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S P E C I A L I S S U E

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# TIDINGS

Volume 86, Number 7, July/August, 2023

## KINGDOM *dreams*

Our visions of the coming  
Kingdom

Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

# TIDINGS

Volume 86, Number 7 / 2023 Special Issue



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# KINGDOM DREAMS

*By Steve Davis*

**I** consider myself fortunate to have known Sis. Shawn Thomas before she died of cancer in 2019. Shawn was a devoted follower of Jesus, who spoke enthusiastically about the coming Kingdom, was quick to quote the Bible, and was a fixture around Bible School and CYC campfires, where she sang and played hymns on her beloved Martin guitar. While Shawn now sleeps in the sure hope of the resurrection, some of her words still speak to me. (Heb 11:4).

“Kingdom dreams,” she would say. Shawn and I were contemporaries and had children about the same age.

One summer, our families shared an apartment suite at the Shippensburg Bible School, and it is a memory from this occasion that stays with me. Our families enjoyed time in the living room after the evening program when it came time to put the little ones to bed. After the kids were tucked in, Shawn opened each bedroom door and softly whispered the tender expression, “Kingdom dreams.” I’ve never forgotten it. With two simple words, Shawn was exhorting her children and mine to fall asleep thinking about the incomparable joys of the Kingdom. (Rom 8:18).

How about you? When you dream about the Kingdom, what do you see? The CYC in my home ecclesia once asked our members to answer the question, "What do you look forward to most in the Kingdom?" The CYCers asked these questions and videotaped the responses. For the elderly sister, whose hands and feet were gnarled from a lifetime of living with arthritis, she answered, "Jumping like a deer." The brother who fled with his family from the war-torn Congo answered, "When men will not know war anymore." Others spoke about seeing loved ones who had died or been healed of a disease or about the restoration of all things when God's glory will fill the earth. In this issue of the Tidings Magazine, we will be dreaming a little bit about the joy that is set before us (Heb 12:2). The first two articles, like the video recordings done by the Boston CYC, are compilations where some of our brothers and sisters share their ideas about what the Kingdom may be like, and about which people in the Bible they would like to meet at the return of Christ.

Some of us have been anticipating our Lord's coming for a long time. Bro. Peter Owen reminds us that it has been 75 years since the Jews' extraordinary return to their national homeland. Many in the brotherhood in 1948 surely expected this event would soon herald the return of our Lord. And while it may be natural to wonder if the Lord is slack concerning his promise, Bro. Rich Dineen reminds us that the seeming delay in

the Lord's return means that many others have been born and wait in eager expectation. He explains that God's plan for humanity is not just about individuals but the collective whole. The Faith chapter concludes with the promise that "Only together with us should they be made perfect." (Heb 11:40).

Because of God's grace and eternal timing, we, along with many of our children and grandchildren, have now learned about the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. Together we can, as Bro. Dan Styles puts it, "Get excited about the Kingdom." Dan suggests we can get a sneak peek of the future Kingdom by exploring the kingdoms of David and Solomon. Bro. Jim Styles suggests that the current work of the angels can help us discover ideas about what our future family of God will be doing throughout the Millennium. Picking up on this theme, Bro. James DiLiberto writes about worship in the Kingdom Age and points us to Revelation, where the redeemed sing a new song. In James's article, he focuses on how worship and praise are a coming together of heart and mind in a grateful response to our redemption. He suggests that the new song demonstrates that throughout our eternal life, the saints and the angels will worship in a way that will bring joy and pleasure to both the giver and receiver.

And while we wait for these long-promised joys, the earth groans. Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Link each

wrote articles describing the “distress of nations, with perplexity.” Bill explains that the word used in Luke’s gospel for perplexity is translated literally as “without passageway.” He focuses our attention on a planet afflicted with environmental troubles of grand proportions. Carol reminds us of governments, charitable organizations, and citizens overwhelmed by the problems and tensions surrounding us all. People need solutions, and frustrations all too often turn into despair. In this dreadful environment, where does our help come from? The Psalmist, Carol says, provides the answer. “My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” (Psa 121:2). In Christ’s righteous Kingdom, the nations will be taught His ways so that we all can learn to walk in His paths.

It may be that we will live long enough to witness the miracle of Jesus’ return. Or it may be that we fall asleep in the sure hope of resurrection. Sis. Martha and Bro. Chris Sales have us imagine what it might be like to stand in a graveyard looking at rows of tombstones, one engraved with your name. In awe, you conclude that the resurrection has occurred! What will you do next? Perhaps you will visit relatives and friends proclaiming that Jesus Christ has returned before being brought to the Judgment Seat, they wonder. Certainly, meeting Jesus

Christ will be a highlight, as will the supernatural change that will take place within us when “This mortal body puts on immortality.” (1 Cor 15:53 NRSV). For many, though, the thought of the Judgment Seat brings pangs of worry. Bro. Darren Tappouras’ article, enticingly called “Looking Forward to the Judgment,” suggests those raised from the dead will first be either accepted or rejected and only then will “give account” for the things done in their lives. Giving account is not something we should fear, but it is a process by which the good values of faithful servants are rewarded and reinforced. In contrast, the flawed ones are corrected and purged before the immortalized saints begin their pastoral and political rulership in the Kingdom. Imagine how great it will be to rule and reign with Christ! Bro. Ron Hicks concludes our issue by exhorting us to preach the Good News of the Coming Kingdom by sharing this joyous message with a spirit of excitement, urgency, and commitment.

We hope you enjoy this special issue. As you drift off to sleep this evening, may you meditate and anticipate the glorious Kingdom to come. Kingdom Dreams.

Steve Davis,  
Boston Ecclesia, MA  
(Editor for the 2023 Special Issue)

*Giving account is not something we should fear, but it is  
a process by which the good values of faithful servants  
are rewarded and reinforced.*



# LOOKING FORWARD

*By Jeff Gelineau*

**A**T my house, a question often arises while sitting in the hot tub late at night. “What are you most looking forward to in the Kingdom?” It’s always interesting to me what kinds of answers you get. It’s also interesting how quickly people answer. For some, it’s on the tip of their tongue as it guides their daily life. For others, it takes a while to quantify the one thing they most look forward to. I’ve asked some friends to share their thoughts.

For me, it’s simple.

## **Justice**

Specifically, a just government. I often get so frustrated with what goes on that I have stopped watching the news altogether. Seeing what politicians argue over and how little they get done causes me to get depressed. We live in a world filled with so much need, and it is so often ignored. Hunger,

homelessness, drug abuse, mental health concerns, children without families, and human trafficking, all of these things need serious attention from people who are concerned about helping. Instead, they often get people wrangling over words, budgets, and sound bites for the news.

I want a just government. I want a benevolent King who knows what is wrong with people and what they need to help them. I don’t want to waste time and money debating and arguing over competing strategies and ideologies, and I want a loving ruler who acts and moves forward to help, not hurt.

I want to see Jesus sitting on a worldwide throne. For me, it’s that simple.

*Jeff Gelineau,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

## Peace

Peace entails so much more than a cessation of hostilities or a quiet time to contemplate.

There are many in the world today whose prospects of imagining a peaceful mind is incomprehensible. We live in a society constantly bombarded with frightening images and sadness. There may be violence within our street or arguments with friends, our families, and even church. The noise this creates in our lives can soon turn into an internal monologue, which is anything but peaceful. Quiet, then, is no longer peaceful. It feels like an attack because our minds are on constant repeat.

All quite the opposite of peaceful. The alleviation from this particular suffering is my Kingdom hope.

Walking down the street, we have no idea what is happening in another's

Perhaps the Kingdom will mean that we all feel more keenly, but it will be happiness and peace that we feel. A calm internal process. Freedom from pressure, sadness, and anxiety.

life. There are hidden disabilities, mental illness, brain injury and disease, and physical but hidden problems that take up a lot of brain space. These thoughts and voices which invade

people's mind are on top of what we generally experience as a species.

It's difficult for us who haven't experienced serious mental health issues to understand exactly what goes on in the mind of someone who

has. When Jesus healed those with "demons" in Scripture, they were insightful people whose spiritual radar was heightened and who experienced feelings and emotions more keenly. Those who feel everything more intensely find existing extremely painful.

Perhaps the Kingdom will mean that we all feel more keenly, but it will be happiness and peace that we feel. A calm internal process. Freedom from pressure, sadness, and anxiety. As Scripture says, "*Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" (Isa 35:10).

We will no longer need the distraction techniques we use to cope with our level of distress, our reliance on radio, music, TV, keeping busy, being constantly on the move, and buying the next new thing. We will fully have the mind of Christ.

I imagine life will be slower. Our ability to feel and connect with others will strengthen our thoughts and we will be safe, warm, and peaceful.

This mind will reconnect us back to nature and into the arms and soul of our Heavenly Father.

Peace at last.

Kate Lawrence,  
Nottingham Ecclesia, UK

## A Heavenly Choir

I look forward to seeing the faces of these four men. We might call them "The masters of music" They are Asaph, Heman, Ethan, and Jeduthun.

Oh, what a joy it will be to acquaint oneself with the tunes of the psalms

and spiritual songs and to learn the harmonies and how they might have arranged the music and any accompaniments. What a privilege it will be to listen to that earthly choir singing of heavenly things. And better still, if allowed, to sing with them, with a perfect voice, in perfect pitch, possibly in Hebrew! (Zeph 3:9), as a heavenly choir indeed, praising God throughout all eternity.

Yet above all else, I want to be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. I want to be made “*like unto his glorious body*” (Phil 3:21) and unhindered by the shackles of sin and all its consequences. I want to be a partaker of the wondrous divine nature.

What a joy that will be for us all. Lord hasten that day, we pray!

*Kitson Reid,  
Acocks Green Ecclesia, UK*

### **No More Cruelty**

In the coming Kingdom of God, I am looking forward to the elimination of man’s inhumanity to man. To know that every broken heart and spirit will be healed, including my own. I can’t wait to see what it will mean for the earth to be filled with God’s glory and eventually what it will truly mean for God to be all in all. To experience the touch of Christ’s hand on mine. I want to tell him how much I love and thank him. To finally understand what it is to be what God has wanted me to be all along. Righteousness and

precious godliness will surround us all. To know that my only work will be serving God and serving Him in the ways He intended for me. To have such an understanding of Him that my talks with Him will be even more meaningful and intimate. I look forward to walking and talking with the disciples of Christ that I have already met through the Scriptures. I love the words in our Hymn 255.

The strife is o’er, the battle done;  
Now is the Victor’s triumph won;  
O let the song of praise be sung:  
Death’s mightiest powers  
have done their worst,  
And Jesus hath his foes dispersed;  
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst:  
On the third morn he rose again  
glorious in majesty to reign;  
O let us swell the joyful strain:  
Lord by the stripes  
which wounded thee,  
From death’s dread sting  
thy servants free;  
That we may live and sing to thee:  
Hallelujah!

*Patty Chelius,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

### **The End of Poverty**

Each day I am reminded of the brokenness of our world when I see the homeless. I long for the day Christ returns to heal all that homelessness represents, which is wrong in society.



Jesus told his disciples in Mark 14:7 (NKJV), *“For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good.”* But homelessness is not just a result of someone being poor. It is a growing and heart-wrenching epidemic experienced in so many places worldwide. For many years I worked at a food pantry, and it was there that I came to understand the complexity of how people find or choose to be homeless: mental illness, addiction, broken relationships, victims of abuse or trauma, loss of employment, lack of health insurance, etc. Whatever the reason, those who experience homelessness are the most vulnerable in our society. They are those who have no “net” to catch them before they fall, no group or community with the means to truly help. Man’s solutions and resources are few and far between and difficult to navigate. Many caring neighbors take it upon themselves to do what they can when they encounter a homeless individual, to give a cup of water, buy a meal, or even pay for a night’s stay in a hotel. Still, none of these quick Band-Aid solutions will change this person’s trajectory in life like the return of a just King named Jesus.

Jesus, as King, will bring a rule that leads with righteousness, justice, and faith. Just as the poor and lowly shepherds were the first to witness Jesus’ birth, I like to think that just

maybe the homeless of this world will be some of the first to witness his return. They will not be distracted by work or materialism or the busyness of life. They will go from feeling invisible to being seen and invited to follow the Savior of the world. Jesus said in Luke 4:18 (NKJV):

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me to  
preach the gospel to the poor; He has  
sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are  
oppressed.*

Return, Lord Jesus, may it be said,  
*“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your  
hearing!”*

Jennifer Russell,  
Verdugo Hills Ecclesia, CA

### **Truth, Godliness, and Justice**

What am I looking forward to most in the Kingdom of God? Wow! So many things! As are we all.

Isaiah 11:1-5 (ASV) often filters through my mind.

*And there shall come forth a shoot  
out of the stock of Jesse, and a  
branch out of his roots shall bear  
fruit. And the spirit of the Lord shall  
rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom*

*I like to think that just maybe, the  
homeless of this world will be some of the  
first to witness his return...*

*and understanding, the spirit of  
counsel and might, the spirit of  
knowledge and of the fear of the  
LORD.*

In contrast to these verses, we see a world dominated by the ungodly. A system of justice heavily weighted in favor of the wicked, the rich, and those with connections in high places. The voices of the poor, the oppressed, and the disenfranchised are not heard. They are not valued. Their very real problems are ignored! How can it ever change?

It's already started! Small, insignificant, a shoot from a stump, a branch from the roots, a Nazarene despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief who offered up prayers with strong crying and tears. Who learned obedience by what he suffered. He set his face. He stayed the course. He's been here before and knows what it's like to suffer at the hands of the godless and wicked. He will come again to fix it all. Not shoe-horned or parachuted into office by corrupt associates. No. He is worthy to reign. The Father raised him because of his holy character, which will be fully displayed when he reigns from Jerusalem in his glory. He will be a righteous King-Priest. No bribes. No respecter of persons. But all the beautiful qualities of the spirit seen in his ministry are now revealed to the world with authority and power.

