

TIDINGS

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ISRAEL AND HER FOES



Building faith in the
Christadelphian community.

TIDINGS

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EDITORIAL / ISRAEL

- Israel and Her Foes**, Dave Jennings..... 2
Cheering for Israel?, Bill Link 8
Israel's Last Tribulation, Ted Sleeper 14

ANNOUNCEMENT

- Retirement of John Bilello**, Alan Markwith..... 24

LIFE APPLICATION

- Radical**, Nathan Badger 26

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

- Kingdom Citizenship**, John Laben 33

MOTHERS IN ISRAEL

- Bible Study for Moms**, Julie Snobelen 38

BIBLE STUDIES

- A Fresh Look at Jonah**, David Carroll 42

FIRST PRINCIPLES

- Edenic Law and the Book of Romans (4)**, Richard Morgan 50
Biblical Unitarianism and the Dark Ages, Richard Morgan..... 55

BOOK REVIEW

- Breaking the Cycle**, Andrew and Julie Weller 60

PREACHING AND TEACHING

- St. Lucia**, Mike LeDuke..... 65
Outreach Trips, Benoit Mukendi 66

THOUGHTS ON THE WAY

- Tomorrow's Headlines**, George Booker 72

ISRAEL AND HER FOES

FEW topics are more essential to Christadelphian doctrine than Israel. We have been united as a community for almost 170 years over the critical place of Israel in God's plan—past, present, and future. Scripture tells us Israel is the apple of God's eye (Deuteronomy 32:9-10; Lamentations 2:18; Zechariah 2:8). Just as we carefully guard our extremely tender and sensitive cornea, God cares deeply about His people and watches over them.

As we view the constant animosity and conflict between the current nation of Israel and the surrounding nations, it is easy, and perhaps convenient, to view those who are against Israel as evil and irredeemable. When we see atrocities like the Gaza massacre of October 7, 2023, we rightly abhor the behavior of Hamas. It was a senseless attack that resulted in an escalation of violence and bloodshed. But also, the revenge of Israel and the loss of life of tens of thousands in Gaza is repugnant. Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ need to caution against polarizing our perception that either side of this conflict warrants such violence. When we take a position with friends of our unremitting support of everything that secular Israel does, we sound obtuse.

We need to explore how God sees the current foes of the region against Israel. Are the nations surrounding Israel incurable enemies to be destroyed as part of God's plan with Israel?

Certainly not.

The Vision of Isaiah 19

There are countless references in Scripture to Israel being God's people. But Isaiah reminds us of how the work of Jesus Christ will one day unite the household of Abraham in a way we might not expect.

In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. (Isaiah 19:23-25).

Did you notice which group was called God's people? Egypt! And who were described as the "work of my hands"? Assyria! Israel is included with Egypt and Assyria and is described as God's "inheritance." This vision is remarkable, showing what will be accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ upon his return. It brings peace and free movement to the household of Abraham: Hagar from Egypt and the houses of Bethuel and Laban from the area we know today as Syria. This "highway" will also facilitate the recovery of the people of Israel (Isaiah 11:10-12). It encompasses the territory promised to the king that "he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Psalm 72:8).

As we look at the developing news daily, imagining such harmony and freedom of movement between

Israel and her neighbors is almost impossible. Men have tried to craft peace treaties and agreements that would patch together concord. But in every case, it is a bag with holes. There can be no true, lasting peace until the King of Peace rules from Jerusalem.

Our Perspective About Israel's Enemies

The press shapes the public's perceptions of what is transpiring. We are shocked by the images of destruction and suffering and the narrative linked to it. In the news in late 2023, the press fed us content that demonized members of Hamas in Gaza, and rightly so. But as time progressed, the narrative shifted because of the extremity of the IDF invasion of Gaza and the unthinkable human suffering. People who once rallied for Israel after the October 7 Gaza massacre are now turning against Israel and its actions.

That is the perspective of the secular world. Public opinion shifts like the wind. However, as believers, we must shape our perspective using the Word of God, not the national broadcasting organizations. How does God see this situation?

When we look back at the history of Israel, we see a long list of countries that were enemies of Israel. They were involved in scenes similar to or worse than the October 7, 2023, Gaza massacre. The prophets documented the list of people who had been enemies of Israel. In some cases, God actually strengthened the nations that became adversaries to Israel. God fought against Israel because of their rebellion to humble them and have them turn

to Him. But what is striking when we read Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets is that these nations were judged for their cruelty and arrogance when persecuting Israel. Nebuchadnezzar had already burned the temple and sacked Jerusalem when he was walking in his opulent palace in Babylon, declaring how he himself had accomplished all these victories. It was then, in his foolish pride, that God abased him and drove him like a wild beast until he came to recognize that *"the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men."* (Daniel 4:30-32). God used nations like Assyria and Babylon to accomplish His will (Isaiah 10:5-7; 43:14). But their Divine punishment was due to the cruelty and pride they exhibited toward God's people. Others, such as Tyre, were destroyed because they gloated over the desolation of Judah. (Ezekiel 26:1-3). Nations may have military success against Israel, but they will be brought to their knees if they attack the apple of God's eye. The persecution of Israel by many nations was often with purpose. God used these people to demonstrate that Israel's only hope was to turn to the LORD of hosts.

Is the hatred and cruelty today of Israel's neighbors just another manifestation of what God has allowed over the centuries to redeem His people? Israel today is a prideful, secular nation, trusting in their own might and ingenuity and not in God. The October 7 Gaza attack may have been an attempt to wake His people. Sadly, it seems to have driven them even further to trusting in their own arm.

The Bad Guys?

The media and Hollywood frequently demonize the Arab people and Muslims in general. They have become the convenient “bad guys.” They tell a story of all Muslims being suspected terrorists and enemies of the West and Israel. This notion is simply not true. Not all Arab or Muslim people are enemies of Israel, and it is quite inappropriate to put them all into one box of irredeemable people. Are the Arab people and the Egyptians seen by God as people to be discarded because of their adversarial behavior toward Israel? Scripture says, “No!”

The inhabitants of ancient Assyria and much of the Arab world represent a people to become a third with Israel and Egypt. That’s incredibly hard to see from the events of our time. The people inhabiting ancient Assyria have been at Israel’s throat for nearly one hundred years. Egypt has vacillated between neutrality and animosity toward Israel for more than sixty years.

We need to be very careful when we speak of Israel’s present enemies. When we speak of nations like Syria, Iraq, and many of the Arab peoples, we must see them as God sees them. He sees in them people with whom He can work—a people who can give glory to His Name. Daniel tells us that when the King of the North rolls through, “*many countries shall be overthrown*” (Daniel 11:41), not just Israel. Daniel further tells us that the conquering host will “*have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt.*” (Daniel 11:42-43). The King of the North and his confederates will oppress Egypt. The Egyptians will also be looking for a savior. But ultimately, the northern invader who will defy our Lord will face inevitable destruction in the fields of Armageddon. The confederate nations of Ezekiel 38-39 are not the people identified in Isaiah 19.





The Muslim People

I was quite surprised when I listened to a Christmas address by Iranian President Ahmadinejad in 2008. He recognized Christian and Jewish prophets and texts predating Islam in his address. He spoke positively of the Muslim belief that Jesus Christ was a great prophet who would return to the earth. His view, however, was that Jesus would come to condemn Israel and the Western powers for their “bullying, ill-tempered and expansionist” leaders who have strayed far from Jesus’ path.¹

We do not intend this article to defend Mr. Ahmadinejad or the current Iranian leaders for their attacks on Israel from Iran. However, we need to consider that while Iran is officially a Muslim nation, it is mainly because of an oppressive government that persecutes those who pursue Christianity. But surprisingly, we learn that “In the past two decades, Iran has had the fastest growing church in the world—even though the Bible is illegal,” points out Nima Alizadeh, one of the many Iranian converts to Christianity in the last couple of decades.² Of these converts, most are

fervently pro-Israel, bowing their knees to the Jewish Messiah—with kindled affection toward the Jewish people.”³ As a community, we are very thankful to have so many Iranian refugee brothers and sisters who, under great duress, embraced the truth and were baptized into Christ.

The Muslim doctrine of Allah is non-Triune. There is a wide gap between how Muslims see God and mainstream Christendom, which embraces the doctrine of the Trinity. Our view of God’s character differs from the way Muslims see Him, but we are similar in our view that there is only one God. Because of this, refugees from Muslim areas are quite surprised to learn of communities like the Christadelphians and others that reject the Triune God teaching and recognize the one true God.

How Could Isaiah 19 Unfold?

There is no way for any man to engineer a lasting peace in the Middle East, such as is described by the Prophet Isaiah. This will only be accomplished by the Lord Jesus. How long will it take for

the Muslim people to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ upon his return? How long will it take for them to accept an elevated status along with Israel and Egypt? How long will it take for them to glorify God and accept that “*out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*” (Isaiah 2:3)? Undoubtedly, the work of the saints will be deployed to make this centuries-old chasm disappear. I suspect these people will be among the first to understand and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

Egypt has a long and spotty history with Israel. It has been the sustainer, the oppressor, the ally, and the betrayer. Egypt has been, as Rabshakeh said to Hezekiah, reliably unreliable. (2 Kings 18:20-21). How long will it take for a crushed and occupied Egypt to plea to God for deliverance when the King of the North is in their land?

Our Lips

Certainly, we are fully committed to supporting God’s people. That does not mean we endorse the violence and military policies of the current government or IDF. These policies are completely devoid of trust in God. We pray for the redemption of the Jews, but we must also accept that God intends to reunite the terribly fractured house of Abraham. This change will include some nations that are enemies today. We may have to expand our notion of who God considers His people with Isaiah 19 in mind.

In the following article, Bro. Bill Link discusses “*Cheering for Israel.*” Bill helps us to see that supporting God’s people doesn’t equate to accepting every secular and military objective of the nation today. Doing so is a very slippery slope, and we need to understand what we do and don’t support.

Ultimately, it is God’s plan and purpose to redeem all nations. People we see as arch enemies will, in the powerful hand of God, be transformed into people who give Him glory and honor. Because of this, we need to jettison all thoughts of nationalism that may lead us in opposition to the thinking of our God. God doesn’t view men and women as Iranians, Americans, Canadians, Australians, Chinese, Russians, or any other nation. We are all part of the “*sea*” that Jesus comes to calm and eventually eliminate (Revelation 21:1). This is the lofty role of the saints: to teach the nations and proclaim liberty and righteousness.

Let our lips speak of love for **all** men, for it is the very purpose of our Lord to usher in a new world order that includes all nations. That is, after all, the very definition of the gospel message. (Galatians 3:8) Our Lord’s Kingdom will end oppression, cruelty, violence, and antisemitism, finally bringing harmony to the family of Abraham.

Dave Jennings

¹ The full address of Mr. Ahmadinejad may be viewed on YouTube. The article referenced is from the *Los Angeles Times*, Ahmadinejad’s Christmas Message, December 25, 2008.
² *How Iran Became a Hotspot for Christianity*, Crossway.org, April 28, 2023.
³ *Iran’s Christian Boom*, Pipes, Daniel, Newsweek, June 24, 2021.

CHEERING FOR ISRAEL?

*Our thinking about Israel sometimes morphs
from the spiritual to the political.*

By Bill Link



ON October 7, 2023, Hamas launched 5,000 rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip, and 6,000 Palestinians rushed across the border. They killed 1,200 people, most of whom were civilians.¹ The invaders committed many atrocities, including acts of sexual violence and mutilation.² They took 251 hostages, including women, children (at least ten were under six years old), and the aged (at least nine were over eighty years old).³

The Israeli government vowed to recover all of the hostages, to destroy Hamas, and to ensure that Gaza would never again be a threat to Israel. On October 27, 2023, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) initiated a large-scale invasion of Gaza. The IDF put in place a complete blockade of the territory and began a devastating bombardment that left at least 80% of the population homeless, the territory's infrastructure demolished, and, as of this writing, over 40,000 killed; these include 6,000 women and over 10,000 children.⁴

Hamas claimed its attacks were justified, prompted by many years of Israeli oppression. The Hamas charter calls for the "obliteration" of Israel and says it is the religious duty of Muslims to "fight Jews and kill them." Israel, Hamas says, has no right to exist.

Initial responses to the October 7 attacks were strongly supportive of Israel across the world. There were forty-four nations that "publicly expressed their unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and explicitly decried its tactics as terrorism."⁵ At least 20 nations said that Israel had a right to defend itself forcefully.⁶

Over the fourteen months that have passed, the world has watched horrible scenes of destruction in Gaza. The full-throated support of Israel's friends has quieted. Israel is increasingly portrayed as a heartless colonial aggressor that exists on stolen land. Its response is labeled as far from proportionate, and as a result, sympathy for the Palestinian cause has grown.

What should our attitude be toward all this, as Christadelphians?

Our Natural Sympathies

Our natural sympathies are with Israel for three reasons.

First, because the Jews are God's chosen people, we think of God's word to Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you." (Genesis 12:3). We recall God's unbreakable covenant that Israel will abide forever (Jeremiah 31:35-37) and Zechariah's word: "thus says the LORD of hosts... he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:8).

The Apostle Paul describes the Jews as "beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Romans 11:28-29).

The second reason our sympathies are with Israel is our recognition of the long history of Jewish suffering and the deep yearning of its people for peace in their homeland. In fulfillment of the prophetic word, the Jews became dispersed through all nations.⁷ The Scriptures vividly portray the uncertainties and hardship of Jewish life among the nations:

And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there

the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, "Oh, that it were evening!" And at evening you shall say, "Oh, that it were morning!" because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. (Deuteronomy 28:65-67).⁸

Over the last thousand years, Spain, France, England, Switzerland, Hungary, Portugal, Italy, and other countries have expelled Jews. The countries of Poland, Russia, and Germany viciously persecuted them. And yet, for all this, they retained their identity as a people. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Zionist movement brought Jews back to their land, fleeing Russian persecution. German atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s resulted in many thousands of displaced Jews. The time was right for British colonial rule in

Palestine to come to an end, and in 1947, the newly formed United Nations proposed a partition of the land into Jewish and Arab states. In 1948, the modern state of Israel became official, and over the next five years, more than 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel,⁹ more than doubling its Jewish population.

This brings me to the third reason our natural sympathies are with Israel: The existence of a modern nation of Israel is one of the most emphatic proofs of the inspiration of Scripture.

"Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob," says the LORD, "Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, And no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will



correct you in justice. And will not let you go altogether unpunished.” (Jeremiah 30:10-11).

In 1848, John Thomas wrote:

The restoration of Israel is a most important feature in the divine economy. It is indispensable to the setting up of the Kingdom of God...here is, then, a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the Kingdom.¹⁰

So, Christadelphians naturally feel a great excitement about the existence of a modern nation of Israel. We know that the Jews are God’s chosen people, that they have suffered terribly, and that the formation of a modern nation of Israel was an essential antecedent to the second coming of the Lord. We rejoice in Israel’s existence.

And we condemn the aggression of Israel’s opponents. In its 1948 declaration of statehood, Israel said,

We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land.

While the declaration was being read, six Arab armies pounced, their goal to drive the Jews into the sea. The present conflict has its roots in that aggression.

How Should Believers Feel About Israel’s War With Hamas?

Our thinking about Israel sometimes morphs from the spiritual to the political. I’ve heard brethren echoing Israel’s prime minister, saying that the destruction in Gaza is sad but necessary, that the devastation Israel has rained on Gaza is justified, that

Bental, Merom Golan, Israel

Israel has, in fact, been very careful to avoid civilian casualties, that Hamas deserves all the blame for using its people as human shields. Besides, all Palestinians are pro-Hamas, so they deserve to suffer.

Such casual hard-heartedness is not becoming of us as brothers and sisters of Christ.

What's more, there is no need for us to try to justify Israel's actions. To do so is to overlook an essential feature of Bible prophecy, that Israel's restoration would be as an unspiritual, hard-hearted nation.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations... [I will] bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.'" (Ezekiel 36:22-27).

An uninspired prophet might have said, "Someday, Israel, everything will turn out fine for you because you are good people and deserve it." But God's word portrays the newly reborn nation as filthy and stony-hearted, in need of a new spirit.¹¹ Israel's behavior in Gaza is consistent with that picture. Her self-reliant spirit is epitomized by the words

of her first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, spoken on May 19, 1948, just five days after the new state came into existence:

Never have we lost faith in the conscience of mankind. Always we shall demand of the world what is justly ours. But morning and evening, day in and day out, we must remind ourselves that our existence, our freedom, and our future are in our own hands. Our own exertions, our own capacity, our own will, they are the key.¹²

Stirring words, but with no mention of God! As John Thomas noted in *Elpis Israel*:

The pre-advantual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him.¹³

We love the Jewish people and are thrilled at the existence of the modern nation. But this does not mean that we should be politically pro-Israel or try to justify her bad behavior.

Praying For The Solution

Seeing the terrible suffering in the holy land and throughout the earth, we should never harden our hearts. *"Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard."* (Proverbs 21:13).

But what can we do?

We can pray for the peace of Jerusalem and lament for the suffering of the afflicted. In the Olivet prophecy, Jesus said that *"unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved;*

but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:22). I have always read this as meaning that "for the elect" the days would be shortened, as they were during the Egyptian plagues.¹⁴ But that's not what the passage says. It says "for the elect's sake"—literally, **because** of the elect.¹⁵ I suggest the passage might also mean the elect will pray the days be shortened, God will hear that prayer and respond, and the suffering will end—for everyone, not just the elect.¹⁶

Let us pray for our Lord's soon return and his reign of righteousness and

peace when he establishes his house as a house of prayer for all nations, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4), and when Israel will have a new heart and spirit.

Bill Link,
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1 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-new-idf-assessment-shows-some-6000-gazans-invaded-israel-on-oct-7/>

2 <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>

3 At least 36 of the hostages were under 18 years old, with 10 being 5 years old or younger. At least 48 of the hostages were 55 years old or older, including 9 that were 80 years old or older. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/28/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-hostages-status.html>

4 <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-war-palestinians-statistics-40000-7ebec13101f6d08fe10cedbf5e172dde>

5 <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/international-reactions-hamas-attack-israel>

6 *Ibid.*

7 Deuteronomy 28:64, Leviticus 26:33, Ezekiel 36:19 and Luke 21:24 (all of which see in their context) are a few among many passages speaking of the Jewish scattering, or "diaspora." The English word diaspora is borrowed from Greek, used of the Jewish people in John 7:35, James 1:1, and 1Peter 1:1, based on a vivid word picture of the broadcast sowing of seed.

8 All Bible references are from the NKJV.

9 <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-immigration-to-israel-by-year>

10 John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, Chapter 17; https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Elpis_Israel

11 This two-stage restoration, first natural then spiritual, is hinted at in the dry bones prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-14. The bones come together; flesh, tendons, and skin cover them, but there is no breath in them. It is only when the winds (ruach, also translated spirit) blow life into them that they live as a mighty army in their own land.

12 From Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return: The Struggle for a Jewish Homeland*, page 309.

13 John Thomas, *loc. cit.*

14 Israel's livestock were spared in the fifth plague (Exodus 9:4); Goshen was spared the plague of hail in the seventh (Exodus 9:26); there was light in the dwellings of Israel in the ninth plague (Exodus 10:23); and the Passover provided for the sparing of the Jewish firstborns in the tenth plague (Exodus 12:23).

15 The exact same Greek construction is used in John 12:42 and 1Corinthians 11:10, where "for the sake" clearly has nothing to do with benefit.

16 2 Peter 3:12 can be read similarly. The Cambridge Bible Commentary says, "the thought of the Apostle is that the 'day of God' is not immutably fixed by a Divine decree, but may be accelerated by the readiness of His people or of mankind at large."

ISRAEL'S LAST TRIBULATION

There is growing concern among the Western nations that Israel is going too far in their bombing and destruction in Gaza. This development may lead to an increasing isolation of Israel in the larger world that prophecy leads us to expect.

By Ted Sleeper

HOW close are we to Jesus' return? Quick answer? I don't know. But, given the events in Israel and Europe, it would be good to remind ourselves of what God has told us about these days. Before we get into this, let me ask the reader an important question: Why should we care about Israel? Consider what Paul says:

*If their [the Jewish people] being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but **life from the dead**?* (Romans 11:15).¹

Clearly, we tie our hope of resurrection to Israel's fortunes!

Why?

If some of the branches were broken off, and you [the Gentiles], being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. (Romans 11:17-18).

If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29).

We, as Gentiles, have been grafted into the people of Abraham that we might partake of the promises made to Abraham, granting us status as an **inseparable part** of the Jewish people.

I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has

happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:25-26).

This thought shows that the day of Israel's salvation will mark the beginning of God's Kingdom on earth and, therefore, **the day of our salvation**.

God's Purpose With The Jews

To understand God's purpose with the natural offspring of Abraham, we need to remember the foundational promise made to God's friend:

I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. (Genesis 17:7-8).

What are the key elements of this promise?

- God's firm and declared purpose is to be **the God of the family of Abraham**, and they will be **His People**.
- God will give Abraham and his family the **land of Canaan** as their permanent possession.

All prophecies concerning the Jews have the fulfillment of these two promises as their **focus and goal**. For example:

*I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and **they shall be My people, and I will be their God**, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. (Jeremiah 24:6-7).*

*Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; **I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.** They shall be My people, and I will be their God. (Jeremiah 32:37-38).*

Note the intense passion of God for His People and the fulfillment of His declared purpose in these passages. We can see that everything going on now on this earth concerning the Jewish people is directed towards working out this purpose! So, let's see what all this means to us now.

The Beginning and the End

Before continuing, read through Daniel 2:37-45, then consider these questions about Nebuchadnezzar's image:

- How many great empires do you count? (Five)
- What were these world powers? (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Iron and Clay)
- What is the common element? (All exercised power over God's land and God's people.)

- What happened to the 4th world power? When was this fulfilled?

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24).

In AD 70, the nation of Israel, its capital city and holy temple, were completely destroyed by the Romans. The Romans sold the Jewish people into captivity and scattered them into all nations. **In essence, there was no more a Jewish nation or land to rule over!**

Why is May 1948 significant? Because the "*times of the Gentiles*" of which Jesus spoke are now coming to a close! Why? After almost 2000 years of wandering, the dispersed Jews became a nation again in their own land in 1948.

Why is June 1967 significant? Remember Jesus' words: "*Jerusalem will be trodden down until...*" When Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is finally back in Jewish

hands, a significant step forward in fulfilling this prophecy will arrive. This event is what happened in 1967.

What does this all mean? It means the stage is **now** set for developing that fifth and last great power to exert its control over God's people and their land.

The Fifth Power: The Ten Toes of Iron and Clay

The iron fragments are the remnants of the Roman world and culture (the fourth element in the image). Today, these powers are in Mediterranean and European areas. It has always been a marvel that for almost 2,000 years, Greco-Roman ideas have continued to guide the Western world's political, cultural, religious, and intellectual shape.

But who is the clay? Until early 2000, the identity of the clay was unclear. What surfaced in the popular press then gave shape to a most astonishing change. For the first time, the Arabs have succeeded in invading Europe. In fact, they are on the cusp of becoming a significant part of Europe's population! According to Pew Research in 2017:

The Muslim share of Europe's total population has been increasing steadily and will continue to grow in the coming decades. From mid-2010 to mid-2016 alone, the share of Muslims in Europe rose more than one percentage point, from 3.8% to 4.9% (from 19.5 million to 25.8 million).²

And, very much in accordance with Daniel's prophecy, they do not mix with Roman iron at all.

So, what holds them together? Since the mid-1970s, Euro-Arab collaboration has developed at all levels: political, economic, religious, educational, and scientific. This structure has become the channel for Arab immigration into Europe and the development of Europe's and the Arabs' anti-Israel policy and anti-Americanism. One political commentator has called this collaboration a "symbiosis," i.e., a mutually beneficial relationship between two peoples or groups.

One other thing that keeps Arabs and Western Europeans united is their shared hatred of all things Jewish.

So, the iron and clay now exist as one element. All that remains is for ten powers to emerge from this "symbiosis." Wikipedia had an interesting entry about this:

In 2010, the estimate of the Arab population in Europe was approximately 6 million (the total number of the Arab population in Europe described below is 6,370,000 people), mainly concentrated in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Greece.

These are twelve nations with a sizeable Arab population. It is important to notice that Iran and Egypt are not on the above list, and for good reason. While 90% of Egyptians identify as Muslims, the people are Egyptians, not Arabs. Likewise, while 98% of Iranians are Muslims, the majority of the population are Persians, not Arabs.

The Mountains of Israel

And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: Because the enemy has said of you, "Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession," therefore prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord God: Because they made you desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people— therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around— therefore thus says the Lord God: Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country. (Ezekiel 36:1-5).



Why are the mountains of Israel so important? They are clearly the focus of the prophecy above. Notice the behavior and attitude of the enemy. What does the enemy do?

- They take possession of the land of God with the help of “the rest of the nations which are all around.” (v. 4-5).
- Takes possession of the ancient holy places of the Jews (v. 2).
- Plunders and destroys the area they take over (v. 4-5). Who would do something like this?
- Causes God’s land and people to be mocked and ridiculed by the world’s nations (v. 3, 6).

Why should this prophecy be vital to us today? What do you notice about these two areas? The “mountains of Israel” are what we today call the “West Bank.” This is a prophecy about today!

Who wants this area today and why? “Edom” (v. 5) seems to play the most prominent role in opposing Israel. Who is “Edom” today? Edom is the name given to the nation and descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:8). The key to understanding this prophecy is to understand what happened to Esau. At the hands of Jacob, Esau lost his birthright, which gave him the **leadership** of the Abrahamic family and the family blessing, the inheritance of the **land** promised to Abraham. It is

easy to understand from this what Esau wants: What he lost: both the **rulership** and the **land!**

Why is this prophecy and Ezekiel 35 about mountains? God gave Mt Seir to Esau as his inheritance, hence the conflict between the two mountains. Esau lost the mountains of Israel, and now he wants **both** Mt Seir and the mountains of Israel for his possession.

Who are the descendants of Esau today? The Arabs, but especially, I suggest, the **Palestinian** Arabs.

What do the Palestinians want? They want the West Bank and Gaza as an independent state. Yet, if you look at any Palestinian textbook or any map produced for the Muslim world, you will not find Israel on it anywhere. As Ezekiel prophesied, these descendants of Esau want **all the land.**

What is the outcome of this controversy?

Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations. Therefore thus says the Lord God: I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame. (Ezekiel 36:6-7).

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in



the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:26-28).

Notice two things:

- The surrounding nations (Arab countries) will not succeed.
- God will fulfill His promises to Abraham—the descendants of Abraham will inherit His land, and they, the Jewish people, will, at last, become God's People!

Closer Look At The Drama Of The Last Days

The prophet Zechariah gives us a close-up look at these dramatic events prophesied by Ezekiel.

The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of

the earth are gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:1-3).

Notice it is a time of “siege” in Judah and Jerusalem. A siege is an effort to “bottle up” the people of an area, block supplies and other essentials, and, in general, disrupt the enemy's life. The Arabs call this siege activity an “Intifada.” There have been three Intifadas so far. A fourth is underway now with the rockets and bombs from Gaza and Lebanon.

Will the Palestinians succeed in their “siege?” The prophecy says that God will give them a “cup of drunkenness.” This image is pretty transparent. How successful would a drunk man be in a real fight? That will be the same for the Palestinians: They will never succeed in their efforts to bring Israel to its knees.

Now consider the difference between this and Zechariah 14.

Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be



cut off from the city. (Zechariah 14:1-2).

Can you spot the differences?

- Here, Israel's enemies now succeed! Why? The key phrase is in verse 2, "I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem." It is the exact phrase found in Joel 3:11-12.
- The spoil is divided in the city. This enemy has no intention of leaving the city; they consider it theirs.
- But only half the city is taken, and not all of it. Why? Because the nations of the world will only allow the Palestinians to have what they promised them—half the city.
- Finally, notice there is a "remnant" that God protects in the city, a remnant that will "not be cut off." Why are they so significant? Compare Joel 2:32. Joel is very clear: there will be a remnant in Jerusalem that God will protect and shield from the enemy. Indeed, it will be for **their** sake that He sends their Messiah and Deliverer.

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights

in the day of battle. (Zechariah 14:3).

And how does God "fight" on the day of battle? Consider the testimony of these two Scriptures:

It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand. (Zechariah 14:13).

I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother. (Haggai 2:22).

Amazingly, God turns the enemy, those "round about," **against each other!**

What is startling is that the Arab world is actually already split into two warring factions, the Sunnis, and the Shi'ites. They hate each other! God will use this hatred on the day of their apparent victory to turn them against each other.

