

# TIDINGS

Volume 88, Number 3, March, 2025

## SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD



Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

# TIDINGS

Volume 88, Number 3 / March, 2025



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E D I T O R I A L

# SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

POWER AND CONTROL  
HAVE NO PLACE IN  
THE ECCLESIA OF CHRIST.

**T**HE very subject line of this editorial probably makes you feel uncomfortable. Ecclesias purposely were modeled to be absent from formal hierarchy. We have one leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. The most outstanding title we will ever have is “brother” or “sister.”

### **Informal Power in Ecclesias**

Yet, it is not uncommon for informal or even formal power and control to appear within ecclesias. Often, well-intentioned members dedicated to serving the Lord can become dominant in their ecclesias. For many reasons, they gain a strong influence on the decisions of the ecclesia. Initially, they may have obtained that influence through their Scriptural knowledge, administrative capability, having a track record of spiritual support, or by demonstrating wisdom in ecclesial interactions. Having such brothers and sisters in our ecclesias can be a huge advantage.

But there is an equally substantial risk for abuse. It's a slippery slope between being an influential servant and one whose personal preferences and needs may suffocate life in the ecclesia. In the ecclesial body described in 1 Corinthians 12, these dominant brothers and sisters can function as surrogate heads of the body. They can make authoritative decisions for the ecclesia, sometimes without debate or challenge. Ecclesial members bow to their authority, either because they have confidence in them or because

they feel it is pointless to challenge them.

Robert Roberts wrote, "Little or no government would be necessary were we to profess the name of Christ animated by a controlling deference to the mind of Christ." Roberts continues by speaking about authority in Christadelphian meetings. "The ecclesia does not appoint masters, but servants."

In Christadelphia, we are freed from one of the most alluring reasons for power and control—money. No one will get rich from being a Christadelphian! Leaders aren't captive to worrying whether their message or position on an issue may result in a loss of income, which is a very real issue in some churches. Thankfully, money isn't at stake for us.

However, there may be an equally powerful reason for someone to desire extraordinary influence in our community. Some have an unspoken desire to be revered by others, and we often unwittingly contribute to this. We heap praise on the talented speaker. We honor those who serve in certain visible positions or organizations. These accolades can quickly intoxicate if you need to be accepted and recognized as a leader. It can become your identity in the community and what you feed on. Such leaders are sure that they know better than the brothers and sisters in the ecclesia. In some cases, they may be correct.

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## Behaviors of Abusive Power

Such informal power and control are always at risk. Pushing others down to increase or maintain influence may be necessary. Here are a few behaviors identified by other churches when power and control were abused.

- **Hyper-Competitiveness:** The individual needs to show others that they are better than them.
- **Jealousy:** They constantly compare their service to others they consider more successful or receive greater recognition.
- **Defensiveness:** When people try to correct them, they quickly offer excuses for fear of being exposed as weak.
- **Argumentativeness:** Defending oneself isn't enough. They need to go on the offensive and actively work to silence dissenting voices.
- **Risk Aversion:** They fear that any challenge will expose a lack of competence, so they always play it safe or position any threat as Humanism or a compromise to the Truth.
- **Unforgiving:** They are easily hurt, finding it hard to “turn the other cheek” to their critics. They can be ardent “letter writers” across the community, urging the taking of sides.
- **Legalism:** They create artificial measurements, which make it difficult for others to challenge them or measure up.
- **Intimidation:** members might walk on eggshells around them, fearing a conflict or having an opposing view.<sup>1</sup>

- **Judgmental:** Feeling superior to others and critiquing their efforts because they won't do things their way. This results in volunteers no longer being willing to step up and clears the way for the leader to dominate alone.

You may have seen some of these behaviors manifested. We may dabble in a few of these from time to time. But they suppress and even extinguish the love of Christ. We should be better than this.

## Authority in New Testament Times

There are many examples of leadership in the first-century churches. The Apostle Paul stands out as the most influential leader, with his impact felt in both Gentile and Jewish quarters. Paul was headstrong. He had a clear vision from the Lord about how the ecclesial body should operate and interact. As time passed, he appointed elders in ecclesias, which he had helped establish. Even from his prison home in Rome, Paul continued to provide ecclesial leadership to the infant church.

Paul could be intimidating for many. He never backed down when he felt that rebuke was needed. Paul challenged Peter when he thought that Peter's actions were inconsistent and opposed to the intended direction of the Lord. When warned not to go to Jerusalem, even through the Spirit, he went anyway. Paul was a masterful writer, a talented debater, and a man with Scriptural knowledge that few had ever seen. Yet, as we see with Barnabas, he could take strong opinions.

Interestingly, Paul was not always accepted as an “authority” in many churches. In Corinth, he spent eighteen months helping to form the ecclesia. However, the ecclesia divided itself to identify with iconic leaders. Paul was only one of them. Some rejected his instruction in favor of the words of others who preached “another gospel.” His work in ecclesias was trailed by the Judaizers, who attempted to pull Gentile Christians into following the Law. In his letters, Paul spoke directly to these challenges. He frequently called out the motives behind the missteps. He used words such as “foolish” to describe the Galatians. “Puffed up” to describe the Corinthians that had failed to administer ecclesial discipline.

But is there anyone like Paul who was so committed to supporting and recognizing brothers and sisters? He often ended letters naming the brothers and sisters who had labored in the faith. He appears to have had a

protracted prayer list for which he daily sought the Lord. To save some, Paul would do nearly anything, including going back into a town (Lystra) that had stoned him and dragged him away as dead. Paul was, first and foremost, a servant of the Lord. He wasn’t after fame (or fortune), and he was not to be deterred from his work.

Even the way Paul describes the oversight of the flock is interesting.

*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28).*

The first place for leaders to look is at themselves. Leaders misaligned with the spirit of Christ cannot be effective leaders. How can one shepherd the flock if they are motivated by things the Lord rejected, such as envy and power? Further, shepherding in the ecclesia is all about feeding, not about



being fed. The needs of the sheep come well before the needs of the shepherd. This duty is in stark contrast to the shepherds of Israel, who, in their self-interest, fed themselves and not the flock (Ezekiel 34:8). Peter exhorts shepherds and elders to take the *“oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind [ready to serve—NIV].”* (1 Peter 5:2.) Further, Peter clarifies they are never to be *“lords”* over God’s heritage, but by being examples (v. 3.) It is a temporary job elders do until the *“chief Shepherd shall appear.”* (1 Peter 5:4).

### **Accountability and Rotation in Leadership**

The first thing to recognize is when accountability to the ecclesia is no longer in view. We are all accountable to one another. No appointed position in the ecclesia is outside of these checks and balances. A recording brother is not at liberty to communicate ecclesial positions when they have not been previously agreed to by the ecclesia. Most ecclesias have constitutions that deal with this. If we don’t see everyone as accountable to the ecclesia, we are walking in dangerous territory.

Sometimes, well-intentioned brothers and sisters can “gobble up” ecclesial responsibilities. This situation can happen for many reasons. Sometimes,

it happens (and should never happen) because the ecclesial members are unwilling to do some necessary work in the meeting. Neglected work can cripple an ecclesia, and dedicated elders would sooner do the work themselves than permit the need to go untended.

Of course, there is another side to this. Leaders in the ecclesia may feel that there’s no one qualified or dependable to delegate work to. When this happens,

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one or two people dominate almost every important ecclesial committee. They are on the arranging board, they lead the program committee, they head up the preaching committee, etc. Nothing much can happen in the ecclesia without their control. I believe that this is insidious. No one thinks they are dominating; if they are, there is a good reason for it. Sadly, as time passes, it is possible

that even when there are qualified members to do the work, they will feel unwanted.

Most ecclesias have either annual or biannual elections for serving positions. It is a promising idea for servants to rotate on and off most positions, assuming the ecclesia is large enough. In a prior ecclesia in the 1980s, the ecclesia decided to limit the recording brother’s term to a maximum of six consecutive years (three elections). After this,

the individual could serve in other capacities but not as a recording brother for at least the next election term. I was uncertain of the wisdom of this when it first occurred. But I found it extremely useful in our ecclesia. It is a very impactful way of reminding us that we are servants. I am sure you have heard ecclesias referred to as “So and So’s Ecclesia” because of the longstanding position a recorder may have. This statement may be a tip-off to us that the humble spirit of brethren serving together may have been unwittingly sacrificed.

At times, there can be positions taken by “ecclesias” where the members know nothing about the matter or have never agreed to it. Positions taken are to be **ecclesial** positions, not positions by the few. When these occur, the ecclesia needs to take note and hold these leaders accountable to the authority of the ecclesia. Further, some brothers and sisters are easily hurt, finding it hard to “turn the other cheek” to their critics. As was noted above, they can be ardent “letter writers” across the community, urging the taking of sides. When personal letters are written and circulated, they may be mistakenly identified as reflective of their ecclesia’s thinking. Such letters rarely edify, but if written, they need to be identified as being from the brother or sister only and not the ecclesia to which they belong.

### **Emphasis on Humility**

We should not seek out recognition and power. As Peter said, we should do the work willingly, not by grumbling. If

you find yourself feeling this way, take note. The ecclesia is at risk, and so are you. Insist that appointed committees make decisions, or even the entire ecclesia. Follow proper delegation techniques. Support the worker when work is accepted, but don’t abdicate responsibility. Like any good leader, you must ensure that when work is received, the individual has all the support and training necessary. But check in regularly to make sure the work is progressing. Change your identity from being an irreplaceable individual contributor to a committed mentor, especially of younger brothers and sisters.

You can step away for a while. When the ecclesial elections occur, don’t accept the nomination for a leadership position. You will find countless other ways to serve in the ecclesia. If, by God’s grace, you wish to return to that job later, be careful to take it on with a renewed commitment to not accepting the power or control you may have had previously.

But what if you find yourself in a small ecclesia with few leadership options? There may not be an alternative to your serving. If so, it is incumbent on you to ensure that all decisions are openly discussed with the ecclesial members, attempting to engage as many of them as possible (when it is sensible) in any decisions the ecclesia makes. Promote having the ecclesia engage in an open Biblical discussion about the principles governing the decisions to be made. Let the authority come from the Scriptures themselves.



If you cannot fully back away from leadership responsibilities, here are some ideas for spreading responsibility and ownership to others.

1. Delegate parts of a job to others (e.g., Moses and the princes of the tribes, the appointment of the seven for the needs of the widows in Acts 6).
2. Mentor younger members to take on progressively more responsibilities over time.
3. Be as transparent as possible, sharing information and context as appropriate.
4. Seek the advice of those with more expertise than you, for instance, carpentry, purchasing, insurance review, or preaching.

