to bring Him praise. As Isaiah 43:21 says, "*the people whom I formed for myself, that they might declare my praise.*" Jeremiah 13:11 also speaks to this idea. "*So I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the LORD, that they might be for me a people, a name of praise, and a glory.*"

This is what God wants of us, His people. Not that we praise only out of duty, but because it brings us pleasure. In doing this, we declare we are in harmony with God's purpose. Psalm 68:3-4 nicely captures this sincere outpouring of feeling toward God. "*But*

the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy! Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to Him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before Him!"

THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN PRAISE

We now turn to a specific form of praise: music. The praises of God found in Psalm 150 provide an excellent example of using music to praise. This psalm also shows the diversity in musical instruments and forms (including dance) that can be used to give glory to our Creator.

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary:

praise Him in the firmament of His power.

Praise Him for His mighty acts:

praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:

praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:

praise Him with stringed instruments and (pipe).

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals:

praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord.

(Psa 150:1-6).

The beneficial effect of music can be extremely significant in the walk of a believer. It focuses the mind on God, and when done as a group it becomes a shared experience, creating a harmonious act of praise. Music drowns out the other thoughts that invade the mind and provides a place of quiet, while calming the body. This physical response allows us to draw closer to God. Music generates joy and humility within us, all the while elevating God.

In addition to being a perfect vehicle for praise, music provides a method of positive instruction among believers. Paul wrote to the ecclesia in Colossae, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* (Col. 3:16). Music also provides a way for sisters and brothers to communicate with one another. We are encouraged in Ephesians to *"be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart."* (Eph 5:19).

JESUS AND PRAISE

When Jesus teaches us how to pray through the example of the Lord's prayer, we may notice that the first element included in this template for prayer is to hallow, to exalt, to lift up the name of God. In other words, to

praise Him. Matthew 6:9 reads: *"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'"*

Although we may find that expressing fitting praise can be difficult for us at times, the instruction given to us in Matthew is so straightforward, so simple. Through praise we are doing our best to acknowledge and express God's unique nature, His great and wonderful Holy Name. Even Jesus, who is *"the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,"* (Heb 1:3) found it fitting to verbally lift up his Father's name in praise and worship. Let us follow Jesus' lead in this area as in all others, remembering to include praise or better yet, begin with praise in our conversations with the Father.

In the last moments of his pre-resurrection life, musical praise remained a necessary element of Jesus' life. As we read later in the same gospel account, *"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."* (Matt. 26:30). We can all imagine the strength this simple act of worship would have given Jesus before he faced the cross. Likewise, let praise and music remain an essential element in the life of a believer, giving us strength for each day and pointing us towards our hope for tomorrow.

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¹ All references taken from the English Standard Version.

² At the time of 1 Chronicles 23, there were 38,000 of the tribe of Levi (v.3) and a total of 4,000 (v.5), about 10% of them, were appointed to serve in the temple as musicians. There is no doubt that music is important to God!

³ Psalm 148 provides a good example of hallowing God's name within the natural limitations of man, as it describes a variety of earthly creations all united in directing the observer to praise God.

JAEEL

THE MOST BLESSED OF WOMEN

By Kayla Pettinger

WONDERFUL WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Over the next couple of months, we will be featuring a series of character studies about valiant and virtuous women in the Scriptures. I am thankful for the contributions of our sisters, helping us to appreciate the great faithfulness of women throughout time.
~ Editor

IT is easy to blame external circumstances when we find ourselves lacking faith. Our walk towards the Kingdom is full of highs and lows. There's no denying that. One day we feel solid and secure in our faith; we have a plan and we take action. Then maybe a few weeks later, we find ourselves faltering and unsure

just how to deal with circumstances thrown our way. We fail to take action. When this happens, I tend to blame my occupation. Or I blame what's going on in my family. Sometimes I even blame my geographic location: "I'm just not in an area where I can be making a difference," I say. I blame these things because I'm not particularly eager

to take responsibility for my lack of faith. I don't want to admit that I'm struggling, that I'm drifting away, that I'm failing to take action. It's so much easier to blame what's going on around us for what's going on internally. But our Scriptural role models didn't do that. Jael didn't do that, even though she very well could have, considering the situation she was in.

ISRAEL ENSLAVED

In Joshua 11:10-15, we read how Joshua and the Israelites captured the city of Hazor and entirely devoted it to destruction. The account mentions twice that Hazor was burned. Joshua had fully obeyed God's command to strike this city and exterminate its people. However, in Judges 4:2, we find the city of Hazor had somehow managed to resurface. Despite being burned to the ground, Hazor had risen again, powerful enough that its king, Jabin, could enslave the people of Israel for twenty years. What an indication of how persistent sin can be! It can be crushed, it can be burned to the ground, and yet it can still come back to threaten us.

We're told that Israel became enslaved by Jabin because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. Ultimately, while it was God who gave Israel into the land of Canaan, we cannot overlook the power of this Canaanite army. The commander of Jabin's army was Sisera. His very name indicates that he was born and bred for war. The name means "battle array" or "a field of battle." And he had 900 chariots of iron. Israel had none. We're told the reason was that they were supposed

to rely on God to save them. When the Israelites finally cried out to the LORD, he appointed Deborah to summon Barak to lead them into battle against their oppressors. Psalm 19:13 is interesting to note here. It says, "*Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.*" This city Hazor, this Canaanite city of sin, the people of Israel had oppressed it and entangled it.

But we can look to Judges 5 to see who wanted relief from the oppression of sin and who may not have minded it so much. Judges 5:14-18 gives an account of the responses of the various tribes:

Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir [Manasseh] came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer. And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

"Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek": Some of the Ephraimites who followed Barak into battle were still dealing with the threat

of the Amalekites, a nomadic people who had attacked the Israelites back when they first left Egypt. When Israel was tired and weary, they picked off the stragglers and the weak at the back of their lines. God condemned them for this cowardly tactic.

“After thee, Benjamin, among thy people”: The Book of Judges is not written in sequence, thus it’s possible the civil war with Benjamin had already occurred, leaving that tribe with very few men left to fight. But even so, they were still willing to go forth and fight.

