INCLUDES SPECIAL SECTION ON PERSONAL WITNESSING (Page 14)

Volume 87, Number 2, February, 2024

ARE YOU RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?

There is a difference between being "spiritual" and "spirituality." It's essential we know the distinction.

Building faith in the Christadelphian community.



TIDINGS Volume 87, Number 2 / February, 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial—Are You Religious or Spiritual?, Dave Jennings2
Life Application—Telling Lies, Believing Lies, Bill Lawrence
Special Section—Biblical Models for Outreach, Joe Hill14
Exhortation and Consolation—Children of Light, Henry Wisniewski21
—Where Two or Three are Gathered, David Gore
Bible Studies—Words Hope Never Hear Again (6), David Levin30
—Getting to Know our God and Jesus (5), Sue and Jim Styles35
First Principles—Preaching First Principles in a Post-Christian World (5),
Richard Morgan
—God's Greatest Temple, George Booker
Letters to the Editor
Thoughts on the Way—Anna's Story, George Booker

EDITORIAL

ARE YOU RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?

T'S common to hear someone tell us that they are deeply spiritual, but not religious. Often, we find that those we speak to about the gospel are interested in the message but have created a thick wall to guard against any invitations to consider a new church. Religion has a bad reputation these days. There's been a long list of organized religion failures that have affected this. Too many sexual abuse and cover-up scandals or news of financial misconduct. Some have concluded that the way to truth is not found in wooden pews and brickand-mortar churches but in a personal journey of spirituality.

Austin Cline, a former regional director for the Council for Secular Humanism, wrote:

It's popular, especially in America, to completely separate spirituality and religion. It's true that there are differences, but there are also a number of problematic distinctions which people try to make. In particular, supporters of spirituality often argue that everything bad lies with religion while everything good can be found in spirituality. This is a distinction self-serving which masks the nature of religion and spirituality.1

But religion is quite clear, as the Scriptures define it. True religion engages **both** understanding and spiritual experience. James wrote that pure religion involved service to others, as well as being *"unspotted"* from the world. (Jas 1:27). This implies not only doing good, but discerning what it means to be holy. God, in His wisdom, knows we can best come closer to Him when we worship together with understanding in our fellowship. Paul wrote:

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 15:5-6).

However, many people are ignorant of this principle today. Pew Research reported in 2022 that US adults who consider themselves religious have dropped precipitously since the pandemic. About fifty years ago, 90% of Americans considered themselves affiliated with a religion. That number dropped to 63% in 2022. Those who consider themselves spiritual but religiously unaffiliated have risen to an unprecedented 29%.² Many people are rejecting church participation, which they define as "religion," as they seek their personal pathway to truth.

While it is true that many people today have a growing aversion toward organized religion, most still are willing to engage in spiritual conversations. Over three-quarters of Americans wish to grow spiritually, and nearly 80% believe in a God or higher power.³ In fact, most Americans have expressed an openness to having a spiritual conversation.⁴

How is "Spirituality" Defined?

But there is a difference between being "spiritual" and "spirituality." It's essential we know the distinction.

Christina Puchalski, MD, a leader in trying to incorporate spirituality into healthcare, wrote: Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred.⁵

If that sounds familiar, it is because those pursuing spirituality often do so outside the parameters of the one true God and His righteous commandments. This situation traces back to the beginning of time when people worshipped human leaders and images of stone, metals, and wood. Men have been looking to the stars, the vastness of the natural realm, and even the dissected entrails of animals to find truth. Spiritualism, outside of the worship of the one true God, is nothing more than a form of idolatry. Some claim "spirituality" but only wish to accept parts of the Bible's teachings. That's like approaching the Bible like a buffet table, where you select the baby corn and tomatoes but pass by the beets and mushrooms! Some people wish to accept or reject God's commands based on their personal preferences.

Spiritual Versus Spirituality

As believers, we understand the thirst to be more spiritual. We learn the fundamental truths of the Bible, often as children. But we yearn to develop a closer relationship with the Father and Son through our adult lives. We don't only want to know about the peace of God as a principle, we want to experience it. We don't only want to know that God is working in the world today. We want to perceive how He works in our lives and the lives of others. We know God is love and understand the command to love one another. But we want to experience what it feels like to be loved and to love others.

Some live only within the limitations of religious observance and feel they have yet to explore the spiritual rebirth promised in Christ fully. Decades of attending church can make one feel they are doing the right things but fail to satisfy the deeply personal experience that the Lord offers. Our religious beliefs instruct us about God's love, plan, and purpose with the world and us as believers. That knowledge serves as a guide and shepherd for our spiritual lives. Spirituality without religion is self-involved and directionless.

The Appeal of the Gospel

The preaching of the gospel was a call for all men and women to join in a collective understanding of God's plans and commandments and then enter into new lives through Jesus Christ. Men weren't invited to live alongside Christ but through him.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent

He wishes

us to have

a spiritual

experience,

but grounded

in truth.

his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live **through** him. (1 John 4:9).

If we limit our view of religion to doctrine or religious observance, we fail to see that Christ has invited us to discard our old life and live through him. He wishes us to have a spiritual experience, but grounded in truth. The Lord instructed disciples to denv themselves and "take

up [your] cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23).

I suspect there is no better way to think about our spiritual experience than by contemplating how we are following the Lord Jesus in the workplace, the market, or school each day. Jesus wanted his followers to grow through his teachings and their spiritual experience as they put those teachings into practice in their daily lives.

Understanding and Spiritual Fulfilment

A sound spiritual experience is anchored first in knowledge and understanding of one's religion. For instance, in Corinth, some had the Spirit gift of speaking in tongues but used the gift without an interpreter. That may have been a useful spiritual experience for the person with the gift, but there was no edification to the hearers without interpretation. Paul

made this point.

lifeless Even instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle? It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you

are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space. (1 Cor 14:7-9 NLT).

Whatever makes up our spiritual experience requires a proper grounding in Scripture. If not, it may arouse emotions or increase selfawareness but leave us no closer to our God. Music in our services effectively encourages spiritual growth, assuming the words evoke a sound understanding of Scripture. Hearing a lovely and catchy tune is helpful, but the worship music properly connects us with the expressed message. This connection is why so many of our beautiful new and old hymns are constant partners when we need to come closer to God.

Seeking Spiritual Experience

Understanding the truth and spiritual experiences work in harmony. The more we learn from God's word, the more we desire spiritual experiences. The more often we have spiritual experiences, the more they drive us to God's Word, sort of like faith and works. When James spoke about this, he used the example of Abraham. In his offering of Isaac, he was justified not only by works but also by his "faith wrought with his works." (Jas 2:21-22). By his works, his faith was made perfect. When we have faith in God to help us through a specific trial, we are, in effect, demonstrating that we understand Him as our allpowerful and loving God, and we invite Him to guide us spiritually through the hardship.

Therefore, by the activities of faith, we can experience the spiritual growth that

so many seek. Want to grow spiritually? Try serving others. Love someone who is not easy to love. Teach the gospel to someone who is seeking answers to life.

How This Affects Our Preaching in a Secular World

Bro. Richard Morgan's recent articles⁶ on preaching in a secular world are helpful in this consideration. Paul didn't preach from the Law when he spoke on Mars Hill. Instead, he adapted his preaching to words and concepts that were interesting to and understandable by the Greek philosophers of that day.

Perhaps we tend to lead in our preaching with doctrinal exposition. We discuss the return of Jesus Christ, baptism, and associated topics. Of course, these are critical and must be explored at some point if one wishes to be saved. But the world is increasingly focused on "What's in it for me?" We have a powerful message to share. We can emphasize what Christ does for believers to relieve sorrow and grief. We can share what it means to live through Christ. If one feels powerless to overcome an addiction or sin, we



The Christadelphian Tidings - Volume 87, Number 2 / February, 2024

When we get the opportunity to share God's wisdom for spiritual living, men and women who are being called will surely overlook the concerns about participating in an organized religion.

can describe to them that the strength to overcome is by God's power, not our own. We can share Godly principles from Scripture for strong marriages and how to effectively raise children. We can share the beauty of God's love and our call to embrace it in our interactions. Once we meet people who show interest, we can then share the eternal principles of God's plan with them. When we get the opportunity to share God's wisdom for spiritual living, men and women who are being called will surely overlook the concerns about participating in an organized religion. They will learn that a strong religious life reinforces spiritual living.

For Us

It would serve us well to spend a more significant portion of our time together conversing about our own spiritual experiences. These stories can build faith in us. There is immense value in hearing the testimony of how a sister endured cancer treatments by revitalizing her trust in God. Or by hearing how a brother was brought to tears when he found reconciliation after years of conflict with another brother, by following the principles of Christ.

The children of Israel experienced great wonders while being delivered from Egypt. Future generations would not have known the power of these experiences unless they were shared by those who saw them. (Deut 6:6-7).

Indeed, as Peter wrote, we "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 2:5). We are indeed a "religious" community. We strive to praise God with one mind and one mouth during our worship services. But we are more than this. We are a spiritual house, making spiritual sacrifices to our God. Our time together and the time we spend individually putting the truth into practice all make up the most wonderful experience any man or woman could desire this side of the Kingdom of our Lord.

Dave Jennings

^{1 &}quot;Modeling the Future of Religion in America," Pew Research Center, September 13, 2022.

² Cline, Austin. "What's the Difference Between Religion and Spirituality?" Learn Religions, Aug. 26, 2020, learnreligions.com/religion-vs-spirituality-whats-the-difference-250713.

^{3 &}quot;Rising Spiritual Hunger in the US," Barna Research, 2023.

^{4 &}quot;What Does it Mean to Be Spiritually Open?" Barna.org, Jun 21, 2023.

⁵ Pulchalski, Christina M., "Improving the Spiritual Dimension of Whole Person Care: Reaching National and International Consensus," Journal of Palliative Medicine, June 1, 2014.

⁶ Morgan, Richard, "Preaching First Principles in a Post-Christian World," October 2023-February 2024.

TELLING LIES, BELIEVING LIES

By Bill Lawrence

W are living in challenging times. One of the challenges everyone reading this article will face is the certainty that what the Bible teaches is authoritative and true. Truth is a fundamental Bible teaching. We believe the Word of God is without error. God's Word anchors our confidence in the certainty that what He says can be relied upon.

We live in a society that now rejects the principle of the certainty of the Word of God. We live in a world that increasingly believes lies compared to Scriptural truths. God cannot lie; His word should be a solid anchor:

Because God wanted to show His unchangeable purpose even more clearly to the heirs of the promise, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope as an anchor for our lives, safe and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. Jesus has entered there on our behalf as a forerunner, because He has become a high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:17-20 CSB).

Telling Lies

God cannot lie, but we can. I think most of us have wrestled with the concept of not being truthful in the various shades of meaning the idea brings. From childhood, we learn lying is wrong. Our parents likely taught this to us very early. In Sunday School, we knew this Bible ethic was essential to incorporate into our lives. Proverbs contains an early memory verse of mine where we learn that two of the six things the LORD hates involve lying: *"There are six things that that the LORD hates… a lying tongue… a false witness who breathes out lies."* (Prov 6:16-19).¹

We know the LORD hates lying, and we want to do what is right. We wish to be truthful people. How well have we incorporated being truthful into our lives? I want to share a lesson from an adult Sunday School class that addressed this topic many years ago. At the time, our adult classes were discussion oriented. We enjoyed listening to and considering viewpoints from many fellow believers. A senior member of our meeting, very well respected for Scriptural knowledge and wisdom and extremely well respected for living a faithful life, challenged the class: "We should always tell the truth no matter what the cost might be to us personally." This statement is paraphrased, but it gives the sense. The remainder of that class allowed for input from most of those attending.

I recollect that most of the class thought this goal would be challenging. It was like we were grading the severity of lies. For example, most of us may tell what I will call half-truths or harmless lies (as opposed to outright lies, or is it?). For example, maybe I am not feeling well, and the standard greeting of "How are you doing?" has me responding, "Fine, thanks, how are you?" We know we are not okay but do not reveal it, so we are being slightly deceptive or evasive. Perhaps a friend has a new hairstyle they are pleased with and asks how we like it, and we respond favorably, but our true feelings are not favorable. In

some social circumstances, we may be less than honest. One way of justifying our statements is by the idea that we are sparing remarks that would be hurtful to others. There are countless other examples. Our Sunday School class concluded that most, if not all of us, realized we do this sometimes, even the brother guiding the discussion. I don't recall anyone saying they had mastered being truthful in every circumstance.