### **Obey Them That Have Rule Over You**

Hebrews 13:17 has occasionally been taken out of context over the years, suggesting that ecclesial members

should “obey” and “submit” to the leaders of the ecclesia. The Apostle Peter was clear that there was to be no “lording” over the ecclesial members. He wrote,

*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.* (1 Peter 5:2-3 ESV).

As Bro. Alfred Nicholls pointed out in “Take a Marginal Note” in *The Christadelphian Magazine* in 1994, the KJV margin note tells us that the phrase is not “rule over you,” but “guide you;” the Greek word is also the word for “lead.” He added this.

Such a responsibility devolves upon the twentieth-century brethren no less than upon those of the first century, though they have been elected rather than



“ordained.” Moreover, they too must carry out their duties “as they that must give account.” How important is it, then, that we offer such brethren our full cooperation that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for us.

Hebrews 13:17 reminds elders of the gravity of their role as overseers. They must give an account of the Shepherd’s sheep. To the full ecclesia, it instructs us about cooperation and submission. As Paul wrote, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”* (Philippians 2:3). This is a critical touchstone for all members of Christ’s body.

### **What We Came Out Of**

Robert Roberts was keenly aware of how different the Christadelphian world was from the churches we came from. Only a few dominated those churches. Their leaders were held in esteem and often compensated by the parishioners. There was an acknowledgment of the power and control of the church leaders, often with disastrous consequences.

Someone once pointed out that no one ever washes their rental car. I have rented hundreds of times but never cleaned the car or checked the oil. Why? Because I don’t own it. If the vehicle is dirty, the rental car company will wash it for the next person. People may feel this in other churches, where

a few elders dominate. There is no ownership. There is little accountability. The church is “theirs,” and we just attend it. If the church needs repair (like the rental car), we will let the real owners take care of it.

The remarkable beauty of the truth is that as a single, interdependent body, we are all necessary. We are all “owners.” The body of Christ in Corinth was filled with a diversity of spirits. Some were more notable, others less so. However, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul continues to argue that all these diverse gifts in the body were temporary. The three behaviors that would endure were faith, hope, and love. We need to focus on these, not power and control. The greatest of these is love. That is Christ’s mind, which we all must aspire to. Our Lord *“took upon him the form of a servant.”* (Philippians 2:7). He *“humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (v. 8). Today, he has all power and authority in heaven and earth, God has highly exalted him. By God’s grace, our time for authority and power is yet to come when our Lord makes us *“unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* (Revelation 5:10).

Until the Chief Shepherd appears, we must all serve each other humbly, taking on the form of a servant. It is then that he will exalt us, by his grace, to *“receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”* (1 Peter 5:4).

*Dave Jennings*

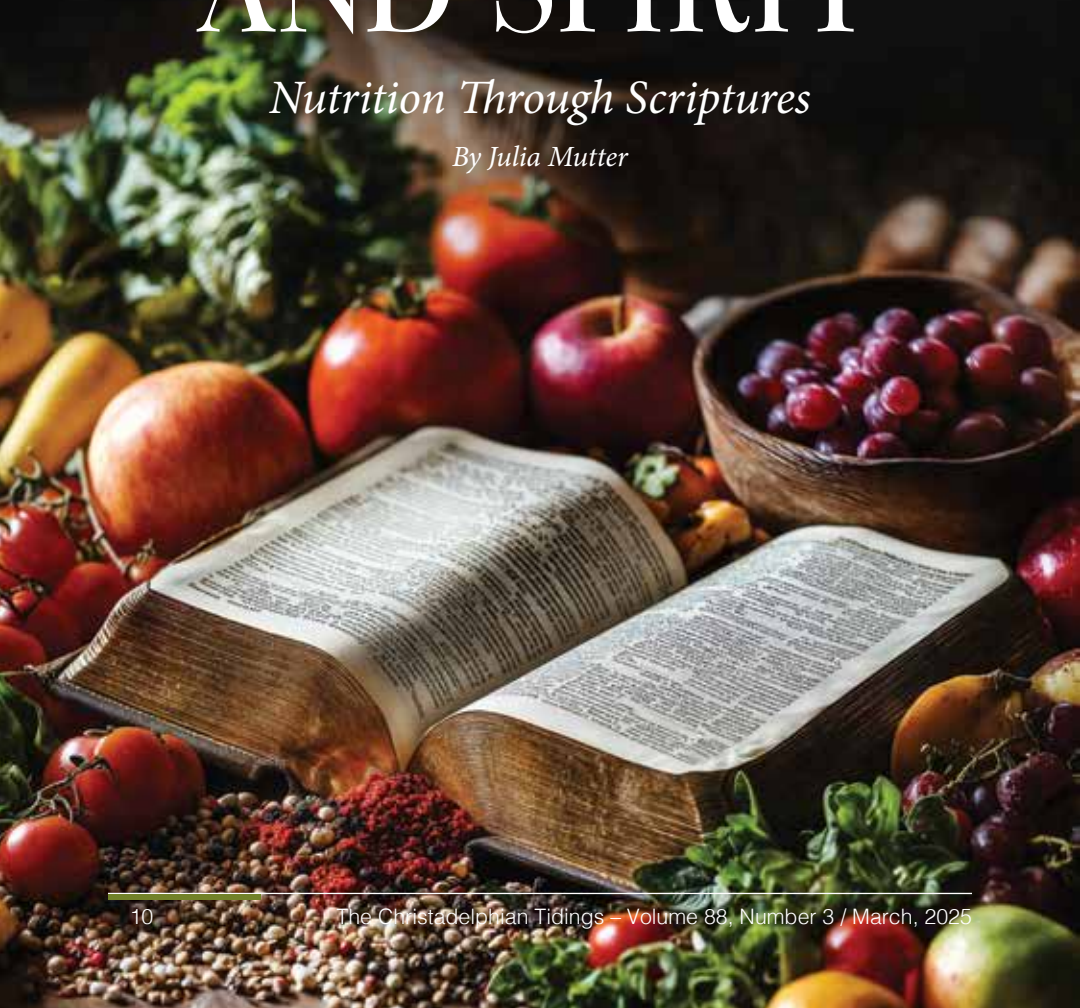
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<sup>1</sup> Foster, Dan, *The Dangers of Toxic Power Dynamics in Church Leadership: Pastors caught between Convictions and Congregations*. October 13, 2024.

# FUELING OUR MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

*Nutrition Through Scriptures*

*By Julia Mutter*



**A**S a dietitian, I've been in the world of food and nutrition for over twenty years. In that time, so many of the people I talk to relate to food with shame, guilt, fear, and an overwhelming sense of confusion. Food has also been contributing to unhealthy medical outcomes. From the beginning, this was not what God intended. If we can navigate a more balanced relationship with food, it can keep our bodies healthier and also help us deepen our relationship with God.

God laid out a beautiful series of laws regarding food for His people in the Old Testament. These laws were meant to be a schoolmaster to lead us to care for our bodies and relationship with God. In these commands, there is also medical guidance and knowledge meant to protect us from potential food-borne diseases and allergens, as well as sin and its consequences. For example, in Leviticus 11, dietary restrictions are laid out for the children of Israel. The restricted foods (i.e., pork, shellfish, insects, and scavenger birds) are now known to us as foods with a higher potential to carry bacteria, which could make people ill. This result was especially true for the children of Israel, who had less access to food processing and pasteurization, which can remove some of these harmful bacterial agents. In the New Testament, these foods were declared clean (Mark 7:18-19), but with increased knowledge, we can see why they may have been restricted to those without access to clean water and preservation techniques.

Foods in the Bible were also to be prepared in a certain way for similar

reasons. This practice of ritual cleaning, separation of the blood, and boiling would protect the Jewish people from bacterial outbreaks. The most significant example of this is the Black Plague in 1347-1350. Jewish people were accused of poisoning others because they were not dying. Years later, it was discovered that the plague was spread by poor hygiene. The ritual cleaning the Jews followed helped save their lives.

While these practices are no longer followed in our society, we can be comforted by the fact that God laid out practices to preserve and protect His people. How can we also apply some of these food guidelines to keep us healthy in a world that is becoming increasingly unhealthy and dying of diseases linked to poor dietary behaviors?

### **Biblical Food Guidelines**

What foods were typical to God's people? The first chapters of Genesis describe a plant-based diet.

*Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. (Genesis 1:11-13).<sup>1</sup>*

The land produced the food meant to nourish Adam and Eve at a time when there was no need for the death

of animals. Their bodies were made to survive off this vegetation. We see this practice again in Daniel's time. The people of Babylon were eating an overabundance of the King's meat. He did not want to eat this meat since it was defiled by sacrifice to their gods, but even then, he was nourished body and spirit by vegetables and water. After ten days, Daniel and his friends were healthier on a plant-based diet.

*Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. (Daniel 1:12-16).*

These instances do not mean we should all be vegetarians, as there are mainly essential amino acids found in poultry, meats, and fish. But what should we build our diets around? We should seek to find a balance of fresh produce, lean proteins, and complex carbohydrates. When I give grocery store tours to those in the community, these are the foods found on the

outside perimeter of most grocery stores. They do not come in boxes. They do not have big advertising budgets. No athletes or superstars are promoting them. They come to us the way we would find them in nature.

### **Self-Control and Approach To Food**

Self-control over food can help us control all other aspects of our lives. We do not want our appetite for sin to control us and our behaviors. In the Old Testament, having a "great appetite" is often associated with someone unable to control themselves.

*This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. (Deuteronomy 21:20 KJV).*

*Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. (Proverbs 23:20-21).*

While it is not a sin to overeat, the guidelines in the Bible can help us to see that continual overeating can cause much pain in this life. When helping guide people in their relationship with food, there is often an uncomfortable relationship with the scale. Weighing people can be a helpful tool to determine success in

**Self-control over food can help us control all other aspects of our lives.  
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weight maintenance and the need for loss or gain. For those unhappy with their number on the scale, I often encourage people to see the scale as a choice reflection and not self-reflection. If we make continuous healthy choices, the scale will often find balance (though this is not always true in special circumstances). This description is obviously an oversimplification of the complexity of food balance, but seeing food as a source of energy “in” versus energy “expended” is a balance all of us seek to maintain.

### **Fellowship With God and His People**

People come together around food. My boys just love potluck Sunday at our ecclesia. People identify with each other in the Bible and in our current society through food. Relationships are formed through meals, and people show love and connection through giving and sharing of their food.