“Out of Machir came down governors”: This was the line of Manasseh. Governors (or lawgivers), not warriors, responding to Barak’s call to fight. *“And out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer”*: This term refers to those in charge of taking the censuses. Once again, it is the people who are not necessarily warriors who respond to Barak’s call.

Issachar and Naphtali also went with Deborah and Barak, resulting in a total of 10,000 fighting people—people trained to deal with matters of the law, census takers, men who emerged from a tribe almost completely obliterated, and men who were otherwise occupied with the nation of Amalek. We see these men going against chariots of iron, the people who had enslaved them, and a commander whose name means “battle array.”

GOD’S MIGHT AND POWER DISPLAYED

But we know that some of the most remarkable victories in the Bible were won when the Israelites didn’t stand a chance. These victories allowed God to display His might and power, leaving the Israelites to put their faith in Him

rather than in chariots and man. We get a description of how the LORD may have brought about their victory. In verse Judges 4:14, Barak and his army went up on Mt. Tabor, and when Sisera found out the Israelites were there, he gathered his army and his chariots and approached the mountain. As they advanced via the Kishon River, a river prone to flash floods, the chariots’ wheels (the supposed advantage the Canaanites had over Israel) became stuck in the mud. Sisera’s entire army was thrown into confusion. Seizing the advantage, Barak ran down from the mountain with his men, forcing the Canaanites to flee and pursue them.

Six tribes went up with Barak: Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Naphtali. And six tribes stayed behind. We are told that Asher and Dan stayed by the sea, and Reuben was too busy debating whether or not to join the fight and so they missed out on the entire battle. Because the tribe of Levi was exempt from military service, we know they weren’t there. The account does not reveal anything about Gad and Simeon’s involvement in this particular battle. That leaves us with one tribe: Judah. Judah was supposed to be the tribe that led the people in war. And yet, no mention of Judah whatsoever in these two chapters. But that doesn’t mean Judah wasn’t represented!

WHERE IS JUDAH?

Judges 1:16 tells us that the Kenites settled among the people of Judah. Heber, Jael’s husband, was a descendant of the Kenites. But he had deserted the tribe of Judah; he left and pitched his tent near Kedesh. The record also tells us there was peace between the king

of Canaan and the house of Heber, seeming to imply that Heber may have been a traitor to the Israelites.

The home of Heber and Jael was about 5 miles away from Mt. Tabor. But, while the rest of Sisera's army fled from the Israelites in the direction of Harosheth-hagoyim, Sisera fled in the opposite direction—towards the home of Heber and Jael. As Sisera approached Jael's tent, she came out to meet him. We aren't told where Heber was at the time. And we are given very little information about the woman, Jael, leaving a fair amount of her intentions up to speculation. But she knew the type of man she was inviting into her tent, and she knew what it might mean for her to be alone with this powerful, renowned commander of a sinful nation. She opened her home to him anyway. The Bible doesn't say whether or not she supported her husband's decision to desert Israel and ally himself with a nation of sin. What we do know is that she had stayed with her husband. Possibly even because she knew God would use her for a greater purpose in doing so.

THE BRIDE UNCOVERED

To fully understand what transpired in Jael's tent, Judges 4-5 need to be read side-by-side because each chapter only provides snippets of the account. I want to remind you of the type of man Sisera was. He was a coward, he was arrogant, and in Judges 5:30, he and

Jael knew the type of man she was inviting into her tent, and she knew what it might mean for her to be alone with this powerful, renowned commander of a sinful nation.

his soldiers would plunder and ravish. This man was a perfect representation of sin. He may have raped Jael. We are given a good look into his character. This cowardly man, who had just fled from battle, would have needed to do something to prove to himself that he still had power. Sisera was a man who took great pleasure in defiling the women of the cities he conquered. Judges 5:27 says, "*At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down.*" The word for "lay down" is the Hebrew *shakab*. The

majority of the times that particular word occurs, is in reference to sexual relations. Chapter 4 tells us Jael covered Sisera with a mantle twice. Why would that covering need to be repeated? Because something incredibly sinful occurred in the time between those two coverings. Furthermore, when Jael finally drove the tent peg into Sisera's head, we read how her placement was very specific: the temple (Heb. *raqqa*). That word is used only five times in Scripture, three in this account, the other two in Song of Solomon 4:3 and 6:7:

"hy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks (veil).

As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks (veil).

The unveiling of the bride by the bridegroom represented the concluding step of the marriage, the uncovering of the bride by her husband. But what if someone besides the husband

uncovered the bride? Sisera exposed parts of her that none but her husband were meant to see. Combining verses from Proverbs 4-5, what transpired in the tent might be read in the following way:

Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, 'Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not' And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down [sexually]. Then he said unto her, "Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and brought forth butter in a lordly dish, and covered him (once again). Again he said unto her, "Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, 'No.'" Then Jael, Heber's wife,

took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her right hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground, and when she had pierced and stricken through his temples, she smote off his head: for he was fast asleep and weary. So, he died. Where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

Now it's entirely possible he didn't rape her. He may have just come in, been given milk, and passed out fast asleep. But it's always important to consider the language being used in these accounts.

REDEMPTION AT THE HAND OF A WOMAN

Judges 5:26 says, "She smote his head off." That word (Heb. *mahaq*) means "to utterly destroy" or "blot out." She nailed it right to the ground after she was violated in the most vulgar way. I can't imagine much else being so utterly humiliating and defiling. Save perhaps, being spit on, mocked, stripped of your clothing, whipped, every inch of



you laid open for eyes to see, a crown of thorns on your head, left to die on a cross. Our Lord and Savior was most certainly humiliated and defiled too. But we know that when it was over, he also arose and smote the head of sin, fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15. Dealing with sin, **crushing** sin, is not a clean process. The words used in Scripture are “*pierced or shattered, smote, and stricken through.*”

Jael would have been covered in blood, from head to toe, much like our Savior was when he hung on that cross. Controlling sin isn't easy, and we deceive ourselves when we think it is. But we have some amazing examples to look to, and we know that crushing sin is not impossible.