At last, in his reign, the meek shall inherit the earth, and the Lord's promises from the beatitudes will be realized for us, his disciples, his connections who have waited down through time knowing that one day he would return. All this

from a shoot from the stump of Jesse!  
How amazing!

What am I most looking forward to?  
Truth, Godliness, and Justice, with the  
authority of the King to make it work!

*Shane Kirkwood,  
Sutherland Ecclesia, NSW*

### **Limitless Time**

Acts of service have always been my love language. It is how I tend to show love to others and how I like love to be shown to me. I believe passionately in the importance of service to others, but that doesn't mean I do a great job at it. So often with service, other things get in the way. I'm too tired or too busy. I want to relax, and no one will help me. It's too difficult for me. There are too many obstacles—the list of excuses goes on and on, leading to guilt and frustration. That is why, when I think about what I look forward to most in the future Kingdom of God on earth, the one thing that seems to come out on top is the idea that I will have limitless time, energy, and ability, to serve the LORD God and His creation without compromise. What a blessing it will be to have all those excuses removed in God's kingdom, to serve God and others without reservation, distraction or limits, and to lose the guilt that I am not doing enough! Thank You, LORD, for promising us an eternity to serve You limitlessly.

*Jane Hewitson,  
Baltimore Ecclesia, MD*

## Acorns and Anticipation

He was the Master of Suspense. Alfred Hitchcock knew how to captivate audiences with his movies, clutching the viewers in the thrall of impending terror. Hitchcock's strategic recipe: "There is no terror in the bang, only in anticipation of it." And the power of anticipation exists not only for fearful things but also for the wonderful. There's no greater treat than the thrill of hopping into a car, or onto an airplane, for an unknown destiny on a surprise trip planned by friends. We rob ourselves of joy when we ignore the excitement of what's coming. Moreover, this enjoyment, being rooted in the future, can spring us from the prisons of the present should our present be burdened by anxiety, depression, or despair. It releases us from the gnawing fear of a job that may suddenly disappear, the disheartening clangs of failure in marks missed, and the shrill alarm of the new shadow in a medical scan. It lifts us from the oppressive stream of experiencing a society sliding further into selfishness, entitlement, and hate. Anticipation is not a mere anodyne but a genuine transportation to a happier world.

That brings us to thoughts of the Kingdom. God's grace-born opportunity to experience "*a new heavens and a new Earth*" as a new being oneself! Both world and residents finally resonate with the One who made them. A chance to see Creator and creation generating beauty in a powerful, harmonious union. But what will any of this be like? What will even we be like?

*"You do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed,"* intones the Apostle Paul. Not one of us could look at an acorn, having never seen an oak tree, and have any hope of predicting the size, structure or complexity of the towering magnificence which that acorn can ultimately become. We are currently acorns, so to speak, and thus it is fruitless to spend mental energy trying to predict whatever oak tree qualities we may one day hold. My Kingdom speculations turn away from the elements the Bible shows I have no hope of comprehending to muse on the aesthetics themselves.

Thus I focus purely on the anticipation, embracing it as an entity in itself, without needing to solve any of the unknowns which that joy portends. This is faith in its naked state. I unapologetically marinate in the excitement of future discovery, knowing that, unlike any earthly promise, the revelation will not disappoint but rather amaze me, and the glorious transformations it will bring will never end.

Above all, I never forget the very best thing about anticipation. I can revel in it right now.

*John Pople,  
San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia, CA*

## A Restored Eden

Spring has arrived in my garden here on Vancouver Island. Purple crocuses and yellow daffodils brighten the edges of the lawn. Cherry blossoms create a pink canopy overhead. The buds on the fruit trees are swelling. Crimson flowers are unfurling on the rhododendron. Pansies and primroses



nod in the breeze. Bees are buzzing, birds are chirping, and the sun is shining. “Yes,” I think to myself. “This is a glimpse of Genesis 1:31 (NIV), that God saw *“all that He made, and it was very good.”*”

Then I see it, pushing up through the soil: a light green leafless stem. Horsetail weed. It’s back.

Maybe you know it. *Equisetum arvense* L., or Common Horsetail, also known as Bottlebrush, Foxbrush, Mare’s Tail, Snake grass, Scourweed, Pintop. A Google search tells us it’s a non-flowering evergreen perennial reproducing through spores rather than seeds and underground rhizomes. And then these warnings: “Shallow tilling of the soil worsens the problem by spreading rhizomatous pieces that can regenerate. To prevent it from taking over your garden, it’s advisable to use soil barriers as it is a challenge to contain with a strong tendency to spread and form a monoculture.” And finally, “It is toxic to grazing animals.”

Now I am thinking Genesis 3:17-19 (NIV), *“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it... It will produce thorns and thistles.”*

Sin. Persistent, perennial, and pernicious. It creeps in, overtakes, and overwhelms the vulnerable. It’s toxic, impeding the growth of those around it. It tends to spread, is difficult to control, and chokes out diversity.

What am I looking forward to in the Kingdom? The Restored Eden. Revelation 22:1-3 (NIV) says,

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life... And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.*

Gillian Kenzie, Saanich Peninsula  
Ecclesia, BC

## Working Forever Without Sin

You would think that I would look forward to eternal life, the experience of life without an end, that elusive prize that billionaires like Jeff Bezos are desperately investing in as they feel death's sickening inevitability uncoiling mercilessly in their withering husks. But it isn't that I yearn for. The thing I'm most looking forward to in the Kingdom of God is freedom from sin and the pall it casts over all aspects of the life I now live in this unreliable and perpetually disappointing flesh. Sin's tendrils extend into and curl around everything: my thoughts, words, and actions. Many days end for me with a sense of sadness born of the bruising of my heart by sin, my horrid companion. Thanks be to our God that this will end soon.

I yearn for a time when fully emancipated from my nature's debilitating effects, I can be completely devoted to the service of my Master and his Father, with none of the dark-tinged clouds of selfishness that so impair my walk in the faith. Then, filled with boundless joy and love for the LORD, I can work before Him with an undivided heart, a service unconstrained by the lust of the eye and flesh and the pride of life. Then I will finally be a full-grown man in Christ, working selflessly as one of his brethren, healing the brokenness of the frightened and demoralized peoples of the earth, helping to bring them out of the darkness of ignorance and sin into the light of the LORD and His Word for the illumination of their lives, their hearts and minds.

To work forever without sin; there is nothing more precious to me. I pray every day that this will be the day that work begins for me.

*Dev Ramcharan,  
Toronto West Ecclesia, ON*

## A Healed Earth

Where I live in Southern California, we've had several years of extreme drought. It rained so infrequently during my youngest daughter's first few years of life that she was baffled the first time we got a sprinkling of rain. What was this wet stuff coming from the sky? However, this winter has brought record-breaking rainfall, making the chaparral hills near our home lush and green. We recently went hiking with friends, and my daughters picked armfuls of colorful wildflowers as we walked past verdant fields on the way to a waterfall gushing down through the rocks. It was hard to believe that we were in the same place ravaged by wildfires in recent years, fueled by the abundance of dead grasses that usually cover the brown hills. It brought to mind the words of Isaiah 35:1 (ESV):

*The wilderness and the dry land  
shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice  
and blossom as the rose.*

Seeing those once-dead hills filled with new life brought by all the recent rain was a glimpse of the healing of God's creation that will come in the Kingdom. In my mind, I'm zooming out from that day's hike to picture all the earth healed, transformed, and renewed. I love how Isaiah describes it:

*It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. (Isa 35:2 ESV).*

And there's so much more to be healed: healing of sicknesses, healing of minds and hearts, healing from sorrow:

*Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. (Isa 35:3-6 ESV).*

I think of the joyful simplicity of Jesus' words to Jairus's daughter, "*Child, arise!*" And at that moment, everything changed completely for their family. That moment is coming for all the world when everything utterly changes and never returns to how it was before.

Joy will make everything completely, entirely, unchangeably, irrevocably right: life from death, love that brings healing, and peace that brings restoration. It will come.

*And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa 35:10 ESV).*

As surely as day follows even the darkest of nights, healing will come for God's precious creation. Everlasting joy will come and banish sorrow and sighing forever. A healed earth filled with healed people: that is my prayer, my hope, and my vision of God's Kingdom.

Ruth Hensley,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA



What are *you* most looking forward to in the Kingdom?



# WHO I'D LIKE TO MEET IN THE KINGDOM

By Dan Ryan

ONE of the ways we can keep our Kingdom vision clear is to imagine meeting some of our favorite Bible characters, asking them questions, and learning more about their lives. Who do you want to meet in the Kingdom? What do you think that will be like? Young people from around the world have answered these questions, and we hope you do as well!

*Dan Ryan,  
Baltimore Ecclesia, MD*

When we are all in eternity, I'd love to meet Eve. To hear what it was like to be under newly created stars, to walk and talk with God, to be without sin and shame, and in complete perfection. How it felt the second her eyes were opened. And then to watch her face as she meets and talks to her promised Son, her Righteousness, and she is perfected once more.

*Sharnie Tunnell,  
San Diego Ecclesia,  
CA*



I am most looking forward to meeting Joseph. I have been inspired by how he clung to God amidst trial, lived with compassion, and displayed such powerful forgiveness. Joseph's mom died when he was just a young boy. He was sold by his own brothers into slavery and was separated from his whole family for 22 years. He was wrongfully imprisoned for years for doing the right thing and choosing

God's way when Potiphar's wife pleaded with him daily. Joseph kept his faith, and not only that, we see that he lived with Christ-like care and compassion through it all. When Joseph would have been at rock bottom, locked up in prison, he noticed the butler and the baker feeling down and asked them what was wrong. He cared deeply about others no matter what he was going through. God brought all the trials that Joseph went through for good, and Joseph sees that and chooses to forgive his brothers in such a moving and powerful way. I can't wait to give Joseph a huge hug and tell him all about the impact that his faithful example has had on my life.

*Seth Thomas,  
Baltimore Ecclesia,  
MD*



The one person I would most want to meet in the Kingdom is Daniel. I would love to hear from him exactly what it was like to rise through the ranks of the most powerful empire in the world while standing out as someone who made every decision with God at the center.

I would be fascinated to hear about his challenges as a Jewish prince in a Babylonian world. I would ask about the pressures of being the closest advisor to such all-powerful emperors and the incredible ways he experienced God working in his life.

I know I would be in awe at the strength of his faith through the most intense adversity we read of in the book

of Daniel and how he never let anyone erode his righteous character and unwavering faith.

*Caleb Reid,  
Kinver Ecclesia, UK*



In the Kingdom, I would like to meet Queen Esther. She was a powerful woman who feared God. Although she faced trials, she overcame them and found her way back to the LORD, something many people struggle with today. She is a positive role model who can teach us a lot!

*Alessa Small,  
Moorestown Ecclesia, NJ*

I'd like to meet Solomon in the Kingdom. I think Ecclesiastes is my favorite book because it shows what someone with everything in the world thinks about all he's accumulated. Solomon, even though he had everything, felt that it was meaningless. It shows that earthly pleasures don't make a person happy. It's only when you have a relationship with God that you are truly fulfilled. For this reason, I'd like to meet Solomon and understand firsthand what it was like.

*Ben Davis,  
Maidenhead Ecclesia,  
UK*



As a newly married young sister in Christ, I look upon Biblical persons such as Priscilla and Aquila with great admiration and believe there is much to learn from our small insight into their lives. Paul tells us of their hospitality in inviting him into their home and workplace to facilitate his ministry. We also read of their partnership in sharing the glory of God with those around them, such as in their teaching of Apollos. Considering the dedication and love this couple showed toward the Truth, I am encouraged to seek opportunities where my husband and I can show such love for our God, our fellow believers, and those around us. I hope and pray that through emulating the attitudes and actions of Priscilla and Aquila, we might uplift our brothers and sisters or even help someone come to know the one true God. I look forward to meeting this couple in the coming Kingdom as I'm sure their presence will only strengthen my desire to work with other believers for the LORD and proclaim his glory to the world.

*Jordyn Buttsworth,  
Brisbane Ecclesia, QL*



As a newly married young sister in Christ, I look upon Biblical persons such as Priscilla and Aquila with great admiration and believe there is much to learn from our small insight into their lives.

Someone I'd like to meet in the Kingdom is Noah. I think it's so incredible that God called Noah for the vast, seemingly unattainable task of building the ark, and Noah devoted his life to accomplishing that. Even though it set him apart from the rest of the world, *"thus did Noah according to all God commanded him, so did he."* (Gen 6:22).

Emily Hernandez,  
Baltimore Ecclesia,  
MD



In the day the Kingdom comes, I hope to meet Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary had such a wondrous but also terrifying calling. Mary was arranged to marry Joseph when she became pregnant, which means that if she were eligible to be married, she would be around my age. I cannot even fathom the faith she must have had in the LORD for her to go through a pregnancy unmarried. On top of that, she was carrying Jesus, The Messiah. As she was told, *"He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the highest."* (Luke 1:32). I would like to be able to talk to her and hear her story and possibly even get some advice on sustaining a strong faith in the face of trial.

Kate Amis,  
Northern Virginia  
Ecclesia, VA



The person I would most want to talk to would have to be David. I want to speak to him about his roller coaster ride of life, from killing Goliath to becoming an anointed king at a young age, all the highs and lows that he had, which he wrote about in the Psalms. David wrote a lot about his life and experiences, and I would love to sit down with him and talk to him about his life and see what helped him keep his drive toward God.