In the laws regarding the altar offerings, when the people wanted to show God honor, praise, atonement, and/or dedication, they would bring animal offerings to the priests. According to the law, the fellowship offering (also known as the peace offering) is the only time when people are able to eat the food offered. When God wants to be in a relationship or find fellowship with us, a meal is involved. The fellowship offering was also voluntary. (Leviticus 7:11-38). God wants us to be in a relationship with Him, but we must also choose to come to Him. In the offering, people could offer a variety of foods. The animals were to be without blemish, but they could be male or female, and there was also a grain offering. It was a full meal with protein, carbohydrates, and fat. This offering was much less specific than the others and was meant to be consumed. They put this fellowship offering in their bodies and let it nourish them.

Foods connect us to God and each other. They nourish and care for our bodies. The foods mentioned in the Bible are important to know more about—why are they mentioned, and how can we apply them to our lives?

One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible that represents the power of food is when Abigail prepares a meal for David and his hungry men. They are running from Saul; they are scared, angry and hungry. They want revenge and are prepared to show aggression to Nabal and his household. Nabal, whose name means “fool,” tells David he has no reason to protect and provide for him and his men.

*And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? (1 Samuel 25:10-11 KJV).*

Abigail, knowing the will of God and hearing how these men protected her household, does not hesitate.

*Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. (1 Samuel 25:18 KJV).*

Like many other examples in Scripture,

this is a well-balanced meal. It is filled with complex carbohydrates and proteins that are high in fiber. This meal will sustain these men, but it also led David to recognize his foolishness in wanting to avenge himself. Their fellowship meal and her appeal to him caused him to feel blessed by her gift of food and knowledge of God's will.

### **Lessons For Us**

In future articles, I plan to discuss specific foods and their amazing power to heal, as well as their great spiritual significance. But let us look at these Old Testament examples of balance, moderation, and spiritual fellowship when making food choices. Can we see food as a fuel for our bodies that God has provided? Will we choose minimally processed foods so that their nutrients can provide us with proper nourishment? How can we show self-control in our portions to not overfeed our bodies and cause injury?

*Give us today our daily bread. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? (Matthew 6:11, 25).*

*Eat your food with gladness and drink your wine with a joyful heart. (Ecclesiastes 9:7).*

*Julia Mutter,  
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<sup>1</sup> Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless specifically noted.

# EMOTIONALLY WOUNDED

(A FICTIONAL STORY AND CHARACTERS)

*By Patricia Ferguson*

**D**URING a family gathering, Orson thoughtlessly<sup>1</sup> remarked about his cousin Alora's weight. Though he intended no harm, his careless words struck deep, leaving Alora feeling hurt and the target of teasing.

Years passed, and another family reunion brought familiar faces together. But it also brought unresolved tension to the surface. Orson observed Alora from across the room. Her presence deepened the weight of his guilt and the burden of the task before him. He remembered the carelessness of his words and the pain they caused.

Summoning his courage, Orson approached his cousin. With a low, steady voice, he quietly said to her, "Alora, I need to apologize. The last time we spoke, I said wrong and hurtful things. I am truly sorry. Please forgive me."

Alora's smile vanished as the painful memory rushed back—the humiliation, the stares, and the pitiful looks. The anger she had fought so hard to bury returned. Her piercing eyes locked on Orson, and with a bitter voice, she said, "Oh, I remember. Sorry, it doesn't erase what you said. Wounds like that just don't disappear, and forgiveness is far from being considered."



Orson stood in silence. Her words cut deep, but he didn't argue or defend himself. Instead, he nodded and softly whispered, "I understand." Without another word, he turned and walked away. An apology was offered but not accepted.<sup>2</sup>

If we were Orson or Alora, how would we respond? This story highlights how deep wounds can linger even when remorse is expressed. While apologies are vital, they don't always erase the pain or repair trust if we leave God out of the equation for healing.

Colossians 3:13 is a good reminder to *"forgive as the Lord forgave."* This request applies to everyone, whether we have caused harm or been deeply hurt. When we choose to forgive offenses, we release the weight of resentment and embrace the peace found in Christ. Mark 11:25 is emphatic *"When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*<sup>3</sup>

When Peter asked how many times he should forgive, Jesus replied, *"Not seven times, but seventy-seven times."* (Matthew 18:21-22).<sup>4</sup> Jesus was telling Peter he should forgive his brother a limitless number of times. Forgiveness has no limits. It is a continual process, not limited to a few of life's significant moments. Whether it's Joseph pardoning his brothers, Jesus extending

mercy to those who crucified him, or the unmerciful servant refusing to show compassion, each of these instances emphasizes God's call for us to forgive.

Jesus taught the importance of reconciling with others before approaching his Father in prayer (Matthew 5:23-24). Forgiveness isn't only for the one who is forgiven; it frees both people from emotional pain. It shows God's love in our lives and is a powerful reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Just as he bore the weight of our sins to offer us salvation, we are called to give grace (bestowal of blessings) to others. If we are unwilling to forgive even small matters, it can harden our hearts, making reconciliation even more difficult. Forgiveness depends on our willingness to extend mercy. It mirrors God's mercy and shapes us to grow in humility, compassion, and love. When we forgive, we actively live out the grace we've received, fostering peace and unity within the body of Christ and beyond.

That peace is not fleeting but a lasting peace, deeply rooted in faith and trust in Jesus' love.

*Patricia Ferguson,  
Past member of the now closed  
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<sup>1</sup> *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what helps build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* (Ephesians 4:29).

<sup>2</sup> Basically, an apology has four elements: I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I love you.

<sup>3</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless specifically noted.

<sup>4</sup> Translators of the Bible are advised to translate the expression as "seventy times seven." Commentators are advised to explain that although the phrase equates to four hundred and ninety, it symbolically signifies the completion of forgiveness for all sins that could be committed against someone. Jesus speaks of forgiveness beyond what anyone had ever considered: seventy times seven!

# ANXIETY

*By Paul Zilmer*



**YOU** don't need me to tell you there's a lot of anxiety in the world. Threats and stresses of all kinds abound. It's uneven, of course. Some individuals, families, and communities feel they are doing all right; they aren't particularly anxious about anything. For other individuals, families, and communities, the word anxiety is too weak.

Jesus and others have a fair amount to say about anxiety and being anxious. Mostly: Don't be. They aren't blind to what causes anxiety, and they aren't foolishly optimistic. Let's look at a sampling.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives extended attention to what most of us consider legitimate anxieties. But he says (paraphrasing), "Don't be anxious about your life, not even what you'll eat. And don't be anxious about the future." (Matthew 6:25-34). To someone who doesn't know where their next meal is coming from or where they'll sleep tonight, or someone terminally ill, this might seem harsh. What Jesus is saying is that there's more to consider than the immediate need.

Jesus warns his followers that they'll face arrest and trial for following him. That would tend to make any of us anxious! But he says, "*Do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say*" when you're hauled in before the authorities. (Luke 12:11-12).

The Apostle Paul writes, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" (Philippians 4:6). The Apostle Peter says essentially the same thing. "*Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*" (1 Peter 5:7).

Does this sound like a cheerful "Don't worry, be happy!" attitude? Something like that would only be said by someone who has it easy or is out of touch with reality. Look at who's speaking and recall what they endured. They are all familiar with the cold reality of hate, insecurity, poverty, and even violence.

Jesus and his apostles were reflecting on teachings from the Hebrew Scriptures they grew up with. They knew Jeremiah said the one who trusts God is a green tree in the desert, not anxious even in drought (Jeremiah 17:5-8). They know the psalm that says "*eating the bread of anxious toil*" accomplishes nothing, and the LORD gives unworried sleep to those who are His. (Psalm 127:2).

Why all this counsel not to be anxious? Clearly, God recognizes we **do** have anxieties. It's a problem for us. If basic needs like food and shelter are uncertain, worry is natural. If we are persecuted for our faith, who would not be worried about what we'll say when we're accused?

What does Jesus say? "The Father knows what you need, and is more than capable." The real question is whether we trust Him. Paul and Peter say, "You can give your worries to God because He really loves you." Jeremiah says, "If you've put down deep roots of trust, you'll get through the hard times." (Jeremiah 17:7-8) When we've done this, we believe that the LORD loves and cares and is capable, and we have no need to get all wound up, working harder and longer, and losing sleep, as the psalm says.

These passages don't say believers have no problems or that stresses in our lives are a sign we don't have enough faith. That's not the point of any of them. The point is that stresses and troubles will come, and the question is how we'll react to them. In Jeremiah's parable, will we prove to be the scrub bush that withers, having little root? Or the deep-rooted tree that stays green even in harsh circumstances?

We might beat ourselves up for being anxious by thinking about things like this and reading this kind of passage. We know we **do** worry sometimes—does that mean our faith is weak? We can grow anxious about being anxious! Instead, the counsel our LORD gives us is, "Let it go, let me handle it." And when we do, we can have that unworried sleep. God will be there for us tomorrow.

*Paul Zilmer,  
Bloomington Ecclesia, IL*



# PERSECUTION: MATTHEW 10

*By Robert Prins*

**I**N one of the many times Jesus and other New Testament writers speak about the persecution of the followers of Christ, Jesus said this: “*You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*” (Matthew 10:22 NIV).

There are two things to note here. The first is that persecution comes because of our relationship with Jesus. This situation might seem hard to imagine at the moment, especially if we live in a tolerant Western culture, but things can change very quickly. Jesus did not say that **some** people would hate us because of him. He said that **all** men would hate us because of him. It appears likely that there will be a real swing in attitude toward Christians.

The second point to note is what we should do about it. Stand firm. When persecution comes, the end will not be far away. Don’t give up. It would seem so much more hopeless if we were not expecting persecution. If we were surprised by it, we would feel like giving up. But we have been warned. Now that we know we will probably be persecuted, we can anticipate it and be prepared to stand firm.

Let’s not let persecution take us by surprise, but be determined to stand strong no matter what happens until our Lord returns. May our faith and strength grow stronger through the coming year.

*Robert Prins,  
Pakuranga Ecclesia, NZ*

# BIBLICAL ANCIENT ISRAEL

*By Jason Hensley*

**Editor's Note: We are pleased to welcome Bro. Jason Hensley to the editorial staff with this issue. Jason is the newly-appointed Associate Editor for the *Tidings*. He will begin a series of articles this year, Lord Willing, on Biblical Prophecy. I am sure we will all enjoy this new column.**

**P**ROPHECY finds its basis in Scripture and history. It is through history that we understand prophecy fulfilled and see the patterns through which God works. Therefore, in our attempt to understand prophecy, we must first understand history.