In Judges 4: 8, before the battle even started, Barak said to Deborah, “*If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.*” I don't think these were the words of a coward. I think they were the words of a man who recognized he could not do this alone, that he was not his own Savior. Deborah's response to him in verse 9 was “*I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.*” These words were not intended to shame Barak; they were just a statement of fact.

And when Barak finally reached Jael's tent hours later, no doubt with God guiding him there, he met a blood-covered Jael, waiting for him. She said the following words: “*Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest.*” As Barak followed her into the

tent, he may have realized he wasn't really seeking Sisera. He was seeking a Savior. So, when Jael stood before him, showing him the place where she had smote sin down, he saw a glimpse of what that Savior would do, what he would go through and look like—covered in blood—as he finally accomplished what he had been sent to do.

Jael is praised for her actions in a trying time. She let nothing hold her back. Not the decisions of her family, not the bad things that had happened to her, not the choices she may have made in the past. In the end, it is Jael's faithful actions that are remembered. She didn't let her external circumstances define her life and she certainly didn't let them hinder her chance to serve God. She used those difficult situations to glorify Him.

In Judges 5:24, Jael is called “*blessed above women,*” the identical praise given by the angel, Michael, to Mary, the mother of the Messiah: “*Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*” (Luke 1:28). Elizabeth repeated this same phrase in verse 42: “*Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*” What a parallel Jael was to our Lord Jesus Christ! Both were representatives of the tribe of Judah. Both knew the dangers and humiliation they would face. Both may have been defiled in unspeakable ways. Yet they both delivered their people from the sin that would have otherwise destroyed them.

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HER NAME IS RAHAB

By Katrina Brown

RAHAB: we we know her as the prostitute of Jericho. Her story starts in chapter 2 of Joshua and doesn't go much further than Chapter 7. After that, we hear of her in Matthew, Hebrews and James. She married Salmon (one of the spies she hid?), was mother to Boaz, Great-Great Grandma to King David and is one of four women listed in the direct genealogy of Jesus. Her actions, those of a strong, spiritual woman, changed the course of her family members' lives. Her story is pretty incredible.

I prefer not to call her "Rahab, the prostitute." I'm not particularly eager to reduce her merely to one of the ways she made money. Rahab was a very hard worker. From where she hid the spies, we know that she also worked flax, which I'll come back to a little later. So why do we reduce her life to this one aspect, as if it was the only thing noteworthy about her? I have heard it said that knowing what Rahab chose as a profession makes it all the more incredible that she is part of Christ's line. Did she deliberately pick her profession of prostitution? I don't

think many sex workers would tell us they chose it as their living.

Did Rahab have responsibilities that meant she had to turn to this line of work? We know she had a family, and she continued to care for them when she made her deal with the spies. Was sex work just another occupation she had to support those she loved? When I look at Rahab's story, I think of all the women being taken advantage of on the city streets today—not forgetting that were it not for men's desires, these women wouldn't need to charge for sex to put bread on the table.

Society tends to look at the great things men “do,” but only on what women “are.” Some treat men like verbs and women as nouns. This idea is something we should take a moment to pause and reflect on. Does our Christadelphian community have a similar thought pattern? We know the incredible impact Rahab had. Rahab did great, incredible things, as can women in our modern day ecclesias.

INTRODUCING RAHAB

And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go, view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there. (Josh 2:1).

Note, they **chose** to lodge with Rahab. Was this because she was also an innkeeper with her family? She was a woman of many talents and side hustles. Josephus mentions her role as an innkeeper but does not expand on whether she also kept a brothel. Rabbinic texts refer to her only as an innkeeper. Given Rahab's possible dual

role as an innkeeper and sex worker, it is easy to consider she may have been privy to many confidences from tired soldiers and weary travelers. This could be why the spies chose her particular house to lodge in. Her house was also upon the city walls, suitable for a swift exit, as we see later in the story. Are the stories told by those passing through her house how Rahab first heard of the God of Israel? It's clear she knew of Him, as we read in Joshua 2:9. It's possible that travelers shared stories and soldiers feared the God who could part water. Rahab must have been affected by the tales she heard. They had awakened a whisper in her. Because of what she had heard, she was able to utter the words:

As soon as we had heard these things, our heart did melt, neither did there remain any courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. (Josh 2:11).

What an incredible declaration to hear from a Canaanite! When the spies arrived at Rahab's home, they hadn't done a great job, as instructed, of being secret. The news of spies in the land had reached the king, who knew exactly where they were and commanded Rahab to hand them over! Thus, Rahab found herself at a crossroads in her life. She knew she was in a good position, whichever path she chose. I'm sure the king would have rewarded her richly for turning in the spies, and yet she remembered all the stories she had heard of the God of the spies. This God is powerful and able to exact many miracles. Rahab chose to commit

treason and turn her den of sin into an ark of safety. I find this incredible. Rahab was as strong in character and brave as were the wonderful midwives in Egyptian captivity. She put her life on the line, going against her king to reach for life as one of the Israelites. This deed is such an example for us all.

Rahab stepped up with a solution to the spies' dilemma. They were at risk of being captured and taken to the king. Thus, the first lives Rahab saved were those of these two spies when she said: "*Where the men went I do not know, pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.*" (Josh 2:5).

Her action makes me ask myself how I can step up more and provide solutions to other people's problems. Rahab inserted herself into the fabric of Israel and, in doing so, became part of a kingly line. She wasn't a quiet, timid girl in the story. She took action to change life for herself and her family. If we are listening, is it still possible for us to take up challenging acts to do good and protect the gospel? Am I learning to speak up for change where it is needed?

A WOMAN OF VALOR

The account then takes us to Rahab's deal with the spies, hiding them from the soldiers. She took them to her roof and buried them under the flax. Here is evidence of another of Rahab's jobs—she was a worker of flax, the product required to make linen. Proverbs 31, a book often attributed to Rahab's great-great-great-grandson, Solomon, talks about a virtuous (various other translations: noble, capable, beautiful, chaste or excellent) woman who works flax. Interestingly, a more accurate translation of "*eschet chayil*," is "*woman*

of valor." This is the female version of "*gibbor chayil*"—"mighty man of valor." If this woman's description is merely as virtuous, the point of just how formidable she is is lost. The virtuous woman is a strong, powerful woman and so is Rahab. Proverbs 31:10 to the end could well have been written about Rahab.