We know that we wrestle with being perfect in our truth-telling at times. This struggle has been true from the beginning of Genesis in the garden. We could speak of Cain lying about his brother's whereabouts. About Abraham and his lies to Pharoah in Genesis 12 and Abimelech in Genesis 20. His son Isaac repeats the same lie in Gerar later in his life. And then Jacob deceives his father, Isaac, to inherit the blessing. We could recall Rahab hiding the spies sent to Jericho and lying to the King while she hid the spies on her rooftop. And what about Peter denying his Lord? I almost hesitate to use these Biblical examples of lying, as there may be a danger that simply acknowledging them will lead a person to some justification for not being truthful. This type of justification could lead us down a path of increasing allowance for telling a lie. We aren't perfect. We will have motives, but we should always consider Proverbs 6 and the importance of being truthful.

The simple conclusion from the above is that we are human and are not always as truthful as we could be. Sometimes, we may even rationalize that we are reasonably justified in telling a lie. God has allowed us to choose when we find ourselves in various situations. Truthfulness and truth-seeking should be principles that guide our behavior. We know what God desires. It is essential to develop spiritualmindedness, and it can be difficult to master the challenge.

The spirit of God working through James encourages us to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (Jas 1:22). Being deceived or deceiving is not in the way of truth. Deceiving is a form of lying, and it is possible, says James, to lie to ourselves. He goes on to say, "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." (Jas 1:26 ESV). We know from Jeremiah that "The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? I. Yahweh, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve." (Jer 17:9-10 CSB).

Further, James 3 is devoted to the tongue. In this section, he likens the damage the tongue can do to a fire, boasting, staining, cannot be tamed, a restless evil and full of poison! James concludes the section by directing us to examine our hearts and behavior. We understand God hates lying, a work of the tongue that echoes what is in the heart and mind. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man." (Matt 15:18 WEB).

Our challenge is to be reflective in our walk. We ask ourselves questions to measure how we are doing and where we can improve and develop a mind that better reflects our Lord's mind.

The Apostle John reminds us:

Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. (1 John 3:18-21).

Our conscience can help us determine if our walk aligns with the truth. Being self-deceived would be like having a seared conscience. Self-deception is lying to oneself. Do we, like the Apostle Paul, "strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man"? (Acts 24:16 NIV).

Self-Examination

The thoughts of James and 1 John should put us on a course of selfexamination. Are we conforming to the pattern of this world or being transformed by the renewing of our

S and

together in

minds? Whenever we come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are told to examine ourselves before eating and drinking the cup. (1 Cor 11:28). The Apostle Paul also asks those in Corinth to "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves." (2 Cor 13:5 NIV). It is perhaps easier to find fault with others than to look inwardly at ourselves.

At the last supper, we have some insight into self-examination. Consider the moment when our Lord reveals he will be betrayed: "When it was evening, he took his place at the table with the twelve. And while they were eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.' They became greatly distressed, and each one began to say to him, 'Surely not I, Lord?'" (Matt 26:20-22 NET). Note the attitude of the twelve. Could it be me? Is it possible? There was no hint of finding fault with someone else. There was no "Could it be Judas?" being spoken. It was simply, "Could it be me?" Closely reading this

Idern

to Musng festivals text could also reveal that the disciples recognized the truth that Jesus was Lord. Whereas Judas says, "**Rabbi**, *is it I*?" (v. 25 NKJV). Is it possible that Judas recognizes him only as Rabbi or teacher and not as Lord? If so, this would be very close to many in our age who see Jesus as a good living person. They see him teaching good principles but fail to acknowledge him as Lord. This thought leads to a rejection of the principle that absolute truth is

embedded in the Word of God. John the Baptist had his question when answered he asked, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Luke 7:19 NASB). Did Judas believe a lie? Perhaps he was thinking of Jesus a good teacher, not the Coming One. Both telling a lie and believing a lie can put us on dangerous ground.

When we examine ourselves and find we are weak or lacking in a particular area, we must confess that to our Lord. In addition to the confession, we must seek forgiveness and pray that we might overcome. "*Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.*" (Heb 13:18 WEB). This is vital for our salvation.

The Post-Truth Era

In 2016, the Oxford Dictionary called "post-truth" the word of the year. As part of its definition of this term, Oxford states, "In this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data

When we examine ourselves and find we are weak or lacking in a particular area, we must confess that to our Lord.

and reach any conclusion you like." If it is true that we live in a post-truth society, we must be even more diligent to determine truth. We don't want to reach any conclusion we like. We want to be truthful and be able to identify lies. Consider that in the post-truth era, there are competing worldviews. A worldview is how we understand and have a perspective on everything that exists and matters to us. Do we believe in God? Which God? Who and what

is God? Is there a purpose in life? Does it matter how I treat and interact with others? Is truth important, or is it okay to have my truth while you have yours? A worldview encompasses the most fundamental beliefs we hold dear. A worldview provides us with a roadmap to life. Other worldviews compete with a Biblical

worldview. Different worldviews often clash with the truth we find in the Scriptures.

The challenging times we live in make it difficult to be in the world but not of the world. In other words, it may be tough to have a Biblical worldview without borrowing ideas from the world around us. If and when we do that, we are not only in danger of believing a lie but also of transmitting that lie to others. God hates this. We desire to be children of God, shining forth as lights in a world full of darkness. The danger lies in that it can be challenging to ferret out how much we have been assimilated into the culture we are embedded in. How many of the lies of competing worldviews infiltrate our beliefs? Has there been, or will there be, a form of acculturation from the culture around us, and will that be merged into our beliefs?

In North America, we live in a Postmodern world with its version of secular humanism. We add to this that we live in an ever-growing multiethnic society in North America. We are immersed in a pluralistic society that constantly challenges our Biblical beliefs. Our society is decidedly less Christian every year. There is a mindset that permeates our culture of one that is relativist. A University of Chicago professor, Allan Bloom, wrote in his book *The Closing of the American Mind* that,

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question 2 + 2 = 4."²

Speak the Truth in Love

Our walk of faith has many challenges. Are we confident we are speaking truthfully? Being honest with others who hold a different worldview can be formidable. Talking about what God says without being labeled a bigot or prejudiced against a particular group is risky in some places. So, are we convinced that we could trust in God's Word and put our complete confidence source of information in that that anchors our hope? With that conviction, are we confident we will not be slightly deceptive in revealing the truth to others? Are we even being persuaded to believe things that are not true and are lies when compared to the word of God?

We are living in challenging times. It is essential to be truthful and avoid lying. It is crucial to compare the Word of God with what society says, so that we don't believe a lie and spread it to others. May we "speak the truth in love." (Eph 4:15). Let's ensure the error of lawless people does not carry us away. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another." (Eph 4:25 KJV).

> Bill Lawrence, Guelph Ecclesia, ON

All Scriptural citations are taken from the New King James Version, unless specifically noted.
Bloom, Allan. *The Closing of the American Mind.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

SPECIAL SECTION ON PERSONAL WITNESSING

BIBLICAL MODELS FOR OUTREACH

By Joe Hill

God's Preaching Mission for His Servants

God chose Israel to be His special people. He was their God, and they were His servants. As such, the LORD assigned them the responsibility of preaching His message of justice and salvation to all nations, including both Israelites and Gentiles. This is a favorite theme of Isaiah:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations... In his teaching the islands will put their hope... I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind. (Isa 42:1, 4, 6; Matt 12:18-21).¹

[The LORD] says, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." (Isa 49:6; Acts 13:47).

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"... The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. (Isa 52:7, 10; Rom 10:15).

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. (Isa 61:1; Luke 4:16-21; Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22). Daniel preached to Gentile kings. For example, Daniel and his three friends were faithful to the LORD. They revealed God's word to Gentile kings, and, as a result, those kings acknowledged that their God was indeed the God of gods:

The king [Nebuchadnezzar] said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." (Dan 2:47; see also 3:28-29; 4:34-37; 6:25-27).

Ionah reluctantly preached to Gentiles. The Book of Jonah tells two parallel stories of Jonah preaching to Gentiles. In both cases: "The word of the LORD came to Jonah" (1:1; 3:1), "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it" (1:2; 3:2), and "Jonah prayed to the LORD" (2:1; 4:1-2). In the first case, "Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish" (1:3); in the second, "Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh." (3:3). In the first case, "the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah" (1:17); in the second, "the LORD God provided a leafy plant... to ease Jonah's discomfort" (4:6). In both cases, the Gentiles behaved more appropriately than Jonah:

Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him." (1:14-16). The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. (3:5; see also 3:6-9).

Jonah had done the absolute least he could possibly do. He did not want to preach to Israel's most hated enemy. He did not want the LORD to forgive them and show them mercy and kindness. He would prefer that God destroy them. But God expected more of His people, more of His prophet. Finally, at last, Jonah proclaimed to them, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." (3:4). Nevertheless, his minimal effort produced the fruit of repentance (3:5). God relented: "When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened." (3:10).

When the Pharisees and scribes demanded a sign, Jesus responded by recalling these two episodes in the life of Jonah:

He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here." (Matt 12:39-41).

Jesus preached the gospel everywhere he went to both Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. (Matt 4:23).

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matt 9:35-38).

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." (John 4:31-38).



If we are to follow the example of our Lord, then we must be preachers of the gospel. We are the ones God has chosen to sow the seed and to reap the harvest when it is ripe.

The formal missions of Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles.

I [Paul] *presented to them the gospel* I preach among the Gentiles... they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. (Gal 2:2, 6-9).

Principles of Preaching

Throughout his ministry Jesus teaches us the key principles of preaching.

We are called to shine as lights in the world. Jesus and Paul emphasize that we must preach the gospel as a community and as individuals:

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:14-16).

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. (Phil 2:14-16).

The fruit determines the validity of our preaching mission.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. (Matt 7:15-20).

We must preach everywhere to everyone. This point is key to the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-23). In the parable, the farmer scatters the seed everywhere: along the path, on rocky places, among thorns, and on good soil. He doesn't just sow it on the good soil. He scatters it on all types of soil and lets the soil itself determine if it produces a crop. This randomness may seem difficult for us to understand, but it is the Lord's way. The idea of preaching everywhere is also part of the great commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20). He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." ... After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (Mark 16:15-16, 19-20).

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8).

Pair preaching. Following the pattern set by Jesus, preachers in the first century were sent out "two by two" (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1; Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2-4; 15:39-40; cf. Eccl 4:9-12).

The book of Acts and the New Testament letters also discuss preaching principles.

The message we are to share is the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12).

[Paul] proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness *and without hindrance!* (Acts 28:31; cf. Matt 3:23; Mark 1:14-15; 1 Cor 15:1-4).

We must be instructed in the Scriptures as preparation to preach. Paul exhorted Timothy (and us):

But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is Godbreathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Tim 3:14-4:2; cf. Luke 24:44-49).

We must diligently plant and water; God will give the increase. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor 3:5-9).

Specific Examples of Personal Preaching

Naomi to Ruth. Naomi was a wonderful mother-in-law. No doubt, she taught her daughters-in-law the promises of the LORD. This preaching is evident because when it came time for Naomi to return home to Bethlehem, she encouraged them to stay behind in Moab, "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16).

Legion to his own people. Once healed and in his right mind, Legion wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus refused, insisting instead that he go back home and preach to his people:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demonpossessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. (Mark 5:18-20; cf. Matt 4:25). Samaritan woman to the Samaritans. After her remarkable interaction with Jesus at Jacob's well, she returned to preach the good news to the people of the town, leading many of them to believe in him:

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans *came to him, they urged him to stay* with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." (John 4:28-30, 39-42).

Lois and Eunice to Timothy. Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful women in the Lord. No doubt, in their everyday lives, they were wonderful influences on him. Paul praised them, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you." (2 Tim 1:5).