Far and above, Scripture tells Israel's history. From Abraham and the patriarchal family to the spiritual descendants of Abraham in the New Testament, the Biblical record presents historical events related to a particular family. Prophecy continually describes what would happen to Israel—prophecies God fulfilled in the days of the prophets themselves and prophecies yet to come. Because Scripture's prophecy and history center on Israel, our column will do the same. Sometimes, we may feel turned off by history (and also prophecy). Perhaps these feelings develop because of dogmatism that isn't really warranted by Scripture. While Jesus did expect his contemporaries to understand prophecy (Matthew 16:3; 24:15), our focus on understanding must also be tempered by a humility that recognizes that our interpretation may be wrong. Prophecy shines as a light in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19). Scripture is infallible and inerrant. Yet, our interpretations and understandings are not. Thus, we must try to understand prophecy and approach this understanding with

a recognition that we have more to learn. History works similarly; our grasp on history also changes with new discoveries and findings. We need to be willing to adjust our understanding; this column will attempt to take that more flexible approach to both history and prophecy. We'll do our best to understand and recognize that we can make mistakes.

Finally, prophecy and history both witness to God's greatness. He declares the end when it's only the beginning, and He has done so specifically with Israel. Israel serves as God's witnesses (Isaiah 43:10–13). Therefore, we can not only use prophecy and its fulfillment in history to encourage our own faith, but we can discuss these things with others. We can share how God has worked in the past, following the instructions echoed by many of the Psalms: "*Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.*" (Psalm 66:5).<sup>1</sup> Our awe of God and His doings compels us to share our understanding. In tracing the prophecy and history of Israel, may you be inspired.

For this article, we're going to start at the beginning. We want to understand ancient Israel in its historical context. This context and recognition of Israel's historical existence are imperative when discussing prophecy and the Bible in general with others. At this

point, many argue that Jews never had any existence in the land of Israel. Thus, for the following few pages, we'll examine the Ancient Near East, uncover the Exodus, and consider the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

### The Ancient Near East

The “Ancient Near East” refers to the ancient area encompassing Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Iran. Over 5,000 years ago, Sumer and Akkad were two major players in Mesopotamia, and Abraham’s story begins in the latter empire. As Scripture explains, Abraham came from Ur (Genesis 11:31), one of the major cities in the Akkadian empire. Being an Akkadian, Abraham likely spoke Akkadian, the earliest documented Semitic language, and if he wrote, he wrote Akkadian in cuneiform. Based on the timeline presented by Scriptural genealogies, Abraham lived around the year 2,000 BC.

Though Abraham traveled from Ur to Canaan, the road between the two was not direct. Ur sits almost directly east

of Canaan, yet going directly east takes one straight through a desert with very little water. Abraham and his family thus traveled northwest, stopping in Haran, an area in the region of Aram (from which Aramaic derives). In this new area, now Abraham’s family likely began to speak Aramaic, which explains why both Abraham’s servant (Genesis 24) and Jacob (Genesis 29) could easily converse when they traveled north from Canaan to Aram. Eventually, through the story of Joseph, Jacob’s family ended up in Egypt.

At this moment, no extra-Biblical documents or artifacts exist to prove Abraham’s existence or the movement of his family from Canaan to Egypt.

Historically, none of these events can be proven. While that may seem an affront to the Bible, it isn’t—one day, historians or archaeologists may find proof of these things, but at this moment, no extra-Biblical documents or artifacts exist to prove Abraham’s existence or the movement of his family from Canaan to Egypt. This fact matters because we should be upfront when we talk with our friends about history and prophecy. At this point, we rely solely on the Biblical text, believing in its inspiration. Though genetic research does support the Biblical narrative, indicating that



The painting inside the Tomb of Rekhmire depicts slaves of Semitic origins.

European Jews have genetic links with Jews in the Middle East—indicating a common origin, it doesn't point to anything definitive about Abraham.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Exodus is another historical challenge. Using the timing given at Solomon's temple completion, the Israelites left Egypt around 1444 BC (1 Kings 6:1, 38). At this time, Egypt certainly had Semitic slaves. Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 lists a number of slaves whose names prefigure those that appear throughout the Bible. The tomb of Rekhmire includes a painting of slaves with Semitic origins. Nevertheless, contemporary Egyptian history includes very little about Israel. The Soleb inscription, written approximately 100 years after the Biblical date of the Exodus, refers to the "land of the shasu of Yahweh." Most scholars believe that "shasu" refers to a group of nomads, and thus, this inscription is one of the first references to the Israelites. The Soleb inscription records peoples conquered by the Egyptians during that time period, and thus, indicates that the Israelites were no longer in Egypt then, meshing nicely with the Biblical record. The Merneptah Stele records something similar, although it dates to approximately 1205 BC. In other words, the establishment of a people known as the Israelites in Canaan who followed Yahweh is certainly historically verifiable.

The conquest of the land of Canaan by Joshua and the Judges presents another fascinating historical picture. Archaeologists have found Jericho, and though many scholars date the

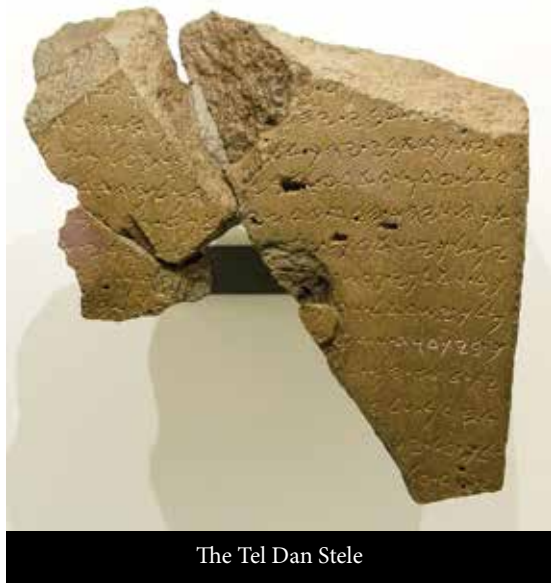


The Merneptah Stele

fall of Jericho to a period different than fits with the Biblical record, a movement exists that recognizes the evidence at Jericho points strongly toward harmony with the Biblical narrative.<sup>3</sup> Other cities conquered by the Israelites, such as Hazor and Ai, match what Biblical scholars would expect.<sup>4</sup> In essence, as we come closer to our time, we find more evidence supporting not only the Biblical record but the existence of the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

Much more evidence surfaces during the time of the kings. The Tel Dan Stele dates to the 800s BCE and references "the house of David." Even older, the Large Stone Structure in Jerusalem





The Tel Dan Stele

appears to have been David's palace, or if not David's palace, certainly a palace of the kings of Judah. By this point, the evidence of a Jewish kingdom in Canaan, centered in Jerusalem, is overwhelming.

All of this is history. We stand on solid footing both Biblically and historically when considering Israel in the past and the future. Our understanding of Israel and its past, shaped by the Bible, largely fits with what we know about Israel and Judah throughout history.

Not only does this convergence of the Bible and history excite us, simply because it further verifies what we have read Scripturally, but it also gives us an informed opinion when discussing Israel and its future with others. The following quote demonstrates why this informed opinion is so important:

Establishing the colonial nature of the conflict has proven exceedingly

hard given the biblical dimension of Zionism, which casts the new arrivals as indigenous and as the historic proprietors of the land they colonized. In this light, the original population of Palestine appears extraneous to the post-Holocaust resurgence of a Jewish nation-state with its roots in the kingdom of David and Solomon: they are no more than undesirable interlopers in this uplifting scenario. Challenging this epic myth is especially difficult in the United States, which is steeped in an evangelical Protestantism that makes

it particularly susceptible to such an evocative Bible-based appeal and which also prides itself on its colonial past.<sup>5</sup>

This book, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, is considered an academic text that presents the Palestinian view of the Israel/Palestine conflict. Unfortunately, as evinced above, it also engages in historical revisionism, writing the Israelites into nonexistence. It's also not the only popular source that does this. It, therefore, behooves us, as those who believe the Bible and want to share its message with our friends and coworkers, to know what errors some are saying about Biblical history and how to counter these falsehoods.

With that said, this consideration also benefits us in another way. We can discuss the historical validity

of the Biblical record and use this information as a historical basis for the next period of time in Israel's history. During that period of history, when Israel was conquered by empire after empire, Israel was influenced by numerous extra-Biblical forces. Thus, its beliefs and ideas about God began

to shift. In this period between the Old and New Testaments, Israel changed dramatically. We'll consider that change in the next article.

*Jason Hensley,  
Associate Editor*

- 1 All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the English Standard Version.
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- 5 Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Picador, 2017), 241.



# SURVIVING AS A SINGLE MOM

*It is up to you to be the spiritual leader in your household, knowing that raising your children to be a part of God's family is your **number one** priority.*

*By a Sister*

**M**y marriage was in crisis soon after our child was born. We had been married for about seven years by then. My husband was not part of the Christadelphian community, nor had he practiced religion as an adult. His drinking increased gradually over the years, but now he had developed into a full-blown alcoholic and resented me for staying home to care for our newborn. He wanted me to go back to work, though our house was paid for, and we had plenty of money in the bank.

Originally, when I got pregnant, the plan was to return to work after two years, so rehiring was still possible. Very early on, my husband continuously started conversations with, "When you go back to work," or "When are you going back to work?" He was fearful I was going to want to be home permanently. Finally, one day, I got the courage to say aloud that I wanted to stay home to raise our child. But that only made things worse. There was no amount of talking that would make him understand or feel different. He resented me to the point of hatred.

The next seven years were filled with trials, hurt, and challenges. I firmly believed divorce was not an option for me. I held on to the hope that if he could just stop drinking, things would work out. During that time, his drinking got to the point where it affected his work, and to keep his job, he went to rehab. He went to rehab four times during those seven years, the last time because he was ready for a change. He had decided he was done with me and needed to be sober to divorce me.

Those years were not good times in my life, but they were profitable for significant spiritual growth, for which I am very grateful. I knew God was using this situation for good, and I only needed to obey and trust Him.

*Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4).<sup>1</sup>*

It was a long haul, and I didn't know how things would end, but I developed patience and learned not to take things into my own hands to feel better. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God's timing was perfect. It allowed me to go through all stages of grief and leave the way of escape to Him. I had no guilt or wondered if I did the right thing. My husband and I were married for a total of fourteen years. The first seven were fairly normal, with occasional isolated incidents of him getting drunk, but the last seven were extremely difficult, as my alcoholic husband disliked me intensely and tried everything in his power to manipulate me to his advantage. In the end, I sheepishly compared it to the famine in Egypt during the time of Joseph, with seven years of plenty and seven years of famine (Genesis 41: 29-31). My faith definitely got me through the difficulty, with God directing me to support groups that educated and provided tools for learning to live with

an alcoholic, as well as giving friends in the Truth to share life with. Even amid that trial, I learned to enjoy life despite my circumstances. But new challenges were ahead: now I was divorced with a child to raise.