Nate Giordano,  
Schooley's Mountain  
Ecclesia, NJ



Joseph is a man who continuously maintained his trust in God despite his many hardships throughout life. When God's Kingdom is restored on earth, Joseph is someone I would absolutely love to meet. I would want to know his inner thoughts while dealing with betrayal from his brothers or deceit from Potiphar's wife. I would like to ask him how in all of his difficulties, he managed to keep his trust in God without ever feeling as though he had to take matters into his own hands or overcome these hurdles alone. It would indeed be a very interesting conversation.

Ishmaiah Small,  
Moorestown Ecclesia,  
NJ





# ISRAEL

## 75 YEARS LATER

*By Peter Owen*

**M**AY 14, 2023 marked 75 years since the Jews returned to their ancestors' homeland, and the state of Israel was declared.

This extraordinary event seemed impossible just a few decades previously. Despite the Zionist movement that had developed at the end of the 1800s, very few nations supported the Jews returning to Palestine. Britain famously did, at the zenith of its empire, in 1917. However, it took the atrocities of WWII to convince the rest of the world the Jews needed a homeland and to agree it could be part of Palestine. As a result, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to adopt a newly drawn-up partition plan, dividing the land of Palestine, then controlled by the British, into a Jewish and Arab state.

Christadelphians had long expected this seemingly impossible event to happen. Dr. John Thomas, when writing *Elpis Israel* a century before, stated:

“The pre-adventual [before Jesus returns] colonisation of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. They will emigrate thither as agriculturalists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Thomas went on to show another key part of the Biblical prophecies

regarding the return of the Jews, that they would return home “under the efficient protection of the British power.”<sup>2</sup> He further wrote:

“The decree has long since gone forth which calls upon the Lion of Tarshish to protect the Jews. Upwards of a thousand years before the British were a nation, the prophet addresses them as the power which at “evening-tide” should interest themselves in behalf of Israel.”<sup>3</sup>

For the Christadelphian community, the excitement would have been incredible to witness Britain taking the lead in supporting the Zionist movement to return to the land. The eager anticipation would have reached feverish levels for them to see the ancient Biblical prophecies explained by Dr. Thomas come to fruition when on Friday, May 14, 1948, the new Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, declared the establishment of the new state of Israel.

What is rarely commented on, but is of significance, is that in the weeks leading up to May 14, debate had raged in the newly convened Jewish council about the wording of the Declaration of





Independence. Religious members of this Jewish assembly insisted that this declaration mention the God of Israel, while many secular Zionists felt any mention of God would be blasphemy. David Schwartz, the Director of Education at Temple Har Zion, writes in *Exploring the Israeli Declaration of Independence*:

“David Ben Gurion realized that to succeed, any declaration of Jewish statehood required all the stakeholders to agree. He proposed that rather than refer to God, Israel’s Declaration would end with a mention of placing trust in Tzur Yisrael, The Rock of Israel, a Biblical term used as a synonym for God but one that could be interpreted differently by members of the assembly possessing a more secular outlook.”<sup>4</sup>

This highlights the unbelief so many of the returning Jews had. Many could hardly acknowledge God, let alone the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ. 75 years later, the nation has only become more secular.

Given the history of the last 75 years, it seems barely believable that those of us watching the Jews and the Land, let alone those living in it, could not acknowledge the hand of God in the events that have unfolded.

There have been numerous wars in and around the newly formed state, which against all odds, the Jews have won. Perhaps most famous was the 1967 Six-Day War, which saw all of Israel’s Arab neighbors come against them. Remarkably, the Jewish state survived and took the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria,

the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem from the Palestinians. The status of these territories subsequently became the major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Although much of the territory gained in 1967 was returned to the neighboring nations, Israel kept control of key areas, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem. As a result, the United Nations has brought resolution after resolution against Israel, demanding they give back the land they annexed in the war to the Palestinians—returning to the lines of the 1947 UN partition plan. Resolution 242, passed by the UN security council on November 22, 1967, stated:

“The fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which should include the application of both the following principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.”<sup>5</sup>

Whatever accusations the UN throws at Israel, as Christadelphians, we do not expect Israel to give back these territories. We should make clear it is not that we don’t feel an enormous amount of sympathy for the plight

of many of the Palestinian people. It is also not because we think the Jews are correct in their policies. As noted, so few believe in God and still less in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. Yet, the events we have witnessed, and will continue to witness, are signs of the times and the fulfillment of ancient prophecies.

Being back in the land, although an extraordinary sign, was not in itself enough. The prophets clarified that the people of Israel would be living in Jerusalem and the West Bank at the Time of the End.

Joel 3, a prophecy of the events leading to Armageddon, begins:

*For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. (Joel 3:1).*

This prophecy makes clear that the captivity would return not just to Judah but also Jerusalem itself.

In addition, in Ezekiel 34:12-14, we read:

*As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by*

*the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.*

The term  
“mountains of  
Israel”  
is enormously  
significant.

The gathered Jews would be brought onto the “mountains of Israel.” The term “mountains of Israel” is enormously significant. It refers to the Judean hills stretching along the length of the West Bank (see map).<sup>6</sup> This is the very territory Israel

gained in 1967.

It is helpful to have a brief history of the territory to appreciate the work of the angels in bringing about the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies and bringing the territory under Israel's control:

“From 1517 through 1917, the area now known as the West Bank was under Turkish rule as part of Ottoman Syria. At the 1920 San Remo conference, the victorious Allies of World War I allocated the area to the British Mandate of Palestine (1920-1948). The United Kingdom proclaimed Abdullah I, as emir of the Emirate of Transjordan, on April 11, 1921; he declared it an independent Hashemite Kingdom on May 25, 1946. Under the United Nations in 1947, it was subsequently designated as part of a proposed Arab state by the Partition Plan

*The term **West Bank** has only been used in the last 70 years or so. It was named so by Jordan when they had control over the territory following the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 until 1967...*

for Palestine. Resolution 181 recommended the splitting of the area of the British Mandate into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an internationally administered enclave of Jerusalem; a broader region of the modern-day West Bank was assigned to the Arab state. The resolution designated the territory described as "the hill country of Samaria and Judea" (the area now known as the "West Bank") as part of the proposed Arab state, but following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, this area was captured by Transjordan."<sup>7</sup>

The term West Bank has only been used in the last 70 years or so. It was named so by Jordan when they had control over the territory following the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 until 1967, when Israel took it from them. The Jordanians simply called it this as it was on the western bank of the River Jordan!

The fact Jordan had control before 1967 was in itself a remarkable part of Ezekiel's prophecy. In chapter 36, when the prophet deals specifically with "the mountains of Israel," he talks of the enemies of the Jews having control of the territory:

*Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and*

*say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people. (Ezek 36:1-3).*

The prophet makes it clear God will take the territory from the enemies of his people, and return it to the Jews to be theirs, ultimately as an everlasting possession. The prophet goes on, however, to tell us which nation would have it before God would take it back for the Jews:

*Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. (Ezek 36:5).*

Idumea is modern-day Jordan. In 1948 they "appointed the land into their possession." However, God did

not designate it in their possession for long. In 1967 the Jews took control of the mountains of Israel, and so the ancient prophecies were fulfilled. The mountains were for God's people, the Jews. This is His sign for all time to show that He is working on the earth:

*But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezek 36:8-11).*

The language Ezekiel is inspired to use is remarkable. The Jews would be brought back to “settle” in the mountains. They would multiply from a small group of settlers to many people who would build the old wastes and farm the land.

This, of course, is exactly what we have seen since 1967. Three major points come from these verses:

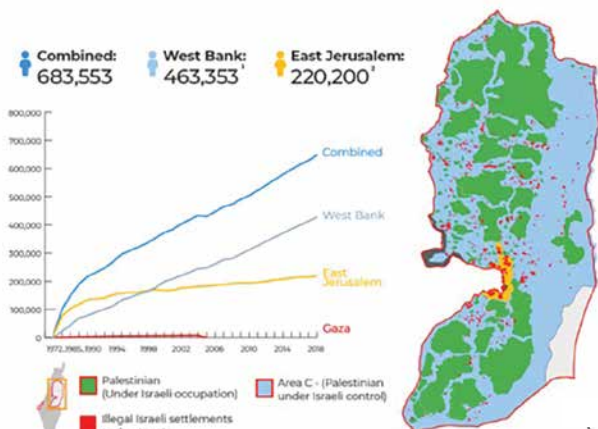
1. The Jews would multiply on the mountains. Have we seen this? Yes. They have grown exponentially as a group, much to the international community's ire (see chart below).<sup>8</sup> This is exactly what Christadelphians would have expected to see. Bro. Thomas, when remarking on this section of Scripture, stated:

“It may be remarked here that there will have been a considerable gathering of Israelites upon the mountains of Israel before the invasion of the country by Gog and his capture of Jerusalem.”<sup>9</sup>

Can you imagine how excited he would be to see the events we see in front of us? “A considerable gathering of Israelites.” Perhaps Bro. Thomas might have anticipated a few thousand Jews on the mountains. There are now approximately three-quarters of a million Jewish settlers in the area!

## Illegal Israeli settlements

Settlements are Jewish compounds built on Palestinian land. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in at least 290 settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israeli settlements are illegal under international law.



## Netanyahu says no freeze in settlement construction in West Bank

Several Israeli officials say the government will not halt the authorisation or construction of illegal settlement units.



2. God said through Ezekiel that they would build the old wastes, and He would settle them on the mountains. How ironic that today they are continually building, and those living in the settlements are called “settlers.” The headline above from the *Al Jazeera* news network<sup>10</sup> highlights the commitment of the Israeli government to keep building, despite the fury of the international community.

3. The third point is that the Jews would farm the land. On March 31, 2023, the French news outlet, *Le Monde*, ran this headline: “In the West Bank, pastoral farms are a new tool for settler expansion.”<sup>11</sup> The article went on to say:

*“Israeli settlements are now using sheepfolds to expand their land to the detriment of Palestinian villages, which are increasingly hemmed in and deprived of their pastures. This situation*

*has accelerated since 2017, bolstered by the arrival of the far-right Benjamin Netanyahu’s new government.”*

The details of the fulfilled prophecies are a sure sign that God is at work among the nations today to bring about His purpose. We shouldn’t presume that the international community will ever accept the Jews’ actions. In fact, we expect the

very opposite. Ezekiel continues:

*Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations. (Ezek 36:13).*

This is exactly what the world says to Israel. They have “devoured up men and bereaved nations.” Much of the world hates Israel for its actions since 1967. This antagonism will only grow before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The government of Israel is not looking for Jesus. The Jews will believe the peace and safety (of sorts) they will create in the land by their building work and continued annexing of land is simply their own doing. However, it is the angels working in the background to bring about the very purpose of Almighty God.

When Gog drops down from the north parts into Israel, we are told in Ezekiel 38 that it will be onto the mountains. The international community, led

by Gog, will gather together for the battle of Armageddon to deal with this nation they say, “*devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations.*”

### What Next?

The nations will eventually come against Israel with a plan to destroy these arrogant people for good. When all seems lost, the Lord Jesus Christ will intervene. The Jews, who for millennia have ignored the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, will suddenly look on him who they crucified and mourn for him, instantly realizing their foolishness. Zechariah prophesied that not only would the Lord come and stand upon the mount of Olives, but that “*all the saints*” will be with him.<sup>12</sup>

If we are among the saints, it will be our privilege to work under the direct leadership of the newly crowned King in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus Christ, to change the world and make it a place filled with blessings for all men everywhere.

We ask, do we want to see a world that is fair, equitable, free from war,

free from the climate crisis, free from corruption, and filled with the very character of God Himself—“*merciful, gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth*”?<sup>13</sup>

As we see the milestone of Israel being back in the land for 75 years, we should not allow ourselves to wonder if “*The Lord is slack concerning his promise, as so many men count slackness.*” (2 Pet 3:9). No! We should be looking up, knowing that our redemption will soon draw nigh.

As we wait for his return, we keep watching the sign of the nation of Israel—the great witness to all the world that our God is indeed God. We keep holding fast to His Word, ensuring it is the lamp to our feet and the light to our paths to get us through these last dark days.

Peter Owen,  
*Mumbles Ecclesia, UK*

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, John, *Elpis Israel*, page 254.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, John, *Elpis Israel*, page 254.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, John, *Elpis Israel*, page 255.

<sup>4</sup> Schwartz, David, Director of Education at Temple Har Zion, [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org).

<sup>5</sup> UN Resolution 242, <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SCRes242%281967%29.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [freeworldmaps.net/asia/palestine/westbank.html](http://freeworldmaps.net/asia/palestine/westbank.html).

<sup>7</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West\\_Bank](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bank).

<sup>8</sup> [aljazeera.com/features/2023/4/11/palestinians-face-expulsions-as-israel-tightens-hold-on-west-bank](http://aljazeera.com/features/2023/4/11/palestinians-face-expulsions-as-israel-tightens-hold-on-west-bank).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, John, *Eureka*, Volume 5, page 246.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/27/403>.

<sup>11</sup> [lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/03/31/in-the-west-bank-pastoral-farms-are-a-new-tool-for-settler-expansion\\_6021340\\_4.html](http://lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/03/31/in-the-west-bank-pastoral-farms-are-a-new-tool-for-settler-expansion_6021340_4.html).

<sup>12</sup> Zechariah 14:5.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 34:6. noted.





# TOGETHER TO THE KINGDOM

*By Rich Dineen*

**I**N Acts 1:6, the disciples ask the risen Christ, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”<sup>1</sup> This a perfectly normal question given all the wonderful things they had witnessed the past three years. But it was not to be, as Christ had other plans for his followers: the spreading of the good news to the Roman world and beyond.

We, too, as we look out into a world of chaos, immorality, and violence, can ask the same question. “Lord, is it not time to set up your Kingdom?” Perhaps we are struggling with a health issue, family strife, loneliness, and sadness over a lost loved one. We long

for a time when “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev 21:4). Even the Apostle Paul wrote passionately about this in Philippians 1:23-24 (NKJV) “For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.”