Joe Hill, Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX

1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version 2011

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

By Henry Wisniewski

Editor's Note: This exhortation was sent to me by Bro. Henry Wisniewski early in 2023. I regret that I did not publish this earlier, as Bro. Henry fell asleep in the Lord after a lengthy illness on December 6, 2023. Bro. Henry had a zeal for the truth and a passion for the coming Kingdom. In this exhortation, Bro. Henry encourages ecclesias to be watchful and strengthen our resolve to serve our God, especially during times of adversity.

W have been blessed with another opportunity to remember the grace of God provided to His human creation through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through his victory over sin by a life of obedience unto death, he sits presently at the right hand of God as our high priest, mediating our supplications for forgiveness for our sins. By submitting to the mind of God and His Son, we can be delivered from the nature we possess with its sinful propensities to disobedience and its mortality. We need to constantly strive to develop a spiritual mind, knowing that the time for the return of our Messiah to this earth may be near. Though we experience challenges to our physical frames and our mental and spiritual health, we need to watch for Christ's return and hold fast to the Word of God and to each other in that Word, for we are the children of light.

Paul wrote:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of the darkness. (1 Thess 5:1-5).1

Paul tells the Thessalonians that the time of Christ's return and judgment upon this earth is clearly foretold in every age, with signs that take place so that those believers in God's promises would always be prepared for the Lord's return. In Paul's time, the Revelation had not yet been received by John. Yet, whether one lived during the times of Abraham, Moses, or any of the prophets, or those in New Testament times, or through the ages up to our day, one needed to live a Godly life because the day of the Lord is to suddenly come as does a thief in the night In every age, sure signs were present, which assured the believer that Christ's return was nigh. We live in an age that indicates his return will be soon because many of the predicted events are currently taking place. The most significant of these was the establishment of a secular Israel in the land given by God for their possession.

Paul assures the Thessalonians that that day will be as sudden as a woman with child experiences travail in labor. Once

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day the process of birth begins, it cannot be held back. That process is beginning now. Paul states that we are in light, not darkness, about these things. We can see because the light of the Word informs us. As during Noah's day, most in the world think they dwell in peace and safety. This belief is not about the absence of violence and evil but one where people believe their lives will continue as before.

There are other signs evident today that Jesus said in his Olivet Prophecy would occur. False Christs and prophets abound, with many Christian denominations preaching a Christ that we know not. False prophets teach distortions of how world events, as prophesied in the Bible, will occur. Many are deceived by their interpretation of signs and wonders, even to the point that Christ's very elect might be deceived. Though always present on this earth, violence between nations is multiplying geometrically. Political and economic systems struggle with futility as they seek to remedy the potential collapse of governments and financial institutions. Personal evil permeates the whole earth, reaching the extent existing in Noah's time. The forces of nature themselves are erupting against man's mismanagement of the natural environment. The Day of the Lord is truly near. Yet Jesus stated about that day that only the Father in heaven knows the season and time.

Jesus said:

But as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came, and took them all away. (Matt 24:37-39).

The people of Noah's day were preoccupied with everyday life and had no thoughts about God. Jesus emphasized the need to be constantly vigilant and kept in light through the oil of the Word. He would return when the world thinks not.

Peter writes,

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Pet 3:3-4).

He says further that God is not slack in His promises, but because He is not willing that any will perish. He is longsuffering, giving all who are eager to listen to His Word the opportunity for repentance. While troubled by these signs, we realize that God will soon dissipate the collective evils of the human race. Paul wrote that God had not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died so that life might be attained by his followers. (1 Thess 5:9-10).

Let us glean further lessons of encouragement from Genesis 37, which records the trials of Joseph, who persisted in faith. Though he was enslaved in Egypt and placed in prison because of false accusations, he maintained his faith and integrity. We read in Nehemiah 6 about God's people striving to do God's will through adversity. As they worked to build the city wall, their enemies sought to prevent them through guile and threats. In a class many years ago, Bro. Bob Lloyd stated that Nehemiah's enemies were enticing him to meet on the Plain of Ono. Just as the world tries to entice us, Bob said we may emphatically declare "O NO," However, as time passes, the "O NO" becomes weaker and weaker. Being slowly drawn away by the world's enticements, we might find we increasingly relish the false gods in our environment-gods like money, status, entertainment, technology, or

whatever else feeds the inclinations to sin within our nature. In this case, we are just saying, "O!"

We, too, are building a wall. Not a physical wall, but one of faith. The wall is to resist the encroachments of the world that entice us from outside and within. Let us not be fearful in this endeavor, as the body of Christ is

assaulted by turmoil without and within. As Christ said, let us keep our hands on the plow and our eyes focused on that vision of hope of salvation. Let us keep building this wall, as did Nehemiah. This wall protects the ecclesia so it might be prepared as a bride when our Master returns. At that time, the saints will collectively be part of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, the city of peace, descending out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:1-3). Through the grace of God, we shall all be part of that holy edifice if we, as Nehemiah, continue to build the wall, no matter what temptations or adversity we experience.

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians reads,

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thess 5:23).

Earlier in this epistle, Paul tells us

We, too, are building a wall. Not a physical wall, but one of faith. The wall is to resist the encroachments of the world that Jesus died for us. He goes on to say that whether we sleep or are still alive, we shall one day live together with him. He then urges the readers of his epistle, both then and now, to comfort and build up one another. Paul then lists how to do this. Esteem all those who labor in the ecclesia. Be at peace with each other. Warn

those unruly (the Greek words imply "to caution or reprove gently") those undisciplined in behavior. To comfort the faint-hearted. To support those who are without strength. To render evil to no one. Instead, one ought to rejoice evermore. Pray continually.

Exhortation and Consolation: Children of Light

Give thanks for everything. Prove all things. Hold fast to that which is good. In all these things, we should reject evil (1 Thess 5:13-22).

As we all strive to love God with all our being and to love each other, we can find help in God's Word. Every revelation of God's spiritual mind can profoundly affect the minds of men and women. The one condition is that as the "good ground" in the Parable of the Sower, we have "an honest and good heart." (Luke 8:15). It cannot be otherwise, for the seed of faith requires good soil for it to grow and flourish.

In Romans 8:5, Paul writes, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after Spirit the things of the Spirit." True believing men and women are renewed in the spirit of their minds (Eph 4:23) and be transformed by the renewing of the minds. (Rom 12:2). We are to have the spirit of Christ in us (Rom 8:9-10). What is involved in this process is a transformation within us. It's a radical change in our personality and character, based upon a free choosing of those things that reflect the mind of God and His Christ. This transformation can only come about by our voluntary submission to the wisdom of God

provided us in His Word. By that Word of spiritual power, our hearts become enlightened, our spiritual wisdom and understanding are increased, and we become sons and daughters of God, shining forth as children of light.

So we see that the hope promised us of freedom from the evil and corruption of this world and from those propensities driving us to disobedience are of no power against us if we watch in faith for the return of our Lord. We must persevere and work to build the walls of our house even in adversity. We can call constantly upon our God for help. By developing the mind of God and of Jesus Christ and loving our God and our brothers and sisters, we will stave off any adversary.

Paul summarizes this hope in I Thessalonians 2:19:

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

Let us strive always to be children of light. Our God and His Son sacrificed so much in love on our behalf.

> Henry Wisniewski, Thousand Oaks Ecclesia, CA

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

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

By David Gore

IN Matthew 18:20, Jesus says: *"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" The context in Matthew 18 is not that of the memorial service, but the principle is there, and we often use the verse about the breaking of bread, and rightly so.

The basis of our fellowship is, as Jesus says, "*In my name*." In other words, our fellowship is based upon our special relationship with the Lord Jesus

Christ. It's a fellowship that is more than friendship because meeting in the name of Jesus Christ will lead us on to greater and higher things through God's mercy and grace. John writes concerning the disbelief of Thomas at the resurrection of Jesus: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," and then goes on to write: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." (John 20:29, 31).

The importance of our fellowship is emphasized in Acts 2, where the writer records the words of Peter to the Jews: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." (v. 38). Then verse 42 tells us the basis of our fellowship and the order upon which it is based. First: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine," and, upon the basis of understanding the truth of God's teaching, they and we have true "fellowship" when we break bread and drink wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus, while at the same time engaging in prayers of praise and thankfulness.

While we might be just one, two, or three, the Lord Jesus is with us, just as he was with the two on the road to Emmaus. We read, *"While they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them."* (Luke 24:15). It is the same sequence we find in Acts 2. First, Jesus taught them the truth about his death and resurrection. Until they knew the truth of the Old Testament prophecies, they called Jesus a stranger. Then, based on their new understanding, they shared fellowship together, wanting Jesus to abide with them and share a meal that involved breaking bread. When Jesus later ascended to heaven, we read that the disciples: "were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." (Luke 24:53). Note verse 47, where preaching was to be "in his name."

There was another occasion when two people were walking together and were joined by another. On this occasion, it was in the Garden of Eden. Here were Adam and Eve, made from one flesh. Instead of obeying God's teaching, they decided to seek knowledge on their own terms—the knowledge of good and evil. The one who had joined them was precisely the opposite of the Lord Jesus. It was the serpent.

As they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were opened. But instead of their hearts burning within them, they hid themselves in fear from the presence of the LORD. Because they were afraid, they desired to avoid fellowship with God. And then, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Instead of joy, there would be sorrow, hard work, and death. That's where false teaching got them. They lost fellowship with God.

What was their mistake? Partly, it was about who was in their midst. For those on the road to Emmaus, it was the Lord Jesus. For Adam and Eve, it was the serpent.

Let's look at the care Jesus has for each of us. Revelation 1 shows a picture of the Lord Jesus amid seven golden candlesticks. In verse 16, Jesus has seven stars in his right hand; in verse 20, these are described as the angels of the seven ecclesias. Despite Jesus being involved with the members of the ecclesias, when John falls at the feet of Jesus as dead, it was the right hand of Jesus who attended to his needs, telling him, *"Fear not."* (Rev 1:17).

In the letters to the seven ecclesias, there are blessings for those who overcome.

- 1. The Ephesians were promised the fellowship of sharing the fruit of the Tree of Life, a reversal of the error of Adam and Eve. (Rev 2:7).
- 2. For those at Pergamos, it was partaking of the hidden manna and having a new name (Rev 2:17).
- 3. For those at Sardis, it was to have their name confessed before God by the Lord Jesus (Rev 3:5). So not only are we associated with the Lord Jesus through his name, but also that he knows our names and will be pleased to bring us to the attention of our heavenly Father if we overcome.

- 4. Those at Philadelphia were promised to have the name of God written upon them, and that they will abide in the temple of God, being part of it. (Rev 3:12)
- 5. Finally, those of Laodicea were invited to open the door and let Jesus into their lives and share a meal with him and he with them. Just as Jesus overcame and is seated with his Father in His throne, so will those who overcome have total fellowship by sitting with Jesus at his throne.

We then see the great blessings God has bestowed upon us through His Word of truth. Through the fellowship we share with brothers and sisters worldwide and by the provision of His Son, who can save us from our sins, we are brought into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who will return as King in God's kingdom.

Whatever our circumstances, we must try to overcome them, bearing the name of the Lord Jesus and enjoying the fellowship of our brethren and sisters. We look forward to the return of Jesus when the saints from all ages will be joined together in eternal fellowship in the Kingdom of God.

> David Gore, Rochdale Ecclesia, UK

We look forward to the return of Jesus when the saints from all ages will be joined together in eternal fellowship in the Kingdom of God.

tidings.org

BIBLE STUDY

PART 6 WORDS I HOPE I NEVER HEAR AGAIN

By David Levin

Christadelphian Cliches, Misquotes, Pat Phrases, Wrested Scriptures, and Legalistic Formulas

About Wives and Jesus

THIS month's entry episode takes on another handful of phrases we're better off without. Three are monikers for wives, and three pertain to the Lord Jesus: helpmate, helpmeet, sister-wife, elder brother, absent Lord, and broken body.

Helpmeet and Its Even Worse Companion, Helpmate.

What's wrong with it? To quote the Oxford English Dictionary, "helpmeet is a compound absurdly formed by taking the two words help meet in Gen 2:18... as one word." There's also the nuance of "assistant" or "sidekick" when applied to one's wife.