Jerusalem, Israel





And how will the enemy become so confused that they destroy each other?

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You. (Zechariah 14:4-5.)

When the feet of our Lord Jesus touch the Mount of Olives at the very place he ascended 2,000 years ago, the result will be an earthquake of inconceivable magnitude. The word “Azal” in verse 5 can mean the “root of the mountain.”

This meaning might indicate that this earthquake will actually tear the Mount of Olives in two right down to its foundation! This event would be a catastrophe of major proportions, probably creating shockwaves and tsunamis throughout this earth.

The end result will be as God declared: The LORD will give His people victory over all their enemies. And, at last, Yahweh, our God, will be King over all this earth!

We might rightly feel this should be this prophecy's final, triumphant statement, but it isn't. Here is how this prophecy concludes:

In that day “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come

and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 14:20-21).

This prophecy closes with an amazing statement: *“There shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.”* Does this seem strange? Perhaps not quite fitting? We may find this peculiar until we remember what Abraham saw when he entered the land God promised to give him for his inheritance: *“And the Canaanites were then in the land.”* (Genesis 12:6).

Zechariah’s prophecy couldn’t end on a more satisfying note: Finally, the Canaanites will no longer be in this land because **Abraham will have at last entered his inheritance with all his children.**

A perfect ending to a most powerful prophecy!

Reflections

As this article is being written, many Christadelphians have eyes on Gaza (Hamas-controlled, sending rockets and mortar shells) and the West Bank (Fatah-controlled, stabbings). Also, Hezbollah to the north of Israel in Lebanon is sending its rockets into Israel. To this, we can add the Houthis in Yemen, who are launching rockets and drones at Israeli-linked shipping in the Red Sea.

Israel has responded to all these attacks, but most especially to Hamas

in Gaza. In this case, organizations are portraying Israel’s response as “genocide.” There is a billboard on the freeway near me with that very message with the sad face of a Gazan child.

What does this all mean?

There seem to be more Arab nations around Israel that are turning against Israel. There is also a growing concern among the Western nations that Israel is going too far in their bombing and destruction in Gaza. This development may lead to an increasing isolation of Israel in the larger world that prophecy leads us to expect.

Does this mean the prophecies we have considered are moving toward fulfillment? Perhaps, but we should be cautious. We need to continue to watch the unfolding of these events. I believe what is happening now is laying a foundation for fulfilling these prophecies, but the current situation doesn’t seem to be the actual fulfillment.

So, we continue to wait and watch and pray for the soon return of God’s Son as the only real solution to all the things we see going on in the Middle East and also in our own countries, including the destruction of the moral foundations that have given us some relative calmness in our ordinary and spiritual lives. How much longer this will continue should also be a concern.

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

² See <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>

RETIREMENT OF BRO. JOHN BILELLO



THE word “retirement” is not a word that one could or should apply to Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI). John has served the community in many ways for 31 years, including his roles on the *Tidings* magazine committee. He was our first chairperson and continued in that role for fifteen years. He also served as a book editor for many years. Now, at 86, he has decided to refocus his energies through further article writing and speaking engagements.

John has been a member of ecclesias in North America from New York to California, and currently, the Midwest at Ann Arbor. On multiple occasions, he lived overseas and was a member of ecclesias in the UK. These experiences gave him great insight into the spiritual needs of brothers and sisters of diverse backgrounds. All this helped to equip him in his contributions to the Christadelphian *Tidings* Magazine and in sharing the word by teaching at

multiple Bible Schools across North America and sharing studies with brothers and sisters in Australia, the U.K., New Zealand, China, and South Africa.

While most visible, his work and contributions to the *Tidings* were not a solo effort. While not officially a committee member, his wife, sister Mary Bilello, provided John with daily support during his tenure. It began with joint chores of stuffing, addressing, and stamping envelopes for thousands of hard copies of the magazine and fulfilling book orders for many years. Mary's help went far beyond. She has been that spiritual confidant, a help meet for him, a true partner, providing sound Scriptural counsel on articles and issues that would come to the attention of the *Tidings*. Some descriptions of a virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 come to mind:

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.... She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She openeth her mouth with wisdom...he praiseth her.
(Proverbs 31:11, 12, 28).

John has provided steady leadership and counsel to the *Tidings* committee and editorial team for over thirty years, as many topics needed spiritual wisdom based on a sound understanding of Godly principles. John has shared similar counsel through many articles and has authored several books to benefit the community. His book, "*Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage*," is an example of one that has helped many in the community. A free PDF copy of the book can be downloaded at: tidings.org

John has worked tirelessly to help build the faith of brothers and sisters in the way of Christ. We would be remiss if we did not mention the disappointment John has felt, that despite 50+ years of prayerful effort, we have not yet seen the uniting of the body of Christ in North America (Amended, Unamended, and CGAF). There are various opinions as to why not. John's perspective is that it comes down to a lack of trust and humility on the part of all. He believes that if the brethren step up and apply these missing pieces, our Heavenly Father will bless them.

John's added passion and encouragement for all of us is the need to share the Word and preach more—not just through committees and organized events but personally, one-on-one, with friends, neighbors, colleagues, and family members. We commend his most recent article, <https://tidings.org/articles/our-sufficiency-is-from-god/>, as it reflects the importance he sees in preaching to a world without a shepherd.

While no longer formally on the *Tidings* Committee, we will no doubt continue to seek his input and counsel as much as possible. Thank you, Bro. John, and Sis. Mary, for all your years of service.

*On behalf of the Tidings Committee
and Editorial Team,*

*Alan Markwith,
Chairman,
The Christadelphian Tidings
Publishing Committee*

RADICAL

*God has called all of us to enter his inheritance.
This invitation requires us to think and act radically.*

By Nathan Badger

WHAT do you picture when you see the word “radical?” Just this week, news headlines broadcasted: “radical Islam,” “Trump’s radical agenda,” and “radical opposition groups.” The word “radical” typically conjures an image of an off-the-rails extremist pushing a turbulent religious, political or research agenda.

Growing up, radical or “rad” was my surfer slang for “awesome” or “cool!” But more correctly, radical originates from the Latin word *radix*, which means “root.” The garden vegetable radish also comes from this same Latin word—its name implies a root plant.

The word radical was first used literally to describe roots or something proceeding from a root, such as tree roots or a stem from a plant root. Later, radical was also used figuratively. Roots are the deepest part of a plant, so radical came to describe things understood as fundamental, essential, or the origin of. Radical also progressed to refer to a person or idea viewed as extreme or way out of the norm. In other words, their root or fundamental ideas are so “out of the box” that we regard them as radical.

Thus, a radical idea or person seeks to teach a fundamental or root truth, often vastly different from the usual or traditional.

Radical Principles

I believe God’s word is full of “radical.” Firstly, God teaches us **how** to be radical. His principles, concepts, laws, and lifestyle are the roots, fundamentals, and origins of how He wants humans to behave and think. When we digest them, we understand they are not the norm, and when we follow them, we may be viewed as extreme.

For example, Paul teaches Timothy that *“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.”* (1 Timothy 6:10-12 ESV). Note that Paul even uses the Greek word *rhiza*, which means the same as radical—a root. He warns that if the love of money is a root or fundamental part of our lives, then it will pierce us through with *“many sorrows”* and cause us to *“err”* in the *“good fight of faith.”* Instead, he counsels us to *“Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”*

Paul’s principle is entirely radical. It stems from God’s earlier root commands to Israel: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me,”* (Exodus 20:3) and *“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, soul, and... might.”* (Deuteronomy 6:5). God requires the love of Him to be the fundamental, root, or origin of our heart’s desires—not money! Looking around, is this principle the norm in modern society? The world has created its own fundamental principle focused on money and, predictably, has caused many sorrows.

Where do our lives fit in with this radical principle? How many hours each week do we actively pursue money, especially outside what we need to live? How does this contrast with the hours we actively pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness? These latter investments lie at the root of Jesus’s exhortation to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6:20 ESV) and are the roots of true happiness and a close relationship with our Father.

Radical Examples

The Bible also shares incredible examples of men and women who lived radical lives. They sought out, understood, and visibly applied God's root principles and laws through *"the good fight of faith."* (1 Timothy 6:12).

Hebrews 11 is decorated with examples. I am always impressed by Abraham, who *"obeyed to go out into ...an inheritance...and he went out, not troubling his mind as to where he was going."* (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham did not fret or fear where God was leading him. Instead, he responded with 1) radical obedience to God's command and 2) radical faith in God's promises—two fundamental, root behaviors that God wants all of us to develop and cherish.

Abraham's actions should reassure us. If we feel lost or do not know where our lives are headed, we learn that we can reach out, take God's hand, trust He has a plan for us, and have faith that He will guide our life to his desired destination. We may experience doubts, confusion,

"because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully." (Numbers 14:23-24 ESV). Despite the giant problems the spies confronted in Canaan, Caleb whole-heartedly rooted his obedience and faith in God and encouraged others to fight this same *"good fight of faith."* (Numbers 13:30-33). Sadly, his radical spirit was a stark contrast to the rest of Israel, who were rooted in doubt and disobedience. Some even wanted to stone Caleb (Numbers 14:10, CP Heb 11:37), but in the end, God's fundamentals came with a great reward—entry into the inheritance.

Caleb's spirit is inspiring. Do we feel scared, overcome, or intimidated by the giants we face in our lives? Is there something that we think could eat us up, or is stronger or of greater stature than our God? God's radical teachings can help us face and overcome these. But being radical and following God's root principles often sets us out on our own or into uncomfortable circumstances that we must face with faith.

God has called all of us to enter his inheritance. This invitation requires us to think and act radically, like Abraham and Caleb.

and severe discomfort on the journey, but if we are obedient and exercise faith, our minds will be far less troubled, as Abraham's.

Caleb is another example of radical faith and obedience. Along with Joshua, he was the only Israelite allowed to cross into the promised land

God has called all of us to enter his inheritance. This invitation requires us to think and act radically, like Abraham and Caleb. How different would our lives or the world be if we all practiced God's radical principles and cherished them with our "whole heart, soul, and mind"?

The Radical Jesus

The most impressive example of radical in the Bible is Jesus. He grew up in a world rooted in self-centeredness and self-worship. The Roman Empire's society was steeped in expansion, war, violence, immorality, and abuse of the vulnerable. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes competed as religious fellowships. They were permeated with corruption, conceit, power and excluding people. Documents such as the Talmud were based on God's message but applied corruptly.

Jesus questioned these roots and challenged the status quo. John Baptist, his forerunner, warned the religious and political systems, *"Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees."* (Luke 3:9 ESV). In other words, Jesus and John's teachings would remove and replace the root of these systems—they needed to be *"cut down and thrown into the fire."* Their message sought to turn the people back to principles based on God's roots so that the nation and people could *"bear good fruit."*

This parable should cause us to stop and reflect on the root, tree, and fruit we are cultivating personally, as an ecclesia, and as a community. What is our root? Is it God's root—His Word? Or is it more like the crooked political and religious practices Jesus condemned in his day?

Jesus devoted his life to teaching and demonstrating God's fundamentals. Everything he taught was radical. It was fundamental and out of the norm. Here are five of my favorite radical principles:

1) Radical Greatness

Jesus' disciples were prone to argue about who was the greatest. To answer their question, Jesus places a little child in their midst and instructs, *"Unless you turn [are reversed], and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever humbles himself like this child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18:3-4 ESV). Jesus taught radical greatness. Be big by being little. Let God elevate us by lowering ourselves. This position is wholly opposed to the roots of our society, where greatness is achieved by stepping on people, pride, leading by power, lying, self-praise, and pedestalizing self. Instead, being great is about lowering oneself, being humble, exalting others, serving, and giving our lives to others. What type of greatness do we seek?

2) Radical Non-Violence

At Jesus' arrest by the weapon-adorned Roman guards and religious leaders, one of the disciples drew a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus challenged this use of weapons and violence to confront his attackers and rebuked, *"Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."* (Matthew 26:51-52 ESV). His condemnation of violence agrees with Isaiah's prophecy that Jesus *"had done no violence."* (Isaiah 53:9). Instead, Jesus encouraged his followers to respond to violence with peace, love, a turn of the cheek, and especially prayer (Matthew 26:41). This instruction contrasts with the roots of the world around us. Violence is the

solution to everything. War, weapons, violent assaults, and communications are the norm. Violence pervades entertainment (e.g., movies, video games), social media, and even sporting events. Do we behave non-violently and refuse to revel in the violence the world celebrates?

3) Radical Giving

Jesus has much to say about our possessions and what we do with them. For example: *“Those of you who do not give up everything you have, cannot be my disciples.”* (Luke 14:33

NIV), and *“Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.”* (Luke 12:33 ESV). Jesus even instructs a keen disciple to *“Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”* (Mark 10:21). This is a radical form of giving. It is a willingness to give up everything and be extremely generous to others. It is a realization that all our possessions are God’s, and God expects us to liberally redistribute his possessions to others—especially at a cost to ourselves. Our world teaches a doctrine that starkly contrasts with this type of giving. Current thinking



is that we should heap up things for ourselves and only give if we have extra. Our society coerces us to gather earthly treasures rather than eternal ones in heaven. Instead, Jesus teaches a fundamental principle, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Matt 6:21 ESV). In other words, what we do with our possessions signals to God where our hearts and worship are. What does our giving style indicate where the heart of our lives is?

4) Radical Love

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a series of radical principles, including a command to “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*” (Matthew 5:44 ESV). This stunning principle takes us back to God’s commands that Israel “*shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” (Leviticus 19:17-18). Sadly, the Jews took this to mean they only had to love fellow Jews. However, Jesus clarified what God meant by this radical love. Not only were they to love those who were easy to love, but also those they struggled to love, such as their enemy and those who hated or mistreated them. This proposition is one of the most difficult fundamentals God asks us to live, and it is completely unlike the behavior of society. Love and hate divide our world. Religion, politics, race, and status create divisions, petty grudges, and long-term grievances. These behaviors corrode neighborly love as God desires. Jesus’ radical love is a revolutionary way to resolve differences, and it helps us appreciate

that God cares for and loves both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). What type of love are we practicing?