Proverbs 31:13 shows that this valiant woman works with flax. Rahab is the only other woman in the Bible attributed to this work. When I read this chapter, I can see the rest of the story of Rahab

beyond the Book of Joshua. The valiant woman of Proverbs 31 provides a place of safety for her husband. He knows he can trust her. Salmon, Rahab's husband, was possibly one of the spies who entered her house. If this is the case, he certainly knew he could trust her—she had saved his life by her actions.

I talked earlier about Rahab's work as an innkeeper. Proverbs 31:13-14 speak about a woman providing food and caring for her household. This work is something Rahab would have done—with plenty of hungry mouths passing through her home. Verse 16 tells of her buying a field, reminding us that Rahab's son, Boaz owned a field, and his relationship with Ruth (remarkably, another woman described as valiant!) blossomed there. Verse 21 tells us how she is not afraid for her family—for they are clothed in scarlet, the color of the rope which Rahab boldly hung

Her action makes me ask myself how I can step up more and provide solutions to other people's problems.

out her window during the attack on Jericho. My favorite link is verse 30: *“Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”* (Prov 31:30).

Compare this thought to Rahab’s former life, where looks and being desired were valuable properties for a woman—something society still tells us today. I find it interesting that the fact she worked with flax is given just as much weight as her title as the harlot. Yet, we cling to the harlot wording and include it in her name wherever it is mentioned. The good news is that God can take any circumstance we find ourselves in and turn it into something good. I look at this Proverb as describing Rahab. No doubt her story was passed down by word of mouth, and so her descendant, Solomon, could write about her in such glowing terms. Her family didn’t think of her as Rahab, the prostitute, but as a woman of faith who belonged to God.

BY FAITH RAHAB

Rahab was a Canaanite woman. She was someone the Israelite spies should have stayed well away from. Yet, they didn’t hesitate to help her. The spies had no idea how the city would be overtaken, but they trusted that the covenant they made with her would be recognized and honored by God. I believe God saw faith in Rahab (Heb 11:31). He saw past her job title and into her heart. He saw the virtue and valor in this woman. Rahab chose to put her heart with God and His people. She wanted to know more about the God who parted water and tore down cities.

Like many stories about women in the Bible, I am astounded by the faith and trust Rahab placed in God. Rahab had no proof that this God could save her and her family through the spies and the red chord. She hadn’t personally seen any of the miracles spoken about as people passed through her home. But she listened; she opened her heart and found God. *“Whoever is of God, hears the words of God.”* (John 8:47).

We can learn a lot from how the women in the Bible behaved and heard God. There is trust and peace in so many stories, a quiet acceptance that God works in their lives. Rahab’s home became an ark for her family. They were the few saved from the entire city and what a story that goes on to become! Like Mary, when told of Jesus (Luke 1:29; 2:19; 2:51), Rahab heard the accounts of the Israelite God and allowed them to work on her heart. When the opportunity came to accept Him openly, she took him in without reservation.

I don’t need any more incredible an example of how God grafts sinners into the branch than myself; I know how good God is because he’s even **saved me!** Rahab being a prostitute doesn’t make her story any more remarkable than if we just knew her as a worker of flax. She is famous to us, not because of her occupation, but because of her faith. *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

*Katrina Brown
(Glasgow South Ecclesia, UK)*

THE MAN OF SIN AND THE LORD'S APPEARING

By Ted Sleeper



MATTHEW 24
*Do you not see all these things?
Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone
shall be left here upon another, that
shall not be thrown down. (v. 2).*

When Jesus spoke of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, his disciples were dismayed. They wanted to know when these things would happen, and

they immediately connected it with his coming and the end of the age in which they lived.

Jesus' first concern, though, was not about the details, but about his disciples. He did not want them to be deceived in their earnest desire for his coming by the many false Christs and false prophets that would rise up before

he would come in his Kingdom glory. Jesus knew these impostors would succeed in deceiving “many” (see vv. 11, 23-25).

Why so many impostors? Would they emerge because of the concentration of evil and frightening events swirling around them—warfare, famines, pandemics (pestilence), earthquakes (vv. 6-7)? And these events were only going to be “*the beginning of sorrows.*” Literally, these would be the “*birth pangs*” of the new heavens and earth, the new order of things, God’s Kingdom on earth.

Whatever the exact cause, the truth of Jesus’ prophecy is echoed in the NT:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. (2 Pet 2:1-2).

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7).

Consider especially Paul’s words to the elders from Ephesus:

For I know this, that after my

departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse (i.e. twisted, distorted) things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:29-32).

What is particularly poignant about Paul’s message is the depth of his love for these brethren that he had taught that they might remain true to the Faith. He pleaded with them with tears not to be deceived and caught up in this betrayal of the true gospel that was coming after he was off the scene.

What comes next is worse. Jesus’ disciples were to be delivered over to grievous tribulation and death, and be hated by all nations for his name’s sake (Matt 24:9). So bad are these circumstances, that his disciples would stumble because of these things and “*many*” will fall away (the meaning of the word “*offended*”). Worse, men will hate those who remain faithful and begin to betray their own brethren to the authorities (cf. Luke 21:12-13,16-17). No wonder that in such evil times Jesus says the “*love of many will grow cold!*” (Matt 24:12).

It is hard to understand how this level of treachery could reach within the ecclesias and even into their own families. Jesus’ warning helps us here:

But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles....Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. (Matt 10:17-18, 21-22).