This brings us to Hebrews.

Hebrews 11 is often called the “Faith Hall of Fame.” It is a powerful reminder of the faithfulness of God and the power of faith to transform lives. Take, for example, verse 40. The author here

concludes with a profound statement that encapsulates the central message of the entire chapter:

*God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

This statement is the culmination of the author's argument about the nature and power of faith. It speaks to the idea that God's plan for humanity is not just about individuals but the collective whole.

To understand the significance of this statement, we need first to examine the context in which it is made. Hebrews 11 is a powerful meditation on the role of faith in the lives of God's people. It begins with a definition of faith: *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."* (Heb 11:1). From there, the author goes on to illustrate the power of faith through a series of examples from the lives of Old Testament heroes.

Hebrews tells us about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and others and how they all demonstrated faith in God through their actions. The writer is trying to show that faith is not just a mental exercise or an emotional feeling; it is something that is lived out in concrete ways. By faith, these heroes were able to accomplish incredible things and overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Joseph recognizes this when he reveals himself

to his brothers in Genesis 50:20 *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."*

However, the writer of Hebrews is not just interested in telling stories of faith for their own sake. He has a deeper purpose in mind. He encourages his readers to persevere in their faith journey, even when the going gets tough. He is showing them that faith

is not a guarantee of an easy life but a guarantee of God's faithfulness.

This is why the writer of Hebrews ends the faith chapter with verse 40. God had planned something better for us. He is saying God's plan is not just about the individual heroes of faith he has just mentioned,

but it is about all of us. God's plan is to make us all perfect (mature) together.

What does this mean? It means God's plan is not just about saving individuals from sin and death and giving them the Kingdom. It means God's plan is to create a community of people fully devoted to Him and one another. It means God's plan is to create a people who reflect His love, His grace, His mercy, and His justice to the world. Take the prophet, Micah. He asked the question:

*With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be*

*pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (Mic 6: 6-8).

Those heroes of faith Hebrews mentioned were not perfect. They were flawed, just like the rest of us. But they were able to accomplish great things through their faith in God. God's plan is to use all of us, flawed as we are, to accomplish even greater things through our collective faith.

*God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.* (Heb 6:10).

*And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* (Heb 13:16).

This message is incredibly empowering. It means that we are not alone in our faith journey. It means we are part of a larger community of believers striving toward the same goal. It means we can learn from the examples of those before us and draw strength from their faith.

But it also means that we have a responsibility to one another. We cannot just focus on our own faith journey; we must also be concerned with the faith journeys of those around us. We must encourage one another, support one another, and hold one

another accountable. We must work together to build up our ecclesias, redeeming the time that God, in his grace and mercy, has provided all of us before His Kingdom comes.

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you looked after me. I was in prison, and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matt 25:31-40).*

Rich Dineen,  
Boston Ecclesia, MA

1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless specifically noted.



# NEEDING A VISION

*By Dan Styles*

**T**HE Kingdom of God is a central first principle for all true believers. Indeed, the Kingdom is identified as one of the two key “mega first principles” along with *“those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ”* in Acts 28:31. How blessed we are that we have been given a proper understanding of the future reward of the saints, the resurrection, Judgment

Seat and Millennial reign of Christ. Yet do we look forward to the Kingdom daily?

Apostate Christian groups believe they are going to heaven when they die. This is a nebulous concept for sure, with little detail on what one’s role will be for eternity. Once you get past the pearly gates and harp lessons, the obvious

question becomes, “What exactly am I going to be doing up there?”

Fortunately for us, God, through His Holy Scriptures, has given us a detailed blueprint of the true reward of the faithful. But are we studying the plan and getting excited about our potential involvement in it? It’s easy to fall into the same trap as nominal Christianity and not have a real idea of what the future will be like. Solomon warns us:

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. (Prov 29:18).*

The word “*vision*” is from the Hebrew *hazon*, which means a forward-looking vision or prophecy. The word “*perish*” is from the Hebrew *para*, which means to let loose. Without a forward-looking vision of the Kingdom, we will not only fail to desire it, but our behavior in this life will be negatively impacted. In order to serve God in this life we need a firm vision of the next life. I recall Bro. Harry Tennant asserting in a talk many years ago that those who really want to be in the Kingdom will be there. I was a bit dubious at first that it could be that easy but have grown to appreciate his remark. There’s an excellent verse in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy which backs up Bro. Harry’s idea:

*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim 4:8).*

We love what we know, and clearly, the Apostle Paul had a firm vision of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the point that he loved it! Do

we? It’s easy to get caught up in the cares of this world to the point that we lose our desire for the profound changes Christ will bring to this earth. How do we combat this world-weariness? By having a keen vision of what the Kingdom will be like! I recall a family vacation many years ago to a theme park called “The Magic Kingdom.” One of our young children turned to us and asked, “Is this the Kingdom?” Well, he was trying to envision it! As we experienced the long lines and overpriced food, Mom and Dad were more convinced than ever that this was an extremely poor substitute for the real Kingdom! While anything this world has to offer ultimately is a letdown at best, God has assured us that the future glory planned for the saints is more wonderful than we can even imagine:

*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Cor 2:9).*

It’s indeed a comfort to know we will be freed from the limitations of mortality and will have unimaginable experiences in the Kingdom. Our aches and pains will be gone. The sadness brought on by physical and mental illness will be a thing of the past. The constant struggle with sinful nature will be behind us. One word that frequently surfaces relative to the Kingdom is “joy.” (Matt 25:21; 1 Thess 2:19; Heb 12:2) The word for “joy” in these verses is the Greek word *chara*, which denotes a background level of long-term joy, not the short-lived burst of joy this world pursues. A corresponding emotional

low often follows this temporary joy. Once again, how blessed we are to have such a “*hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing*,” as the Apostle Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 2:19.

### **The Kingdoms of David and Solomon**

So, how do we get a vision? One great source of information on the

Kingdom is the reigns of David and Solomon. While these are imperfect prototypes of the future Kingdom, Scripture does call the Kingdom of Israel “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exod 19:6). David recognized Solomon as the first fulfillment of God’s promises to him that he would have a son to “sit upon the throne of

	<b>Solomon</b>	<b>Christ</b>
<b><i>Builds a Temple</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 6:1-38</i>	<i>Ezek 40-48; Acts 15:16</i>
<b><i>King/Priest</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 8:5, 14, 22, 54, 62-64</i>	<i>Jer 23:5; Isa 2:2-4</i>
<b><i>Man of Peace</i></b>	<i>1 Chr 22:9; 1 Kgs 5:4</i>	<i>John 14:27</i>
<b><i>Nations come to worship</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:1-13 (Queen of Sheba)</i>	<i>Psa 86:9; Isa 60:3; Zech 14:16-17</i>
<b><i>King of Kings</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:24-25</i>	<i>Rev 17:14, 1 Tim 6:15</i>
<b><i>Magnificent Throne</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:18-20</i>	<i>Isa 6:1-4; John 12:41; Rev 20:11</i>
<b><i>Known for Wisdom</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:9</i>	<i>1 Cor 1:24, 30; Col 2:3</i>
<b><i>Executes Justice</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 3:28; 10:9</i>	<i>Isa 11:3-4</i>
<b><i>Righteous Principles</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:9</i>	<i>Psa 72</i>
<b><i>Supper for a Multitude</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:4-5</i>	<i>Rev 19:9</i>
<b><i>His Servant’s Joy</i></b>	<i>1 Kgs 10:6-8</i>	<i>Matt 25:23</i>



the Kingdom of the LORD.” (1 Chron 28:5; 22:9-10). The apostles asked Christ at his ascension if he would “at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Even Christ referred to himself as the greater Solomon (Matt 12:42). So a study of David and Solomon’s kingdoms can give us a “sneak peek” of the future Kingdom. The chart (on Page 31) highlights the similarities between Solomon’s kingdom and the future Millennial Kingdom of Christ. While Solomon was an imperfect man, for sure, the early part of his reign especially gives us a vision of how wonderful the future Kingdom will be. We can go to events in David’s and Solomon’s kingships to provide us with images of the future glory of the Kingdom. David’s bringing back the ark to Jerusalem, and his religious reforms. Solomon’s building and dedication of the Temple. The visit of the Queen of Sheba. However, one often overlooked period of insight into the future Kingdom is a time when David and Solomon’s reigns overlapped, and David made extensive preparations for Solomon’s kingdom in 1 Chronicles 22-29. This circumstance arose when David’s son, Adonijah, declared himself king and seized the

throne. (1 Kgs 1:5-10). At the time, David was on his deathbed. But because of this incident, David roused himself to declare Solomon his heir, as he had promised Bathsheba. What’s more, we read in the Chronicles account of this episode that David was rejuvenated and spent considerable time counseling Solomon and preparing for the building the Temple, a period of seven years. Clearly, this period of preparation and looking forward to Solomon’s kingship re-energized David, and his final years were spent productively in a planning and mentoring role. This is a real lesson for us!

### **David and Solomon’s Kingdom Preparations—1 Chronicles 22-29**

There are many other lessons we can take from this time period, but we will focus on just one that can get us excited about the future Kingdom. David realized the Levites needed reorganization, as the Temple would now be a permanent structure. Their responsibilities to transport the tabernacle would no longer be required:

David said:

*The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may*

*His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

Without a forward-looking vision of the Kingdom, we will not only fail to desire it, but our behavior in this life will be negatively impacted. In order to serve God in this life we need a firm vision of the next life.

*dwell in Jerusalem for ever: And also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. (1 Chr 23:25-26).*

What, then, did David do? He reorganized the Levites to have roles that would be more appropriate for Solomon's future kingdom.

*Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges: Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith. (1 Chr 23:3-5).*

We ask, what exactly are these duties assigned to the Levites? Responsibility for the worship services, officers and judges, porters, and musicians. Other jobs listed in 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 27 include military and administrative positions, jobs in finance, commerce, agriculture, the environment, and others.

What do all these appointments have to do with the saints? Well, we know the saints have been made a “kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” (Rev 5:10 ESV). The jobs listed above are the ones we are applying for in the Kingdom right now. Do any sound interesting to you?

Will the Kingdom be a non-descript place? Absolutely not! Many fascinating priestly and ruling roles await the saints. Through our Lord's grace, we will all be able to discover the perfect job that will excite us. This thought can give us hope and courage to keep soldiering on in this life. We've been blessed with a real, joyous, and rewarding aspiration for the future. Let's develop our own personal vision for the Kingdom and get excited!

*His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (Matt 25:21).*

Dan Styles,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the King James Version, unless specifically noted.



# LEARNING FROM THE ANGELS

*By Jim and Sue Styles*

**W**E often wonder what life in the Kingdom will be like as an immortal. Sometimes we speculate and dream about it, but what does the Bible say? It says very little directly. Jesus told the disciples they would “*sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt 19:28 ESV). But what about us?

Maybe we can discover some ideas by examining what the angels do now in the family of God. Jesus said:

*Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God. (Luke 20:35-36).<sup>1</sup>*

We know of many references to angels singing in the heavenly choir, but what else do they do that we may be involved in during the coming age?

In Psalm 103:20-21, we learn that angels do His word, obeying the voice of His word. They are His ministers who do His will! So angels have all learned to obey God in everything, doing His will, not their own. We know the angels are “*all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*.” (Heb 1:14). God seems to like expanding His family, so the angels may be a compilation of beings He has saved over many, many years. Paul refers to the “*whole family in heaven and earth*” (Eph 3:15 KJV), and we hope to join the angels to assist in their work. They serve in God’s family to train His mortal children to develop His character while they guide and protect them daily. This hints at what

many immortal saints will do in the Kingdom—ministering for those who will inherit salvation during the 1000 years. Beyond that, the Bible doesn’t give us many hints.

Remember when Ahab got Jehoshaphat to join him in attacking Syria? Micaiah, a true prophet of God, was called in and described how God’s divine counsel works. God decided Ahab would die that day, but He asked some of the angels how they would cause it to happen. They suggested some ideas, and then one angel said, “*I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets*.” And the LORD said, “*You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so*.” (1 Kgs 22:22-23). Even though the angel carried out the plan, Micaiah told Ahab, “*The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets*.” This gives us a hint as to how some of the events of the Kingdom will develop. God or Jesus will lay out the plan, ask for suggestions about how to accomplish it, and then give one or more saints the authority to carry out the plan. Sound exciting?

Three angels appeared to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 to tell them Sarah would have a child the next spring. These angels left Abraham and headed down to Sodom to find out if it was as bad as they had heard. That surely indicates angels are not omnipresent. They must be present to know what is happening and act upon it. On the way to Sodom, the three angels stopped to discuss whether or not they should tell Abraham what they might have to do to Sodom. After discussing the issue and declaring that Abraham was their intimate friend (“*for I have*

*Isn't it wonderful that the immortal angels, like God, can experience joy when sinners turn back to God? They don't focus on all the terrible mistakes and sins that wayward believers committed but rejoice that these children of God have returned!*

known him”—see Rotherham's), they decided that the two of them should continue to Sodom. One angel would return to talk to Abraham and explain what they were about to do. This is an excellent example of how God does not constantly micromanage. God gave these angels a job to do but left it up to them to figure out the best way to carry out His plan. This gives us another exciting glimpse into the work we might do in the Kingdom. God may give us a job to accomplish, but let us figure out how we will get the job done. It will be challenging and fun, and we will have a team of immortals to help us!

In Daniel 10, Gabriel had to wait about twenty-one days to talk to Daniel. When Michael came to help him with the King of Persia, Gabriel was freed up to go to Daniel. Gabriel was not all-powerful, nor could he be in two places simultaneously. In Mark 13:32, Jesus explained, *"Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven."* Peter mentions how the prophets *"predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories... things into which angels long to look."* (I Pet 1:10-12). So angels are not omniscient or omnipotent, and neither will we be in the coming age. God will provide us with what we need to accomplish His will.