5) Radical Sacrifice

When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples to share God’s radical message, he warned their mission would be costly. They may even lose their lives: “*Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*” (Matthew 10:39). This is radical sacrifice. Jesus wants us to abandon our lives for him and those around us. And ironically, if we give up our lives to Jesus and God, we gain everything! The world scoffs at this root principle. It teaches us to live for today and for ourselves. We are encouraged to serve ourselves, serve our interests first, and make “I” the most critical part of life. If not careful, our lives can become focused on the short-term rather than the long-term and temporal things rather than the eternal ones. Instead, Jesus encourages us to live for God—to carry the same cross he did—a life of selflessness that meant pain, turmoil, mocking and being “unfriended.” Are we giving up our lives and everything today so we can inherit forever?

These are a handful of Jesus’ many radical teachings. Although some may consider them wild and crazy, they are instead root behaviors that God expects us to practice because they are part of his majestic character. They are simple actions but should also make us squirm in our seats and challenge us deeply.

Upside Down

After Jesus ascended, his disciples set about upending the world with his radical teachings. In Thessalonica, a violent mob dragged Paul and Silas before the city authorities with the following accusation: “*These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.*” (Acts 17:6 ESV). Christ’s radical message and example had created a riot!

God wants us to be exactly like these disciples—men and women, young and old, with a zest for his message and a drive to share his life-saving principles with the world by word and example—even at a cost to our comfort, safety, and popularity. We aim to share the salt of God’s word, the radical power of his teachings, and the benefits, joys, and blessings for today and the Kingdom age. Have Jesus’ teachings and God’s fundamentals turned our world upside down? Have they profoundly changed the direction of our lives and the example and message we share with the world around us?

Self-Denial

The heart of all Jesus’ teachings and examples is transforming our lives from serving ourselves to denying ourselves. Paul pinpoints this when he draws our minds to Jesus and instructs us to “*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*” (Romans 12:1). This was a radical concept to the Jews—they were still sacrificing dead animals under the Law. However, Jesus’ life and teachings were not about these lifeless rituals. Instead, he demonstrated their root meaning: God wants us to sacrifice our entire self to God and

His children “*by a new and living way.*” (Hebrews 10:20). In other words, self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-lessness—all of which are radical, fundamental lifestyles.

Bro. Dennis Gillett makes clear the practical application of Paul’s exhortation:

These verses in Romans ought not to surprise us. The truth is that discipleship, given full expression, should change [our] lives radically and redirect our energy and aspirations. The central thing is the denial of self. It is utterly radical.¹

How are we doing at living Jesus’ life of radical self-denial? Are we giving up everything we want for everything that God wants?

Follow Me!

God’s Word contains a radical call. Nineteen times, Christ instructs us in the gospels to “*Follow Me.*” This instruction is a call to love Jesus and God more than anything else this world has to offer, including money. It is a call to obey God, come out of the world around us, and faithfully seize our inheritance. It is a call to develop a different spirit and wholly follow God.

It is a call to live out radical greatness: non-violence, generosity, love, and sacrifice. It is a call to turn our lives and the world around us upside down. At the very root of “*Follow Me*” is a life of radical self-denial. God has called us to be radical. How are we doing at radically following him?

*Nathan Badger,
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¹ Gillett, Dennis. *The Genius of Discipleship*. Great Britain: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1984. (pp. 1, 2).

KINGDOM CITIZENSHIP

O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent?

Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

Psalm 15:1

By John Laben

A recent article about God's grace in *Tidings* magazine got me thinking about what God is looking for in the people who will populate the earth—those who will live with Him forever when His Kingdom fills the earth and sin and death are no more. Put another way, what qualities is God looking for in those who will be citizens in His restored creation, those who will be with Him forever?

We cannot be worthy of God's grace or His love. We are not worthy to expect a place in the Kingdom of God. But we are recipients of God's grace. This situation is not our doing. He tells Moses, "*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.*" (Exodus 33:19). Why has God chosen us? Why He loves us is an unanswerable question because it is by His grace, His call, and His choice.

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you. (1 Thessalonians 1:4).¹

Rather than ponder why God chose us, we should humbly acknowledge that God loves us and has graciously called us, and therefore, we should respond to God's grace and love. How do we respond to God's grace, and how do we respond to God's love?

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5).

We are recipients of God's grace and His love, not because of anything we are or anything we have done, but because He has chosen to be gracious and loving toward us. God's grace and love offer us life with Him and His Son in His Kingdom. He offers life in His creation with the curse of sin removed. God expects a response and is looking for a response from us. God is seeking a people He would like to live with Him, to be citizens in His Kingdom, His eternal creation. What character traits does God want in the citizens of the Kingdom of God?

Our search should look for positive traits, not negative traits, for it is too easy to be negative and forget or ignore the positive. Paul points out to the Romans the wrong response to God's grace:

What shall we say then? Are we

to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6:1-2).

God looks for those who seek after Him and are steadfast and faithful in that search. He looks for those who seek unselfishly the best for others.

But above all, first and foremost, God looks for those who love. Of all the traits God looks for, love is the utmost. Why? Because God is love (1 John 4:8), and God created us humans in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). We see the love of God in the character of His Son, our Lord Jesus. We are joined to Jesus in baptism. Jesus shows us

God's love in human form, so we must show love.

We Are Recipients of God's Love

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5).

We should share this love with others.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).

Love. Genuine love. Holding fast to what is good, loving each other with brotherly affection. (Romans 12:9, 10).

He has poured His love into our hearts, so we should share His love with others. John writes in his first letter, "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" (1 John 4:7, 11) Paul writes to the Corinthians,

**God is seeking
a people He
would like to live
with Him, to be
citizens in His
Kingdom**

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

If we love, it is easy to show hospitality. If we love, it is easy to contribute to the needs of others. If we love, living in harmony with one another is easy. If we love, it is easy to live peacefully. If we love, it is easy to please others. If we love, it is easy to put the needs of others first.

Paul says it better:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. (Romans 12:9-16).

For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." (Romans 15:3).

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32).

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8).



Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12-17).

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech. (Titus 2:7-8).

How do we respond to God's grace and love? Remember, God created humankind in His image and likeness. In Jesus, we see that image and likeness, as well as God's character and glory. On Mount Sinai, Moses asks God, "Show me your ways," and "show me your glory." God responds, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim my name 'the LORD.'" (Exodus 33:18-19).

The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7).

Notice how God's declaration of His character, His declaration of His name, is echoed in Paul's description of the fruit of the spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23).

How should we respond to God's grace and love? He has brought us into His Son, our Lord Jesus, so we should strive to live a life after the example we see in Jesus. Our life, our lifestyle, should show we are in Jesus; thus, our life should strive to be fruitful and abounding with love.

As Peter exhorts us:

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities

are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8).

How should we respond to God's love and grace? What qualities is God seeking in those He will bring into eternal fellowship with Him in His very good creation?

We could make a list of all the desirable character traits Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John mention. However, that could too quickly become a checklist involving the mind, not the heart. A checklist would miss what God is looking for. How could you make a checklist of love, faithfulness, or humility? God is looking for hearts that seek after Him, hearts that strive to emulate His Son and hearts that overflow with love for others and God. Hearts that ask the question:

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8).

If the first and second great commandments rule in our hearts and direct our thoughts, words, and deeds, our life will show our response to God's mercy and love.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27).

Responding to God's grace and love by loving Him with all our being, by seeking to come before Him every moment of our life, and by showing this love to all those around us, Peter tells us:

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8).

In responding to God's mercy and love, may we be blessed to hear from our Lord:

Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of thy Lord (Matthew 25:21, 23).

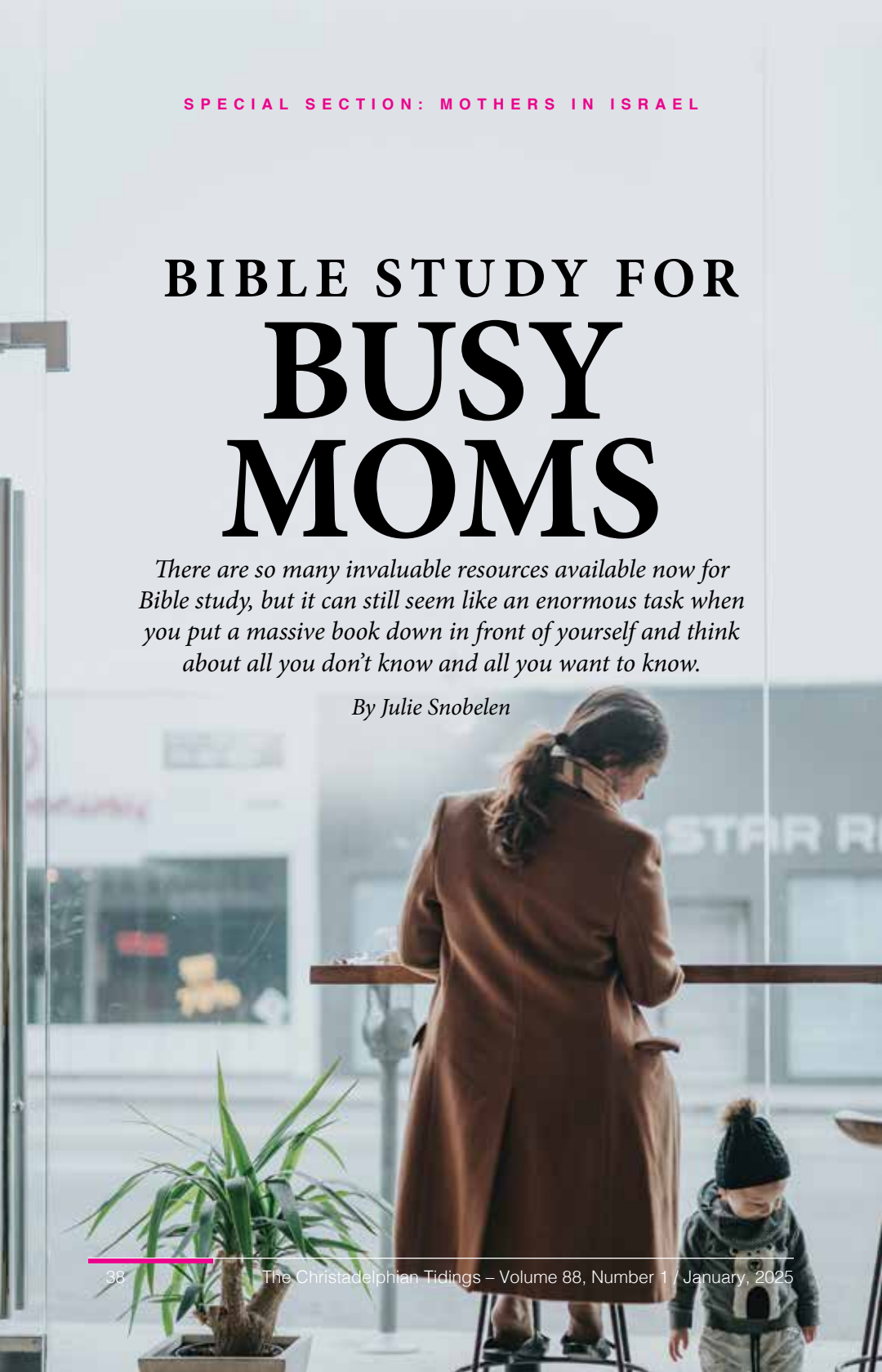
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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version unless specifically noted.

BIBLE STUDY FOR BUSY MOMS

There are so many invaluable resources available now for Bible study, but it can still seem like an enormous task when you put a massive book down in front of yourself and think about all you don't know and all you want to know.

By Julie Snobelen



A few years ago, I compiled a list of verse selections about God, one for every day of the year. I wanted to improve my prayer life and realized I needed to know God better in order to pray to Him. Writing out the verses by hand over a year seemed to be an effective way to slow myself down, take the time to absorb what they were saying and produce a collection I could go back through when I needed reminding.

There is science behind the value of pen and paper. Writing things down by hand creates more brain activity across different brain regions, which may help to lodge it more effectively in the memory. The most significant benefits may be when children are learning to differentiate letters. Still, in an age where we are offloading brain work to digital devices, it is a simple way of keeping the brain active. If you want to read more about this subject, just Google “value of writing by hand.” It is also a way of slowing down a bit when we are increasingly used to having everything right now. Instead of trying to absorb a whole chapter or subject, it made me focus on just what this one thing had to say.

It may be obvious to most people, but it took me a long while to fully appreciate how little things add up to big things. I first really appreciated this fact when watching my children learn to read. The progress each day was so small, sometimes not even noticeable, but at

the end of the year, they would be doing what wasn't possible at the beginning. I often tend to do something all at once, as fast as I can, to the detriment of other necessary tasks. I have to force myself to slow down, do just a little bit today, a little bit tomorrow, and a little bit the day after that. The side benefit is that it begins to form into a habit.

Although it can be difficult to evaluate our own growth or how we have changed spiritually, purposeful, small, daily interaction with God's Word over the course of a year will have a positive effect, like a tree planted by a consistent water supply. Growth just naturally happens. When we put the words of God into our hearts, they will come out in our words and actions.

Growth just naturally happens. When we put the words of God into our hearts, they will come out in our words and actions.

There are so many invaluable resources available now for Bible study, but it can still seem like an enormous task when you put a massive book down in front of yourself and think about all you don't know and all you want to know. We have a tradition of daily Bible reading, which is a good thing but can sometimes create a bit of stress for those who are perhaps not readers or are in difficult periods of life where time is hard to find. Writing out a verse or two every day is a small task, but at the end of the year, that small thing has multiplied.

I have continued to create a new list of verses around a theme for the past few years, which I have shared on the Magnify Him Together website (www.magnifyhimtogether.com/scripture-

writing-plan). It has been a way of staying motivated and connected to faith for myself, and I hope sharing it will help others to do the same. My goal is to help those in a busy season and struggling to find time to sit down and do Bible study or those who just need a starting point. Here is a year-long study broken down into small bits that you could squeeze into your day or use as a springboard into even more connection with God's word.

If you want to try verse lists, pick a subject you want to know more about and divide it into twelve months of related topics. Concordance searches for various words can help to work up

a list of applicable verses, or another option is to choose a book of the Bible and divide it into manageable sections of a verse or two. Get a notebook and pen, and you will be all set. Alternatively, to create your verse lists, you could print off your choice of the monthly verse lists from Magnify Him Together or one of the many options available on the Internet. You may not want a plan at all, but just start writing out a particular book. Once you have that all sorted, all you have to do is spend a few minutes each day writing out the verse selection. You can tie it into your morning coffee or before-bed routine and think about it a bit more during the day or before falling



asleep. If you want to spend more time, I like to underline and circle important and interesting bits and look up a few words in a Lexicon or check out a Bible commentary. It can also help to read it in a different translation and research the context to understand better what the Bible is saying.