What's at stake? Social propriety, Hebrew and English semantics, and in some measure, marital relationships.

How can it be fixed? Wife is a perfectly fine word.

Discussion: An "help meet" for Adam might have had some cache at the turn of the 17th century, but now it suffers from being both archaic and fused. The phrase "help meet" first came into English (as "helpe meete") with the Geneva Bible of 1560. Coverdale's 1535 translation had "an helpe to beare him company." While "help" and "beare" do not readily combine, "help" and "meet" became one flesh.

Two words, "*help*" (a noun¹) and "*meet*" (an adjective), both require some unpacking. Biblically, a "*helper*" is not an "assistant." The word usually denotes one who comes to the aid of another or a rescuer. It frequently refers to God

(e.g., Psa 46:1). In this context, the helper is Eve, someone **like** Adam but unlike the other animals. She is there to be with him in his garden duties, in worshipping their Creator and dealing with the inherent temptation implicit in the command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The second word, "*meet*," has to be first understood in English, then in Hebrew. As an adjective, it's archaic. Today we would say "suitable," "corresponding," "like," or perhaps "pertaining."

The Hebrew phrase implies a spatial relationship also. Eve came out of his side, and now she is in front of him, like a mirror image. The male and female humans stand face-to-face and appreciate their complementary status.

Helpmeet started life as a hyphenated formation, "*help-meet*," and has been used as a compound noun only since the last half of the 19th century.² Today, using either one is inexcusable and a degrading term for one's wife. These terms were "absurdly formed" and now they are absurdly used. Your wife is not your secretary or your Jeeves. She's your co-heir in Christ, one flesh with you.

Sister-wife

What's wrong with it: technically, nothing. Its usage is what makes it intolerable. Sister-wife is pointless and as is usually used, somewhat demeaning.

What's at stake: Social inculcation of a phrase that should have never seen the light of day.

How to fix it: Say "and his wife, Sister Bethulah." But see the "not-so-side note" below.

Discussion: Last Sunday (as I am writing this), my son, Ezra, presided, and I exhorted. He did not introduce me as his "brother-father." Because sister-wife is the only combination of this sort that you or I have ever heard or will hear. It carries some baggage. It's the same sort of baggage as "helpmeet," a somewhat belittling title.

Occasions do arise to use analogous versions because, many times, biological relatives will preside and exhort, father and son and many others. Do you think in a sisters' class, my wife, Cora, would recommend that the group "read this article that my brother-husband wrote"?

Thus, the absurdity of sister-wife. Its repetition is just the social inculcation of platform speech.

Here's the not-so-side note. There is only one New Testament instance (in hundreds of references to individuals by name) where a personal name is preceded by "sister" or "brother." That one instance is clearly a contextual emphasis.³ There is no other place ever where a disciple is listed as, for instance, "Brother Epaphras" or "Sister Eunice." Paul never appends "brother" or "sister" to clarify who's a member of the body or not (e.g., 2 Tim 4:9-14). The title "brother" is used in a pronominal sense, such as "the brother famous for this preaching," and to refer to groups, e.g., "the brothers in Thessalonica." Our standard use of "brother" and "sister" as titles before a personal name is a nicety and a term of spiritual endearment and collective belonging, but it has no Biblical basis.

Elder Brother

This title is often used, especially in prayer, for Jesus.

What's wrong with it? It is never used in Scripture, and it implies a relationship to Jesus that can be somewhat substantiated but is not one the Bible endorses.

What's at stake? Due reverence and respect for our significant relationship to Jesus.

How can it be fixed? Use one of the several titles Scripture uses for Jesus: Our Lord, the Lord Jesus, Savior, Son of God, Head of our Body, and many more.

Discussion: This entry was suggested to me by Dave Jennings (my brothereditor) when I first proposed this series to him for publication in the Tidings. It's one I've heard often, but it hadn't registered with me as a phrase to include until he mentioned it to me. Dave noted that not even Jesus's own younger (half-) siblings ever called him their "elder brother."

The title "elder brother" occurs nowhere in the New Testament, despite numerous places could where it have been written or spoken. It is true in the sense that Jesus is the "first born from the dead," which implies that others also will follow and hence be his brothers and sisters. Moreover, Jesus himself

said (quoting Psalm 82) that we are *"all sons of God."* Again, that makes us all siblings. There are also references to Jesus considering us his spiritual siblings, Luke 8:21 and Hebrews 2:11-12.

However, Jesus is the "firstborn from the dead." (Col 1:18, Rev 1:5). No one else has achieved that status. We're not there yet. In a provisional sense, we are his siblings now, but he is our spiritual head, not our elder brother.

More importantly, though, Scripture never encourages or instructs us to frame our relationship to Jesus as one of younger brother or sister to older brother. Jesus is properly our King, Lord, Savior, and Redeemer, and our access to the Father. He is the Son of God, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Overcomer of Death, the single Inheritor of God's Promises, Lamb of God, Head of the Body, and many more titles. Missing from the list is "elder brother."

Absent Lord⁴

What's wrong with it? Similar to the above entry, "absent Lord" is not a Biblical phrase or title for Jesus. Also, our Lord is not absent.

What's at stake? Recognizing the daily presence of our Lord Jesus in our lives. How can it be fixed? Either avoiding it altogether or using it to refer specifically to Jesus's physical presence and kingship.

Discussion: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt 28:20 ESV). Jesus is present with us in the relevant sense that is appropriate for our current dispensation. He is our coming King in a political and physical sense. (Rev 22:20).

Jesus told several parables with a common theme of people going about their business when their master was absent (Matt 25:14-30). In every instance, the faithful acted as if their master never went away. They carried out their duties regardless of the master's physical presence. Their fidelity, integrity, and responsibility were rewarded upon the master's physical return, but to the faithful, their master was **always** present.

We all understand the intent of the phrase "absent Lord." But the introduction of the word "absent" connotes a separation from Jesus that is both unscriptural and spiritually unhealthy.

Broken Body

This phrase is often heard at the breaking of bread, either in the presider's remarks or in the prayer of thanks for the bread.

What's wrong with it? At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and shared it among the disciples. He said it was his body, not his broken body.

What's at stake? The symbolic meaning of the bread we share in memory of our Lord each Sunday morning.

How can it be fixed? Emphasize what the Bible emphasizes. The bread represents the true manna that came down from heaven, that is, the life, teachings, and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus.

Discussion: Jesus said the bread was his **body**, and his body was horribly abused, broken if you will, on our behalf. The alliteration of the three key words—bread, body, broken—plus their contextual relatedness adds up to an easy entry of "broken body" into our vocabulary.

More directly, Paul quotes Jesus (I Cor 11:24 KJV) as saying, "*My body, which is broken for you.*"

However, the appearance of "broken" is almost certainly due to a scribal addition. Current versions such as NIV, RSV, ESV, and NASB (working from a different set of manuscripts than the KJV) all omit the phrase, though they have marginal notes indicating that the phrase is in some ancient manuscripts. The ESV reads, "and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, 'this is my body which is for you." Mounce notes both manuscript and Greek grammar reasons for excluding "broken for you." His translation omits the phrase.⁵ Most telling, though, regardless of any textual variants of 1 Corinthians 11:24, is the uniform testimony of three synoptic Gospels, which all record "*my body* [given] *for you.*" (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19). The Lord himself designated the bread as symbolizing his **body**, not his **broken body**. For the reasons listed at the beginning of this section, it's easy to see how those words crept in, but they have to be regarded as spurious.⁶

What then did Jesus intend the bread to bring to mind? The most proximate answer is in John 6, where Jesus, speaking in the direct context of the memorial symbols of *"eating his flesh,"* tells us that he is the true manna that came down from heaven. He is the bread of life upon which our spiritual lives are nourished. To me, that includes both his explicit verbal teachings and the implicit lessons we learn from how he lived his life in loving service and submission to the will of his heavenly Father.

> David Levin, Denver Ecclesia, CO

1 Today, "help" is used only as a verb; referring to someone as "the help" would be pejorative. The current noun form is "helper."

- 3 Hint: it's in Acts. One instance, but it's repeated.
- 4 Thanks to Ron Hicks, a dear friend who has now returned to his native Australia, for this suggestion.

² It seems odd, but probably isn't as far as language change goes, but per the OED, the compound noun "helpmate" predates "helpmeet" by a century or so. The corruption of "meet" to "mate" makes a neater fit for a noun to describe a person who is a close companion and aide. Originally, "helpmate" referred to anyone who assisted you, not necessarily your wife.

⁵ Cited from https://www.billmounce.com/monday-with-mounce/was-jesus%E2%80%99-body-%E2%80%9C%E2%80%9D-you-or-%E2%80%9Cbroken%E2%80%9D-you-1-cor-11-24-0 accessed 24 November 2023.

⁶ Another area of controversy is the Greek word translated as "broken," the issue being whether or not that could describe his abused flesh. Also, there's the applicability of the prophecy "*not a bone was broken*" and its fulfillment. To me, this all seems unrelated to the main point, which is Jesus' own words recorded in the gospels.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR GOD AND JESUS

By Sue and Jim Styles

God's Intention with Animal Sacrifices and the Death of Jesus

ONE of the areas we have been most surprised about needing to modify our earlier views is that of animal sacrifices and the sacrifice of Jesus. We grew up with a mistaken idea that we commonly hear today among Christadelphians about why God had people kill animals when offering a sacrifice. In our experience, most responded, "Because sinners deserve to die," which is a very passive way of looking at sacrifice. It views sacrifice as a punishment we deserve but doesn't require us to do anything. This idea is much the same as the belief many Christians have that Jesus died as their substitute. Both of these views generate thankfulness in most people, but they lack the daily motivation to take up their cross and follow Jesus in his death



to sin. Although sinners do indeed deserve to die, that is probably not why God introduced and commanded animal sacrifices for so many years. Besides, do we really need a ritual to remind us sinners deserve to die when so many people are dying every day?

The "deserve to die" response links to our third article on "God's Punishment vs Discipline." If you view God as an austere or angry Father who wants to punish you for your daily sins, then your view of animal sacrifice, and possibly even the sacrifice of Jesus as well, is connected to punishment. You may tend to think the physical death of the animal represents the punishment sinners deserve. You might even link the death of Jesus to this as well. But when we examine New Testament writers' explanations, they do not make this connection at all! Thankfully, God has provided the New Testament commentary on many Old Testament issues to help us understand what He intended His people to learn. When New Testament writers all say the same thing, it should end any disagreements or debates we might have on the issue. Think about all the New Testament

If you view God as an austere or angry Father who wants to punish you for your daily sins, then your view of animal sacrifice, and possibly even the sacrifice of Jesus as well, is connected to punishment.

passages that are connected to the sacrifice of Jesus, and see if you can find any passages that link the death of Jesus to the punishment that communicates "sinners deserve to die." We haven't found any! Your mind might go to Romans 6, where Paul says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23).¹ But within the context, Paul contrasts King Sin and the wages he pays out (death) with our loving Father who gives us a free gift of eternal life. No way does this indicate that God wants to punish His children for their sins, but instead, it shows He wants to give them the "free gift" of eternal life when they join with Christ in his death to sin.

The New Testament makes it truly clear that the lesson God wants us to take from the death and sacrifice of Jesus is that we must participate in his way of salvation—dying to sin and living for God. Consider how Jesus develops the exhortation he wants his followers to take from his death on the cross.

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? (Luke 9:23-25).

Jesus doesn't link his death on the cross with "sinners deserve to die," but instead makes the connection that his followers must take up their own cross daily and follow him. This directive isn't about our **physical death** but rather about us actively putting our flesh to death daily, a **spiritual death** to sin, fighting the devil inside us, and living for God. Jesus didn't go through his life of obedience to God by putting the devil in himself to death to show sinners they deserve to die, but instead, he was trying to show sinners how to live as children of God!

As a community, we have spent too much time dwelling on the punishment we deserve, to the detriment of focusing on the new lives we should live as God grows His eternal way of life in us. Consider the words of Peter when he explains what the death of Jesus is supposed to mean to us:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet 2:21-24).