Jesus spoke the Parable of the Lost Sheep and ended it by saying, *"There*

*will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."* (Luke 15:7). Isn't it wonderful that the immortal angels, like God, can experience joy when sinners turn back to God? They don't focus on all the terrible mistakes and sins that wayward believers committed but rejoice that these children of God have returned. We need to practice these behaviors now so God will welcome us into His family, and we can respond like angels to "lost" mortal believers during the Kingdom!

While explaining a Parable, Jesus said,

*"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt 13:41-42).

Remember, angels were involved in destroying almost all life on earth with a flood, killing all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, destroying 185,000 of the Assyrian army, and turning Lot's wife into a pillar of salt. So there will be times when some immortal saints will probably have to carry out God's destructive commands during the Kingdom or at its end.

Paul appeals to believers to not go to the legal authorities but instead take matters to the ecclesia and let them

be responsible for making decisions. He says:

*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Cor 6:2-3 NKJV).*

God expects us to be involved in our ecclesias and learning in this life, so we can make responsible decisions in the Kingdom when the saints are incorporated into God's family. Some will be elevated above angels and must make decisions involving them. God has great plans for the saints in the future. Some will rule over current angels and decide what they do!

When Jesus was resurrected, and the two angels talked with some perplexed believers, the angels reminded them about what Jesus had told these believers:

*Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. (Luke 24:6-7).*

Jesus had told them months earlier, but they had forgotten, and once the angels reminded them, they remembered his words. One of the blessings of being made equal to the angels is that our memories will be restored and improved!

Jude had to deal with false believers who secretly joined the community of true believers and tried to mislead the faithful into sinful ways of life. He said these people were “*relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.*” (Jude 8). But then Jude reminds us that “*When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’*” (Jude 9). Jude takes us back to Zechariah 3 when the adversaries contended with the Israelites (represented by Joshua) about rebuilding the temple. Even though Michael the archangel was far more powerful than any of the adversaries, he simply said, “*The Lord rebuke you.*” (v. 2). Isn't it fascinating that Jude would refer to the behavior of an angel to exhort us, not to blaspheme or scream or hurl reviling accusations against others today because that's not the way God's immortal children behave!


Yes, the angels surely indicate what we can hope to do in the Kingdom Age when we are made “*equal to the angels.*” But they also remind us today to practice behaving like angels if we hope to join them in their ministering work in God's family in the age to come and beyond!

*Sue and Jim Styles,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.





# TRUE WORSHIP AND MUSIC

*By James DiLiberto*

**R**ECENTLY, our ecclesia had a public event where members gave their personal testimonies. One relatively new member, a professional musician who learned the gospel later in life, shared how she feels the closest to God in times of musical worship. Her vision of eternity deeply involves a desire to remain in this experience indefinitely, giving glory to God and our Lord Jesus, with all the saints gathered around their throne.

As I was listening, I couldn't help thinking of Mary sitting at the feet of our Lord, in a posture of adoration and love, content to just be in his presence. This is the kind of heart our Father in Heaven desires, as His Son told the woman of Samaria:

*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:23).<sup>1</sup>*

Similarly, Paul expressed it:

*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God **acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.** (Heb 12:28).*

This way of communing with God is consistent with many other Scriptures, where the heart (feelings) and mind (thinking) are in perfect harmony. "I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also." (1 Cor 14:15). Worship and music are often used interchangeably. Many modern churches even refer to their music ministry as "worship." A short Bible study will reveal that while worship

certainly includes music, it is not exclusive to it. But for the purposes of this article, when referring to worship, I am assuming the primary use is an expression of the posture of one's heart and mind when music is played or sung.

One thing we may be certain of is that during the Millennium, our God and His Son will be worshipped. Even during Jesus' mortal days, when going to Jerusalem,

*The whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "**I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.**" (Luke 19:37-40).*

In immortality, just imagine the response of the redeemed, given what they will have seen then. The mortal population will have no words of rebuke to say on that day when the King ascends his throne. Even now, "[Jesus] *has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*" (1 Pet 3:22). He is now receiving the pleasure of the sweet incense of prayer. Psalm 16 speaks of his immortality, "*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" (Psa 16:11).

As with the Earth's creation, *"When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy,"* (Job 38:7), so it was at the creation of God's only Son. For *"when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'"* (Heb 1:6). And what form or expression of worship did this take? Praise to God!

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* (Luke 2:13-14).

The pleasure of both the giver and the receiver of this kind of joyful praise is, by extension, a picture of what eternity has in store for us when we

*"cannot die anymore, because [we] are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."* (Luke 20:36). This same joy of praise desired by our sister, and experienced by the angels around the throne, is what all should anticipate, as we ascribe the same honor and praise to the One who saved us.

*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* (Jude 24-25).

We can be sure that praise and worship are a feature of the eternal realm.

*In eternal life, there will be no end to our gratitude for redemption...*

## Angel Adoration for Eternity

As Bro. Peter Ribaud used to share around the Schooley's Mountain campfire, singing the songs of the Kingdom, "So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8). He would reflect that when we sing praise, we get a taste of what it will be like being born of the Spirit. Thankfully, the Scriptures paint us some beautiful pictures, both directly and by extension, often through the experience of the angelic host. "Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!" (Psa 103:20). Worship is their natural response to doing His word and participating in advancing His will. We see this in praise of other immortal hosts, who seemingly never tire of this activity. The saints are here represented by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders:

*Day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"... those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne... fall down before him... They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." (Rev 4:8-11).*

This immortal response to God's creative power is an echo of the same creatures but styled seraphim in Isa 6:

*I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. And one*

*called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isa 6:1, 3).*

Of this vision, the Apostle John refers to the exalted Christ when he tells us, "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him." (John 12:41). In this worshipful response, we can extend a picture of the praise culture we anticipate in eternity, just as we ought to do for him today.

In eternal life, there will be no end to our gratitude for redemption. Revelation stylizes more visions of this musical praise describing the redeemed:

*And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you... for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!" (Rev 5:9-12).*

We may perhaps even expect to be singing the songs we crafted in this age, just as

*They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the*



## *Shall we be with Him in that Day? We make the answer now.*

*Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." (Rev 15:3-4).*

Praise will be the response of the saints and angels together.

If this praise and worship will be given unto God and the Lamb, where might the nations gather, if not to the same place the angels come today, pouring their praises upon the King? It will be his throne room in the Temple, here on Earth.

*Many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob"... For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Mic 4:2).*

*They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD... "You shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise." (Isa 60:5-6, 18).*

*No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God*

*and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (Rev 22:3-4).*

*You shall have a song, as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute, to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. (Isa 30:29).*

*And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There. (Ezek 48:35).*

My hope for this experience is so beautifully expressed by Hymn 296.

*"Oh! the rapturous, blissful story,  
spoken to Emmanuel's praise,  
and the strains so full of glory,  
that immortal voices raise.*

*While our crowns of glory casting, at  
His feet, in rapture lost.*

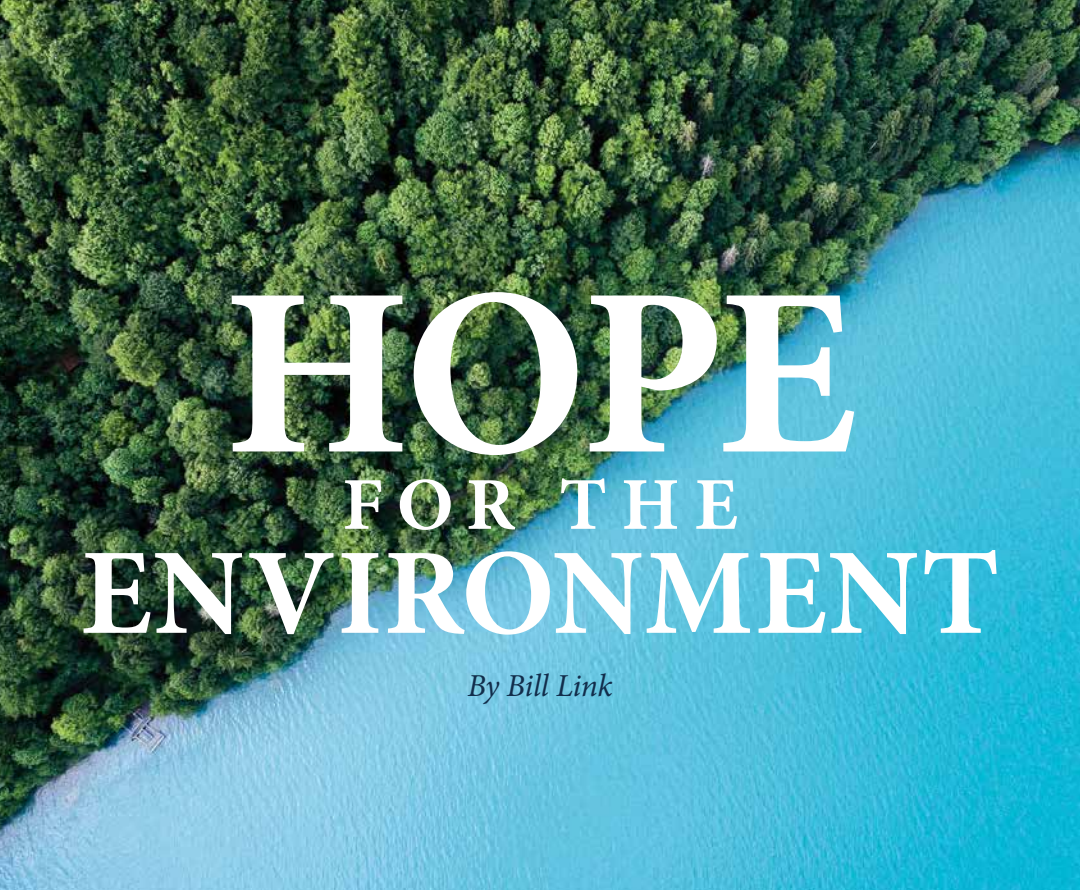
*We, in anthems everlasting,  
mingle with the ransomed host.*

*Hail, Emmanuel, great Deliv'rer!  
Thou art worthy of all praise."*

The question for us is, "Shall we be with Him in that Day? We make the answer now." (Hymn 405).

*James DiLiberto,  
Canterbury Ecclesia, VIC*

<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.



# HOPE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

*By Bill Link*

## Problems Without a "Way Out"

**J**ESUS said that the time of his coming would be characterized by *"distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring"* (Luke 21:25)<sup>1</sup> The word used in Luke's gospel for perplexity is translated literally as "without a passageway." The problems of the Last Days are to be not only distressing but unresolvable. There will be no way out. There's no question the world is a mess nowadays. There's the brutal war in Ukraine, Myanmar, Yemen, Ethiopia, and many other places. There are the resulting refugee crises and mass migrations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates

103 million forcibly displaced people in mid-2022, with over 50 million fleeing across international boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

These things are grievous. Yet, lots of folks take a perverse sort of comfort in saying, "It was ever thus." The implication is that somehow, man will find a way and muddle through the problems. Some might even quote Ecclesiastes 1:9, that there's *"nothing new under the sun."*

But the problems of the Last Days will be different. They will be perplexing. There will be no way out. Man's capacity to destroy the planet with nuclear weapons fits this category. There's no way of putting the genie back into the



bottle; this threat will not go away. The problem becomes even more pressing when considering the proliferation of such weapons in nations led by unstable and wicked men.

### **Environmental Problems With No Way Out?**

Many people consider the environmental problems of this earth as having no way out. A National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) website says,

“The effects of human-caused global warming are happening now, are irreversible for people alive today, and will worsen as long as humans add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.”<sup>3</sup>

Glaciers are shrinking, sea levels are rising, and extreme weather events, droughts, wildfires, and species extinctions are projected. Quoting NASA again:

“Some changes (such as droughts, wildfires, and extreme rainfall) are happening faster than scientists previously assessed. In fact, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—the United Nations body established to assess the science related to climate change—modern humans have never before seen the observed changes in our global climate, and some of these changes are irreversible over the next hundreds to thousands of years.”

What should we think about all of this? Some are inclined to dismiss climate change as a hoax invented by scientists intent on padding their

research budgets. The argument has strong political overtones, with many conservative politicians outright denying climate change or questioning its implications. On the other hand, the political left has embraced climate change as a signature topic of concern.

We Christadelphians have always kept out of politics but find ourselves in times where it is challenging to maintain that position. We are awash in a sea of information, much tailored by our Internet experience to match and reinforce our interests and inclinations. The political right or left might attract us—the views of one side or the other aligning better with our Biblically informed perspective on particular issues.<sup>4</sup> Our political inclinations might unconsciously influence our thoughts on climate change and the environment. We want to be sure we think well and are guided by the Word of God.

### **A Biblical View of Environmental Problems**

So what should our perspective be on environmental problems, as Christadelphians?

First, we should see the earth as manifesting the creative majesty of our heavenly Father. In Psalm 104, David marvels at God’s creation and sustenance of the earth.<sup>5</sup> God “*sends the springs into the valleys*,” providing drink for birds and beasts, giving life to the vegetation that nourishes and blesses man (Psa 104: 10-21). The bird’s song glorifies God (v. 12). The bounty of wine, oil, and bread makes man’s heart glad, his face shine, and strengthens his spirit. All of this is God’s blessing and handiwork.



Psalm 104 ends with “*Hallelujah!*” (praise the LORD), an imperative to all believers to join the chorus. With David, we say, “*O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.*” (Psa 104:24).

It should grieve us, then, to hear of the earth polluted, its natural resources swept away.