I do understand that a year may seem like a formidable commitment, and it can be off-putting when you start something like this and then miss a few days, and then a few weeks, and then catching up seems too overwhelming, so you quit. It has happened to me numerous times. You may not want to spend an entire year on one theme, but I have found it to be good discipline. My solution was to create a planner for myself for the year that included the verse for the day and room to write it out. I made this available on Amazon for those who were interested. If I miss a day or a week, I don't try to catch up unless I have time and want to. However, it is there in front of me, and mostly, I just continue with the day at hand. Over the years, it has helped to build this simple task into something I enjoy and miss if I don't complete it.

By the end of this year, I will have written out the book of Proverbs, which has been enjoyable and interesting. Although I have always known the Proverbs were full of practical advice, I needed to take the time to think about how to apply the various bits of instruction to myself. Although I knew wisdom was essential, I hadn't differentiated it from knowledge. Now

I know more about that and have a new appreciation for why the fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Working through something slowly has allowed me more time for thought and absorption.

For 2025, my plan, God willing, is to soak in words and experiences that help me feel and understand the goodness of God. It feels like something I need at the moment, and I'm sure other people feel that way too. Hopefully, it will combine two things I enjoy very much: writing out a daily verse and noticing Creation (experiencing God through His words and His works). One of my reasons for choosing this theme was an article I read that suggested that people today have less of a problem believing there is a God than they do believing He is a good God. Of course, this has been an age-old question and will continue to be, but an element of this problem is that humans are much better at taking note of what they don't like than fully appreciating what they do.

So, if you are struggling with motivation or time to interact with the Bible in your day, I think that with a little determination, this is an excellent way of forming a little but valuable habit. It may not always seem like you are getting anywhere (like anything that takes time), but it is a way of doing what God asks all of us to do: to listen.

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A FRESH LOOK AT JONAH

By David Carroll

- Why is this very strange prophecy included in the Scriptures?
- What is the reason for the prophecy?
- Why did Yahweh send Jonah to the violent enemies of Israel?
- Would you select a preaching target based on their extreme wickedness? (Jonah 1:2).
- Could Yahweh have turned His merciful hand toward a Gentile nation when the times of the Gentiles had not yet arrived?
- Did the people of Nineveh really repent to salvation? Or was it just to “save their skins” from imminent destruction?

A common notion is that the purpose of the book of Jonah is to show the Father is concerned for all of His creation. At that time, he was apparently willing to save nations or peoples other than Israel and show this side of His character to Israel. This idea is said to be demonstrated in Jonah’s preaching and the repentance of Nineveh. This opinion is certainly the case in Christian literature. The preamble to Jonah in the New International Version says,

The book depicts the larger scope of God’s purpose for Israel: that she might rediscover the truth of His concern for the whole creation and better understand her own role in carrying out that concern.

Jonah is the only minor prophet where the target audience, the author and the reason for writing are not clearly stated.

We should not be surprised that Christianity, which has rejected the “*Hope of Israel*,” can only come to this conclusion. While it is true that Yahweh is concerned for all of creation, He indicates Abraham’s seed will bless all nations from the beginning. He also chooses to reveal himself in different ways at different epochs of history (Hebrews 1:1). The Father himself declares in Jonah’s contemporary prophet Amos:

O children of Israel...you only have I known of all the families of the earth. (Amos 3:1, 2).¹

For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6).

The modern Christian approach requires that Yahweh work with Nineveh for eternal salvation. If this is the case, we would have to betray all the fundamental and essential principles of salvation that the Father has set forth.

Jonah’s record is unique among the prophetic books in that it is entirely a narrative, a story. Interestingly, there is no straightforward statement of the reason for the writing, such as in the other minor prophets. In fact, Jonah is the only minor prophet where the target audience, the author and the reason for writing are not clearly stated. There is not much additional

commentary beyond the narrated facts of the story. Jonah is neither a hero nor a particularly good example of faithfulness.

Nevertheless, He is a patriotic Israelite who knows the Father's presence and merciful character. This understanding is what gripes Jonah the most. Yahweh's graciousness, mercy, kindness, and slowness to anger greatly displeased Jonah (Jonah 4:2).

At the end of the prophecy, we are left hanging in a unique way about this prophet's final attitude and destiny. I think we are safe to conclude that while the book is commonly called "Jonah," and he is certainly an actor on the stage of Yahweh's play, the prophecy is not about him.

There are so many strange features about this prophecy that make it appear like a fairy tale—however, it receives the endorsement of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ as an actual event. Additionally, Jesus uses the circumstances of Jonah's three-day incarceration as a witness to his own generation. You cannot have an allegory of an allegory, only an allegory of a real event.

The Introductory comments by Keil & Delitzsch make the following observation:

It is very odd that Yahweh turns to another nation or another city like Nineveh to work with them for their own salvation in a period when He is a one-nation deity...

If the three days' confinement of Jonah in the belly of the fish really had the typical significance which Christ attributes to it in Matthew 12:39, and Luke 11:29, it can neither be a myth or dream, nor a parable, nor merely a visionary occurrence experienced by the prophet; but must have had as much objective reality as the facts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ."²

In fact, the strange features themselves provide clues to the meaning and richness of the message.

There are two parts to this study:

1. The reason for the prophecy of Jonah.
2. The meaning of the repentance of the people of Nineveh (a parable of true and false salvation).

The Reason For The Prophecy

It is very odd that Yahweh turns to another nation or another city like Nineveh to work with them for their own salvation in a period when He is a one-nation deity. By His definition, He is "the God of Israel," an expression repeated more than 200 times in the Old Testament record.

He promised Israel that He would make them a peculiar people above all nations—effectively saying that

nationally, they were the sole recipient of His grace until the specific time came for “*all nations*” to be included. This position, of course, does not exclude individuals from other nations being the recipients of salvation. However, this was a result of “proselytization” (i.e., those individuals becoming attached to the nation of Israel and its Holy Law). Such has it ever been since the days that God made a covenant with Israel.

Of course, the ultimate purpose is all nation’s involvement in salvation, which is indicated right from the beginning in the promise to Abraham, “*In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed.*” But this has been a secret for nearly 2,000 years.

In Romans 9:17-18, Pharaoh was raised by Yahweh for the one specific purpose of showing Yahweh’s power through him. It is Yahweh’s sovereign right to show mercy (salvation) to those who He determines. The Creator has the sovereign right to show and withhold mercy on whom He will and whom He will not. More on Romans 9 later.

In Jeremiah 18, the record of the potter speaks eloquently of Yahweh’s sovereign will to do what He wills.

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. (Jeremiah 18:7, 8 ASV).

If, however, we accept the premise that Yahweh is fundamentally working with His own people, yes, even the errant people of the northern kingdom, can the prophecy of Jonah still make sense? Yahweh seems to turn to another nation (Assyria) to save them, which is, in fact, one of their principal cities. Jonah was the prophet of the northern kingdom during the long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II.

And should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city? (Jonah 4:11 RV).

The father showed compassion and pity to Nineveh to save them (“*to spare*” AV) from imminent destruction. This Hebrew word, *khoos*, shows Yahweh’s general compassion but is never connected with salvation. Note that Romans 9:15 reveals it is Yahweh’s prerogative to show mercy (for salvation) or compassion (generally) on those He chooses. The distinction between mercy and compassion is an important feature of this treatise. Romans 11:30 also confirms, “*For ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Jews) unbelief.*”

In simple terms, the time had not yet come for the salvation of the Gentiles (apart from proselytization into the nation’s life). Individuals had accepted the truth, but the time had not yet come for the gospel to go out into the world beyond the borders of the chosen people.

Note how Peter in his First Epistle echoes Deuteronomy 32 and the principle of mercy for salvation when he refers to the Gentiles being called out of darkness:

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:10).

We will presently see how this peculiar expression “not a people” applies to the people of Nineveh. Note also how “mercy” is specifically related

to salvation. This connection is an essential principle of salvation. (Luke 1:77, 78; Deuteronomy 5:10, 7:9)

The conclusion is that the mercy connected with salvation was not to be offered to the Gentiles until the specific time denoted by Yahweh. This thought is one of the secrets (“mysteries” in the AV) of the Scriptures.

The mystery of Christ. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men (Ephesians 3:4, 5).



The mystery which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God. (Ephesians 3:9).

The Apostle heralded how the Jewish leaders rejected the gospel in Rome.

Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and they shall hear it. (Acts 28:28).

The Strange Song of Deuteronomy 32

The strange Song of Moses sheds light on the purpose of Jonah (Deuteronomy 32:15-21). Moses sang a song to testify to Israel when troubles and “evil” came upon them. The song was specifically to testify against their idolatry. A song is a means of memory; Vital principles appear in the song.

And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ And I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil that they have done, because they have turned to other gods. Now

therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.” (Deuteronomy 31:16-21 ESV).

A Song About Yahweh’s Jealousy for His People

Fundamentally, when Yahweh’s people become corrupt to the extent that He becomes jealous, He is prepared to take an extraordinary step to try and reclaim His people. When His people provoke Him to jealousy by devotion to other deities and all other forms of warning have failed, the extraordinary step He warns He will take is to turn His face to people other than Israel for a time. This change of heart is very unexpected! The reason He does this is not for the benefit of that other nation but for the sole benefit of Israel. The objective is to provoke Israel to jealousy.³

The passage in Deuteronomy 32

shows us that when “*Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked,*” they lightly esteem the Father and worship strange gods. This includes abominations (morally disgusting behavior) and ritual sacrifice to demon gods—to put it simply, gross idolatry (v. 17).

In tragedy, the loving Father turns to another nation to provoke Israel into jealousy. There is bitter poetry here. You are children who have no faith. (Deuteronomy 32:20) You turn to new gods, non-gods, and vanities. This step is to provoke a jealous response from Israel so they would turn back to the Rock that begat them, the Yahweh that formed them (v. 18). Note also the poetical reference to Yahweh as the “*Rock*” (*tzur*) that begat them. “*Formed*” is the Hebrew word *chul* to be brought forth or “*calved*” in pain. In contrast, men's hands merely fabricated their stone, timber, and metal idols.

Does this reasoning “stack up” in relationship to the Prophecy of Jonah? Did Yahweh turn to Nineveh to provoke a jealous response from Israel? Can we show that conditions in Israel were ripe for that kind of response from Yahweh? Is there evidence that Jonah returned to Israel and the strange repentance of Nineveh moved them?

There are echoes or hints in Jonah's assessment of the people of Nineveh as being “*foolish people.*” (Deuteronomy 32:21).

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their

right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:11).

The Contemporary English Version interprets this as, “*In that city of Nineveh there are more than 120,000 people who cannot tell right from wrong, and many cattle are also there. Don't you think I should be concerned about that big city?*”

The contemporary books of Amos and Hosea provide the moral background of the time of Jonah. Amos speaks to people who are in an advanced state of moral corruption. In the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, Amos condemned luxury and excess, as well as injustice and hypocrisy of worship. Idolatry was also in evidence as a growing problem within Israel. The following passages of Amos show how idolatry was taking hold in the minds of the people:

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. (Amos 5:26).

You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves. (Amos 5:26 ESV).

Hosea is a marginally later writing, but still in the same time bracket. Jeroboam II is still king. Here the tone is totally about a nation (Israel) that was immersed in its whoredoms (idolatry).

For the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD. (Hosea 1:2).

Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. (Hosea 4:17).

And now they [Ephraim] sin

more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver and idols according to their own understanding. (Hosea 13:2).

Hosea is told to take a wife of whoredoms (Gomer). The fruit of this union is a daughter and two sons. The names of two of them are particularly significant in light of the matter already brought forward.

Lo-Ruhama: *“Not having obtained mercy.”* (Romans 11:30, 31; 1 Peter 2:10; Hosea 2:23)

Lo-Ammi: *“Not my people.”* (Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Peter 2:10; Hosea 2:23)

Both of these are children of sin, being the fruit of the union of Yahweh’s prophet and a woman who was/had been immersed in idolatry. They are evocative of the original themes of breaching the covenant terms through gross idolatry in Deuteronomy 32:21.

Furthermore, if Yahweh’s people turn to idolatry, they break the covenant that he established with Him—a covenant of salvation.

Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them. (Deuteronomy 29:25-26).

Israel was in a terrible situation. A people without salvation.

(To be continued, Lord willing.)

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¹ All Scriptural citations are taken from the Authorized King James Version unless specifically noted.
² Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Jonah, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, [1857-78].
³ “Jealousy” is a relationship word, denoting the breaking of a promise of love and fidelity. The emotion of jealousy that the Father shows is almost always mentioned in connection with idolatry. (I Kings 14:22; Psalm 78:58, for example). Ezekiel 8 is the record of a vision in which the “image of jealousy” appears in the temple at a later time. Ezekiel is invited to observe the abominations and idolatry, among which are the women weeping for Tammuz and the men worshipping the sun. In this case, Yahweh says, *“Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity.”* (Ezekiel 8:18). It is an oft-repeated lament in the Scripture that the loving Father is provoked to the emotion of jealousy when His people turn their devotion to idols. (Deuteronomy 5:9; 6:15; 2 Kings 22:17)

PART 4
EDENIC
LAW
AND THE
BOOK OF
ROMANS

By Richard Morgan

HOW do you solve the problem of sin? The temptation can be throwing more laws at sin until it sticks. We say, surely, if there are enough rules of behavior and if I try my best to abide by those rules, then I can overcome sin. However, the experience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden tells us that the law does not work.

In fact, Paul tells us the problem is worse than just the fact that the law cannot save us. He tells us that there is a very real sense in which law **causes** us to sin! He hints at it at the end of Romans 5, where he writes, “*Now the law came in to increase the trespass*” (v. 20).¹ Then, in chapter 6, he writes, “*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace*” (v. 14), suggesting that if we are under law, it means sin will have dominion over us.

The answer to the predicament is grace, but that is counterintuitive. Again, we **think** that if only we had a strict enough law, it would enable us to avoid sin and be righteous. God, being gracious to us, **seems** to turn a blind eye to sin. However, as Paul outlines in Romans, the opposite is true. Law motivates us to sin, and grace motivates us to be righteous.