We know from history that the Jewish persecution and hatred of the followers of Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. Their hatred for Jesus' disciples matched their hatred of their Master (Matt 10:24-25), and this hatred would divide friends and families asunder. What we may not fully appreciate is that the Christians were also hated in the Roman world. The success of their preaching brought them into conflict with the gods

Our word for apostasy is taken from the Greek for "falling away," but the meaning is more simple than this complicated word may imply; the word simply means a **turning away.**

worshipped by the Romans. The persecutions that arose in certain periods from the Romans was not quite the same as the ferocious, extended Jewish persecution the disciples experienced

before AD 70, but it was always there underneath the surface. Yet, amazingly, during this same period of time, says Jesus, despite persecution, the gospel of the Kingdom would be successfully preached in all the world!

Only **then** would the end come.

When would all these things happen? The answer is not as straightforward as it may seem. In Matthew 24:2, Jesus is clearly talking about the destruction of the Jewish Temple. The question his disciples ask clearly indicates they felt this would be in their lifetime. The destruction of the Temple most certainly did happen. So also, the terrible persecution of those who preached the gospel especially among the Jewish people. But Jesus connects all this with his actual coming (see vv. 27, 30):

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!" do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt 24:24-27)

We know Jesus didn't return in the first century, so are these signs also meant for us too in some way? I believe Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 can help us find a possible answer to our question.

2 THESSALONIANS 2

Paul explicitly connects what he is writing with "the coming of our Lord" and "our gathering together to him" (v. 1). Let's take a look at what he writes.

We find first that Paul has the exact same concern Jesus had: **Don't be deceived!** We've already seen the NT passages that address this theme, especially his emotional appeal to the Ephesian elders.

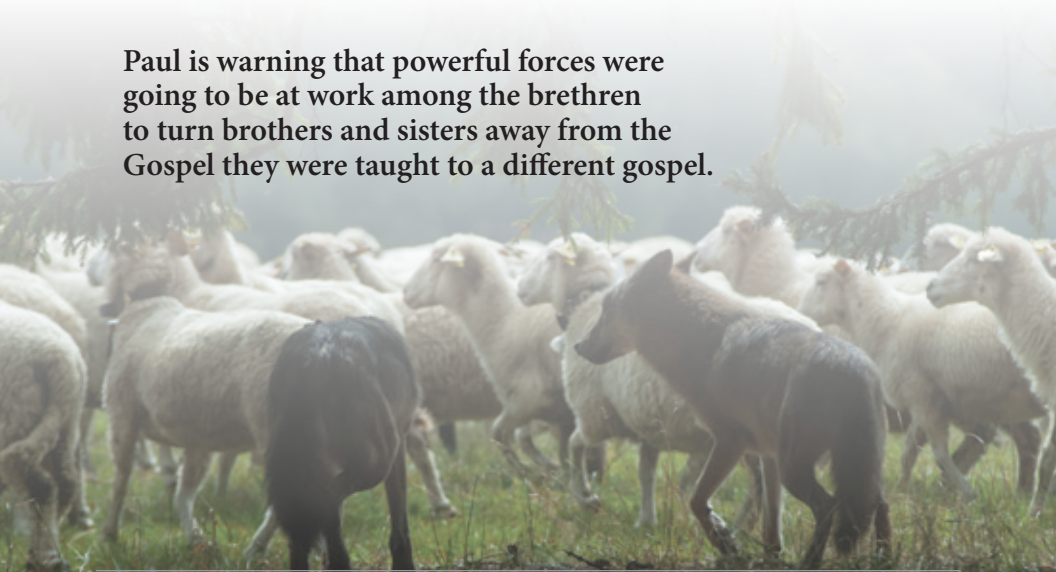
*What Paul now adds is, frankly, even more troubling: "That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first." Our word for apostasy is taken from the Greek for "falling away," but the meaning is more simple than this complicated word may imply; the word simply means **a turning away**. Paul is warning that powerful forces were going to be at work among the brethren to turn brothers and sisters away from the gospel they were taught to a different gospel. About a decade earlier Paul was already confronting the beginnings of this phenomenon: "I marvel that you are turning away (different word, similar meaning) so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert (twist, distort) the gospel of Christ." (Gal 1:6-7).*

But why? Why would God allow this? Because God always allows His people the opportunity to show what they really believe in their hearts.

In Acts 20, Paul warned the Ephesian elders that some from their own ecclesia would arise teaching distorted ideas to draw away disciples after them. If we don't truly value the gospel of our salvation, then we will not hold fast to it, and we will be easily enticed by another gospel more in line with what we think is right or want to believe. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 are very sobering words: God is going to deliberately provide a strong delusion for those who "did not believe the truth."

The final piece of the picture being put before us in 2 Thess 2:3 is found in the revealing of the "man of sin" or "man of lawlessness". This one is lawless, proud, bringing destruction ("perdition"), the very opposite of our Master who was righteous, humble, and brought salvation.

Paul is warning that powerful forces were going to be at work among the brethren to turn brothers and sisters away from the Gospel they were taught to a different gospel.



There are two things that should deeply concern us about this man of sin. First that he is called the “*son of perdition*” and second, **when** this is supposed to happen.

Consider first the “*son of perdition*”. Read slowly and carefully what Jesus says in his prayer for his disciples John 17:12: “*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*”

Do you see what is so troubling? Judas, one of Jesus’ very own inner circle of disciples, is called the “*son of perdition.*” There can be only one conclusion to draw from Paul’s usage of the same term: This “*man of lawlessness*” who will betray the community of true disciples, must arise from within **Jesus’ own disciples**, just like Judas. Whether this refers to one individual or a group

authority. He used his position of respect among the Christian elders in Jerusalem to subvert the gospel, to pull the Christians back to the authority of the Jewish law and their rituals. And, as a baptized believer, he may well have had Holy Spirit power to do miracles that he could use to enhance his position and seduce the brethren! Ponder what these passages tell us:

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!” (Acts 11:1-3).

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ... And when they (Paul & Barnabas) had come



(perhaps it is both), is less important than that this destructive force that utilizes lying and deception and evil will come out of those who hold the true gospel, **not** from the outside.

From Paul’s writings, we discover there actually was such a man in the first century who claimed apostolic

to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law

of Moses." Now **the apostles and elders** came together to consider this matter. (Acts 15:1-2, 4-5).

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me (Acts 15). And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of **false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)**, to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. (Gal 2:1-5).