Consider the rainforests: these are home to half of the world’s plants and animals. Rainforest plants provide medicines, and their trees are crucial in regulating the earth’s atmospheric health. But “more than half of Earth’s rain forests have already been lost due to the human demand for wood and arable land... if current deforestation rates continue, these critical habitats could disappear from the planet completely within the next hundred years.”<sup>6</sup> “In 2019, the tropics lost close to 30 soccer fields’ worth of trees every single minute.”<sup>7</sup>

Time would fail us to speak of overexploitation of the seas, fisheries collapsing, dying coral reefs, plastics in

the ocean, pollution of air, water, and soil, and the global waste disposal crisis. These things should grieve us because we see God’s handiwork defiled.

### **Environmental Problems and God’s Judgments**

As Bible students, we should not be surprised by environmental problems. God’s blessing and favor on the promised land were contingent on Israel’s obedience (Deut 28:1-4, 15-18). Likewise, the prophets speak of ecological problems as signs of God’s wrath.

Isaiah describes the consequences of God’s judgment as making the earth, “*empty and ... waste ... plundered*” and a place that “*languishes and fades away*” and “*defiled under its inhabitants*” (Isa 24:1-7). The context to the end of the chapter suggests this prophecy has to do with the Last Days, leading up to the time when “*The LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders, gloriously.*” (Isa 24:23).<sup>8</sup>

Hosea says environmental problems were consequences of Israel's waywardness:

*Hear the word of the LORD,  
You children of Israel, For the  
LORD brings a charge against the  
inhabitants of the land: 'There is  
no truth or mercy Or knowledge  
of God in the land. By swearing  
and lying, Killing and stealing and  
committing adultery, They break  
all restraint, With bloodshed upon  
bloodshed. Therefore **the land will  
mourn**; And everyone who dwells  
there will waste away, **with the  
beasts of the field and the birds of  
the air; Even the fish of the sea will  
be taken away.** (Hos  
4:1-3).*

The Apocalypse says God will "*destroy those who destroy the earth.*" (Rev 11:18).

We may have always read these passages as being figurative. If so, maybe we need to reconsider. The literal corruption of the earth is consistent with man's greed and disharmony with God.

### Our Blessed Hope

Whether or not we accept the overwhelming scientific consensus about climate change,<sup>9,10</sup> there is no question many people are deeply troubled by environmental problems and see them as having no solution. It is not too much of a stretch to say their hearts are "*failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.*" (Luke 21:26). Jesus

says that when these things begin to happen when men's heads are hanging in dejection, it's time to "*look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.*" (Luke 21:28).

The coming Kingdom of God is the blessed hope which mankind needs. It is the vision that guides us, cheers us, and lifts us up. On that day, "***They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.***" (Isa 11:9).

God Himself has said, "*Truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.*" (Num 14:21). If God's glory is seen in His creation, then surely the earth must be restored in the Kingdom Age.

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which mankind  
needs. It is the  
vision that guides  
us, cheers us, and  
lifts us up.

### Isaiah 35

Isaiah 35 is a beautiful poem of restoration in the Kingdom Age. We are moved when we read it, perhaps finding ourselves humming the melody of an old favorite hymn it inspired, "A rose shall bloom in the lonely place."<sup>11</sup> The scene Isaiah describes is so perfect that even the

wilderness and desert sing and shout for joy.

*The wilderness and the solitary place  
**shall be glad**; and the desert **shall  
rejoice**, and blossom as the rose.  
It shall blossom abundantly, and  
**rejoice even with joy and singing**;  
the glory of Lebanon shall be given  
unto it, the excellency of Carmel*

*and Sharon: they shall see the glory  
of the LORD, the excellency of our  
God. (Isa 35:1-2 RV).*

We're reminded of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and his response to the churlish Pharisee demands that he silence his followers: *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."* (Luke 19:40). There's no containing the intensity of the moment.

Isaiah 35 speaks of removing mankind's physical afflictions; the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the mute are made whole (vv. 5-6). So too, the afflicted earth is healed: waters burst forth in the wilderness, *"thirsty lands"* (more personification) become springs of water, and the dry land comes to life with grasses, reeds, and rushes. (vv. 6-7).

*And the ransomed of the LORD  
shall return, And come to Zion  
with singing, With everlasting joy*

*on their heads. They shall obtain  
joy and gladness, And sorrow and  
sighing shall flee away. (Isa 35:10).*

We are right to be grieved by the world's environmental problems, but we have confidence in a better day. The afflictions and sorrows of sin will be replaced with the strength and joy of holiness. The glory and excellency of our God will be revealed in a gloriously restored earth. May this vision guide us and keep our heads lifted in these times of perplexity!

*Bill Link,  
Baltimore Ecclesia, MD*

<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the New King James Version unless specifically noted.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>.

<sup>4</sup> The problem is that no political party aligns perfectly with God's perspective on all issues. We will inevitably be compromising if we embrace one side or another. Psalm 146 wisely encourages us not to place our hopes in failing mankind but to have confidence that the almighty God will provide equity, social welfare, healing, and justice. Man cannot do it. God can and will.

<sup>5</sup> While there is no attribution of authorship to Psalm 104, Psalms 103 and 104 fit together well, and Psalm 103 is attributed to David. Both begin and end with "Bless the LORD, O my soul!" This exultant refrain occurs five times in these psalms (103:1, 2, 22 and 104:1, 35) and nowhere else in Scripture.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/rainforest-threats>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/deforestation-and-forest-degradation>.

<sup>8</sup> See also Jeremiah 4:23-28, which begins by describing the earth as "without form, and void," using the exact language of Genesis 1:2.

<sup>9</sup> Oreskes, Naomi (2004). The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change. Science, pg 1686. Available online at <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.1103618>.

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveys\\_of\\_scientists%27\\_views\\_on\\_climate\\_change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveys_of_scientists%27_views_on_climate_change).

<sup>11</sup> Hymn 289 in the "green hymnbook" (2002) was written by Bro. William Osborne (1825-1899) and first published in the Christadelphian Hymn Book of 1869.



# WHERE WILL MY HELP COME FROM?

*By Carol Link*

## **A Righteous Government Will Help All People, Everywhere.**

**S****OMETIME** in the past few months, the world population reached eight billion people, according to the “Worldometer” clock.<sup>1</sup> This population clock ticks along relentlessly, raising concerns about war and poverty, refugee crises, and suffering. Even more ominous is the Doomsday Clock,<sup>2</sup> which gauges nuclear threat. With midnight representing the time mankind makes the earth uninhabitable, concerned

scientists say the Doomsday Clock is at 11:58:30 pm—90 seconds to go.

Both clocks monitor world tensions and leave people wondering who can fix the problems. Who’s in charge? Can think tanks, charitable organizations, and local or national governments provide solutions? Can international organizations, like the United Nations, find a way through?

The strain on all levels of government is palpable. Local communities are plagued by issues brought on by regional tensions, tangled up in



national issues driven by international drama. This often results in frustrated citizens spilling into the streets because help seems unavailable. Take, for example, the plight of the world's 103 million refugees. These people have no streets to spill into, yet their needs are among the most extreme. Displaced from their homes, they are stateless, receiving no protective oversight. So, where do they find help? The problem of governing for the good of everyone is perplexing. How interesting that Jesus himself chose the word "*perplexity*" to describe the state of the world in the days before his return. He said there would be "*upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity.*"<sup>3</sup> (Luke 21:25). Nations, even those well governed, are up against the wall. People need solutions.

### Searching For Help

If you have ever faced a life-threatening problem, such as a health emergency, you'll know that finding qualified help can make you feel frantic. Imagine how quickly frustrations turn to despair if the society around you has collapsed and no qualified help exists.

A beautiful expression in the Bible touches on the frantic search for help. My favorite example is in Psalm 121, which begins with the question, "*Where will my help come from?*"

**A Song of Ascents.** *I will raise my eyes to the mountains; From where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.* (Psa 121:1-2 NIV).

The Psalmist confidently answers his own question, "*My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*" (Psa 121:2 NIV) The Psalm is probably familiar to you, and the description of God as the Maker of heaven and earth is perhaps also familiar. Maybe because of this familiarity, the impact of the answer is missed. The pattern is clear and straightforward if we slow down and think about it. His name, "Yahweh," is followed by His credentials, "*who made heaven and earth.*" God's creative work, "*In the beginning,*" when He "*created the heavens and the earth,*" is the seal of proof that He is qualified. He is like the specialist with the seal on the diploma with the essential qualifications. This confident assertion sets the tone for addressing people's needs today, individually and globally.

### Help Comes From the LORD

**A Song of Ascents.** *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore.* (Psa 121:1-8 KJV).

Psalm 121 is written by a person carrying a lot of specific worries and



doubts. There are worries about injury and accidents, the foot that slips (v. 3), exposure to the elements (v. 5-6), and the stress of menacing threats (v. 7). It is written for all travelers on life's journey who look up while being weighed down under challenging circumstances and are reassured the LORD is watching, protecting, sheltering, and guarding every step of the way, from now and forever (Psa 121:8).

Isaiah 2:2-3, one of my favorite Kingdom vision passages, sounds much like Psalm 121, but with some critical differences.

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa 2:2-3 KJV).*

Both passages describe people ascending the mountain of the LORD. The travelers in Isaiah 2 are ascending as a group in solidarity. They encourage each other about the future. The mood is bouncy and light-hearted. By contrast, the one lonely traveler in Psalm 121 is burdened with worries and uncertainties. Interestingly, the Psalm 121 traveler is from just one nation, the nation of Israel, whereas Isaiah's crowd comprises people from "*all nations*." It is a powerfully positive and universal message of hope. In Christ's Kingdom, the people will know where help comes from. It will no longer be a question in the pilgrim's mind.

### **Everyone Will Learn Righteousness**

Education will be a priority in Christ's Kingdom as people ascend to learn of His ways. It must be a priority now, as Christ commanded just before his ascension. He said, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*" (Mark 16:15). Education in the ways of God is a powerful force for good in people's lives. It is critically important now for our spiritual survival, personally and collectively. It



is fundamental to ecclesial growth.

Education is key to reformation in the Age to come. It will be a powerful force for good when Christ returns to reign on earth. *“He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths”* is not pointless rote learning but active learning that results in positive behavior: walking and marking measurable progress. It will bring the long-awaited *“Peace and goodwill on earth.”* At that time, global education initiatives will effect changes in national policies that will ultimately bring good results for everyone.

Isaiah 26 takes up this stunning note of hopefulness on the vital role of divine education:

*With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.* (Isa 26:9).

Isaiah envisions a time when the public policy agenda on education is, *“The people will learn righteousness!”* What could be more beneficial to each person on the earth than this?

Education is fundamental to the success of civil society. A derelict education system, whether in Afghanistan, Haiti, or inner-city Baltimore, is a bellwether of the future. Our brothers and sisters who are teachers experience firsthand mismanagement (or worse) in the education system: gun violence, aggressive social agendas, and curricula discrediting godly values. Where does help come from?

Help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth with righteous enforcement. The Bible tells us clearly that educating the world's people will bring the solution. Education for excellence is one of the most transformational roles of divine government.

### **They Will Learn War No More**

One aspect of education in Christ's Kingdom is actually a rehabilitation program. It is not only about what will be **taught** but also about what will be **untaught**.

*He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* (Isa 2:4 RSV).

In his commentary on Isaiah 2:4, Professor Robert Alter says:

“God's teaching from Zion, then, is to have the effect of inaugurating a reign of universal peace. There is an imaginative boldness, or perhaps rather the courage of desperation, in this vision.”<sup>4</sup>

Upholding Christ's standard of peaceful conduct now is not a passive stance and puts us in the minority. In a desperately hostile world, where swords and spears have been replaced with Long-Range Strike Bombers and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, upholding Christ's standards takes great courage. With the weapons hype comes feelings of national pride—an emotion not to be underestimated. Our young people

today can be drawn into military fervor or arms industry jobs if they are not grounded now in “learning righteousness.” It takes courage and confidence to know where the real help comes from. Views and emotions that align with patriotism put us at odds with the charter of the One who will inaugurate the reign of universal peace.

Gun ownership is another example of an issue that puts us at odds with Christ’s Kingdom charter. Just as the weapons industry perversely flaunts itself as the **solution** to global conflict. So the escalation of gun violence in the United States has the chilling effect of making people believe that carrying a gun is the **solution**. Self-defense is a mainstream view that flies in the face of Jesus’ teaching not to resist evil but to “*turn the other cheek*.” (Matt 5:39 NIV). It may be naïve sounding to the majority. Still, it is what guided Christ, and it is the law that will go forth from Zion when “*nation shall not lift up sword against nation*.” Self-defense was a temptation for Christ, but he resisted, and so must we as the days grow more violent.<sup>5</sup>

## Conclusion

We know where our help comes from. Just as we need to live the role of Kingdom educators now by striving to teach people God’s ways, we need to live the role of Kingdom peace now by aligning with peace in our lives.

Worldometer and Doomsday Clocks are imaginary, but they do inform the eight billion people alive today that time is running out. With threats increasing, knowing that God will help is reassuring. He has appointed His Son, who on a designated day will shoulder the government (Isa 9:6).

*God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31 NASB).*

Knowing that “*help comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth*” reassures us. It’s time to tell everyone who is burdened with worries and doubts. Knowing where help comes from teaches us to trust Him. It keeps us from the emotional sway of popular but harmful ideas. Trusting in the Almighty will put a spring in our step as we ascend the mountain. One day soon, everyone will go up to the LORD’s mountain to learn righteousness. I really want to be in that crowd—with you.

Carol Link,  
Baltimore Ecclesia, MD

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>.

<sup>3</sup> All Scriptural quotations are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> Alter, Robert, The Hebrew Bible, Prophets. Note for Isaiah 2:4, page 627.

<sup>5</sup> Badger, Nathan. Guns, Self-protection, and Faith. Tidings Vol. 86, Number 3 March 2023, page 7.