The Process of Salvation

Consider the structure of the text in Romans 6 and the beginning of Chapter 7. In Romans 6:3, 16, and 7:1, Paul repeats the rhetorical question, “*Do you not know?*” This divides the text neatly into three sections.

The first “*Do you not know?*” section runs from the beginning of Chapter 6

to verse 15. In this section, Paul talks about death and life. We are “*baptized into his death*” (v. 3) and “*united with him in a death like his*” (v. 5) and then “*united with him in a resurrection*” (v. 5). So, we must consider ourselves “*alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” (v. 11). It is a very doctrinal section. It reminds us that God has provided us with animal skins to cover our sinfulness.

The second section contrasts sin with righteousness from verse 16 to the end of chapter 6. How we need to turn from being “*slaves...of sin*” (v. 16) to “*slaves of righteousness*” (v. 18). This describes the reaction we ought to have after being provided with the animal skins—repentant living.

The final “*Do you not know?*” section is in the first few verses of Chapter 7, where Paul contrasts those who “*bear fruit for God*” (v. 4) with those who “*bear fruit for death.*” (v. 5). Fruitfulness is the aim of God being gracious to us. As we saw in a previous article, it’s like planting a seed and seeing it grow to bear fruit. This is the power of grace at work in our lives.

Another way of looking at the first two sections is under the headings of justification and sanctification (Romans 6:19).

Consider the differences between the two terms in the chart that appears at the top of the next page:

The first section, justification, is about who we are—our status in Christ. The second section, sanctification, is about what we do—our walk in Christ. The third section, fruitfulness, is about who we are—our identity in Christ.

Justification	Sanctification
• Legal: counted righteous	• Moral: made righteous
• Single declaration	• Lifelong growth
• Imputed righteousness	• Walking in righteousness
• Indicative—you are justified	• Imperative—act like it
• Union with Christ in his death and resurrection	• Communion with Christ living out his death and resurrection

Law cannot enable this process of salvation; only grace works.

King Sin and King Righteousness

The first two sections of Romans 6 are also bracketed with the metaphor of reigning kings. Chapter 5 ends with the words, “*As sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness*” (v. 21), and then in Chapter 6, Paul counsels us, “*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body*” (v. 12) so that, “*sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*” (v. 14).

With this metaphor in mind, think about the opening question of this

article, “How do you solve the problem of sin?”

Adam and Eve’s solution was to sew fig leaves together and make themselves loincloths. In Romans and elsewhere, Paul defines this solution as the legalistic attempt at solving sin by law. Instead, the solution comes through God’s grace and the provision of animal skins. We see a direct correlation between the faulty and real solution and the first two kings of Israel. Consider the parallels:

Paul based his “King Sin” metaphor on Saul. He tells us that those under King Sin are “*slaves of sin,*” and Samuel said the same thing regarding Saul— “*These*

Sin	Legalism	Grace
<i>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes.</i>	<i>And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.</i>	<i>And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.</i>
Judges	Saul	David
<i>In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.</i>	<i>Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?</i>	<i>The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people.</i>

will be the ways of the king who will reign over you... you shall be his slaves.” (1 Samuel 8:11, 17).

Saul was a man steeped in law. For instance, in 1 Samuel 14, Saul put his army under a curse not to eat or drink anything until they won the battle. After they won the battle, he was incensed to find them eating the spoil without draining the blood, something against the Law of Moses. Yet, despite Saul's strictness regarding the Law, he did not listen to God. Not only that, but he commanded eighty priests of Yahweh to be killed and persecuted the man after God's heart. His legalism did nothing to affect his character or actions.

Law Causes Sin

In fact, not only is it a mistake to think that law can solve the problem of sin, but there is a sense in which law **causes** sin.

In Eden, the conversation between Eve and the serpent revolved around the law. The serpent questioned Eve, *“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”* (Genesis 3:1) and Eve responded, *“God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden.’”* (v. 3). This conversation now fixed Eve's mind on the object of that law, the forbidden fruit.

Paul picks up this dialogue in Romans 7. First, consider the intimate connection he makes between sin and law. In Romans 6:2, he says we are dead

to sin, and then in 7:4, we are dead to law. Then, in the next verse, Paul writes, *“For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.”*

How can the law arouse our sinful passions? Paul goes on to explain himself in the following verses. He says, *“If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.”* (v. 7). In other words, the Law highlighted sin. In Eden, if God had never said, “Don't eat from that tree,” they wouldn't have given the tree a second thought; it would have just been one of many other trees with nothing special to draw attention to. But, when the commandment came, suddenly, the tree became an object of focused attention, hence the conversation between Eve and the serpent. Paul goes on to say, *“Sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness.”* (v. 8). When the law says, “Do not covet that thing,” immediately we wonder what is so special about that thing. Then, our natural desires take over when the thing becomes attractive to our senses. Look at the parallels between Romans 7:9-11 and what happened in Eden:

Please see the table that begins on the next page >

Romans	Genesis
Romans 7:9— <i>I was once alive apart from the law, but when the</i>	Genesis 2:9— <i>The tree of life was in the midst of the garden</i>
<i>commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.</i>	Genesis 2:17— <i>Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat</i>
<i>For sin,</i>	Genesis 3:1— <i>Now the serpent</i>
<i>seizing an opportunity through the commandment,</i>	<i>said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”</i>
<i>deceived me</i>	Genesis 3:4— <i>But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.”</i>
<i>and through it killed me.</i>	Genesis 3:19— <i>For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”</i>

It is important to note that the problem is not with the Law itself. As Paul says, “*The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*” (Romans 7:12). The problem is when the law interacts with the flesh. The

law highlights sin and brings it to our attention, while grace focuses our minds on righteousness.

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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version.

BIBLICAL UNITARIANISM AND THE DARK AGES OF CHRISTENDOM

By Richard Morgan

THE Dark Ages, also known as the Middle Ages, is a term used to describe the period after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, approximately from AD 500 to AD 1500, characterized by a supposed decline in culture and science and a lack of written documentation. It is something of a misnomer, however, and we do know that there were many advances during that time. However, “The Dark Ages” describes one aspect

of society very well—the state of the Christian Church.

From the fall of Western Rome to the Reformation, the Catholic Church dominated Christianity. Other groups did exist, most notably the Eastern Orthodox Church. Smaller groups, like the Albigensian Church in France, flourished for a short while but were eventually stamped out towards the end of the Medieval period. Earlier than that, the Donatists split from the

Catholic Church around the time of the Nicene Council, and other groups came and went, like the Paulicians of Armenia and Arian churches of Germanic tribes, such as the Vandals and Visigoths. But the Christian world, especially in the West, was solidly Catholic.

One cause for Catholic dominance was the medieval feudal system. This arrangement was a hierarchical system in which the elite let out portions of land called “fiefs” to people known as “vassals.” Typically, these fiefs consisted of a manor that included a church and pasture lands and knights protected it. Most people were peasants who owned no land, had little opportunity to travel and receive an education, were mostly illiterate, and knew little beyond what happened in their fief. Therefore, whatever the local church taught was considered gospel truth, enabling Catholicism to retain its stranglehold on the general populace.

Three main factors brought about the end of feudalism: the advent of the Renaissance and, eventually, the Protestant Reformation. First, the “Black Death” in the 14th century caused a significant labor shortage in Europe, enabling wages to rise so peasants could earn more money than they had before. A mercantile class emerged, and those who before could only hope to work on the land now found opportunities to run their own businesses and become famous for their artistic abilities during the Renaissance. Second, the Crusades opened trade routes and brought better security to roads between different fiefs, meaning people could travel more safely and share information.

Third, with the advent of printing press technology, enabling information to be disseminated and stored more easily.

The Christianity Gap

Many Christians today want to trace their roots back to the first-century church. However, the only church that comes close to that claim is the Catholic Church. Like the ones mentioned above, all other churches either died out during the medieval period or emerged from the Protestant Reformation or later. While these churches can claim to be a revival of first-century Christianity, none have an unbroken line from the first century until today.

For centuries, Christianity lived during the Dark Ages. Catholicism reigned supreme, and any efforts to counter it were met with swift measures to destroy them. In the main, if you were Christian (which most Europeans were), you were Catholic and espoused Catholic teaching.

This situation lasted for over one thousand years. Unless one believes Catholicism is thoroughly Biblical, it is difficult to find any evidence for anyone teaching the true gospel during the Christian Dark Ages. For centuries, Catholic dogma replaced Bible doctrine.

Prophesied in the Bible

There is evidence in Scripture that God prophesied the Christian Dark Ages. In particular, our attention is drawn to Revelation 12-13. According to expositors of the Book of Revelation, who follow the continuous historical methodology of interpretation, Revelation 12-13 speaks of the rise of

Constantine, the end of paganism in the Roman Empire, and the rise of the Catholic system. The reader is invited to consult continuous historical papers on these two chapters to find evidence for that interpretation. A summary of this interpretation is as follows:

Revelation 12 opens with a vision of a woman and a dragon. The dragon threatens the woman who is pregnant with a child. The woman represents the early Christian church, which the pagan Roman Empire persecuted, represented by the dragon. It looks like the manchild she gives birth to is her savior, but things are not quite as they seem. There is enough ambiguity about the manchild that we wonder who he really is, and when salvation **seems** to come to the Christian world, the dragon keeps persecuting the woman and her offspring. The supposed savior is not Christ but an imposter in the form of Constantine. Those who followed moved to remove paganism from the Roman Empire, at least as a political force. Paganism persisted, however, but subtly so, because in Chapter 13, we have the rise of a beast that has curious Christian characteristics but is empowered by the pagan dragon. This development speaks of the rise of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages.

As far as the Christian Dark Ages are concerned, we learn that the woman *“fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is nourished for 1,260 days.”* (Revelation 12:6). That is to say, the woman is off the scene for some time. This period is lengthy, if we use the day-for-a-year

principle—1,260 years.

Constantine played a major role in the development of the Medieval church. He presided over the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 and influenced the church leaders' decision to adopt Trinitarianism instead of Arianism, which was largely a political rather than theological decision.

It is intriguing that the period of 1,260 years, if we begin at the Nicene Council, takes us to the end of the 16th century. Was this the time when the woman emerged from the wilderness? By now, the magisterial and radical elements of the Protestant Reformation were in full swing as people wrestled themselves away from the Dark Ages of Catholic domination.

Another passage that alludes to the Christian Dark Ages is 2 Thessalonians 2. There, Paul talks about the man of lawlessness, believed to be a reference to the Papacy. Paul speaks of this system performing false signs and wonders, the same as what is said of the systems outlined in Revelation 13. Like the passage from Revelation, Paul talks about this system that administers wicked deception. But verse 11 gives us a clue as to what would happen during the Christian Dark Ages: *“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false.”* For 1,260 years, the Christian world was defined by the “strong delusion” or error of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Conclusion

Based on continuous historical interpretations of Revelation 12-13 and 2 Thessalonians 2, the long period of

Catholicism and Trinitarianism that dominated Europe should not surprise or alarm us. It does not mean the Catholic Church is the true church or that the Trinity tells the truth about God and Jesus. On the contrary, the history of the formation of both the Catholic Church and Trinitarianism tells us to know they are both thoroughly antagonistic to truth.

The Protestant Reformation is a famous period in Christian history, but what is not so well known is that it consisted of two main elements: the Magisterial and Radical Reformations.¹ Most protestant churches today can trace their roots to one of these movements. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches went to the Calvinistic branch of the Magisterial Reformation, the Lutheran Church went to Luther, and groups like the Mennonites and Baptists went to the Radical Reformation.

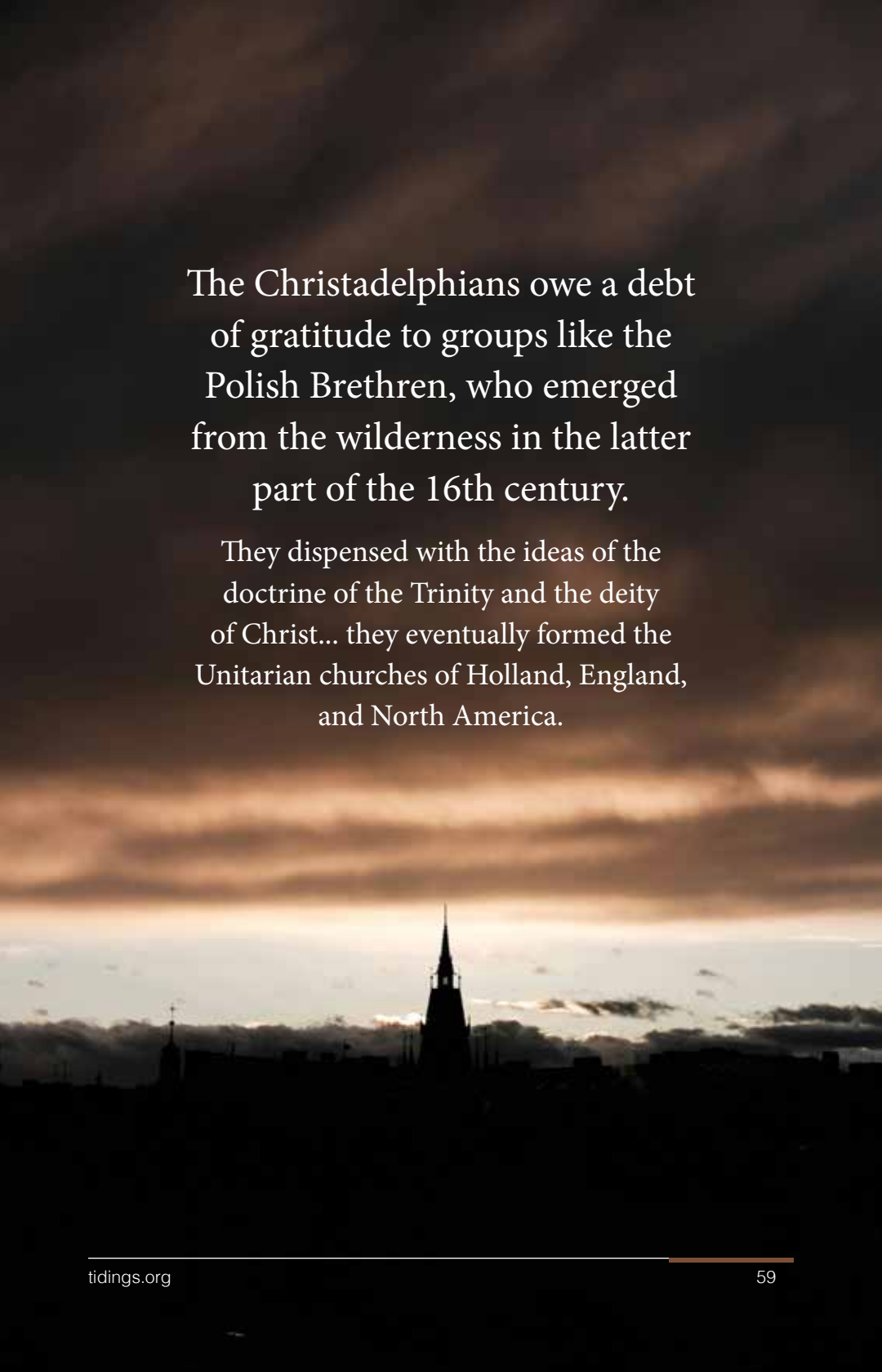
Notably, even the Magisterial Reformers debated whether to dispense with the Trinity, although tying themselves to creedal orthodoxy became too big a hurdle to overcome. It was up to the Radical Reformers to question the Trinity and other Catholic doctrines. The Christadelphians owe a debt of gratitude to groups like the Polish Brethren, who emerged from the wilderness in the latter part of the 16th century. They dispensed with the ideas of the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ. After being exiled from Poland, they eventually formed the Unitarian churches of Holland,

England, and North America. Those Unitarian churches flourished for a while as Christians continued to free themselves from Catholic orthodoxy. Many Presbyterians in England turned to Biblical Unitarianism, as did many of the Puritans who settled in New England. These were no longer tied down by what their priest taught them to believe or adherence to creeds, including those heavily influenced by pseudo-Christian Roman Emperors. These were Bible students who opened the Scriptures, studied them for themselves, and came to conclusions that were at variance with the period of the Christian Dark Ages.