### **Newly Divorced with a Small Child**

My priority was my child. I now had to work to support us, but through God's grace, I found part-time work at a hospital, which allowed me to get by financially while spending as much time raising my child as possible. Of course, divorce has devastating effects on children, and mine was no exception. I recognized some manifestations of OCD and abandonment issues around their eight years of age and knew we needed help. The Christadelphian community was not equipped to understand, deal with, or provide help and support in this kind of situation.

utilized other tools and resources to help my child through this time of life. My child has now been married in the Truth and their children are now baptized and also invested in God's family. God is good, and I am blessed beyond most.

### **Lessons Learned, How Others Can Help, and Disclaimers:**

I chose to submit this article anonymously to respect my child's privacy. My goal has been to honestly share this season of my life and describe events as they really were. However, this is my viewpoint, and I cannot truly know for certain what was in the hearts and minds of those involved.

My divorce was decades ago, and social norms and pressures were different than they are today. However, even though there are countless scenarios and circumstances for people who find

**Current societal pressures, particularly for our children, are exceptionally difficult, and it is up to you to be the spiritual leader in your household, knowing that raising your children to be a part of God's family is your number one priority.**

Though we have come a long way, there is definitely room for growth on these issues. Consequently, I contacted a Christian counseling organization in a nearby town that based its counseling on using Scripture and Biblical principles. I would caution others that not all Christian organizations base their approach similarly. After a couple of sessions, things seemed to resolve, at least until the teenage years when OCD resurfaced along with severe depression symptoms. I immediately restarted the counseling sessions and

themselves facing divorce and raising children in the Truth, God's principles are timeless and will work for you. Current societal pressures, particularly for our children, are exceptionally difficult, and it is up to you to be the spiritual leader in your household, knowing that raising your children to be a part of God's family is your **number one** priority.

As their role model, you must be a consistent example of living your Faith. Some obvious ways are to consistently

attend Sunday School and Memorial Service, read the Bible daily and make it a family priority, pray, and provide every opportunity to be with those of like faith. Go with your children to Bible Schools. Teach Sunday School. Look for friends in the Truth with whom you can seek advice, have fun, and share your children: *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”* (Proverbs 17:17).

Be careful not to speak badly of the other parent, include children in adult conversations beyond their maturity level, or treat your children like emotional confidants. Children naturally and almost always feel that somehow, they were responsible for the divorce, even if they do not tell you.

Tell them that they are not accountable. Check in on their feelings and model how to process emotions healthily. Get professional Bible-based counseling if you detect a need. And be kind to yourself, as fear is normal and mistakes will happen.

Also, recognize that you will be vulnerable, especially regarding your own wants and desires. May I say, do not project into the future about things that may or may not happen! You may naturally be vulnerable about wondering if you will ever find love or a partner again. My understanding of Scripture was that it was not an option. For those who choose otherwise to remarry, beware that going in that direction will have its own



complications. Brothers and sisters need to show grace and compassion. I believe Paul's advice about being happier by remaining single has proven true for me, although he is particularly addressing remarriage after the death of a spouse: *"If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I have the Spirit of God."* (1 Corinthians 7:39-40). This whole chapter on marriage is worth revisiting.

In time, be willing to share your mistakes and successes and be there for others who may find themselves in a similar situation. Many brothers

and sisters have no idea why or what happened in your life that you are now single with children. Maybe they don't ask you because they do not want to bring up a subject that might make you feel uncomfortable, or they do not want to appear nosy. One way to feel closer is by sharing your experiences, but it is hard to bring up those times without a reason to do so. I have never regretted sharing when asked.

Occasionally, you may feel a bit left out or out of place between married couples and the young singles. Don't take it personally, and don't assume you are being judged. You can ask people over at your house! For me, I



also focused on older members in the ecclesia, spent time with family, and even did some volunteer work. Learn to practice gratitude. There is always someone worse off than you.

To those looking for ways to show care to single parents in the ecclesia, consider occasionally inviting them to share in your family's activities. Sometimes, an offer to help financially may be incredibly relevant and helpful. On one occasion, when I was looking for a used car, an older married brother and sister insisted that I buy a new car, and they provided a no-interest loan so I could do so. It was totally unexpected, yet so appreciated. Later in life, I bought a used car from a brother, again with no interest! More than once, I received an anonymous money gift in the mail, which really helped me, although I would have liked to have thanked them personally. Another way to help is to ask if something needs to be repaired, offer to get a mower ready for the season, or just help with a task everyone needs to do to maintain a home. To help divorced brothers, offer to babysit the kids, provide a meal, or get a group of sisters together to help clean the house. It is hard to ask for help, but I have found that most people want to be helpful.

One of many inspiring Scriptures to me was that given first by Moses when he spoke to the nation and then to Joshua:

*Be strong and of a good courage,  
fear not, nor be afraid of them: for  
the LORD thy God, he it is that doth*

*go with thee; he will not fail thee,  
nor forsake thee. (Deuteronomy  
31:6 KJV).*

This instruction was later referenced by David in his charge to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:20 and again by the writer of the Hebrews, who said,

*For he hath said, I will never leave  
thee, nor forsake thee so that we  
may boldly say, The Lord is my  
helper, and I will not fear what man  
shall do unto me. (Hebrews 13:5-6  
KJV).*

What a gift to have the Scriptures at our fingertips, particularly in seasons of trial!

We all will go through trials that can reveal who we actually are and help us grow into better people. I've learned that growth in life is a process, and God loves us enough to work around our choices in life. Sometimes he presents circumstances to exercise our minds or help us learn patience, humility, compassion, forgiveness, and love. So do not lose heart.

*For this slight momentary affliction  
is preparing for us an eternal weight  
of glory beyond all comparison,  
because we look not to the things  
that are seen but to the things  
that are unseen; for the things  
that are seen are transient, but the  
things that are unseen are eternal.  
(2 Corinthians 4:1, 18).*

*A Sister*

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



# A FRESH LOOK AT JONAH (PART 3)

*By David Carroll*

**THE MEANING OF  
NINEVAH'S REPENTANCE**

**W**AS Nineveh's repentance one that led to eternal salvation, or just being saved from imminent destruction? Our previous articles answered this question. However, further examination of the record reveals a beautiful parable about the basis of repentance to true salvation and repentance that is loosely associated with God but does not contain the essential elements.

### A Parable of True and False Salvation

The repentance of the Assyrian people of Nineveh is remarkable from any angle. Apart from a man surviving being swallowed by a fish, the repentance of the Ninevites is probably the most striking feature of the message. Both these aspects are mentioned by the Lord in the gospels.

- The survival of Jonah as a sign. (Matthew 12:40, 16:4, Luke 11:30).
- The repentance of the people of Nineveh. (Matthew 12:41, Luke 11:32).

In these records, the Lord says that the men of Nineveh will “*rise in judgment*”<sup>1</sup> with the men of his generation and condemn it because the men of Nineveh repented. What does the Lord intend by this statement? Is it possible that the city of Nineveh, who repented, would be raised in the resurrection, and by their presence at that time, they would condemn the Jewish people of the time of the Lord, who had rejected him? They repented at the preaching of Jonah under the most unlikely circumstances. However, the people of the Lord's Day rejected the Son of the Creator and would do so even after the sign of the prophet Jonah. Three

days in the belly of the grave, then resurrection.

Does the Lord mean this literally or in a manner of speaking? It becomes apparent that it is a manner of speaking. There are three ways we examine this:

- The nature of Jonah's message.
- The etymology of the passage.
- How the Lord uses similar figures of speech.
- A parable of true and false salvation within the prophecy of Jonah.

### The Nature of Jonah's Message

What was the “gospel message” of Jonah to Nineveh? In Chapter 1:2, God instructs him to “*cry against it.*” *Cry* in Hebrew carries the idea of “accosting a person met, to call out.” This same word, *qara*, is used in Jonah 3:2-4 and translated as “preaching” and “cried.” So, the message was a cry to the city. Hardly a message of hope and Good News.

### The Etymology of the Passage

Etymology: to “*rise*” is to “stand or stand up.” “*Judgment*” is in Greek *krisis*, which indicates a tribunal or condemnation. It is not a word used concerning the tribunal of Jesus Christ at his return. In fact, the two most common passages referring to the “*judgment seat*” are Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10, where we read, “*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*” In these passages, the word “*judgment*” is assumed to be a single Greek word, *bema*, referring only to the seat or throne. It is literally, “We must all appear before the seat of Jesus Christ.” The fact we appear before Christ is undisputed. However, to use the judgment of *krisis* (condemnation)

as it appears in relation to the men of Nineveh would be against the spirit of what is intended by the fair and just tribunal of the Lord. It is not found in other places regarding Christ's tribunal when he returns. A suggested rendering is: "The men of Nineveh stand in judgment of the men of this generation and shall condemn it." In other words, the men of Nineveh condemn the men of the Lord's generation because their **response** was so much better than those of The Lord's generation.

### How the Lord Uses Similar Figures of Speech

Note the use of Sodom and Gomorrah in Matthew 10:15, Mark 6:11, and Luke 10:12. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. Are we to assume that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah reformed and somehow received a tolerable assessment at the judgment seat? Or is it a manner of speaking, a condemnation against the people of the Lord's Day?

### A Parable of True and False Salvation

By far, the most revealing and satisfying reason is a consideration of an example of true salvation contained within the prophecy. This example becomes a counterpoint to the repentance of the men of Nineveh. By this contrast, we see that the repentance of the men of Nineveh is not a repentance to salvation but merely a repentance to have the city saved from imminent destruction. In fact, a consideration of Nahum shows that Nineveh is the original harlot on which the harlot of Revelation 17 is based. See Nahum Chapter 3. The religiousness that the men of Nineveh

show is an admixture of paganism and belief in the God of Israel. This fusion is just like apostate Christianity, as depicted by the harlot of Revelation 17. On the other hand, there is an example of true repentance from idolatry and belief to salvation by the individual mariners in Chapter 1 of Jonah.