But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ**. And no wonder! **For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light**. (2 Cor 11:12-14).

Putting together these passages, we are confronted with an emerging opposition first to Peter, then Paul, and to the gospel they preached among the Gentiles. Notice in the first quote that "those of the circumcision" had seats within the Jerusalem council of

elders. Around 14 years later when Paul had to defend his work among the Gentiles, "certain men" came from this group on the Jerusalem council seeking to correct the doctrinal errors of Paul and Barnabas. The men are identified as belonging to "the sect of the Pharisees who believed." When Paul re-tells this incident in his letter to the brethren in Galatia, he uses much stronger language: These men are "false brethren secretly brought in" to bring the Gentiles back to Mosaic bondage. Even Peter was affected a little later by "certain men from James." And, finally, around AD 55, Paul now writes to the Corinthians about "false apostles," men claiming apostolic authority (likely after James is killed and a void is left on the Jerusalem council), with one specific adversary at the center of all this evil work, an adversary with the ability to demonstrate Holy Spirit gifts to cement his "apostolic" authority.

Now the second piece of the puzzle: **When** was all this to happen? You can readily see from the passages quoted that Paul saw this evil work already afoot in his days: "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." (2 Thess 2:7). Remember his passionate appeal to the Ephesians? Paul himself was going to do everything in his power to restrain this evil force within the Christian community. But he also knew it would come to full flower **after** he was taken away.

Yet, the Lord Jesus was going to destroy this force and all involved at his actual coming:

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His

mouth and **destroy with the brightness of His coming.** (2 Thess 2:8).

*Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, **when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints.** (2 Thess 1:6-10).*

While the Jewish power that sought to undermine and overthrow the work of Paul and the true apostles was effectively destroyed in the overthrow of Jerusalem in AD 70, **Jesus didn't come then. What, then, does this mean for us?**

That Christianity was seduced by the spiritualizing forces that arose in early Christianity, which ultimately gave birth to the Catholic Church, we can see in history. There is no doubt either that this power, ironically, reigned over the kings of the earth for around 1000 years from AD 500 to AD 1500.

But what about the world now? Will you be seduced to leave the gospel of our Salvation? Does this really fit **our** days?

WHEN WILL THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

What does seem to be true is that this prophecy had a fulfillment in the first century. But, since Jesus has not returned, this prophecy must also have a fulfillment in the Last Days. If this is

so, then we need to prepare ourselves for troubling times.

First: At this present moment, despite all the noise of wars and conflicts and pandemics, there is an unsettling quietness, like the “lull before a storm.” Perhaps we are beginning to feel a little bit that our Master has “*delayed his coming?*” If we haven't felt this yet, **we will**, as this is the very condition Jesus spoke about in his parables in Matthew 24 and 25:

If that evil servant says in his heart, “My master is delaying his coming,” and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of. (Matt 24:48-50).

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (Matt 25:5).

Second: Remember how Jesus said the gospel must be preached in all the world before he comes? It struck me very forcefully recently when I was thinking about our brethren in Afghanistan. How and when did the gospel get preached in that country?

Remember how Jesus said the Gospel must be preached in all the world before he comes? It struck me very forcefully recently when I was thinking about our brethren in Afghanistan.

I then looked at a map on the ACBM website that showed all the areas where the CBMs have been working. I was stunned when I realized that the only community of people who hold the truth of the original gospel, the Christadelphians, have been driven for over 70 years to carry that gospel into **all nations!** I was privileged to have met and been personally encouraged by some of the pioneers of this work (Bre. Harry Whittaker and Alfred Norris). Bro. Alan Eyre also compiled stories of the 20th-century work in his *Protesters* books. We've seen the gospel spread to Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Western & Eastern Europe, Pakistan, India, China, Japan, and SE Asia. **This prophecy is being fulfilled.**

Third: A falling away produced by the changing of the gospel to make it more in line with current humanistic ideas and thinking. Surely not! But the prophecy clearly lays out that just such a thing must happen and it must arise from within, from among those today who hold the true gospel. I believe this force is already at work in our midst.

Finally: A system that fits the details of Paul's prophecy? I don't know. I guess we will have to wait and see!

Despite the present "lull" we are moving toward a world filled with great stress through wars, famines, pandemics, and earthquakes. In the midst of this, there will be a falling away from the true gospel, brothers and sisters led astray by good words and fair speeches from

those capable of deceiving the hearts of the simple (cf. Rom 16:17-18). The important question we must address is **what must we do to survive this time?**

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught. (2 Thess 2:15).

This is the antidote to this time of confusion and deception. Paul emphasized the same antidote to those in Ephesus: *"I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you and inheritance among all those who are sanctified."* (Acts 20:32). This is what we need to hold on to with an unyielding grip to endure until the end.

The antidote to the hateful behaviors that will arise among us? It is the very one our Master gave when he shared bread and wine with his beloved disciples: *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."* (John 15:12-14). This is the defining characteristic of Jesus' true disciples, their love for one another. This is the life to which we have been called, and for which we give our God thanks at our Master's table. This will overcome all the forces of evil that may be arrayed against us.

*Ted Sleeper,
(San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia, CA)*



What's the most IMPORTANT THING that has ever to happened to you?

By Ray Arthurs



Bro. Ray Arthurs from the Broughton Eccleisa in Jamaica believes that he knows what that is—for every single one of us! Enjoy this article written by Sis. Antonia Giordano from an interview with Bro. Ray.

GOD knows us. Bro Ray believes this. “From long before we are baptized, God was involved in our lives and bringing us to him. As he said to Jeremiah, ‘*Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee*’ (Jer 1:5), and I believe this is true for all of us. He’s working with us through all the moments in our lives, the good ones, and the most important moments, the bad ones. The worst moments. The worst of times are when our characters are shaped. These terrible times are the most important things that ever happen to us.”

For Bro. Ray, that moment came when he was just three years old, an event

that he remembers as though it was just yesterday, even though he is now in his eighties. Standing in the yard of his family home in Negril, Jamaica, with his older brother and sister, he witnessed an argument between his parents. Being small, he didn’t know what it was about, but he knew it was bad. Then his mother walked out the gate and away down the street, never to return.