The Christadelphian heritage continued in the same vein. John Thomas and others, from careful Bible study, concluded that the Trinity and its associated doctrines are not taught in the Bible but should be confined to the Dark Ages' trash heap. In today's world, that heritage continues in people we have met who have studied themselves out of their churches and Trinitarian dogma. Today, a small movement represented by the Unitarian Christian Alliance has opened up doors of opportunity for those of like minds to share their Bible understanding and further distance themselves from the darkest period in Christian history.

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¹ The expression “radical Reformation” was given to a complex and multifarious movement that found the Lutherans and the Swiss Reformers not daring enough and considered that the Reformation had only gone half-way. While the Radical Reformation (that led to the Anabaptist Churches) rejected any secular authority over the church, the Magisterial Reformation argued for the interdependence of the church and secular authorities.



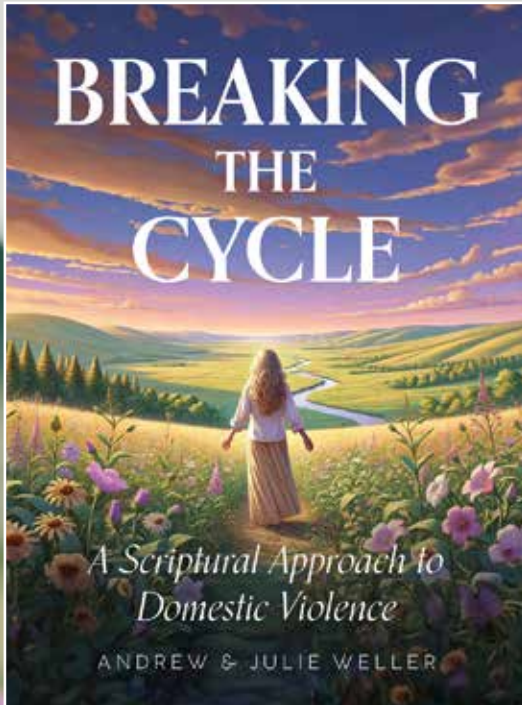
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BREAKING THE CYCLE

BY ANDREW AND JULIE WELLER

Reviewed by The Tidings



BRO. Andrew and Sis. Julie Weller (Cumberland Ecclesia, Australia) are the authors of *Breaking the Cycle: A Scriptural Approach to Domestic Violence*. They have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of domestic violence within our community. Their intention with this new book is to shed light on domestic violence's realities, equip readers with Scriptural guidance, and inspire compassionate action within our community. Through this work, they aim to break the silence, educate, and advocate for lasting change that reflects our calling to do justice, seek mercy, and maintain faithfulness. This book promises to be a good support for our Christadelphian community in recognizing and addressing the problem of domestic violence. It is being released as part of the *Tidings EcclesiaSafe* Program.

Domestic violence shatters lives. It isn't just the physical scars, for often there are none. It's the unseen wounds that continue to haunt long after any bruises might have faded. As followers of Christ, our responsibility goes beyond merely recognizing these wounds. We are called to act in love, empathy, and wisdom. In this book, they explore the complex realities of domestic violence and challenge believers to confront this evil with a Christ-like heart.

What Is It Like to Experience Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is not just an event but often an unrelenting cycle that deeply affects the victims, leaving them in a state of constant fear and emotional turmoil. The pain experienced is not solely physical. It reaches the core of a person's sense of identity and worth.

For many victims, the journey into an abusive relationship often begins subtly, with small manipulations and emotional degradation that grows over time. This gradual erosion can leave them doubting their own experiences and perceptions, contributing to a pervasive sense of confusion and helplessness.

Abuse is manifested in many forms. It can be physical, such as hitting, pushing, or other violent acts that harm the body. But physical abuse is just one piece of the puzzle. Many victims endure psychological abuse—verbal attacks that belittle, humiliate, or threaten them. Over time, this erodes the victim's self-esteem, making them feel worthless or incapable of escaping their circumstances. They may also experience emotional abuse in the form of intimidation, isolation, or coercion. Abusers often seek to control every aspect of their partner's life, creating an environment of intense fear and dependency. Unsurprisingly, this is often the cause of trauma and mental health problems.

In addition to these forms of cruelty, domestic violence can include financial abuse, where an abuser exerts control by limiting or denying access to money or resources. This step creates economic dependence, leaving the victim to feel unable to leave the relationship. Spiritual abuse can also occur, where an abuser uses religious beliefs to justify their actions or manipulate their partner into submission.

The psychological toll of this abuse is severe. Victims often find themselves internalizing the false narratives and criticisms of their abuser, leading

them to believe that they are somehow responsible for the abuse. This dynamic of blame reinforces their feelings of shame and isolation. Many survivors speak of feeling trapped—physically, mentally, and emotionally. They feel unable to seek help due to fear of retaliation or societal judgment.

The impact of domestic violence can extend beyond the individual to the family unit. Children who witness or experience violence are deeply affected. They may feel conflicted loyalty towards their parents, experience trauma-related symptoms, or normalize abusive behavior in their

anxiety, and depression, all of which are compounded by the isolation that abusers enforce. The fear of not being believed or understood can make it even harder for victims to reach out for help. As a result, many endure in silence, feeling invisible and unheard.

The experience of domestic violence is a journey of profound suffering. It is a reality marked by isolation, fear, manipulation, and pain. To understand the depth of this suffering, one must listen and empathize with the victims' stories. Every bruise, every tear, and every silent cry is a testament to the severity of their situation. Breaking

It is a difficult and painful truth that abuse can occur even within our Christadelphian community. Despite our shared faith and commitment to following Christ, instances of domestic violence and coercive control still emerge.

own relationships later in life. The pain inflicted is generational, creating patterns that persist unless actively confronted and addressed.

Victims of domestic violence also face an ongoing internal battle between love and fear. The nature of intimate relationships makes it difficult to reconcile the actions of someone who claims to love them with the harm being inflicted. This dichotomy often leads to emotional confusion, self-doubt, and internal conflict, leaving the victim struggling to identify the boundaries between love and abuse.

The emotional and psychological scars left by domestic violence are often deep and long-lasting. Victims describe feelings of hopelessness,

free from this cycle requires courage on the victim's part and a community willing to offer support, safety, and understanding without judgment.

Abuse In Our Christadelphian Community

It is a difficult and painful truth that abuse can occur even within our Christadelphian community. Despite our shared faith and commitment to following Christ, instances of domestic violence and coercive control still emerge. In some cases, abusers may misuse religious teachings to justify their actions or demand submission in ways that contradict Christ's teachings of mutual respect and love.

Silence and stigma play significant roles in allowing this behavior to persist.



Victims may be reluctant to speak up due to fear of judgment, mistaken understanding of Scriptural teachings, or concern for the reputation of their families or ecclesias. Addressing this requires a conscious effort to educate our community not only about the realities of abuse but also about the importance of a godly and compassionate response that prioritizes the well-being of the oppressed.

There Is No Place for Abuse in a Godly Marriage

God designed marriage to reflect His love and purpose. At its core, marriage is meant to be a partnership characterized by selfless love, mutual support, and respect, modeling the relationship between Christ and the ecclesia. Abuse in any form runs counter to this divine design. Scriptures describe marriage as a bond of unity and care, where both partners reflect Christ's qualities—love, patience, and kindness.

In Genesis 2:24, we are shown that marriage is intended to be a union where two individuals become “*one flesh*.” This unity signifies a deep connection built on trust and love, not fear or domination. Abuse fractures this unity, turning a relationship meant for mutual growth and support into a space of suffering and control.

The Bible calls husbands to love their wives “*just as Christ loved the ecclesia and gave Himself up for her*.” (Ephesians 5:25 ESV). This command highlights God's intent for marriage. It is a place of sacrificial love and care. Abuse, in contrast, seeks power and control, distorting this selfless love into something harmful. In Colossians 3:19, husbands are specifically instructed to avoid harshness, emphasizing gentleness, and understanding as core principles of godly behavior.

Further, 1 Peter 3:7 urges husbands to treat their wives with honor, recognizing them as co-heirs of God's grace. This respect is not just about avoiding physical harm; it encompasses emotional, psychological, and spiritual kindness, acknowledging the full value and dignity of one's spouse. Abuse stands in direct opposition to this call, degrading and undermining the sacred commitment made before God. A Scriptural marriage aims to ensure an entrance into the Kingdom for both parties as heirs together. Abuse undermines that sense of purpose, and in practical terms, threatens the couple's walk in Christ.

Christlike Response to Abuse

A Christlike response to abuse is rooted in "justice, mercy, and faithfulness." (Matthew 23:23 NIV). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus models a reaction of love and accountability. He challenges his followers to confront wrongdoing but to do so with a heart of forgiveness and redemption.

Romans 12:19-21 encourages believers to overcome evil with good, focusing on restoration rather than retaliation. By addressing the harm with empathy and support, we mirror Christ's approach to healing and rebuilding lives damaged by sin and suffering.

Ephesians 4:32 urges believers to show kindness and compassion, highlighting the importance of forgiveness. This requirement does not mean ignoring the severity of abuse but rather seeking paths of healing that restore dignity and safety while holding abusers accountable for their actions.

Practical Steps and Support

Domestic violence requires more than just acknowledgment; it calls for concrete action. For those enduring abuse, it is crucial to seek safety and reach out to support systems available in our community and in society, which have many organizations and programs to tackle the problem. The example of Jesus meeting people in their brokenness and offering refuge encourages us to create safe spaces where survivors can disclose and find hope and assistance without fear of judgment.

There are many organizations offering support. *Tidings* has created *EcclesiaSafe* for our community. There is in the US, the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) and RAINN (Rape Abuse and Incest National Network 1-800-656-HOPE), and in Canada Sheltersafe and the Canadian Women's Foundation. Ecclesias can partner with services like these (including local agencies often readily found with an Internet search) to provide an effective network of care and support.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a distortion of God's intent for relationships, and a violation of His command to love one another. As Christ's followers, we cannot afford to be silent or passive. We must confront this evil with truth and act with compassion, offering a path to healing and accountability.

Together, we can break the cycle.

The Christadelphian Tidings

ST. LUCIA

By Mike LeDuke



I returned to St. Lucia for three weeks this Fall, from October 20-November 10. The work of “ecclesial maintenance” continued. Most of the work during this visit involved assisting the local brothers and sisters with various personal issues and problems and providing Bible classes and exhortations. As an ecclesia, we discussed the importance of personal witnessing, and the members agreed to try to interest their relatives, friends, and neighbors with Bible Classes in homes or at the Mission House. We also plan to have a campaign based on Bible Prophecy. However, not having an experienced couple residing in St. Lucia for a year or more will make it difficult to follow up with interested contacts generated by the campaign. Using ZOOM

for regular follow-up sessions may be a workable

alternative. Of course, personal, face-to-face interaction is always preferable.

Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster are planning to return to St. Lucia in January 2025. During their visit and, God willing, my next stay, we hope to lay the groundwork for a campaign in the Fall. I hope to return in February or early March to continue the work and build momentum towards effective witnessing on an individual and ecclesial basis with the support of the CBMC. I will keep you posted on the progress toward our campaign goals.

*Mike LeDuke,
CBMC Link for St. Lucia*



OUTREACH TRIPS

By Benoit Mukendi

ANOTHER year has passed, filled with many activities, starting locally with our Swahili brethren in Canada and culminating in the Eastern Christadelphian Bible School (ECBS) held in New Hampshire, USA. It was a privilege to be invited to the ECBS to teach daily classes on the subject, “In Service to His Brethren: The Life of Joseph—What a Lesson for Us Today.” ECBS was held for an entire week, bringing together brethren from various parts of the world. It was a time of fruitful study and fellowship, with participants from the United Kingdom, Australia, China, Canada, and primarily the United States.

This gathering provided a wonderful opportunity to be refueled by the Word of God, strengthening and energizing our fellowship.

An evening presentation at Bible School was given on the incredible work of the CBM-UK in supporting ninety countries, including the eastern part of the DRC and Burundi. Bro. Joe Vickers, visiting from Dunstable, United Kingdom, was at ECBS this year and was of great help in this effort. Bible School was a time of deep meditation, prompting us to ask ourselves important questions and shape our journey as part of the great ecclesial family of God.



Special thanks to WCF for making it possible for the newly relocated families from Africa to North America to attend Bible School and benefit from classes in their own languages. This invaluable spiritual support is deeply appreciated, and we are grateful to our Heavenly Father for their assistance and to Bro. Paul and Sis. Bonnie Robinson of Cambridge, Ontario ecclesia. I was able to drive their 12-passenger van to Buffalo and Rochester, New York, where I picked up Congolese brothers and Sisters and drove on to Bible School in New Hampshire. Along the way, we missed a few exits, which delayed our journey, but by God's grace, we arrived safely at our destination. Upon arrival, the brethren warmly welcomed us. The school itself was wonderfully organized, and we give all the glory to God for everything that took place that week.