Peter doesn't mention anything about Jesus showing us the punishment sinners deserve. Rather, he points out Jesus went through all that suffering to leave us an example so we would follow in his steps by trying to put sin to death ourselves, just like Jesus did all through his trial and crucifixion. You see, the death of Jesus wasn't really so much about his physical death as it was more about a public demonstration of his entire life of resisting the devil in himself and doing the will of God. God wants us to participate in that way of life.

So often at baptisms, we read Romans 6 because Paul says we are baptized into Christ's death. Thankfully, we get Paul's explanation of what the death of Jesus should mean to us. He points out that we cannot abuse God's gift of grace by continuing to live a life serving sin because "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (v. 2). Paul reminds us that when we were baptized, we were baptized into the death of Jesus, his death to sin. This thought should cause us to "walk in newness of life." The only punishment going on here is that we should punish sin by putting it to death like Jesus did!

Paul goes on to say,

For if we have been united with him **in a death like his**, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order **that the body of sin might**

be brought to nothing [destroyed, RSV] *so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* (Rom 6:6).

Paul's exhortation to us about the death of Jesus isn't that we deserve to die; that's a passive application that doesn't require us to do anything. Paul wants us to be actively involved in joining Christ in his death to sin by putting sin to death in ourselves. If we missed the point, Paul clearly states, *"For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."* (vv. 10-11).

Paul reminds us when we take bread and wine at memorial service,

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? (1 Cor 10:16-19).

He also points out that the lesson of crucifixion was about a way of life when he says:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20).

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he explained,

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth

of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." (Phil 3:8-10).

Paul clearly understood that the death of Christ illustrated a way of life associated with righteousness from God that depends on living by faith. He never mentions anything about some punishment that Jesus went through for us or demonstrated for us. Paul always refers to Christ's death positively, calling us to participate by sharing his sufferings and becoming like him in his death.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul declared our responsibility to participate if we belong to Christ Jesus:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:22-25).

In Romans 12, after eleven chapters where Paul clearly explained God's atonement without any mention of Old Testament rituals and sacrifices or even any reference to our internal devil, Paul finally declares: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, selfcontrol..."

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2).

It's a *"living sacrifice*" because we continue to live while putting sin to death. Like Jesus, our minds are transformed to do the will of God.

New Testament writers and Jesus himself link his death to motivating us to participate with Jesus in his death to sin by resisting sin and living for God. It was all positive instruction about how Christ's followers should live as children of God. Thankfully, God has given us these New Testament commentaries to clarify what the Old Testament types should teach. We really can't argue with the New Testament writers! Why, then, did so many people misunderstand animal sacrifices? Possibly because we are so biased to look for lessons about God wanting to punish sinners instead of realizing that God was trying to explain how to change our lives to live like His children so He could invite us into His family forever. We tend to focus on the negative lessons rather than the positives. This concept was the standard way Christians misunderstood God for hundreds of years, and they may have influenced us.

So now look back at animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. Who did the animal "without blemish" (Exod 12:5; Lev 1:3) represent? The sinner or God's Messiah? Most of us would agree it was Messiah, God's Son. He would be perfect, without sin. Then, when you lay your "hand on the head of the burnt offering" (Lev 1:4), it is an opportunity to identify with Messiah, connect with him, and indicate you want to live his unblemished way of life while at the same time recognizing your daily failures. God then wanted **you** to "kill the bull before the LORD" (v. 5), hoping you would commit to joining with the Messiah in his death to sin. Making his unblemished life your aim. None of this was supposed to be about punishment, but rather an effective way of illustrating how God's Son would live by putting sin to death. It also permits the worshipper to commit to joining Messiah in a death to sin! God used this ritual procedure as the basis to "make atonement for him." It was a ritual opportunity to identify with and participate in God's method of salvation, as illustrated in His Messiah. If God were trying to teach a lesson about the punishment sinners deserve, then the animal would have represented the sinner, not God's Son.

Further, God would have had the priest kill the animal as a judgment from Him and pour out the blood. Instead, God wanted the offeror to participate in the death because it represented death to sin. God was trying to teach His children how to live, not how He wanted to punish them.

The classic mistake in understanding animal sacrifice is to stop with the death of the animal without considering the rest of the sacrifice. Don't forget that the blood was sprinkled against the altar, reminding us that all lives belong to God, including God's own Son. As Jesus said, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." (Luke 9:24). The animal was laid out bare on the altar. It was "naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Heb 4:13). Finally, it was burned in the fiery trials and sufferings of this life that refine our characters, so we

conform to the image of Christ. Then it could ascend into the presence of God "as a pleasing aroma." (Exod 29:25). God wanted His children to understand that He could change their lives if they would identify with His Messiah, join him in his death to sin, and be found "in him." Then God would forgive their sins, and they could eventually enter into the presence of God Himself as a pleasing aroma. They needed to participate by joining Christ in his death to sin and striving to obey their loving Father in heaven, doing His will. What an awesome hope, illustrated through animal sacrifice, pointing forward to the life, death, and resurrection of God's Son and all those who would be saved through him!

That's a whole different way of looking at animal sacrifice versus substitution or as a punishment sinners deserve. God intended it to be an active training session to teach His children how to live as they identified with the life of the Messiah. As the Israelites lost track of the true meaning of animal sacrifice and turned to punishment and substitution theories, no wonder they got tired of performing sacrifices. If they had truly understood what God was trying to teach, they would have continued to look forward to and enjoy the worship, much like we do today at our Breaking of Bread services. We know we need constant reminders to participate in God's redemptive plan and thank God for His grace and mercy. So when you remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in bread and wine at memorial service, which death are you there to remember? A passive one that speaks to you deserving to die

for your sins, or an active one, where you are thankful for what God has done for you, realizing that you promised to die with Christ to sin when you were baptized. You re-commit to participate in Christ's death by joining his war against sin, *"becoming like him in his death.*" (Phil 3:10). Think about it! Which one has the power to change your life?

It's wonderful how Jude blends God's intent with animal sacrifice to motivate us to identify with Messiah's way of life and the power of God to change us and forgive our sins so we can ascend into His presence, rejoicing. He concludes his letter with:

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless [without blemish, RSV] before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25).

Hopefully, the five articles in this series have helped us get to know our God and Jesus, His Son. We hope it will help us all to live more like our Lord Jesus Christ. Being called into God's family is a great privilege, something we could never deserve. We must be thankful for this every day and not waste our opportunities. How extraordinary is the grace and mercy of our heavenly Father that He doesn't want to punish us for our sins but is willing to send His angels to train us so we can learn to live like Him, like His eternal life? Although He may seem distant and so awesome at times. He invites us to talk to Him always and let Him know our fears, anxieties, and needs because He wants to respond if it can fit into His plan. Now we know that from the beginning, since sin entered into this world, He has done everything He can to motivate us to participate in His plan of redemption, even to the point of the torture and death of His Son. This example illustrates to us how His children are to live. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:57).

> Sue and Jim Styles, Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA

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



PART 5 PREACHING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

By Richard Morgan

The Christadelphian Tidings – Volume 87, Number 2 / February, 2024

DURING his speech before the Areopagus council, Paul criticized temples (Acts 17:24), cultic services (v. 25), and idols (v. 29). He demonstrated that by adherence to these things, the Athenians haven't obtained a true knowledge of God, and are groping in the dark. He has also illustrated that God has revealed Himself in creation (v. 24), history (v. 26), and ultimately in humanity (v. 28-29).

It is here that Paul's address takes a crucial turn. By alluding to Gen. 1:26, where man was made in God's image in contrast with the graven images of idolatry, Paul will finish his speech with an appeal centered on the one who is the ultimate reflection of the image of God.

In verse 30, Paul says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent"¹ which is a call to "[turn] to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (1 Thess 1:9). Paul said a similar thing earlier in his ministry, during his first missionary journey while in Lystra. Paul had just performed a miracle, healing a man crippled from birth. The people of Lystra thought he and Barnabas were gods, so Paul had to tell them quickly that was not the case. Note the similarities with his speech in Athens:

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:14-17).

In verse 15, Paul's call to repentance is for them to "turn from these vain things to a living God." The "vain" things are the same things Paul talked about in Athens—worshiping idols. In 1 Corinthians 3:20, he wrote, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile," using the same word "vain" here translated "futile." He quotes here from Psalm 94:11, where the context is insightful:

Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge [the LORD] knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. (Psa 94:8-11).

The psalm alludes to the contrast between the all-hearing, seeing, and feeling God and the immobile, deaf, blind idols of the nations—utter futility. Peter also mentions vain things when he writes, "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers." (1 Pet. 1:18). The lesson is much closer to home here because Peter isn't talking about pagan idolatry, but the ritualism of Judaism. He says we are ransomed "not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (v. 18-19). The "silver and gold" things of Judaism, for instance, in the temple, could not save anyone. Only the man ordained by God could save. In that sense, therefore, the Jewish problem was the same as that of the Gentiles.

Paul's final appeal continues with the reason the people need to repent: *"because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness."* (v. 30). This is perhaps the most direct quotation from Scripture in Paul's speech, with the phrase *"He will judge the world in righteousness"* found in two psalms.

First, in Psalm 96:13, the context directly relates to Paul's preaching efforts. Verse 3 says, "*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*" This statement is precisely what Paul is doing by speaking to the Athenians. The next couple of verses then continue:

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. (Psa 96:4-5).

In the Septuagint, verse 5 uses the word *daimonion* and reads, "For all the gods of the people are demons," which is interesting considering Paul told the Athenians they were "religious." (Acts 17:22). We saw in a previous article the word, *deisidaimonesteros* with the literal meaning "fear of demons." But, as verse 4 of the psalm says, Yahweh "*is to be feared above all gods.*"

It is likely with Paul's Scriptural knowledge, when he thought about this psalm, he told the Athenians about God

judging the world in righteousness. But he was probably also thinking about Psalm 9, which uses the same phrase in verse 8. Verse 10 then goes on to say, "You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you," reminding us of Paul's appeal for the people to "seek God." (Acts 17:27). The next verse (v. 11) then says, "Tell among the peoples his deeds!" which, again, is exactly what Paul is doing in Athens. Finally, in verse 16, we are told, "The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands," which is a neat summary of Paul's speech in Athens.

How Yahweh has made himself known is ultimately seen in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul ends his message about the folly of idols and the importance of humanity manifesting God with the words "because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31). Thus, Paul answered the initial question about "Jesus and the resurrection" (v18).

Paul's use of the term "*appointed*" in verse 31 is noteworthy because it focuses on the sovereignty and providence of God, which Paul has hinted at in verses 24-26. There, God is described as making all things, Lord of heaven and earth, giving everything it needs to humanity, and even in charge of human history. And now he has "*appointed*" the man, Christ Jesus, to judge the world in righteousness.

Paul used the same Greek word *horizo* (related to the word *proorizo*— predestined) in verse 26 when he said,

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place," here translated "determined." The God who "[declares] the end from the beginning" (Isa 46:10) is in full control of human history.

The word *horizo* is also used in Acts 2:23, which says, "*This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.*" In Acts 10:42, Peter wrote, "*He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*"

Perhaps there is another nod here to the Stoics who believed that the divine Logos predetermines all events. For instance, the Stoic academic Chrysippus wrote:

Whatever happens to you has been waiting to happen since the beginning of time. The twining strands of fate wove both of them together: your own existence and the things that happen to you. (Meditations, 10.5).

Paul wouldn't have agreed with the extreme determinism of classical Stoicism, but by speaking of things *"determined"* and *"appointed"* he found enough common ground, as he did throughout his whole speech, to meet people halfway.

Perhaps throughout his whole speech, Paul was thinking back to an earlier speech he had heard before he repented. Stephen was addressing the Jewish religious leaders when he reminded them of their history of the golden calf "and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands." (Acts 7:41). Stephen then went on to say:

But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: "Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon." (Acts 7:42-43).

He finished his speech by reminding his listeners that "the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands" (Acts 7:48), the same as Paul is saying in Athens. To prove his point, Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1-2. The next verse in that passage says the following: He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations. (Isa 66:3).