# RESURRECTION

*By Chris and Martha Sales*

**I**MAGINE yourself standing in a dimly lit graveyard, looking at rows of tombstones with names of friends from your past. You feel vibrant and energetic, yet you remember being old and feeble. Your skin is youthful and smooth, and you are no longer hunched over. With wonder, you gaze at the details etched on your stone. Did you truly die in 1993? The monument beside yours displays 2023! Have so many years passed? In awe, you conclude that the resurrection has occurred, and you will soon meet the new King of the world—the Lord Jesus Christ!

Will gravestones be overturned? Will there be a deep hole in the ground or any other evidence Jesus has returned? God can certainly recreate us without digging up holes to find our bones. He knows our DNA; He has written our names in His Book. Yet, the stone blocking the tomb of Jesus was rolled away by an angel—a visual demonstration that a miracle had occurred. Will God graciously allow the world to view disturbed cemeteries all over this earth?

We know that we won't be instantaneously immortal when resurrected, as not all who rise will



receive this gracious gift. There will be a resurrection to life and a resurrection to shame (John 5:29; Dan 12:2). There are those to whom Jesus will say, “*I never knew you, depart from me you workers of lawlessness.*” (Matt 7:23).<sup>1</sup> “*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*” (Matt 25:46). Many Christians were tragically tortured and maimed before dying, so surely God won’t bring us back with body parts missing. Indeed, John the Baptist will require his head! It seems quite possible we will come back to life whole and in our prime, already tasting God’s incredible power to make all things new.

Possibly before we are brought to the Judgment Seat, the risen saints will visit relatives and friends, proclaiming that Jesus Christ has returned and it is

time to come. What could be a more powerful witness to the veracity of this claim than a resurrected relative standing at your door? Paul says, “*The dead in Christ will rise first.*” (1 Thess 4:16).

Imagine the apprehension you may feel knocking on the door of someone who lived on after you died. How exciting to appear to your loved ones, not as the old, wizened figure they remembered, but vibrant, healed, and restored! How long will it take them to recognize you? Maybe they will throw their arms around your neck and cry tears of joy! Will they be thrilled to know that Jesus Christ has returned, or will they be fearful, dismayed, and anxious? This could be a difficult interaction. You may have words of encouragement, reminding them of the Father’s great mercy and His strong desire for none



to perish. Or you may observe what is happening in their home, and your heart might break. It will be too late to repent and change (Matt 25:1-13; Rev 22:11). You will be calling them to come away just as they are.

God has promised that angels will gather us from all over the earth (Matt 24:31). Somehow, we will meet Jesus in a private, secluded place. Will angels take our hands to pull us away, like with Lot and his family? Will we arrive instantaneously in the place of judgment, unseen by the world, or will it be an awesome trip, transported through the air like never before, over sea and land?

Thinking about the future, meeting Jesus Christ will surely be the highlight. When we first see him, we may discover he is not the glamorized, handsome model this world portrays. Isaiah 53:2 says, *"When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."* Yet, no doubt, something in his demeanor and deportment will command our respect, admiration, and love beyond anything we've ever felt. Seeing Jesus in action, marveling at how he perfectly manifests his Father and wisely and lovingly interacts with others, will

captivate our attention and bring everything we have learned about him to a powerful reality. He will be the bridegroom of our dreams, and we will not be disappointed if we long for a godly, righteous King. Paul says a crown of righteousness will be given unto those *"that love his appearing."* (2 Tim 4:8).

Visualizing the Judgment Seat as anything but a sobering experience is hard. We must give an account of

our life, and we will either be accepted to partake of God's Divine Nature—as Jesus has (2 Pet 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3), or we will weep and gnash our teeth lamenting the foolish choices we made (Luke 13:28). Every knee will bow to Christ

and acknowledge him as their Lord (Phil 2:10-11). Even if we are judged faithful, we will still be convicted of our shortcomings and fully acknowledge our desperate need for grace and mercy. Yet, what great joy to hear, *"Well done, good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Master."* Consider the supernatural change as *"this mortal body puts on immortality."* (1 Cor 15:53). What will we feel when Jesus transforms *"our lowly body to be like his glorious body"* (Phil 3:21)?

Thinking about the future, meeting Jesus Christ will surely be the highlight. When we first see him, we may discover he is not the glamorized, handsome model this world portrays.

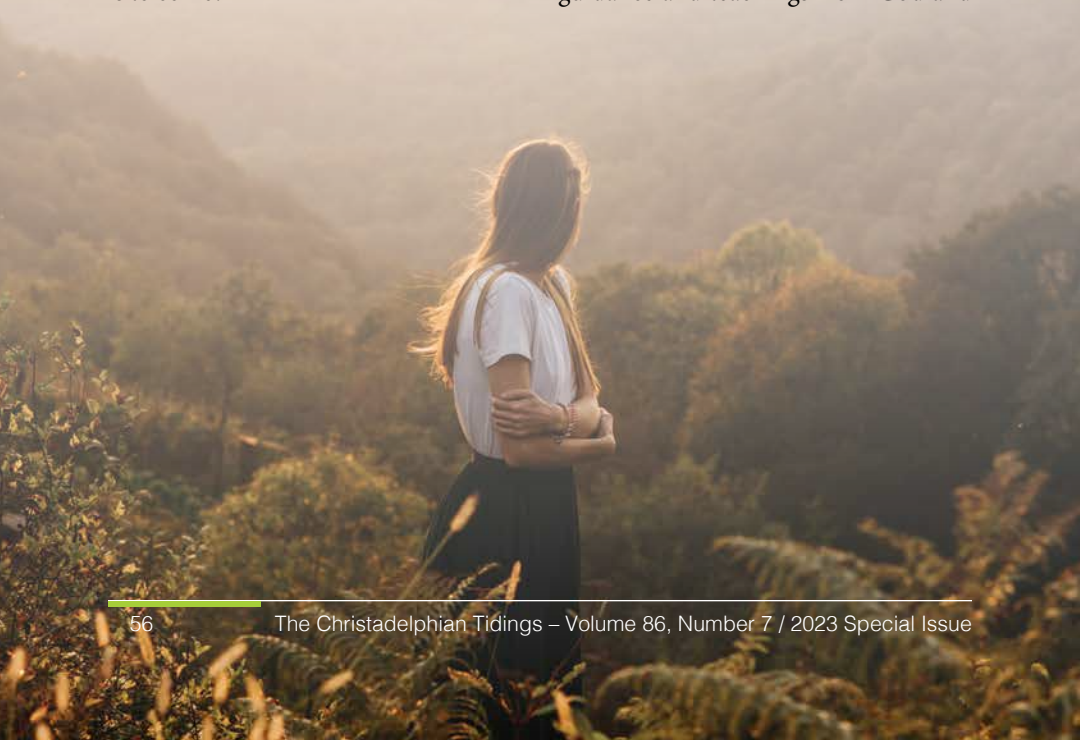


We have been blessed to live in the “*image of God*,” enjoying the marvelous sensory awareness our Creator has bestowed. Do you dream about what it will be like to experience God’s nature? Will energy surge through us? Will we be aware of a vast new range of sounds, thoughts, understandings, and visual perceptions? Serenity will fill our hearts, knowing we will never again face debilitating doubts, sinful temptations, or death and disease!

We may have lifelong, heartfelt petitions never answered in our mortal lives. Is this when those never-moved mountains will suddenly be tossed into the sea? Some of us have loved ones with a veil of darkness upon their eyes. Will we be sent to visit and encourage them to recognize the evidence that Jesus Christ has returned? When Jesus arose from the dead, many saints were resurrected and appeared to those in the city. Could this be a precedent for what is to come?

Will those who have lost young children beg the Lord to raise them to mortal life in God’s Kingdom? There isn’t any explicit guarantee in the Bible that children will be raised, but three of the eight recorded resurrections were of young children. The appeals of desperate parents were heard by Jesus and the prophets with great compassion, and God restored mortal life. However, if our Lord denies our request, we will, as immortal beings, understand his decision so much better than we can now.

We have two models to consider when we meditate on what it will be like to experience immortality. Those who are resurrected will be equal to the angels. We will not die anymore or marry (Luke 20:34-36). Angels are often called young men, sometimes indistinguishable from human beings, sometimes in shiny white clothes with a divine glow. Angels have been very involved, often appearing to give guidance and teachings from God and



to provide encouragement, support, and protection. The faithful will take on this consecrated role in the coming age, ministering as “*kings and priests*” to the mortals who survive Armageddon (Rev 5:10; Isa 30:19-21).

After Jesus was immortal, he could be handled and touched, eat food, move instantly from place to place, and enter locked homes (Luke 24). This may indicate the physics of immortality are quite different from anything we’ve experienced so far! Jesus remembered all his friends, experiences, and the Scriptures. We have every reason to believe that we will too.

We know God’s Holy Spirit will be poured out (Joel 2:28). How wonderful to speak any language, have the right words to say, and have incredible power to heal those sick and diseased!

Our Father, in His great mercy, gave us proof that He CAN and WILL bring us back from the dead by the eight resurrections recorded in the Bible. Jesus Christ is the prime example because not only was he resuscitated, but he was also the first to be given eternal life. Because of this, he is the firstborn from the dead, the beginning of the new creation, and a precious token of what is to come. *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”* (Rom 8:29. See also Rev 1:5; Col 1:18; Acts 26:23; 1 Cor 15:20-22.)

So, visualize yourself now under a starry sky enjoying deep conversations with a multitude of old friends, loved ones, faithful Bible characters, and so many others you’ve met at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Suddenly, your beloved Savior and Redeemer stands up to speak. In glistening white clothing, shining like the sun, he tells us it is time to begin our mandate to bring true peace and righteousness to the earth. With wild elation in our hearts, eager to finally start making the changes this world so desperately needs, we join Jesus Christ to stand on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:10-12; Zech 14:1-4). We are about to save the devastated nation of Israel from an overwhelming assault and reveal God’s chosen King and ourselves—his chosen bride to the world. But that is another story!

*Chris and Martha Sales,  
Collingwood Ecclesia, ON*

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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.



# LOOKING FORWARD TO THE JUDGMENT SEAT

*By Darren Tappouras*

*“That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” (1 John 4:17 NKJV).*

**S**EVERAL experiences in my life directly led me to look at the Judgment Seat in more detail.

Previously, I had held the traditional idea of the Judgment Seat being an event at which a believer's life is forensically examined, motives read, choices evaluated, and a verdict made that would determine either eternal

life in the Kingdom or rejection into “outer darkness.” This view had been unconsciously absorbed by me, not so much from exposition and research, but mainly from off-handed comments heard in talks, plays at youth events designed to scare and motivate young people, and a general perspective that existed in the corner of the brotherhood in which I grew up.

The first break in this perspective goes back many years to when I undertook a detailed personal study of the Letter to the Ephesians. It is no exaggeration to say that the power of this epistle had a transformational effect on me. My view of what it meant to be a saint, to be a child of God, and a recipient of God's spiritual blessings through Christ had a profound impact on me in such a way that I wanted to communicate it to others, shout it from the rooftops as it were. I had finally got it—I am saved by grace!

However, I found it very hard to communicate my newfound enthusiasm. I received a rather benign response to my exhortations and conversations. Why would this be? The power of Ephesians is there in plain black and white for anyone to read, but not many took the words as personally specific and could apply it to themselves as I had. It could not have been more apparent to me.

It was my own mother who identified for me where the dampening effect was coming from. After an exhortation I had given at my home ecclesia in which I repeated my now regular theme of assurance and confidence in salvation and the motivational power of gratitude and love that this should generate, my dear mother approached me. She said, “Yes, yes, it's all very nice, but we all need to get through the Judgment Seat first.” This statement hit me like a hammer. Of course, under this schema, no one could possibly be excited about salvation and grace. No one would have any reasonable confidence to

personalize any of this—it wouldn't be until they hear the words “*well done*” at some distant time in the future that they can finally rejoice, knowing they are recipients of God's grace and mercy. The penny dropped.

Genuine confidence and joy had been pushed into the unknown future. It couldn't possibly have any emotional or transformational power now. “Now” basically means making sure we get through the future terrifying divine examination. No true gratitude or thankfulness dynamic is possible under this model.

This perspective did have a string of verses that seemed, on the surface, to support it. But for me, it contradicted the entire underlying sentiment (or “vibe” as we call it in Australia) of the New Testament. God loves us; we are saved by grace. Christ died for you—therefore, we respond (compelled even) by gratitude and love—our lives are transformed by this reality (1 John 4:19; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:14).

### Looking Closer

How could I reconcile the reality of our sins having been forgiven (as far as the East is from the West), being sanctified and deemed righteous by the sacrifice of Christ, with a future tribunal-type examination that will determine and reveal to us then whether we are even part of God's purpose or not?

I first noticed there is no “Judgment Seat” chapter in Scripture. Other doctrines often have a dominating chapter that explains the why and how, the mechanics and logistics of a subject. For example, Resurrection has

1 Corinthians 15. Baptism has Romans 6. Faith has Hebrews 11. Nothing like this exists for the Judgment Seat. In the New Testament, we only have snippets alluding to the Judgment Seat. These are often in the context of another issue being dealt with.

Next, I noticed that many expositions and illustrations of the Judgment Seat in our community come from Parables. As a long-time Bible missionary and a “*Wrested Scriptures*” aficionado, I knew this was problematic, and my research confirmed as much.

Take, for instance, using Parables to predict the proportion of believers that will be accepted. Using the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we could conclude 1:1. However, the Parable of the Talents indicates 2:1. The similar Parable of the Pounds has 9:1. The Penny a Day Parable has 100:0, and the Wedding Garment Parable indicates thousands are accepted with only one solitary man rejected.