After the end of the Bible School, returning to Toronto, and a much-needed day of rest and refreshing, we flew from Toronto to Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The journey took a total of seventeen hours, with a layover in Addis Ababa, where we had the opportunity to meet with Bre. Anaclet and Sungu. They have been making great progress in supporting the Kipushi Ecclesia's preaching campaign, focusing on subjects like the Kingdom of God, the devils, and the gift of tongues. This outreach was a significant opportunity for the brethren in the Kipushi ecclesia, though the decline in their number of attendees remains a concern. After our time in Lubumbashi, we traveled by bus to Likasi, another major mining city formerly known as Jadotville.

The friends of the truth we met appeared eager to learn, taking lessons from the brethren in Lubumbashi with both precision and enthusiasm. They strongly desired more teaching sessions and literature in the area. During discussions with our contacts, I introduced myself as someone who had lived in the region, which made these moments of sharing the truth even more special. However, time was always working against our schedule, and we had to leave to catch the bus back to Lubumbashi.

Another exciting development occurred while we were in Lubumbashi, the "Copper Capital." We had the privilege of meeting Bro. Kilamba, a former chairperson of the Sympho Ecclesia in the Kalemie area, had relocated to the Kasangulu district of Lubumbashi. Bro. Kilamba is actively reaching out to more contacts from his small home. His presence in the area aims to collaborate with the Lubumbashi Ecclesia to support and strengthen each other's efforts in preaching.

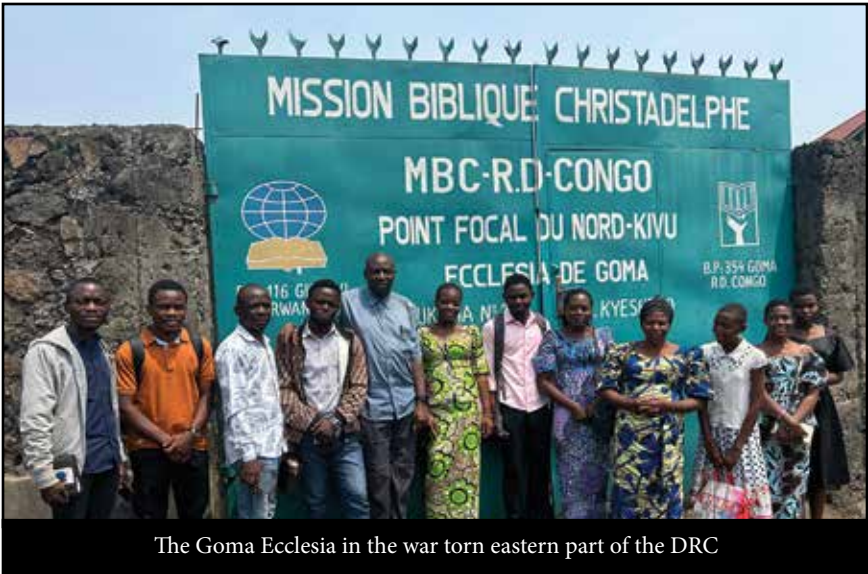
Although having prayed before going to sleep in preparation for our upcoming trip to Kalemie, Bro. Anaclet received a text message informing him of a last-minute flight cancellation. This news came shortly after launching the youth conference in the Kalemie area, which sparked great enthusiasm among the youth and interested friends. The conference focuses on mastering the first principles and living out the truth.

Despite becoming ill for a while, I had the opportunity to speak on such topics as the unity of the faith, supporting those who are weak in the faith, and the spiritual battle against sin. We also focused on nurturing our younger members, offering many teachings on first principles and other key subjects. The youth conference positively impacted many of our young people and brethren, as each day revealed new potential and a growing commitment to mastering the first principles.

At the conference, we had the privilege of fellowshiping around the memorial table, breaking bread, and sharing wine in remembrance of our absent Lord, as instructed in Scripture. The



After the baptism at the Rumonge Ecclesia in Burundi



The Goma Ecclesia in the war torn eastern part of the DRC

Moba Ecclesia continues to grow, and the brethren have built a shelter with a tent on top, hoping to shield themselves from the storms and heavy rainfall forecasted as the rainy season approaches.

Bro. Victor Amnobe, a member of the Des Moines Ecclesia in the United States, generously contributed maize products. This donation has greatly blessed the establishment of agricultural activities in the Fizi area of eastern DRC. It has enabled us to share more meals together; the leftover maize was distributed to families in need in the Kalemie area.

Afterward, we traveled with many of the young people returning to their respective areas aboard the Bateau Amani, a large boat that once belonged to the former president of the DRC. Meanwhile, Bro. Kim's team traveled to the Baraka area and Bro. Parfait, a

member of the Bukavu Ecclesia, and I crossed the border into Burundi. We spent the night at Hotel de l'Amitié before continuing to the Rumonge Ecclesia.

At the Rumonge Ecclesia, we conducted an interview following a public confession of faith that led to a baptism in Lake Tanganyika on the Burundi side. Lake Tanganyika in this area is well-known for its resident hippopotamus populations, which, while viewed as somewhat domesticated on land, are far from predictable in the water—where conditions can change instantly. Afterward, we shared the breaking of bread and drinking of wine with thanksgiving.

In addition, representatives from all the ecclesias gathered at the Rumonge Ecclesia to elect a new representative, as required by the government. This process proved challenging, as

forming a complete representative committee was complicated by government guidelines, which stipulated that anyone representing the Christadelphian Bible Mission in Burundi to the authorities must hold a university degree. This contingency was a significant hurdle, as none of our brothers possessed such a degree. However, we overcame this obstacle by God's grace and successfully completed the task. This step was critical for ensuring the continued growth and flourishing of the truth in Burundi, as this requirement had previously stood as a major stumbling block.

We left Burundi on a positive note, though much work remains to be done. On our way back, we passed through Uvira, which borders Burundi, and spent the night there. We met with representatives from two ecclesias in the area, following Bro. Kim's recent visit to connect with the leaders and observe the growth of the Kasenga Ecclesia.

Early the next morning, we took a bus through Rwanda, continuing to the Bukavu area ecclesias. During our time there, we witnessed several baptisms, participated in the memorial service, and engaged in many teaching sessions led by the brethren. We also had a memorable meeting with leaders from all the ecclesias, where we encouraged them to work together as a team and remain steadfast in the work of Yahweh. After the activities in the Bukavu area, we boarded the Bateau Emmanuel for an overnight journey to the Goma Ecclesia, located in the war-torn eastern region of the DRC, specifically in the North Kivu province. This area,

rich in strategic minerals, has been the focal point of conflict for the past two to three decades, with the ongoing violence fueled by control over these resources. As a result, many have been displaced from their homes and now live in the Mugunga camp, just five kilometers from the Goma Ecclesia.

Goma is surrounded by Lake Kivu, which holds vast untapped reserves of methane gas and is also situated near two active volcanoes Nyamuragira and Nyiragongo. The region's natural resources, combined with the ongoing conflict, create an extremely volatile situation. The area has approximately six ecclesias, two located within rebel-controlled zones. The threat to our beloved brethren and the people in this region is unimaginable. They live in constant fear and uncertainty.

Interestingly, this conflict receives less attention from mainstream media than other global crises. The most meaningful support we can offer our brethren in this situation is prayer. It is a humble yet powerful way to stand with them and can make a significant difference, far beyond what is covered in the news.

We are reminded to pray for our brothers and sisters daily. Through prayer, we bring their struggles before God, trusting that He alone can address their plight and give them the strength to endure.

Our final stop was a flight to Kinshasa, the capital city of the DRC, where we visited the Kinshasa Ecclesia Hall, a project funded by the CBM UK. We are deeply grateful to our beloved brethren from England for their generous spiritual and material support, which,

in line with government guidelines, helped the Kinshasa Ecclesia acquire their own building. We also commend the Kinshasa brethren for actively participating in the hall's construction. During our time in Kinshasa, we were blessed with the opportunity to meet many brethren from different regions. We spent time fellowshiping around the Word of God, and by God's grace, we were strengthened in our unity. After a meaningful and enriching time together, we safely returned

home, giving thanks to the CBM and to everyone who contributed to the success of this trip—whether through prayer, counsel, or financial support. We are filled with gratitude, knowing all our efforts are united in the bond of the truth.

*Benoit Mukendi,
CBM Link for East Africa*

CHRISTADELPHIAN VIDEO ANNUAL REPORT

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To read the annual report, scan the QR code below to be automatically connected.



Thoughts on the Way

Tomorrow's Headlines

Ten Nations Attack Israel In the Promised Land

(Psalm 83)¹

A significant aspect of the LORD God's covenant with Abraham is the promise of a special land (Genesis 13:14, 15, 17). This "Promised Land" is specifically defined (Genesis 15:18) as a land of ten nations (Psalm 83), and since each nation would have a king, there would be ten kings. This point may have a real consequence in the study of Bible prophecy, especially in Revelation.

Elsewhere, this land is described as stretching from the border of Egypt in the southwest to the borders of Babylon and Assyria in the northeast (Exodus 23:23; Deuteronomy 1:7; 11:24; Joshua 1:4; Psalm 72:8). Within this arena, this land of Promise (the full territory of which has never yet been fully occupied by Israel), much of Bible prophecy has been played out. Even today, eager believers worldwide watch that special land, waiting for a sign.

However, this land still contains something like the ten nations mentioned in Psalm 83, although the

names have changed over time. The ten nations of Psalm 83 are listed below:

*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi [small stream] of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the **Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.**" (Genesis 15:10-21).²*

In these days, the "Land of Promise" is a land occupied by two kinds of peoples:

- Those mostly descended from Abraham, who are known today as "Jews" or "Israelis," that is, those Jews who constitute a reborn Israel, and,
- Those descended from the "ten nations" and other earlier occupants of the Land, mentioned in Genesis 15, whose ancestors were intermixed with one another and, to some degree, intermixed with the descendants of Abraham.

Many of the Jews look to their faith and to their ancestry to justify their claims to the land of Promise.

Many of the Arabs, who are primarily Muslims, look to Mohammed as the founder of Islam in justifying their claim to the same land that the nation of Israel now occupies. Their long-standing settlement of the land before British rule (post-1948) further complicates matters.

"Arab" and "Ereb"

The English word "Arab" originates from the Hebrew *ereb*, which means "mixed." A similar word for *ereb* occurs four times in Daniel 2:41-43, regarding the toes of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw (presumably there were ten toes!). The prophet Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and explained it to him:

Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed [ereb] with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed [ereb] with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture [ereb] and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes [ereb] with clay.

Since the beginning of Biblical times, the Arab descendants of Abraham have intermarried with other peoples and created, a mixed or mingled peoples. In fact, this mingling has been mentioned several times in the Old Testament:

While he [Ishmael] was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt. (Genesis 21:21).

He [Esau] married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite [cp Exodus 23:23; Joshua 1:4], and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah." (Genesis 26:34, 35).

There are other instances of the word *ereb*—which may signify "mixed" or "mingled"—as related to other peoples of the Land:

- 1 Kings 10:15: *"All the Arabian kings."*
- Jeremiah 25:20, 24: *"the foreign (or "mingled" KJV) peoples."* This description includes the Philistines, all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the foreign (mingled) peoples in the desert.
- Jeremiah 50:37: *"All the foreigners (or "mingled people" KJV) that are in the midst of her [Babylon]."*
- Ezekiel 30:5: *"Cush, and Libya, and Lydia, and all Arabia (or "the mingled people" KJV)."*
- Nehemiah 13:1, 3: *"Ammonite or Moabite...all who were of foreign descent (or "the mixed multitude" KJV)."*

So, the "mixed peoples" of the Middle East are the Arabs, with blood ties both to the original Canaanites and the distant descendants of Abraham. Both these groups of people have historically had an intense hatred for the Jews.

Now, with the addition of a unifying religion, Islam, many of these Arabs view the Jews as abominable "infidels" who have no real claim to the Land of Palestine. To be honest, hatred goes both ways.

As we consider the Middle East since 1948, when the United Nations recognized Israel as a nation, we observe that the stage was being set for a battle between Israel and the ten "kings of the earth (or land)." As Daniel describes it, in the days when these mixed/mingled peoples trample down Israel, then the God of heaven will set up His everlasting Kingdom (Daniel 2:44).

As Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar:

Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands He has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in

the sky. Wherever they live, He has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth [once again, "the Land"]. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more



than iron mixes with clay.In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. (Daniel 2:37-45).

The “rock” is easily recognized as the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “*the stone which the builders rejected*” (Matthew 21:36-42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17-19), and therefore a “stone” that will indeed become a great Kingdom.

And the prophetic words of Jesus, spoken to his disciples, give us a wonderful hope. How will we know when the Kingdom of God is on the way? Jesus has answered that question for us:

There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your

heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:25-28).

Of course, we can do calculations, guesses, and predictions about Jesus's coming. And though no man may know the day or hour in advance, Jesus' words are conclusive: When you see enemies advancing upon Israel or surrounding Jerusalem, then you will know.

It's as simple as that. Until then, we wait, watch, work, pray, and preach. As the angels told the disciples who were looking intently into the heavens while their Lord Jesus ascended there:

Why do you stand here looking into the sky? The same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11).

Then the disciples remembered what Jesus had told them:

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 1:8).

And then they set out to obey his commands and his examples, even at the risk of their own lives.

*George Booker,
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

¹ The title of this article is not meant as an actual prophecy but rather as something to think about in the days ahead. We are not required to predict the future, but we should be ready to recognize that “future” as it arrives. We accomplish that by waiting, watching, working, praying, and preaching.

² All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

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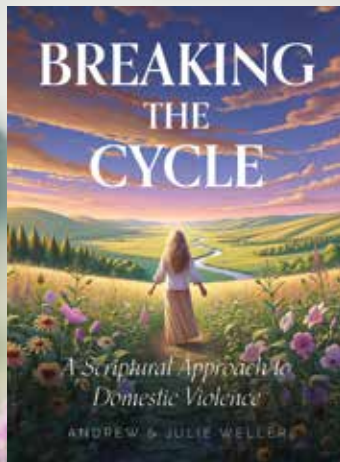
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