“That moment, the worst moment of my life, was the most important moment, because that loss characterized me. The loneliness and the hurt have never left my mind all of my life and my determination is one which I said

to myself, I don't think I could ever, ever bring myself to do such an act to anyone."

The next few years passed without much parenting. His father was often absent and while his older siblings were around, Ray mostly took care of himself. At six years old, his grandmother took him in and made him go to school.

"I left school one year before my time was due, which greatly irritated my grandmother who thought I must go back to school. But I had no interest. I took up fishing to make a living and had a little money." Bro. Ray says, "In those years a lot of people from the West Indies were going to England. One evening, I went to a cricket match and another young man asked me if I was going to England—and I said yes!

I got home and wondered why in the world I said that—was it my pride? Stupidity? But I kept thinking about it."

The path forward, though, seemed impossible. How was a sixteen-year-old boy to fund his way across the ocean to a new life?

"I told a lie, and I am not proud of it, but there it is," says Bro. Ray. "My brother had spent some time in the US and had a little money. I told him—and this was the lie—that our father was going to borrow some money to send me to England. I asked, "Why don't you lend me the money instead?" I knew my brother's character and I knew he would—and so he did. I cannot explain how joyful I felt to be going to England!"



Sunny Negril in Jamaica

He started to make preparations for his trip. During his final few days in Jamaica, he was able to reconnect with his mother and for the first time in 12 years, spent a little time with her.

Then he was off! In 1956, Ray boarded the ocean liner, Venezuela, and set sail for 19 days at sea. At just sixteen years of age, he arrived alone in a foreign country. After a short stint in Coventry, where his meager pay check of just £3 made him cry each week when he received it, he moved to live with some friends in the Yorkshire town of Huddersfield.

During this time, he, and his brother, who now also lived in England, bought a house. At the end of their street was a Christadelphian ecclesia. Ray walked past it many times before an encounter with the pretty sister of a workmate gave him the occasion to go inside. On Christmas Day, 1960, this young lady told him she was going to

church for the evening, and he, being interested in her, invited himself along.

“I didn’t get a single thing from what the speaker said! But afterwards, an old lady sitting behind me began talking to me and she said, ‘Not all Christians are the same.’ This was a shock because I thought all churches were the same.”

The elder sister invited Ray and the young lady to dinner, where they were introduced to Bro. Lionel McVoy. “I had never eaten at someone else’s home before. Since I was a child, it was drilled into me, you always go home to eat, so this was a new experience. After dinner, Lionel started telling us about the Bible, and I had never heard such things that are in the Scriptures. Then he said, “And that’s just a little taste,’ and so we made plans to meet him every week.”

Both Bro. Ray and the young lady, Sis. Merle Marshall, were baptized six months later.



Bro. Ray ministering in the Broughton Ecclesia in Jamaica

During his time in Huddersfield, Bro. Ray attended two ecclesias. First was Milnsbridge, the large, studious ecclesia down the hill from where he lived. Their fine mutual improvement program trained him well, but due to the size of the ecclesia, he was never able to exhort or preside on Sunday morning. So, he began to visit the King's Street Ecclesia. Started by Bro. Robert Roberts, it was by this time a very small meeting of just a few members and Bro. Ray was able to contribute in every way. Between these two ecclesias—the studious nature of Milnsbridge and being able to put his studies into practice at King's Street—God trained up Bro. Ray for the rest of his long life in the Truth in Jamaica.

After twelve years in England, he was ready to go home. He'd learned of the Broughton ecclesia (20 kms from Negril) and knew it was time to support his "home" ecclesia. So, with his wife, Sis. Gloria, and their young son, he went home. He was busy, for many years, cycling the distance between Negril and Broughton on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, showing up covered in dust from the dirt road.

"So much I had to do in Broughton!" he says. "Sunday School teacher, recording brother, presiding. I spoke every week for many years—such a contrast to my days in Milnsbridge when I was unable to get on the schedule!"

"The good LORD has taken care of me all this time," says Bro. Ray, including through these difficult past two years we've all endured. The problems in the world right now are not a problem to Bro. Ray. "COVID-19 is a time of truth

and realization. Everywhere I turn, I see difficulties that can't be explained by us. They were made by the Almighty, and He shows deliverance. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28). It's one of my favorite passages in scripture."

And so, Bro. Ray sees the hand of God in his life, working with him through the good moments and the bad. From the loss of his mother as a tiny child, to carrying him across the ocean to learn His Truth. Bringing him back to Jamaica sometime later for a lifetime of service to his ecclesia there. God has been with him, as He is with each one of us.

*Antonia Giordano,
(Norfolk Ecclesia, VA)*



Bro. Ray Arthurs

CHANGES TO BIBLETRUTHANDPROPHECY.COM

By Art Courtenel

www.bibletruthandprophecy.com, was established as a preaching site in 2012, but since its inception, it has also proved extremely popular with Christadelphians. As a result, we have made the decision to separate the preaching work of our public site from the Christadelphian resource area.

Therefore, are pleased to announce that www.christadelphianvideo.org is now available.

Registering as a user on the site will allow you to view all the previously password-protected material (without entering a password) as well as all our exhortations dating back to 2012, in addition to the NEW upcoming events guide (any ecclesias can advertise their upcoming events). Also, when registering with the site, if you check

the “Newsletter” option, users will receive one email each day with a summary of the day's posts, which includes the “Thought for the Day” video and transcript.

We thank all those who use the site and share content. We will be launching a new preaching-centered site soon called explorethebible.com, which will act as a replacement for the preaching work of christadelphianvideo.org. Our costs have increased, so there is now a donation page for your support.

All our plans are subject to the providence and will of our Heavenly Father. Thank you, on behalf of the Christadelphianvideo.org team!

*Art Courtenel,
(Rugby Ecclesia, UK)*



NEWS & UPDATES

Kitchener-Waterloo, ON

Our new Recording Brother is Bro. Andrew Webb, 13-39 Ptarmigan Drive, Guelph, ON N1C 1E8, aswebb53@gmail.com, (226) 500-4755.