In Stephen's speech and this passage from Isaiah, we are reminded that the problem of idolatry isn't exclusive to the Gentiles. As the prophet says, if your religion consists of empty ritualism, you might as well be blessing an idol.

After Paul ended his speech, we learn that he had mixed results.

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed. (Acts 17:32-34).

Those who believed included *"Dionysius the Areopagite."* So Paul even got through to one of the men conducting the tribunal.

We, too, will have mixed results when we preach first principles like the resurrection of the dead. That kind of thing is outside the normal human experience, so people will struggle to hear the gospel message.

But one thing we can do is follow the example of the Apostle Paul in Athens. Like Socrates, Paul's method was to enter into dialog with people he met. By doing that, he could understand something about their present worldview. He had also done his homework, understanding something about the philosophies of the world and the writings that went along with them. If we stand up and give a Bible talk, we might do an excellent job, but if we don't know what the audience is thinking about and what they believe, we will struggle to reach them.

Our task is to help people turn from the idolatry of the world to embrace the one true God. We can facilitate the process by building bridges and establishing common ground, even though we won't agree with other philosophies. But there are some things we **can** agree on, and that's what Paul latched onto. We, too, can confirm in people's minds that the God of the Bible does fit into some of the ideas that people have, that he is not a God of empty formalism and ritualism, and that there is a purpose in the universe. Then, having established that common ground, we can fill in the gaps and bring people to a place where they can more readily accept the other first principles of the one true faith.

> Richard Morgan, Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA

^{1.} All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise cited.

GOD'S GREATEST TEMPLE

by George Booker

WE all know this story. It is found in the early chapters of Matthew and Luke. It is perhaps the simplest and most straightforward story in the Bible. The story is told to small children by their parents or teachers in Sunday Schools. The birth of Jesus Christ is the centerpiece around which all the rest of the Bible is organized.

In His infinite wisdom, the great Creator looked down upon the earth and carefully selected a young woman—well-known as a virtuous woman—to be the mother of His Son. Her child, when grown to manhood, would draw all people to himself and show them perfect love, a greater love than humanity had ever experienced, a love which required the laying down of his life, the life of the Son of God for his friends:

Greater love has no man than this: to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13).¹ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16).

Everything in the Old Testament looks **forward** to this marvelous miracle of love. Everything in the New Testament (after the Gospels) looks **backward** to the same event.

However, as with other simple stories, there is a more detailed background story. An "inside story" that we may not notice until our attention is drawn to it. The story concerns the Lord God Himself, silently working behind the scenes. At the story's center, we will see... a little baby!

So, why a baby? Or, to put it another way, why not an angel? Paul answers this question:

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." (1 Cor 1:27-31).

Some men, like Nimrod (Gen 10:8-9), conquer the world (or some part of it), and build towers that they intend to reach to heaven, all to gain a reputation among men. But the one true God is not impressed at all by such accomplishments. His hands have literally made **everything**, including those powerful men. He only looks with favor upon those who are humble and contrite and who tremble at His Word (Isa 66:2).

In the little village of Nazareth, in Galilee, there was a young woman named Mary, a virgin, who was betrothed to Joseph. As she spent her days looking forward to their wedding and preparing for it, she was greeted one day by an angel named Gabriel. He pleasantly greeted her, referring to her as *"highly favored by the Lord God."* Almost as an afterthought, he added, *"Do not be afraid."*

After Mary regained her composure, Gabriel continued:

You have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus [that is, Savior]. He will be great, and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. (Luke 1:30-33).

Mary wondered aloud how this could be since she was a virgin. The angel replied that the Holy Spirit would visit her and overshadow her so that the child who would be born would be the Son of God. To this, Mary agreed, saying, "I am the Lord's servant. May His word be fulfilled." (Luke 1:38).

When reading Genesis 1, we might conclude that God created all the heavens, the earth, and everything and everyone on it, and then He "rested." Period. But God did not "rest" for long. He had a plan, and He still has a plan, in which He continues to work, watching over His creation and His children and providing for their needs. God also made the people of Israel His own special kingdom.

Yes, in Genesis, God's commanding Word had brought a new world into being. But there was more, much more, to be done. In Exodus, God's command created a new nation in the earth, with a tabernacle in which His glory dwelt behind beautifully woven curtains.

Then, after God had finished His earlier works, He set out to create what we might call "His greatest masterpiece." The very best of God's creative energies were poured into this masterpiece, which was a unique human being, His only begotten Son.

In Old Testament times, altars, tabernacles, and temples were the places where men might approach God and worship Him. But many times, those places of worship did not serve the worshippers well and thus did not fulfill God's purpose. In fact, those temples were often corrupted by men's self-righteousness, pride, idolatry, and greed. For example, Jesus called Herod's Temple *"a house of merchandise"* (John 2:16 KJV), and so it was!

So, as we enter the New Testament times, we see that God alone, without the use of men's hands, is creating His best and most perfect "temple," or place of worship, in the person of His only begotten Son. Jesus would be a special "temple" where mankind could access the heavenly Father. We might say the Son of God was designed to be not only the "king," but also the "altar," the "priest," the "tabernacle," the "sacrifice," and the "temple," all rolled into one.

There is another significant point to be considered when we see Jesus as the temple of God. The Son of God did not sit in one place, waiting for people to come to him! Instead, he finished his forty-day sojourn in the wilderness, where he wrestled with his temptations and won. Then he went out into the world, going from fishing boat to fishing boat, from town to town, and door to door, we might say, seeking those who would listen and offering them living water, the bread of heaven, and the gift of eternal life.

In the beginning, God had said, "*Let there be light*," and there was light (Gen 1:3). Like the first creation, which was called out of darkness at God's Word, so by the Word of God another great light rose upon the darkness of mankind. Jesus appeared to Israel as a bright light, and his teaching, his character, and his sacrifice revealed the gift of eternal life:

The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. (Matt 4:16).

At this point, we need to back up just a bit to Psalm 139, a psalm of David. In this psalm, the Holy Spirit describes a human being *"intricately woven together,"* even in his inner parts. Today, with the benefit of modern science, we can begin to understand a small portion of that Divine work. In recent years, scientists have opened the door to the awesome miracle of intertwined DNA molecules, which carry the genetic code for every human life. Continuing with Psalm 139, we read:

For you [God] created my inmost being [my mind and my heart]; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place [the womb]... your eyes saw my unformed body. (Psa 139:13-16).

That which is created in the microscopic parts of the human embryo is truly aweinspiring. It is the most extraordinary of God's miraculous works of creation. Much of God's creation, in the far reaches of the universe, can be seen now, and we marvel at the sight. But also, God's greatest work is to be perceived in each individual person, in the smallest threads and chains at the molecular level. There, unseen for thousands of years, God has been weaving together the strands of human intelligence and character.

This is the wondrous work that has formed each of us in our mother's womb. There, little specks of material from the father and the mother come together and then begin to divide and multiply to grow into a real human being and then to grow and develop further until the child is born, ready to develop even further. Eventually, a fully grown person, with a heart and a mind, and intelligence and character, is the result.

The process is all there for us to see as our Father in heaven replenishes the number of His children, day by day. We are all His offspring (Acts 17:26-28). We are created in His image (Gen 1:27). We all belong to the same family, and we ought to love one another.

Now, to consider Jesus himself. Like the fabrics in the tabernacle, which were created at Moses' command, another tabernacle or temple was now produced. Jesus was God's Word made flesh (John 1:14), *"intricately woven together"* by his Father.

This "Word made flesh," that is, Jesus, was a "temple," or "tabernacle," which also had curtains "intricately woven together." Yes, he was a human being like all of us, but an exceptional human in that he was uniquely stamped with "the radiance of God's glory" and the "exact representation" of his Father's person (Heb 1:3).

How did this come about? It began with the conception of Jesus in his mother's womb, where the Son of God was conceived and nurtured and finally born. As he grew and progressed through his young life, he was taught by his Father, but we do not know how. He embarked upon an extraordinary mission when he grew to be a man. This work culminated in the cross, in the garden tomb, and in Christ's resurrection to eternal life. So God's Word became, in human flesh and form, an eternal temple in which God's glory would dwell among men and would remain with them. This process was expressed in the Gospel of Matthew:

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God is with us"). (Matt 1:22, 23).



As *"Immanuel"* (Isa 7:14), the child and then the man Jesus would become a *"sanctuary"* (Isa 8:14), a temple or holy place where God might dwell and where men and women might through Jesus approach God.

As mentioned earlier, God commanded that His people of Israel would have a tabernacle in which His glory would dwell. Then God's divine power oversaw the inspired weaving of the fabrics of that special house, the tabernacle, at the hands of His craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod 35-38).

In the Old Testament, especially in the last part of Exodus, the words for *"knit"* or *"weave"* were used in:

- the pattern on the veil of the Tabernacle: "the work of an embroider," and "made with needlework." (Exod 26-38);
- the embroidery of the hangings at the tabernacle's entrance or gate (Exod 27 and 36);
- the coat (tunic: KJV), turban, (miter), and sash (girdle) of the High Priest (Exod 28 and 39), and, most notably,

• the curtain, or veil, at the Most Holy Place (Exod 26).

So the Spirit of God knitted together the fabric, inward and outward, of the embryo in Mary's womb, for this *"fabric"* would belong especially to the only begotten Son of God (again, Psa 139).

At the very moment when Christ died on the cross, as the once-andfor-all sacrifice for us, this veil or curtain in the Most Holy Place (which represented Christ's body) was torn from top to bottom (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38), revealing God's mercy-seat. The Apostle Paul explained the significance of this miracle:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through **the curtain**, **that is, his body**, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us



from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19-22).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, from his conception until his last mortal breath upon the cross, was fabricated in human form. He became a walking, talking, loving, caring, approachable human being such as the world had never seen before. After his death and resurrection, Jesus became an immortal *"temple,"* or *"tabernacle,"* always available to us who believe in him.

Now we see that the veil of the Most Holy Place in the temple, which held the mercy seat, symbolized that unique human being, Jesus, the Son of God. So it should be no surprise when we learn, from the New Testament, that:

- Jesus refers to himself as *"one greater than the temple."* (Matt 12:5 KJV).
- Jesus said to his disciples that not one stone of Herod's great temple would be left upon another and that every one would be thrown down (Matt 24:1, 2; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5, 6). Thereby, Jesus declared Herod's great building to be evil and corrupt and in need of complete

destruction. This is why Jesus drove the moneychangers out of Herod's temple, calling that temple a den of thieves (Mark 11:17).

- When Jesus was asked for a sign that he had authority from God, he predicted his own death ("Destroy this temple"). Then he also predicted his subsequent resurrection ("I will raise it—this temple—again in three days"). (John 2:19, 20; Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58). In both statements, he was referring to himself as the true "temple" of God (John 2:21, 22).
- Christ said, "Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem... and I will write on him my new name." (Rev 3:12). We also notice that, at the same time, Christ said nothing at all about a millennial temple of Ezekiel's prophecy.
- Furthermore, Paul referred to the disciples of Christ as God's sacred temple. Whether they were considered collectively or individually (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 6:19),

they were, in every detail, the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16), in which the whole "*house*" is joined together to become a holy temple (Eph 2:21).

In his Revelation, John the Apostle tells us, "I did not see a temple in the city [New Jerusalem], because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb **are its temple**." (Rev 21:22).

At the same time, John makes no mention whatsoever of any other temple in Jerusalem. Instead, we see believers raised from the dead or brought together from the corners of the earth. The multitude of believers, one by one, are gathered in small groups or assembled in innumerable masses (Rev 7:4; 14:3).

This multitudinous "Body of Christ" will surely replace any huge building made by human hands with wood, stone, or other materials. God's true temple will be a living family or "house" of God, as His people and His "children." They have belonged to Christ; consequently, they also belong to his Father, who is their Father also:

You are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:28, 29).

As a result, the Apostle Peter refers to believers in Christ as "*living stones.*" These "*stones*" are joined together with the "*cornerstone*," which is Jesus Christ himself, to be a "*living temple*" and a spiritual house, as well as a "*holy priesthood.*" (1 Pet 2:5, 6). "'*They will* be mine,' says the LORD Almighty, 'in the day when I make up my treasured possessions.'" (Mal 3:17).