A long-held Christadelphian interpretative principle is that the straightforward language such as is found in New Testament letters (including Ephesians and Romans) must guide us and, in some cases, even override the more conceptual ideas and literary devices used in Parables—subjects such as the devil, Satan, demons, evil spirits, hellfire, and the rich man and Lazarus.

### Survey of The Brotherhood

In my research, I got my hands on every article, book, talk, and blog I could find that dealt with this subject in any way. Although there may have been a few “off the charts” and theoretical concepts, most came down to one of

two positions. I have called these the **Short-View** and the **Long-View**.

The **Short-View** (based on the Parable of the Sheep and Goats) holds that the Judgment Seat will be a relatively quick affair. Passages supporting this view include boldness at his coming (1 John 2:28; 4:17), no condemnation (Rom 8:1; John 5:24), sins forgiven now (Heb 8:12; Psa 103:12), Saved by grace (Eph 2:8-9). This view was more optimistic than the **Long-View**. It was supported by a substantial Biblical conceptual framework that resonated well with the atonement, justification by faith, and salvation by grace underpinning the New Testament. There was, however, something missing. The concrete references to a believer’s life are examined, and the concept of “*giving account*” that runs through the Judgment Seat passages was not satisfactorily dealt with.

The **Long-View** (which I had grown up with) focused on the Parable of the talents and emphasized the “*giving account*” aspect. It held the Judgment Seat to be a forensic review of one’s life. There is some uncertainty as to what this review was achieving. Some people held it was to determine if our faith was real—did our life actions demonstrate our faith (i.e., faith saves us, but actions prove our faith)? Others suggest the tribunal deals with unforgiven sins and sins that we had not repented of. As the life review will uncover and reveal our motives and secret thoughts, one doesn’t have to try too hard to imagine how such an interrogation would terrify most of us, especially as, according to this view, it will decide our eternal destiny.



The Scriptures supporting such a view include: giving account (Rom 14:12; Heb 4:13), secrets revealed (Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5), and life reviewed (Eccl 11:9; Matt 12:36).

### Reconciling The Views

Can these two different views be reconciled in a way that includes both the life review and “*giving account*” of the **Long-View** and the New Testament emphasis on grace as the focus of the **Short-View**? I believe they can.

You may have noticed that the two views lean on a particular Parable in Matthew 25. Either the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, where the culling of the sheep and goats takes place quickly or the Parable of the Talents, where a “*giving account*” longer process takes place first.

The **Long-View** draws on the adjoining Parable of the Talents. This Parable had been emphasized in my upbringing and that CYC plays and talks were based on. Two Parables, literally alongside each other, but giving two different perspectives.

### The Order of Events

In the traditional view I grew up with, based on the Parable of the Talents, the Judgment Seat went something like this:

1. We give account.
2. We receive praise and/or admonition.
3. We are accepted or rejected.

If we switch the elements around, however, and follow the pattern of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (which is a Parable specifically illustrating

the Judgment Seat), we see a different order emerging:

4. We are accepted or rejected.
5. We give an account.
6. We receive praise and/or admonition.

### This Switch Changes Everything

For me, this new order made better sense of everything. A genuine believer is saved by grace through faith, which leads to immediate acceptance by our Lord. Subsequently, however, to fully refine us, and before we are granted immortality, including pastoral and political rulership, our life is examined to uncover incorrect assumptions, wrong perspectives, prejudices, bad habits, and faulty priorities. Our good values and behavior are rewarded and reinforced, and our flawed ones are acknowledged, rejected, and purged by our High Priest. (Heb 4:12-16; 1 Cor 3:15).

Many passages and examples in Scripture strongly support this perspective, but time does not permit us to explore them specifically now.

I believe the concept is captured nicely in Psalm 139:23-24 (RSV):

*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Darren Tappouras,  
Gosford Ecclesia, NSW



# PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*By Ron Hicks*

**J**ESUS, always setting for us the perfect example, stressed in the very early stages of his earthly ministry the essential need to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. In Luke 4:42-43, we find Jesus under pressure from some of his listeners to stay with them, discouraging him from departing to share with others his life-giving message. Jesus, however, responds very firmly: *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.”*<sup>1</sup> There could hardly be a more compelling guide for us to follow. Here, in the very first reference to the Kingdom of God in Luke’s Gospel, the stress is on the urgency of its proclamation and the imperative call to preach and share it with others. Jesus would not be deterred from that preaching mission, nor should we. Jesus perceived that the duration of his ministry would be short, with absolutely no time to be wasted without sharing the gospel call. In these Last Days, this same spirit of urgency and commitment must motivate our own preaching efforts. We should be satisfied with nothing less as our guide. At the other end of the Lord’s earthly ministry, shortly before his supreme sacrifice, we find the same emphasis on the preaching of the good news of the coming Kingdom. *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”* (Matt 24:14). This statement has special meaning in these Last Days in relation to our own ecclesial experience. We rejoice in hearing that the true gospel

preaching of the Kingdom, near and far, has been facilitated in these Latter Days by the remarkable proliferation of Bible translations into an immense range of languages and dialects. We derive the same sense of appreciation, satisfaction, and joy as those ecclesias which welcomed Paul and his company on return from their missionary journeys. They had *“declared all that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.”* (Acts 14:27). Preaching is a great blessing for both those giving and receiving the Gospel call.

### Imperative Need to Preach

The command to preach the gospel is stressed in the strongest terms by the great Apostle Paul. *“Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.”* (1 Cor 9:16 RSV). He adds, *“For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission [to preach].”* (v. 17). Paul is saying that even if we do not want to preach or if we receive no satisfaction from it, we must still preach, as we are entrusted to do so.

This is challenging language, placing preaching as an essential element of the disciple’s service to the Lord. The strength of Paul’s language is so direct and confronting that we might ask—why is preaching then so important?

From Scriptural reading and our own experience, we know that people come to understand the true saving gospel by one of two means—their own independent reading of the Scriptures or being taught by those who have found the pearl of great price. Cases of self-education, however, are generally

rare indeed, with the great majority throughout the ages needing help and instruction. So Paul poses the question, “How are they to hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14 NKJV). He proceeds to cite Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.” And so

it continues to be. In whatever circumstance Paul found himself, whether free or a prisoner, preaching is imperative for the true disciple.

Paul saw his preaching as an immense privilege, an instrument for transmitting to others the wonderful call of the gospel. “Entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, making his appeal through us.” (2 Cor 5:19-20). If we can capture that excitement, sense of privilege, and responsibility conveyed in these words, we are surely well on the way to being effective and blessed in our own preaching endeavors.

The Apostles Peter and John shared the same excited feeling, exclaiming: “For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20). A similar sentiment should underscore our own sense of privilege in being conveyors of the great gospel call. A precious possession is typically enjoyed much more when shared—and so it is with the gospel of salvation.

The prophet Ezekiel puts the point very starkly, impelling us to reconsider our role as God’s faithful watchmen seriously. “But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life.” (Ezek

3:19). This is very strong and arresting language indeed, suggesting that our personal preaching and witness have a bearing on our own salvation. Of course, we are saved by grace and not by works. But Ezekiel’s statement underscores

that our living faith is surely evidenced, importantly by our commitment to be effective watchmen for the Lord. Ezekiel’s message and challenge have a marked and special resonance in these Last Days when imminent judgments on mankind are at hand, as was surely the case in his own day. The need to preach and witness becomes more imperative than ever.

### Power of Example

A prerequisite for effective preaching is our own true and evident commitment to the ways of the LORD. Anything less conveys to the listener and observer a compromised message that limits the impact of what is being said and taught. The strength and authenticity of Paul’s



statements on preaching have their full influence because we know that he lived out fully his understanding and convictions. This is not to say that preachers must be paragons of virtue in their way of life—but they must be seen as conducting their lives in ways strongly influenced by the teachings which they share. This adds to the challenge of preaching, which has its inherent call to a transformed life.

People to whom we witness and preach should see many qualities in our lives that are appealing and which they would seek for themselves—including contentment, trust, compassion, direction and sense of purpose, ability to accept and endure suffering, and self-control. These attributes will hopefully draw such people to the gospel, seeing them as needed to help find fulfillment in their own lives. Our invitation through preaching remains as David declares, *“O taste and see that the Lord is good.”* (Psa 34:8). Or as Paul states, *“There is great gain in godliness with contentment.”* (1 Tim 6:6). What we have experienced ourselves we wish to share with others. Our example of a satisfied and fulfilled life is so powerful as an aspect of preaching. Without it, we move towards hypocrisy with a disconnect between person and message, a sure way of compromising our impact and effectiveness.

### A Good Listener

Perhaps paradoxically, a key to effective preaching is to be a good listener. Jesus, the master preacher, knew

uniquely well the needs, interests, and preoccupations of those to whom he was preaching. His ability to read the human mind, including its innermost thoughts, allowed him to fashion his preaching in the most effective and appropriate way possible. He was able to present the gospel call with matchless appropriateness given the individual circumstances of those listening. His challenge and preaching to those seemingly the lost of society were so very different, for example, to the approach taken towards the arrogant religious class who needed to have their spiritual pretensions forcibly exposed. Jesus shaped his message to the particular needs of the listener, all within the context of the universal appeal of the true gospel.

The nature and style of the Apostle Paul’s preaching also make it very clear that his effectiveness rested on his ability to meet the needs and interests of his audience. In a very positive sense, he *“became all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”* (1 Cor 9:22). His was not a set pattern of preaching indifferent to the circumstances of his audience. Other great communicators of the gospel message recorded in Scripture had this developed and divinely directed skill of addressing the audience in the way most likely to encourage them to pause and consider. These are great role models to follow.

One of the most evident aspects of the divine authority of the Scriptures is its applicability and relevance for



all humankind. Whether in the first or twenty-first centuries, whether to the most highly educated or to the poorly trained, whether to peoples of well-developed nations or to nations much less developed, the gospel has its fundamental appeal. This reflects its dealing with the basic issues of our condition, providing a way out from human bondage, sin, and mortality to the prospect of a redeemed earth praising and serving its Maker. Hence, the gospel message applies to all who are prepared to listen. All who constitute the circle of our own lives are potential recipients of the gospel. The majority, we realize, will pass it by. But our task, then, is to sow the seed as broadly as we can, alert to as many opportunities as possible that come our way.

Our ecclesial lectures and outreach efforts, requiring as much support as possible, need to be programmed and arranged with a mix of previously selected topics. But even there, the effectiveness of such public and collective witness is most likely when focused on issues understood to be on the audience's minds. Hence, the concern of so many about the drift in human and social values on a variety of issues provides, for example, an excellent platform in which to discuss Bible teaching on divine solutions to the many and varied end-time problems. A rounded presentation of the key elements of the gospel remains, of course, essential. But its relevance for the audience needs major emphasis as the Scriptural guides on preaching so clearly show.

## Personal Preaching

It's very exciting shaping our individual presentations of the gospel with the diverse needs and interests of the audience in mind as best we can discern them. That said, personal preaching, of course, immediately focuses on the home environment where teaching and example come into full and obvious play. This must always be seen as the point of top priority, as witnessing to others is generally unconvincing if not observed as being practiced at home. Furthermore, our experience with preaching and witnessing in the home provides an excellent background for our efforts in the wider society in which we find ourselves.

Realizing the imperative need to preach and the inherent satisfaction in so doing, it could be helpful to list some qualities needed in personal preaching. In our witness efforts, we don't know all the answers to queries and issues that might emerge. However, a basic ability to support our beliefs with appropriate Scriptural references is essential to establish our credibility and avoid conversations becoming no more than expressed opinions. All style and no substance—often the flavor of evangelical preaching—will not get us very far. We have so many Bible helps available for our use.

At the risk of some repetition, serving, however, for emphasis, the following features could be kept in mind.

- Learn to listen and encourage people to provide their background, which could be useful in guiding the discussion and encouraging interest.

- Seek to obtain some understanding (even if brief) of what the person believes or doesn't believe to help guide the discussion meaningfully.
- The spirit of our preaching is crucial. It's not overbearing but gentle and reverential (1 Pet 3:15).
- Be patient, and don't expect immediate results.
- An incident or word, even trivial, might be the means of establishing a link that can later be developed and explored.
- Don't judge whether a person has the potential for spiritual development.
- Be sure that our homes have some Scriptural books and leaflets on hand that might appeal to friends to witness of our basic Biblical interests.
- If in a workplace environment, a well-chosen Biblical quotation on display can be a powerful witness.
- Emphasize constantly the link between belief and behavior, ensuring that the Gospel is seen as a way of life and not only a set of doctrines to be affirmed.
- The concept of a living faith and the abiding presence of the risen Christ need to be stressed as essential for a proper spiritual perspective (Gal 2:20).
- Don't expect people to fit into our ecclesial mold immediately –time may be needed to make social adjustments.
- Don't be deterred by disappointing responses, for which there is sadly ample Scriptural precedence.
- *"Preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching."* (2 Tim 4:2). The time for preaching is continuous and always by word and behavior.

Overall, preaching is much more than talking to people. It presents a whole way of life and purpose based on Godly principles. It reflects a perception of what the gospel has come to mean to us. It is indeed the jewel of great price, with our greatest satisfaction and responsibility being its sharing with others. God's name and purpose can thereby be more widely honored and worshipped. Because we are immensely privileged as the custodians of God's message of grace, we must enthusiastically assume the responsibility to preach and witness in every circumstance that comes our way or that we can find.

Ron Hicks,  
Washington Ecclesia, MD

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

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# GLOBAL PRAYER AND PRAISE EVENT

The Global Prayer and Praise event was held on June 24th.

We were pleased to have nearly **300 participants and over 175 separate users** who joined for this event. There were participants from **Africa, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and of course North America.**

We praised God for the many blessings He has brought to our community, which includes exponential growth in Africa and other areas. We also considered the many struggles we have as a community, and were reminded that we must take these to our God in prayer, who is faithful to deliver us.

We hope you will be encouraged by this recording:

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