If we were to ask what are the requirements of true repentance and salvation which could be universally applied (that is, across the whole span of humankind's history before God), it would be represented by the following components:

- Calling by Yahweh (often associated with a sign or visitation).
- Recognition of the futility of mortal existence.
- Recognition of sinfulness of human nature.
- Recognition of Yahweh as the true God and of His righteousness.
- Repentance from sins and previous wayward life.
- Belief in Jesus Christ in prospect (Seed of the woman) or as the Son of God.
- Baptism or practical act of initiation.
- Entering into a covenant through the shedding of blood.
- Understanding that a Godly way of life needs to be pursued.
- Living a life that brings forth fruit to the Father.

A consideration of the repentance of the mariners in Chapter 1 instead provides an example of true repentance to salvation, containing all the essential aspects listed above. These men were idolaters, individuals drawn out of the sea of nations (almost literally).

They show true repentance and a symbolic association with the death and resurrection of Christ through the “death and resurrection” of Jonah.

Additionally, note the startling way Jonah concludes his prayer in Jonah

2:9: “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” In other words, salvation is through understanding and acknowledging the truth about Yahweh, “*the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.*” (Jonah 1:9.

Ref.	Passage	Comment
1:4	<i>“The LORD sent out a great wind.”</i>	The hand of Yahweh in calling
1:7	<i>“The lot fell upon Jonah.”</i>	The hand of Yahweh in calling
1:5-6	<i>“The mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god, “call upon thy god, if so be that god will think upon us.”</i> god = elohim (mighty ones)	Acknowledgement of a god or gods. But idolatry and futility of the religious system.
1:6	<i>“That we perish not.”</i>	A need, facing imminent death
1:7	<i>“Let us cast lots.”</i>	Superstitions mixed with religion
1:8	<i>“What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? What is thy country? and of what people art thou?”</i>	Real enquiry
1:9	<i>“I am an Hebrew.”</i>	Introduced to the hope of Israel
1:9	<i>“I fear the LORD, the God of Heaven which made sea and dry land.”</i>	The identity and supremacy of Yahweh is explained
1:10	<i>“He had told them.”</i>	A more detailed, unrecorded dialog occurs
1:13	<i>“Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship to land; but they could not.”</i>	Resistance to acknowledging the truth/supremacy of Yahweh
1:14	<i>“O LORD, we beseech thee”</i>	A cry to Yahweh for Salvation
1:14	<i>“Thou O LORD, has done as it pleased thee.”</i>	Acknowledging the righteousness of Yahweh
1:15,17	<i>“The men cast Jonah into the sea (now Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights).”</i>	Jonah becomes the sacrifice / type of Christ.
1:16	<i>“The men feared the LORD exceedingly.”</i>	Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalm 25:14, 103:17
1:16	<i>“Offered sacrifice unto the LORD.”</i> Hebrew zebach, the flesh of an animal. Thus, blood is shed. Same 2:9	The necessity of entering a covenant through shed blood (Leviticus 17:11)
1:16	<i>“Made vows”</i>	Made a commitment to the God of Israel.

The use of the memorial name of Yahweh here is very significant. The name is mentioned seven times in the dialogue between Jonah and the mariners. Twice, it comes from the mouth of Jonah and five times by the mariners. You might conclude that the mariners were saved outside of the law by the grace of Yahweh. On the other hand, the use of the special title of Yahweh is entirely absent from the proclamation to Nineveh. It is merely the more generic expression “God.” In fact, it mirrors the incident of the mariners in that “God” (*elohim*) is mentioned five times in the record concerning the Ninevites.

Modern Christianity liberally refers to “God,” but do they truly understand His memorial name and purpose?

But “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” (Jonah 2:9). In other words, salvation only comes through acknowledging and understanding the special revelation of the God of Israel. The mariners progressed from ignorance in calling to their pagan gods to calling on, fearing, and sacrificing to Yahweh. In stark contrast, the Ninevites never progressed in their understanding at all, to our knowledge. Note how in Hosea 13:1-4 understanding the singular claim of Yahweh to be the only God is connected with salvation. “*Ephraim... sin more and more, and*

*have made molten images... Yet I am the LORD thy God... and thou shalt know no god but me; for there is no saviour beside me.*” Salvation is only of Yahweh.

Jonah’s pivotal confession in the belly of the fish mirrors the enlightenment of the mariners:

- 2:2 I cried unto the LORD.
- 2:9 Sacrifice with thanksgiving.
- 2:9 Pay (make good) my vows.
- 2:9 Salvation is of the LORD.

The Ninevites believed in God (*elohim*) (Jonah 3:5) and showed great repentance through fasting and sackcloth and ashes (for which they became a witness to Israel and to the men of Jesus’ generation). Then, their understanding stalled, and they took a backward step. In the confusion of their minds, they command that their beasts be covered with sackcloth. No sacrifice, no shedding of blood, no acknowledgment of Yahweh, no association with the work of Christ, no vows of ongoing commitment. The difference is pointed and remarkable. In this, the enigmatical final words of the prophecy begin to make sense. Jonah is told that the Ninevites “*cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand and also much cattle.*” (Jonah 4:11).

The Ninevites believed in God (*elohim*) (Jonah 3:5) and showed great repentance through fasting and sackcloth and ashes (for which they became a witness to Israel and to the men of Jesus’ generation). Then, their understanding stalled, and they took a backward step.

### Summary

There must be a reason for the sudden and unusual dispatch of a prophet of Israel to a city of an enemy nation. Is it to save that city? What is the context that would demand such an unexpected and unprecedented extent? Or is there a context and a Scriptural reason laid out centuries before in the divine record?

I believe that the strange song of Deuteronomy 32 is the key to

understanding the purpose of Jonah's prophecy. Additionally, when the contemporary prophets of Amos and especially Hosea are considered, it becomes clear. Yahweh is jealous because of his people's stubborn idolatry. He turns to Ninevah not for its sake but to provoke His own covenant people to repent and turn back to Him.

*David Carroll,  
Blue Mountain Ecclesia, NSW*

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



# SPIRITUAL FORCES IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES

*By Richard Morgan*

**F**OR many Christians, the spirit realm is a place alive with all manner of forces of evil. The devil lives in this realm along with his demon cohorts. And if there's one passage that has proven most difficult for Christadelphians when talking to their Christian friends about the topic, it's Ephesians 6:12, with Paul's reference to "*spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*"<sup>1</sup>

What are we to make of this passage, which also mentions "*cosmic powers over this present darkness*"? The context is the exhortation to "*Put on the whole armor of God*" (v. 11) that we might face and fight against these foes. It sure sounds like there are invisible forces of evil. For the Christadelphians who don't accept the idea of a supernatural devil and demons, we can have a hard time coming to grips with Paul's language.

Paul tells us we need the armor of God to "*stand against the schemes of the devil.*" (v. 11). Why does Paul use this language? If the devil is a term denoting human nature or sinful desires, then why doesn't Paul just say that—"*to stand against the schemes of sinful flesh?*" If the devil doesn't exist as a powerful supernatural force of evil, then why use such terminology, and follow it up with talking about cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil?

### Human Cunning

There is perhaps a clue to how we can understand Paul's words in his use of the word "*schemes*" in verse 11. The Greek word, *methodeia*, used here is rare in Scripture, and in fact only used one other time. It is in the same epistle where Paul counsels us to come to the

knowledge of Christ "*so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes [methodeia].*" (Ephesians 4:14).

In this verse, Paul describes *methodeia* as "*human cunning*," using the common word for human beings, *anthropos*. An argument can be made, therefore, that the unambiguous mention of human beings in Chapter 4 informs us regarding the identity of those he mentions in Chapter 6.

However, even if we are right in this assessment, the question persists: why does Paul use the language of "*devil*," "*cosmic powers*," and "*spiritual forces*," if he's just talking about human cunning?

### Rulers and Authorities

To begin answering this question we can look at some of the other terms Paul uses in Chapter 6. As well as cosmic powers and spiritual forces, Paul tells us, "*We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities.*" (v. 12). These terms certainly sound like spirit beings because Paul says they are not flesh and blood. However, in his seminal work on powers in the New Testament, Walter Wink highlights the fact that the Greek terms for rulers and authorities—*arche* and *exousia*—are almost always used in the New Testament, Septuagint (LXX), and Jewish writings such as in Philo and Josephus, for **human agents**. For instance, regarding *arche* and its related term *archon*, Wink writes:

The normal use of both terms is for human power arrangements.



Apart from four passages in Philo, in the LXX, Philo, and Josephus, archon is used exclusively for an incumbent-in-office and, with the sole exception of Daniel 10 and 12, for human agents.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, for *exousia*, “The vast majority of references are to human arrangements of power.”<sup>3</sup>

However, if it is the case that these terms refer to **human** power arrangements (thus confirming the parallel with Chapter 4) then why does Paul say we are not wrestling against flesh and blood?

### Heaven and Earth

To answer this question, we need to turn back time and read the Bible through the Ancient Near East (ANE) worldview. Paul tells us that the spiritual forces of evil are in “*heavenly places*,” so how would the original readers of Ephesians understand that?

In today’s world, we can roughly divide people into accepting one of two basic worldviews regarding heaven and earth. The religious worldview is that these reference two separate realms. We inhabit the earthly realm, and God and the angels, as well as evil spirit beings such as the devil, inhabit the spirit realm or heaven. On the other hand, the materialistic worldview rejects the existence of heaven altogether, along with the notion of supernatural powers. Christadelphians tend to sit awkwardly between these worldviews.

However, things were understood differently in the ANE. Instead of heaven and earth being two separate and distinct realms, it was supposed

that heaven and earth are intimately connected. *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* puts it like this:

For antiquity the term gives expression to the unity of the world, of the cosmos which is not only physical but also psychical and metaphysical.<sup>4</sup>

In essence, this means that for every earthly phenomenon, there is a corresponding heavenly aspect. Think, for instance, of the simple example of a chair. The earthly aspect of a chair has to do with things like what material it is made of and its dimensions. The heavenly aspect of the chair is its **meaning**. Let’s say it was your grandma’s chair, which she always used to sit in when you visited her at her home. Therefore, the chair has a meaning that goes beyond what it is made of, and when you look at the chair, you see that it brings back memories of your grandma. In that sense, the chair has what we might call **spiritual power**.

In the Bible, the Tabernacle is a classic example. In Exodus, when we read about the various furniture of the Tabernacle, we learn about their materials and dimensions. However, the real power of the furniture is in what it all **means**. The writer to the Hebrews brings out the principle, calling those meanings “*heavenly things*” and “*true things*.” (Hebrews 9:23-24).