Those who worship God and His Son are said to be "offering sacrifices of praise," not sacrifices of animals, but sacrifices of their own lips, praising God "for with such sacrifices God is pleased." (Heb 13:15).

As we have mentioned already, in God's world, "larger" is not always "better." Great, majestic buildings do not necessarily glorify the Holy One of Israel.

In summary, we may say that the LORD God created the universe and everything in it. He created all the earth and filled it with all His children would ever need. Then, He created His greatest gift to humanity, a perfect human "*temple.*" It is a place where worshippers can confidently approach their Creator and find sympathy, mercy, kindness, love, forgiveness, salvation, and finally, eternal life.

Jesus, God's greatest temple, was, and still is, *"filled with the fulness of the glory*" of his Father. (John 1:14).

We may think enormous buildings or other human creations show God's glory. Perhaps that is so, to a limited point. But the glory which we see in God's special Son, the glory which leads to eternal life, is what we should remember and celebrate as we take the bread and the wine.

> George Booker, Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX

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

Letters to the Editor

I quite enjoyed the Bible School article (*We All Love Bible Schools*, November 2023), and of course, the author mentioned it was not comprehensive. I should mention that after Arkansas Bible School, the idea was next repeated not amongst the Amended ecclesias but the Ontario Unamended ecclesias, which became the Canadian Christadelphian Bible School. It has its origins in the Toronto Ossington and Hamilton West Ave. ecclesias.

Members of these meetings already had cottages up in Muskoka, and it made sense to start a Bible School up in Muskoka. It eventually moved to Haliburton, Ontario, where it remained until we had to leave due to us not drinking alcohol (the resorts were short of cash and needed the money that came from alcohol sales). At one point in the 1960s, the Bible School rented out three resorts and a campsite, as there were so many attendees. No member of any ecclesia was required to stay at home if they didn't have enough money. Plenty of members had their fees paid for out of ecclesial accounts, including my family. We had many wealthy members, which got us the connections to these resorts but also the money to pay for attendees short of cash.

It was life-changing for so many of our young people. At the time, no Central ecclesia in Ontario had anything like it.

> Glenn Lea, Berlin, Germany

IN WHOSE NAME?

Given Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Tim 3:16 that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable" as well as the warning in Rev 22:19, "if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life," I think it's important that we take great care when we propose that words be removed from Scripture because they seem to conflict with our understanding of the Word. I read with some interest, then, the recent article "In Whose Name?" (November 2023) and was motivated to do some further research on the subject. In the first paragraph, the article calls the words, "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" the Trinity formula. If they are the words of Christ, they are not the Trinity formula and rather than trying to remove wording that we are uncomfortable with, we need to seek to understand what Christ was saying.

The article rightly notes that there are no examples of the use of this wording in the baptisms recorded in the New Testament, but it doesn't seem that we have exact quotes of what the one performing the baptism said on any of these occasions. A good example is found in Acts 19. Here Luke records one of Paul's visits to Ephesus where he finds disciples. He asks if they have received the Holy Spirit and they respond that they haven't even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. This prompts Paul to question their baptism and they respond that they had received John's baptism.

Something about these disciples not knowing about the Holy Spirit prompts Paul to question their baptism. Could it be Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19? The record goes on to record that they were then baptized, "in the name of the Lord Iesus." That doesn't mean, however, that those were the exact words spoken by the one performing the baptism. Much (all?) of what we have in the New Testament record is just a brief summary of what occurred. Going back to our example from Acts 19, do we think that Paul's words in verse 4 are the complete record of what he said to them between verses 3 and 5, or do we think he elaborated on this topic? Could it also be that "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus" is shorthand that differentiated the baptism that the apostles performed from John's baptism or from the ritual bathing of the Jews? So, the fact that this wording isn't found elsewhere in the New Testament isn't proof that the wording in Matt 28:19 is spurious.

The article goes on to say that the "parallel accounts" don't mention baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is true, but the Mark account doesn't mention baptism into any name, the Luke account doesn't mention baptism at all, and the quote from John is not a parallel account (and doesn't mention baptism either). So, these quotes give no support for questioning the wording of Matthew 28:19.

In the next section of the article, the author finds it curious that not a single Greek manuscript from the first 300 years after Christ contains the "*in his name*" wording, and that "the entire last pages of every existing copy are missing." Again, this is true, but in fact, there are only 15 extant papyri fragments of Matthew's gospel that have been dated prior to AD 300 and most contain only a couple of verses. (Wikipedia, List of New Testament Papyri, October 18, 2023,wikipedia. org/wiki/List_of_New_Testament_ papyri)

It's true that none of these fragments include any portion of the last pages of Matthew's gospel, but they contain no portion of chapters 6-9, 15-18, 21, 27 or 28 and, all together, they contain less than 10% of Matthew's gospel, so the omission of the "in his name" phrase isn't curious at all. It's just that there are very few fragments of text that exist from this period. What we do know is that every existing Greek manuscript that contains Matthew 28:19 contains the standard wording. (Sean Finnegan, Restitutio.org, Is Matthew 28.19 a Forgery?, April 25, 2018, restitutio. org/2018/04/25/is-matthew-28-19-aforgery/)

The next argument is that early sources reference the existence of Aramaic copies of Matthew that may have been preserved in Shem Tov's work Eben Bohan. It's important to note that Shem Tov was anti-Christian and wrote his work specifically to argue against the trinitarian belief that Jesus is God and also argues against recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Giving his translation of 1380 AD more weight than the thousands of Greek manuscripts dating as far back as the 300s seems a little dubious. In fact, it wasn't until 1987 that George Howard first argued that Shem Tov's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew long predates the 14th century, and may better represent the original text. He argues that it is based on the record mentioned by Papias in the 2nd century. Other scholars reject Howard's opinion, noting that it contains late Hebrew idioms rather than early Hebrew and shows signs of Greek textual influence. (David Bivin, Jerusalem Perspective, Has a Hebrew Gospel Been Found, Oct 9, 2006, online version with comments. See comment dated Jun 22, 2021, www.jerusalemperspective. com/4067) One scholar, José-Vicente Nicolas Albarracin, has proposed a process for the creation of Shem Tov's translation starting with the Latin text of the Vulgate, not ancient Hebrew or Aramaic. (José-Vicente NICLÓS ALBARRACÍN, The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew in Shem Tob's Eben Bo an, Particular Features and Medieval Sources, Revue des Études Juives, pp.137-157).

The article also mentions that Eusebius, an early church historian, only uses the standard wording of Matthew 28:19 after the council of Nicaea, in 325 AD. However, the council of Nicaea didn't settle the trinity question. It deified Christ but the Creed of Nicaea did not mention the Holy Spirit as God. It wasn't until the creed was revised at the council of Constantinople in 380 that the Holy Spirit was defined as God. In the 60 years between these two councils, a debate raged about whether the Holy Spirit was God. If Matthew's text had been changed at this time to insert, *"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"* it would have provided great ammunition for the anti-trinitarians, but there doesn't seem to be any argument raised by them during this period that Matthew 28:19 had been altered.

The final argument raised in support of Matthew 28:19 having been changed is an admission by the Catholic church that it had done so. The article presents a quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia of 1913, Volume 2, pages 263 and 265. This quote, however, doesn't exist. This edition of the Catholic encyclopedia is available online archive.org/details/ catholicencyclop02herbuoft/page/262/ mode/2up) and nowhere does it even suggest that the Pope changed the wording of Matthew 28:19. The section on baptism runs from page 258 through 274 and the subsection starting on page 262 is about the form of words used in performing the baptism. It states that the wording, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" is the form of words given by Christ in Matthew 28:19. It goes on to say, "This is the command of Christ to His Disciples, and as the sacrament has its efficacy from Him Who instituted it, we cannot omit anything that He has prescribed. Nothing is more certain than that this has been the general understanding and practice of the Church." Far from claiming that a Pope changed the wording, the article argues that the wording "in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost" came from Christ.

In the end, it seems that the argument for Matthew 28:19 being a forgery is weak and insubstantial. In the closing comments the article asks why we, as Christadelphians, "reference a God we don't believe in" and, "Why would Jesus endorse a Triune God?" The simple answers are we don't, and he didn't. When we say those words, we're not referring to a Trinity, and Jesus wasn't endorsing a Triune God any more than he was endorsing a belief in a supernatural devil when he said, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Simply having the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the same sentence doesn't imply a belief in the Trinity, an idea that didn't even exist when Jesus spoke these words.

So why would Jesus say this and why would we use this wording in our baptisms? Brother Roger Lewis gave a wonderful exposition of the phrase in Matthew 28:19 in a class about our hymns at the Mid-Atlantic Bible School to which the reader is commended. It can be found online christadelphianbibletalks.com/ at studies/1920/Roger Lewis - Highlights from the Hymn Book (MACBS) - class 1 - Highlights from the Hymn Book (How to Sing with Understanding). mp3 and the relevant section starts about 12 minutes in.

Bro. Robert Roberts also comments on the passage in the Ecclesial Guide.

As regards the form of words, it is better to say, "baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", than simply "baptized into the Lord Jesus", for this reason: the first form of words keeps the truth concerning Christ in the foreground—that he is the manifestation of the Father by the Holy Spirit and that what he did, he did not of himself as a man; whereas the latter leaves the way open for the idea to grow up that Jesus came in his own name (which he expressly says he did not), and not in his Father's name (which he expressly says he did). (The Ecclesial Guide, Section 9. Baptismal Formula)

On the other hand, one could also argue that the standard wording leaves the door open for the idea to grow up that Jesus is part of a triune godhead and so the shorter wording is better. That seems to be the viewpoint that the author is concerned with in the article, but if we properly instruct candidates before baptism, we guard against both of these errors without seeking to remove from Scripture words that we may find difficult or uncomfortable.

> David Pommer, Pittsburgh Ecclesia, PA

AUTHOR RESPONSE

The question of the authenticity of the wording in Matthew 28:19 has been around for hundreds of years, featuring discussions by scholars such as Isaac Newton, Tyndale, Martin Luther, Coverdale, Conybeare and many more modern authors. There are two camps of thought: the one considered in the article *"In Whose Name?"* and the one described by Bro. David Pommer in his letter. Which is the more credible

baptism formula we should use? The one mentioned numerous times in the New Testament or the Trinty-slanted wording found only once?

The article did not question the inspiration of the Scriptures. We did not propose taking an exacto knife to the passage. The aim was to find an explanation for the evident disparate wordings. formulae baptism А hallmark of study practices espoused by Christadelphians is to use the whole Scriptures to conclude a doctrinal point. "In the name of Christ" appears at least a dozen times in the New Testament, the Matthew 28 language only once. So, where there is an outlier verse, such as Matthew 28:19, we must carefully research to find an explanation. That is taking an uncomfortable feeling and using it to further our understanding of God's mind, as revealed in the Scriptures.

Currently, students of the Word have many new tools. One of which is the benefit of newly discovered manuscripts and fresh analyses of the language. Thus, there are many documented deviations from the texts of the first English iterations of the Scriptures found in the 1611 King James Version. These modern findings are generally annotated in the margins or footnotes of newer translations. Some variations are simply copyist errors of spelling and grammar. Others are more substantial in missing or added wording. Reading the translation philosophy in the preface of a Bible version is a worthwhile exercise. For more details on this subject, please Internet search for "New Testament Verses not included in modern English

translations." It is up to the Bible student to make their own determination about their validity.

Bro. David is correct in saying we do not consider Matthew 28:19 to be the Trinity. It does not say that these three elements are co-equal, co-substantial and co-eternal as a part of the Godhead. However, Trinitarians do think this passage is about the Trinity. That is why we suggested using "in Christs' name" for baptisms. Christadelphians don't believe in the Trinity, but others outside the ecclesia or young people might think so and be confused. As for teaching our children and outsiders, it doesn't make sense to instruct them that God is one, but their baptism will be performed in "the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." Let's just skip that step and go for "in Christs' name."