Martin Webster

Sussex Ecclesia, NB

We sadly report that our dear Sis Deanna Mason fell asleep suddenly on October 12, 2021 (baptized in 1976). She was a dearly loved Sister who was very caring and made everyone feel special. She will be missed. Our prayers are for comfort to her family & all who mourn, especially her brother, Bro David Sharp who was having hip replacement surgery on the same day she fell asleep. We pray for our Lords soon return, to assemble all those who wait on him.

Paul Baines

Mid-Atlantic Bible School

Lord willing, the Mid-Atlantic Bible School will be held in Shippensburg, PA on July, 2-10, 2022.

The speakers planned for this year are:

Bro. Dennis Bevans, Austin, TX
Bro. Jason Hensley, Simi Hills, CA
Bro. Joseph Palmer, San Diego, CA
Please register online at
www.midatanticbibleschool.com

Robert Kling

Southwest Bible School

Lord willing, the Southwest Bible School will be held in Kerrville, TX on July, 10-16, 2022.

The speakers planned for this year are:

Bro. Mark Giordano
- "My Sins and the Sins of My People"
Bro. Mick Roberts
- "Joshua: From the 'Servant of Moses' to the 'Servant of the Lord'"
Bro. Mike Steele
- "The Glory Set Before Us"

Please register at www.swcbs.com.

Caleb Clubb

Thoughts on the Way Do Angels Have Wings?

LOOK at the pictures in a child's book of Bible stories. Ponder a few old masterpieces. Or check out the top of your neighbor's Christmas tree. Every time an angel is depicted, you will find... wings. **Of course, angels have wings!**

No, not so fast. Consider some of the real Bible stories involving angels. First of all, in the Old Testament:

Genesis 19: This chapter begins with two angels arriving at Sodom. Lot, who lives in the city, greets them at the gate, and invites them to stay in his house for the night. (This kind of hospitality was practiced in the Middle East in Lot's day, and in some parts it is still practiced today.) Notice, however, that Lot does not recognize the visitors as angels. Instead, he refers to them as "men" (v. 9)—as does the narrator (v. 10). It is only later (v. 11), when Lot recognizes that his visitors have supernatural powers, that he treats them as angels, messengers from the LORD God.

Judges 6: The narrator informs us that an angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, with a message: "*The LORD is with you*" (v. 12). However, Gideon is skeptical about the validity of this message, pointing out that the LORD seems to have neglected Israel, and abandoned them to their oppressors (vv. 12,13). It is only when the "man" performs miracles that Gideon recognizes him as an angel of the LORD (vv. 21,22). Again, there is no

evidence of this angel having wings.

The New Testament presents similar situations:

Luke 24: After Jesus is raised from the dead, the women who go to the tomb on Sunday morning (Luke 23:55,56) find the great tombstone rolled away from the entrance. They also find "*two men in dazzling apparel*" (Luke 24:4, NET), and because of their clothing and appearance they understand them to be angels. In this scene, there is no indication of "wings." Like Jesus himself on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2) with some of his disciples, it is the divine light which surrounds these men which gives them away.

Hebrews 13:2: "*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*" (NIV). Here, the writer implies that there was no physical indication that these strangers were angels. Since wings could scarcely have been hidden, it would have been impossible for anyone to entertain angels without knowing that they were angels.

ON THE OTHER HAND...

There is no Bible passage which directly connects an angel with wings. However, there are numerous references, in the Old Testament especially, which refer to cherubim having "wings"—notably in descriptions of the tabernacle and temple, and especially in portions of Ezekiel.

The Hebrew word “*kanap*” is often translated “wing”, as related to birds and the cherubim, but also as related to the “corner” (hem, fringe, or fold) of a robe or garment (1 Sam 15:27; 24:4, 5, 11; Hag 2:12; Zech 8:23).

The Psalms are also filled with references to the wings of the LORD: “*I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings*” (Psa 57:1). Many such verses allude to the wings of the cherubim, which graced both tabernacle (Exod 25:20; 37:9) and temple. The cherubim were angel-like figures of varying features and appearances. When they stretched out their arms as if to overshadow and protect the ark and the mercy seat, the folds of their loose-fitting garments would resemble the wings of eagles. These “*wings*” symbolized the safety and security to be found by those who trusted in the LORD God.

The cherubim are actually referred to as “*angels*” in at least one Bible verse. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, when Peter wrote of the angels who longed to look into the future, to see and understand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow, he was referring to the cherubim surrounding the mercy seat (Exod 25:20), as if to look continually toward the ark of the covenant. This suggests, at least, that Peter likened the cherubim to the angels.

In the lovely story of Ruth, this young widow shows her love for Naomi’s God, the God of Israel, by following her mother-in-law back to Israel, and by dedicating herself to His service. When her near-kinsman Boaz learns of this, he commends her for coming to take refuge “*under the wings of the LORD*” (Ruth 2:12), the God of Israel.

And when Ruth approaches him on the threshing floor one night, privately and secretly, she lays herself down at his feet with the request: “*Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.*” (Ruth 3:9). Here “*corner*” is the same word as “*wings*” in Ruth 2:12.

Here is where all the Psalms passages listed above find their meaning also. As the wings of a great bird overshadow and enfold her young, so the LORD God reaches out His everlasting arms to gather and caress those who seek refuge in Him. The figure of speech is made more powerful by realizing that, in a time and place where men and women often wore loose-fitting outer robes (something like bathrobes or graduation gowns today), their outstretched arms would resemble the wings of a great bird—just like the “*wings*” or arms of the cherubim in tabernacle and temple.

This same imagery explains the words of Jesus, when he mourned over an unrepentant Jerusalem (Matt 23:37). For Jesus to gather the children of God under his outstretched arms was to offer them love, comfort, forgiveness, and rest: “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” (Matt 11:28).

So, finally...**Yes**, in a rather convoluted way, we may say that angels (and cherubim), like men and women, and like Christ and his Father, have “*wings*”—not literal wings such as the birds have, of course, but figurative wings—especially when they take others into their loving care.

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