For people in the ANE, “*heaven*” was something very real because of the power behind phenomena. Thinking about grandma’s old chair might evoke powerful emotions as you sit in it, something that the chair on its own

could not do; it's the meaning behind the chair that holds that power. These emotions were so powerful that things took on a personality, and people imagined that real personal beings were controlling those things. This assumption led to belief in the gods of antiquity, and many ANE civilizations believed in the actual existence of personal powers of good and evil in the various phenomena of life.

### Immanence

However, one thing in common with these personal beings, whether good or evil, is they are all **immanent** rather than **transcendent**. Immanence describes how these gods of antiquity only had meaning within the phenomenon connected with them.

So, for instance, the Sun god Ra of Egypt only had meaning within the context of the Sun. He did not exist outside the Sun; he was intimately tied to it.

This idea of immanence is important because it limits the power behind a phenomenon to the phenomena itself. Take, for example, the idea of a mob spirit. That spirit only exists within the context of a gathering of people. So, individuals who might otherwise be ordinary, law-abiding citizens gather together and are whipped up into a frenzy, called a mob spirit. However, once the crowd dissipates, the mob spirit ceases to exist. Therefore, the question is whether that mob spirit really is a personal being at all if it

only exists within the confines of a gathering of people.

### Thrones, Dominions, Rulers, and Authorities

In another passage where Paul mentions spiritual powers, he talks about things “*in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.*” (Colossians 1:16). Notice his use of the words “*heaven,*” “*earth,*” “*visible,*” and “*invisible.*” What he then lists can be thought of in terms of both earthly and heavenly aspects.

To understand what Paul means by thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities, we can use the analogy of the greatest power in our present world, the United States of America.

This idea of immanence is important because it limits the power behind a phenomenon to the phenomena itself.

The word *thronos* (thrones) means the seat of power. Here, we might think of the Oval Office as the *thronos* of the USA. The word for dominions, *kyriotes*, means a sphere of influence, and in the case of the USA, its sphere of influence is the union of its fifty states. “Rulers” and “authorities” are the words we met in Ephesians—*arche* meaning the office and *exousia* meaning the legitimation or authorization of that office. In the USA, the main *arche* is the office of the President, and the *exousia* could be the American constitution or laws.

Consider these four things from a

purely earthly perspective. The Oval Office is otherwise just like any other room in any other building, albeit oddly shaped. It has a carpet made of the same materials as other carpets. It has walls, a ceiling, and furniture, just like any other room. However, when someone stands in the Oval Office, it ceases to be any other room and commands a sense of emotion that leaves people in awe of its power. That power is the invisible spirit or heavenly aspect of the room.

If you look at a topographic map of the USA, it looks like anywhere else in the world. There are shorelines, mountains, rivers, farmland, and many other features shared across the globe. However, looking at a political map, one can see that the same area emits a power that is only present because it is the United States of America.

The same can be said of the office of the President. Trump and Biden before him are two doddering old men; mortal like the rest of us. But give them the title POTUS, and they become the most powerful men in the world. And they have *exousia*, the various laws that wield their own power.

Consider a Biblical example from the Book of Acts:

*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2).*

What is the throne, dominion, ruler, and authority in these verses? The

throne is the city of Jerusalem, and the temple is at its center. Otherwise, just a city like any other city and a building like any other building, in the context of the New Testament, they wield enormous power. The dominion is the network of synagogues that stretched outside the land of Judea to Syria and the City of Damascus. The ruler is the High Priest, and the authority the letters he could give to Saul of Tarsus to bring Christians bound to Jerusalem. Like the POTUS, the High Priest was just an ordinary man until he received his title, and suddenly, he became the most powerful man in Jewry.

### **The Ruler of this World**

That last example is key to understanding the New Testament's use of the language of power. The office of the High Priest wielded such enormous power that it enabled otherwise ordinary human beings to put the Son of God to death. Jesus said, in the context of the impending crucifixion, "*Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*" (John 12:31). The word for ruler here is *archon*, but Jesus is thinking about more than just the present incumbent of the office of the High Priest. It is the office itself that his death and resurrection will deal with so that power will be lost forever. Notice how the ruler is to be "*cast out,*" a term used throughout the New Testament for the casting out of demons.

But before he was cast out, a mob gathered and cried out, "*Crucify, crucify him!*" (Luke 23:21). Such was the power of this mob spirit that "*their voices prevailed*" (v. 23) over Pilate, Caesar's representative.

The real danger we face, and why we must put on the whole armor of God, is what happens when people in positions of power abuse that power to thrust their ideologies and influence over others. They can rightly be termed the devil and Satan, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

If you were the Apostle Paul writing at the time when the ANE worldview was extant regarding heaven and earth, how would you describe the phenomenon of how such men could persecute and kill Jesus, his apostles, and the Christian church? There was something about how otherwise law-abiding individuals could gather together and do such things. There was a **spirit** about them that could be termed “*the devil*,” “*cosmic powers*,” or “*spiritual forces of evil*.”

There is a reason why we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, even though these powers are human beings sitting on thrones, having a sphere of influence, being invested with high offices, and having authority to act. Ultimately, it is the power behind them that we fight against—their ideas, ideologies, philosophies, and antagonism to truth.

Christian belief about the existence of evil supernatural beings misses the entire point of spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. They make the same mistake as the ancients, who thought that the invisible powers emanating from phenomena were persona beings. The real danger we face, and why we must put on the whole armor of God, is what happens when people in positions of power abuse that power to thrust their ideologies and influence over others. They can rightly be termed the devil and Satan, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

*Richard Morgan,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

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

1 Wink, W, (1984) *Naming the Powers* (p13), Fortress Press.

2 Wink, W, (1984) *Naming the Powers* (p15), Fortress Press.

4 Traub, H. (1964), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p498), Eerdmans.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## ISRAEL AND HER FOES

**T**HANK you for your article in the latest *Tidings*. The events of October 7, 2023, were a shock that day—a wake-up call in all things spiritual, which we value. The events continue to puzzle in various ways.

I have felt bewildered and overwhelmed by the misery of the Hamas invasion and the subsequent Israeli revenge. As a woman, mother, and grandmother, I weep for the women and children of Gaza. I want to see them in homes, I want them to have hospitals for the medical help needed, I want them to have corner stores with fully stocked shelves, I want the kids in safe schools learning their A, B, C's, not how to hate or load guns, I want Habitat for Humanity to set up shop and provide decent, simple housing... and on and on goes a mother's wish list for unknown women and children. It seems I want for them... the kingdom age! The time when everyone will sit under his/her own vine and fig tree, the time when no one says, "I am sick."

But then, as a Christadelphian, I remember, "Hey, they are the enemies of God's people." Do I try to justify what war crimes I see? When is enough war enough? And does God REALLY favor such Israeli tactics? I find myself ashamed and apologizing to God Almighty for my doubts and fears, and once more, asking for forgiveness for this doubting woman. Lord, help my unbelief!

I am grateful for Bro. Dave's writings on Isaiah 19, which I've always puzzled over—the reminder that the promises to Abram included ALL his seed, whether from Ishmael or Bethuel/Laban. (Let us not forget Keturah and her "boys," and I have to believe that they, like Ishmael, were sons of the covenant of circumcision—unlike Lot, who seems to have left the family circle before circumcision, if things are in chronological order.

I've been really disappointed week after week in attending Sunday School and Memorial at how little, if anything, is said in classes, conversations, or prayers about the current Middle East agony. We've been working through the "minor" prophets in Sunday School and are now into Zechariah. I feel strongly that we personally and ecclesially need to pray not only for the peace of Jerusalem (we all like that one!) but also for ALL of God's family/people, whether spiritually or naturally. We don't know who is in those categories, but I feel we have a duty to give Him no peace till His promises are in place for all people. We owe it to those brothers and sisters who have been long in the dust, the "souls under the altar," to urge the Father to end mankind's pride and ambition and replace it with His Son's righteous rule as promised so long ago.

Thank you, brothers, for redirecting my thoughts in these perplexing times/subjects. I truly feel that we are all in for a "bumpy ride," but the best is yet to

come! Many of us have lived too well for too long. May God have mercy on us all! Revelation 3:12 tells us that those who overcome he will “*make a pillar in the temple of my God.*”

May we be there! With appreciation for your efforts with every edition and love in the Promises we share.

*Barbara Booker,  
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

## ABOUT A CERTAIN BIBLICAL IDIOM

**I**n the Gospel of Mark there is an interesting Greek idiom in Chapter 4, verse 39. Let us examine it through reviewing five different translations of the New Testament.

*Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.* (New King James Version).

*And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* (English Standard Version).

*And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.* (New American Standard Bible).

*And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* (Revised Standard Version)

*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* (New International Version)

The first of the highlighted words (quiet) comes from a Greek word, *siōpāo*, or similarly as in Hebrew *charash*—to be silent, to hold one’s peace, to be quiet and *damam*—to be still, to be silent.

The second of these words comes from the Greek word *phimoo*. It could be translated as “shut up,” or literally as “be muzzled.” It turns out that translators do not want to express the literal meaning of this word and instead translate it as “*be still*,” or less often as “*be quiet*.” This idiom occurs only once in the New Testament, so it cannot be compared to other terms by analogy.

*Krzysztof Biliński,  
University of Warsaw, Poland*

**Editor’s Note: Mr. Biliński is a researcher at the University of Wroclaw, Poland. He is a full Professor of Humanities and Doctor of Theology and Pedagogy. He found the Christadelphians on the Internet and is a reader of the Tidings magazine. We are pleased to have his insight on this passage and thank him for his submission.**

# GUYANA EXPO PREACHING CAMPAIGN

*By Mark Carr and Dawne Samuels*



**THIS** past November 2024, what started as an “interesting opportunity” for a preaching campaign in Georgetown, Guyana, quickly became an extraordinary experience for the proclamation of the gospel for the brothers and sisters of the Demerara ecclesias. In early October, the Guyana Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce announced that the GuyExpo would take place at the local fairgrounds in the heart of Georgetown on the weekend of November 14-17. GuyExpo has been the hallmark event showcasing Guyana’s culture and economic potential. It served as Guyana’s largest trade and investment exposition, and it began in 1995, being held annually from 2004 to 2016. With a brief hiatus due to COVID-19, it restarted in 2023 to showcase the growing economy of Guyana. This exposition and trade fair features local and regional businesses and allows business associates and the general public to meet, network, and negotiate with international companies, showcasing their skills, talents, and creative works. For the thousands of patrons who visit the booths, it is an opportunity to experience the wide range of locally produced products and services.