Unfortunately, the material quoted in the article regarding the Catholic Church's changing of Mathew 28:19 was erroneously attributed to The Catholic Encyclopedia. It, however, was actually an opinion obtained by a review of material in pages of that work. In discussing the history of the baptism formula, it is stated that certain sects of Catholicism were permitted to still use the older form of baptism, in Christ's name, in a ruling by Bishop Stephen (Pope AD 254-257). Saying they deliberately changed the text of Matthew 28 was not entirely correct. But we can say that they changed the formula they practiced. When or how it came to appear in the Scriptural manuscripts, all of which date after the fourth century, we cannot tell. Neither can we tell which wording was in the earlier documents because they are

missing many pages, as Bro. David wrote.

As additional validation of the change in baptismal wording, Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) made this statement in *Introduction to Christianity*: 1968 edition, pp. 82, 83:

The basic form of our (Matthew 28:19 Trinitarian) profession of faith took shape during the course of the second and third centuries in connection with the ceremony

of baptism. As far as its place of origin is concerned, the text (Matthew 28:19) came from the city of Rome."

We thank Bro. David for his comments and for the addition to the discussion of this topic. It is commendable for us, like the Bereans, to eagerly search the Scriptures.

> Melinda Flatley, Pittsburgh Ecclesia, PA

We want to hear from you!

We value the thoughts of our readers and would appreciate your comments. If you have an insight on one of our recently published articles or possibly on a different topic, we'd love to share your perspective. Letters to the Editor should be generally kept to 500 words or less.

Please submit your letters to

editor@tidings.org

Thoughts on the Way Anna's Story

M^Y name is Hanna or Anna. I have lived longer than you young ones can imagine. I am almost fourscore years of age. For that matter, I have been a widow for many more years than most people have lived. My husband was a good man of the tribe of Asher, but he has been gone for so long now that I struggle to remember his face.

From an early age, I have had to fend for myself. After my husband died, I never received another offer of marriage. And unfortunately, I have no children or grandchildren who can care for me. Single women need a family to provide shelter and support for them, and when they are left alone, it becomes a difficult chore just to survive. As the years passed, I grew too old and too crippled to glean in the fields for my daily bread, as the Law suggests.

Finally, I came to appreciate one of David's psalms: "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself—a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God." (Psa 84:3) As other opportunities disappeared, I set out to apply for a place in the precincts of the great Temple of Herod, where I was accepted as a poor widow. Here, I have found food as well as shelter, enough on which to survive. I have also found useful work to do. Sometimes, it is watching over children who, for various reasons, have become little "birds" in the Temple and who need mothers and grandmothers to care for them. Sometimes it involves listening to and counseling younger women who are also destitute, who live and serve in the Temple. Some are singers in the Temple choir.

Of course, some of these younger women marry and leave the Temple, and all of us who are left behind rejoice with them when they find new and potentially rewarding lives. Others are not so fortunate and finally resign themselves to the life which we older ones live. And while serving in God's house in various capacities, we women at least have one another for friendship, understanding, and comfort.

I've always had a keen mind and a retentive memory. Probably more than almost any of the Temple women. I had listened to the priests and scholars as they read aloud from the holy Scriptures and commented on their meaning. As time went by, I began to speak of what I had learned to the other women of the Temple. There were times when, being a woman, I had insights into passages that eluded even the most educated rabbis among the men, maybe for the plain reason that they were men! Sometimes, though not too often, the men did not mind listening to an informed woman who knew something about the Scriptures.

Then, there were also the hours that I could spend with the other Temple women, sharing my thoughts on God's most holy Word. They were most appreciative because most men paid little attention to women's opinions. In time, they came to call me "Anna, the prophetess."

Simeon, a Righteous Man

It was during these last few years when I began to speak even in the company of the wise men at the Temple. I came to know Simeon, a righteous man of about my age who, like me, was also without family. I did not know him particularly well, and it would have been inappropriate for us to spend too much time together. But I heard him speak in the company of the students and scholars, and I recognized him as wise as well as devout. One day, I heard him tell the others, "I have had a revelation of that, I am sure. By the power of His Spirit and His angel, the LORD has told me that, despite my advanced age, I will live until I have seen His Anointed One, the Messiah."

It was an extraordinary statement, but no one who heard seemed to question his words. That was the kind of man Simeon was, a man of integrity. After that, Simeon spent every single day in the Temple area. He was waiting, I thought, for someone to arrive, and he clearly had no intention of missing him when he came.

Then, one day, it happened, but certainly not in the way one might expect. A young couple with a small baby arrived at the Temple to offer the sacrifice of purification and the gift for the redemption of their firstborn son. It was a scene that was played out so often in the House of the Lord that it did not seem in the least unusual—one more ceremony among thousands that had come before.

But not usual to Simeon! He stepped forward immediately with a blessing before any priest or Levite could do so. Then, solemnly and ceremonially,



he asked for the child. The young mother willingly handed him over. His name was Jesus, meaning "Savior." Then Simeon praised God in a voice much louder than normal. He seemed to want everyone nearby to hear his announcement:

"Lord God, just as You have promised, so it has happened. You have shown me your promised salvation, bound up in Your ancient revelations. And my eyes have seen that salvation, which You have prepared for all peoples. This child will be the great Light to enlighten Israel and the entire world. Heavenly Father, Your servant will now be pleased to depart this life in peace because he has witnessed such a wondrous salvation!"

Then Simeon turned to the mother and gently handed back the precious burden to her care. As he did this, he added: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:34-35)

As I listened, I had my own personal vision of a sort. I felt as though the sword that pierced her was piercing me, too. I thought that as he grew up, the baby Jesus would be loved by many but also hated by many others. Some will even wish him dead. One thing the Scriptures teach plainly is that any salvation for God's people must be bought with suffering and blood. The young woman who has borne this child will witness that shedding of blood. I shall pray for her. As a spectator, I thanked God at that very moment, grateful for the simple yet profound knowledge that had been conveyed to me, along with others. It must have been in just such a way that our Father in heaven speaks to His beloved child. Praise be to His glorious Name.

To the onlookers in the Temple, this little scene was over almost before it had begun. The little group of three, a man, woman, and child, departed as quickly as they could into obscurity. Some of us were still struggling to understand Simeon's message.

Some said the little family paused for no one but immediately returned to their home in Nazareth of Galilee, they assumed. It appeared that the family wanted to remain anonymous for their own safety, but especially for the protection of the child.

Some remembered the shepherds of Bethlehem, who had brought their young lambs as sacrifices to sell in the Temple marketplace for Passover just a few weeks earlier. These country shepherds had told a different but similar story about the birth of a special child who would be the Son of God. But then it was pointed out that the first incident happened near Bethlehem, just an hour's walk south of Jerusalem, while this young couple seemed to have come from Galilee, a poor, neglected region far to the north. This apparent discrepancy led scoffers to question all potential "revelations" as so much baseless nonsense. But I knew better. I knew the kind of man Simeon was, and I had seen the three from Galilee and heard Simeon's proclamation.

My New Resolution

Life continued on, day after day, and I needed to give attention to my ongoing duties in the precincts of the Temple. I hadn't forgotten what had happened that day, nor the part I had played also, not at all. But it had sunk somewhere deep in my consciousness.

It seems that Simeon came less and less to the Temple until one day, it dawned on me that I had not seen him in several weeks. I inquired of another man whom I saw often in the Temple, a man who was an acquaintance of Simeon. Was he ill? He informed me that, sadly, Simeon had passed away. And I remembered some of the last words he had spoken, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace." (Luke 2:29 NLT) So it had happened, but with this news, I felt sad no longer. My friend Simeon had indeed departed in peace, the sort of peace all men and women feel when they are satisfied to rely on the promises of God's holy prophets. This was a class to which that good man Simeon had most surely belonged. As the news of Simeon's departure sank in, I resolved to faithfully share his revelation with others as long as I breathed. I would tell anyone with ears to hear about the salvation that was coming, which had already arrived! There is no better way I can live the rest of my life. May the Lord God give me strength to the end.

> George Booker, Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX

Notes and References:

- Some of this story involves what we might call educated guesses, but I have tried to fill in the gaps in the Bible story with what might have been, not what is certain.
- Introduction: This story is told in Luke 2:22-38. The Law of Moses allowed poor people to glean in the field after the regular harvest (Lev 19:9; 23:22; Ruth 2:2,3). For the birds finding a home in God's House, see Psalm 84:3. As for Anna living in the precincts of the Temple, see the example of Huldah the prophetess (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22). The early Christian church seemed to follow a similar practice in supporting widows who could not support themselves (1 Tim 5:1-5). For female singers in the Temple choir, see Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67; and Psa 68:25.
- Simeon, a righteous man: The "consolation, or comfort, of Israel" refers to Isaiah 40:1, 2. Also compare Isaiah 61:1; 6:1, 3, 5; 57:1, 2; 62:11, 12; 52:10; 8:14, 15; 53:5, 7, 8, all quoted or alluded to by Simeon. The reference to the shepherds of Bethlehem is found in Luke 2:8-20.



is published monthly, except bimonthly in July-August, by The **Christadelphian Tidings**,

567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941.

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE PAID at Simi Valley, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Christadelphian Tidings, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee: Alan Markwith (Chairman), Joe Hill, John Bilello, Peter Bilello, Linda Beckerson, Nancy Brinkerhoff, Shawn Moynihan, Kevin Flatley, Jeff Gelineau, William Link, and Ken Sommerville.

Christadelphian Tidings Editorial Committee: Dave Jennings (Editor), Section Editors: Nathan Badger (Life Application), TBA (Exhortation and Consolation), Jessica Gelineau (Music and Praise), Steve Cheetham (Exposition), Richard Morgan (First Principles), Dave Jennings (Teaching and Preaching), Jan Berneau (CBMA/C), George Booker, (Thoughts on the Way, Q&A), John Bilello (Letters to the Editor), Jeff Gelineau (News and Notices, Subscriptions), Melinda Flatley (Writer Recruitment and Final Copy), and Shawn Moynihan (Books). **Subscriptions: The Tidings** Magazine is provided **FREE** for any who would like to read it. The Magazine is available in PDF Format online at **tidings.org**. If you would like to order a printed subscription to **The Tidings** you may do so simply by making a donation to cover the printing costs. The suggested donation for printing and shipping to the US is **\$70.00**; (we ask for a minimum donation of \$50.00.) Foreign countries are higher, see www.tidings.org.

All subscription information is available online at **www.tidings.org**. You may subscribe online and make donations online or by mail to the above address. Information on how to subscribe in other countires is also available online at **www.tidings.org/subscribe**.

The Christadelphian Tidings is published on the 15th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 1st of the month. Correspondence to the editor, Dave Jennings at editor@tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Letters should be sent via email to letters@tidings.org. Please include your name, address and phone number. The magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

©2023, Tidings Publishing Committee. In the spirit of Christ ask for permission before reproducing any material. Contact us at editor@tidings.org

CHRISTADELPHIAN MOMS SURVEY

The Tidings wants to help our community better understand the needs of families raising children of all ages today (from infant to young adult) and we have created a survey for moms to share their feedback.

This anonymous survey will be compiled to look at overall trends only. The more we learn from each other, the better we can support the next generation of families!

✓ What kinds of support are today's moms getting?

✔ What kinds of support might moms be looking for?

✓ How can ecclesias, or organizations like *The Tidings*, better provide needed resources?

You can find the survey here: www.mytidings.org/csm

If you are currently a mom raising kids, take the survey before it closes on February 15. And please share it with all the Christadelphian moms you know.

To make a donation or to subscribe, visit us at **WWW.TIDINGS.ORG**

The brothers and sisters who write for *The Christadelphian Tidings* do so on a voluntary basis, and the magazine is provided FREE to any who would like to read it. The magazine is available in digital formats online at www.tidings.org.

If you would like to order a printed subscription to *The Tidings*, you may do so simply by making a donation to help cover the printing and mailing costs. The suggesed donation is US\$70.00, and minimum donation is US\$35.00. (Check online for rates in other countries.) If you can afford to donate more, please do so in order to help out those that cannot afford to.

The Christadelphian Tidings of the Kingdom of God First Class Postage paid at Simi Valley, CA Send address corrections to: The Christadelphian Tidings 567 Astorian Drive Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941 Stay connected and up to date. Find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!