### **The Genesis Of An Idea**

Sis. Dawne Samuels, a long-time member of the Georgetown Ecclesia, had spent some extended time in Canada at the Toronto East Ecclesia and had the opportunity to discover the proclamation work done by A.S.K. at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in downtown Toronto. For many years, a booth at the CNE had

been secured where the gospel was put on full display for the hundreds of thousands of people who attended the CNE over two weeks in late August through early September. It was a compelling, professionally done display leaning on the theme of **“5 Proofs the Bible is True.”** Upon Sis. Dawne’s return to Guyana an idea took form: a similar booth could be created for the GuyExpo in November 2024.

A high-level proposal was put forward to the brethren in the three Georgetown ecclesias, and it was met with great enthusiasm. The word went out asking for volunteers to assist in organizing and supporting the program. As God would have it, twelve persons came forward to pull this together. The energy in this group was infectious! About half of the group members were “children” in Christ, with less than five years as members. Except for five brothers and sisters, none had ever been involved with a preaching event since their baptisms, so it was fresh enthusiasm with a nervous energy that moved this along with God’s help evident through the process.

### **The Work Begins and Roadblocks Removed**

Sis. Elisa Harry quickly offered to meet the GuyExpo organizers to request a booth on the committee’s behalf. To her surprise, the organizing body was completely unwilling to rent a booth to a religious group. They advised us to buy tickets and walk around to share our leaflets on the site. However, the GuyExpo organizers grossly underestimated the persistence of the organizing committee to get this done—they were not going to fold



that easily. An official letter was sent to the Minister of Tourism to appeal against the decision. There was no reply for over a month (hoping perhaps the preaching committee would just give up on the idea), but almost daily follow-ups occurred, and in the end, Sis. Dawne insisted on a meeting with the Minister in charge, forcing him to address the issue. Sis. Dawne explained to the Minister all the preparations that were taking place and that support was even coming from overseas to this event. The official was shocked at the level of interest and dedication to the cause, and only a few short days later, a phone call arrived approving the presence of the Guyana ecclesias preaching booth at the show, with a slight discount no less to show their appreciation for the energy and dedication to make this happen.

### **Preparation**

Despite all the uncertainty, the committee confidently went ahead with their weekly planning. God had already provided all the resources we needed regarding persons to help. Individuals, ecclesias, and support organizations, like A.S.K. and the Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Caribbean (CBMC), rallied together to support the rapid assembly of all that was needed to make this possible. A.S.K. committee members in Canada graciously provided all the PDF artwork for the CNE booth, allowing the creation of an exceptionally professional and stunning display booth. CBMC stepped in to provide the funds necessary to rent the booth for the four days of the Expo. The Toronto West Ecclesia donated all the

leaflets for preaching, a full Caribbean Airlines checked bag of 50 lbs. of pamphlets! On the ground, the team comprised a builder for the table and literature stand (Bro. Patrick Joseph), a sales manager (Sis. Elisa Harry), a communication and events expert (Sis. Abike Barker, living in China!), a software development engineer (Bro. Akeem Headley), teachers (Sis. Elizabeth Europe), CBMC liaison personnel (Bro. David Andrews and Bro. Mark Carr), support staff (Sis. Saygon), transportation (Bro. Derek Babb), social media assistant (Sis. Abigail Babb), and meals (Sis. Joan Andrews and Sis. Danielle Semple). As time went on, many more volunteers and supporters helped with the day-to-day work at the Expo, like creating content for preaching and organizing outreach plans (Bro. Trimal Accra). Almost all able-bodied members of the Georgetown ecclesia came out to share the word and volunteer, even with their tiny children in tow!

### **“The People Had a Mind To Work”**

On Sunday, November 10, after Memorial Service, all volunteers gathered at the Georgetown ecclesial hall along with other members to share a meal and have a training session on how best to proclaim the gospel in this format. The voice of experience was led by Bro. David Andrews. He coached the team on what we should preach and some things to strategically avoid in our discussions. Sis. Elisa, a seasoned business leader, impressed upon the group we were there to sell “our product,” which is the Truth, and to make it as attractive and positive sounding as we could.



On Thursday, November 14, after the team arrived early and set up the booth, the first shift to staff the booth took place around noon. While the general public did not arrive until after 2 pm, hundreds of businesspeople and exhibitors who also had come early to set up to display their wares started to come by even as we were setting up the booth. Some were shocked to see us (but in a good way) and surprised to see a religious booth at a business Expo. Countless people commented on how good it was to see people preaching the gospel and praised the professional booth presentation, wishing us all the best. At 5 pm, the President of Guyana arrived with much fanfare to kick off the opening

of the Expo, and the crowd surged in on the first evening of the event. We were off to an encouraging start!

Over the four days of the Expo, the shifts were from 2-6 pm and 6-10 pm. The first shift was exceptionally busy, as young families took this time to visit, and entire schools of children were given tickets to attend, sometimes causing line-ups at our booth with thirty children deep to answer Bible questions! If the first shift was seen as busy, the evening shift was absolutely chaotic! It seemed the entire country of Guyana had tickets to attend, and the crew on the 6-10 pm shift was non-stop handing out leaflets, explaining who the “Christa-who’s?” was, and speaking of the wonderful hope within



Christadelphian booth at the GuyExpo

us of the Kingdom of God. By day three, Sis. Dawne had all but lost her voice, speaking in squeaky sentences about the gospel! It was exhilarating to see everyone smiling, sharing, and explaining the Gospel to their friends and strangers alike as hundreds of people streamed by—there seemed to be no lull in the endless people stopping to talk to us. There was lots of noisy chatter and laughter against the background sounds of loud music on the grounds outside. Everyone had a part to play in the work. Some brethren and sisters covered the booth and explained our hope. Some focused on the children who came to win a prize answering Bible questions. Experienced aunties and new moms carrying young ones in their arms wandered through the grounds of the Expo, handed out leaflets and invitations to the crowds all through the Expo, inviting families to our Sunday School and adults to our Bible

classes. So many invitations were handed out that a second printing was needed by the second day of the Expo!

### Highlights

The first thing that stood out was the “Spin-the-Wheel” game, which attracted quite a lot of attention, as people were eager to test their Bible knowledge and win prizes. It was a particular hit with children of all ages, and questions were tailored to their past exposure to the Bible. Sometimes, the question was as simple as “What was your favorite animal in Noah’s ark?” to “Name 3 of the Disciples of Jesus?” No one left without a prize, regardless of their Bible knowledge, some with a simple dollar-store airplane, and some choosing a Bible bookmark or Bible coloring book. The enthusiasm and energy of the sometimes dozens of children hovering around the booth at any given time to try to win a prize was a joy to see. All left with an invitation to Sunday School in their hands.

Some of the most incredible unanticipated opportunities came from the work at GuyExpo. One of Sis. Elisa's professional social media contacts from work offered to do a reel for social media entirely for free to help us get the word out about our booth. A high-ranking Google representative was sent to capture the GuyExpo by camera once stopped at the booth in amazement. He asked question after question about God's plans, collected a copy of every piece of literature we had, and asked our permission to make a video for Google showcasing the booth. He was very impressed with how we excitedly shared the word of God with him, particularly highlighting how incredible it was that so many young people were intelligently speaking about the Bible.

Most incredible and unexpected, a popular television station in Guyana had its media personnel moving around the Expo and capturing the most interesting booths of the show. A representative stopped one evening to talk with Sis. Abigail, who was staffing the booth, was so impressed they asked her permission to showcase the booth on TV. With a resounding "yes," Sis. Abigail hurriedly called Sis. Dawne, who was presently handing out flyers on the other side of the Expo, quickly returned and got ready to record. The words of Jesus from Matthew 10:19 (NKJV) echoed in our heads ***"Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak."*** A full 4:40 minute

spot was professionally recorded with Sis. Dawne enthusiastically speaking about the Christadelphians, the essence of what we are doing at the Expo, and above all, the message of the Booth about the coming Kingdom of God. It was a crazy turn of events that created a real adrenaline rush to tell everyone in a very modern way about Jesus and his plans for his return to earth. The spot was aired on TV—a channel seen not just in Guyana but across the entire Caribbean.

### **"Come Over To Essequibo, And Help Us!"**

To echo the famous vision of Macedonia in Acts 16:9 to the Apostle Paul, *"A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us,'" and we too were left with a similar appeal. On two separate occasions, persons from the Essequibo region, the largest county in Guyana without an ecclesia, came to hear us. Essequibo is named after one of the famed rivers in Guyana, many hours north of Georgetown toward Venezuela's border, only reachable by ferry boat over the massive river Essequibo. After spending significant time talking with us, they asked that we come over to Essequibo to share the Truth after being awed by the little they heard. They volunteered to help facilitate setting up a similar booth, helping to organize a time and place free of charge to support our showcasing the hope of Israel. At the time of writing, a campaign has now been scheduled in Essequibo for August 2025, God willing.*



The many, many stories and conversations are too numerous to mention here. Thousands of people passed by the booth over the event's four days. Countless numbers stopped and inquired about the hope that was within us. Needless to say, by the end of the EXPO on Sunday, November 17, the entire team was all exhausted, leaving for home well after the closing time of 11 pm. As we dissembled the booth, people were still standing in front of our banner, taking pictures of the QR code to get more information about the Christadelphians as we left. We felt that all things indeed worked together for good, and to become fishers of men was something we were happy to do together for Jesus.

### Looking Forward

The tremendous success of this event has energized a whole generation of brothers and sisters to continue on in this important work. Plans are already in the works for where to next preach in Guyana and what would be needed to make this booth more mobile. While GuyExpo provided a tent to set up our booth, most places we hope to travel to will not have such facilities. In the short term, with the full support of CBMC, a decent-sized tent will be rented to allow the booth to travel to markets, expos, and a wide variety of locations throughout the year. WhatsApp groups with the numerous contacts made at the Expo were formed to advertise our next events and, most importantly, invite them to continue studies with us, particularly with the Learn to Read the Bible Seminars. The first series began on November 25, 2024,

with Genesis, led online by brothers in Canada via Zoom. A tentative plan of one preaching event per quarter is scheduled to start with, ending with a return visit to the 2025 GuyExpo in November, God Willing.

We ask that you keep the work of these brothers and sisters in your thoughts and prayers as they endeavor to spread the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. The ground in Guyana is legendary for its fertile soil, which allows the growing of all kinds of wonderful produce. We hope that, like the parable of the Sower, the richness of the soil is equally fertile for the spreading of the seed of the Gospel. The CBMC is working to help financially as the committees build their capabilities to visit as many locations as possible throughout the country, to cover the registration costs, to get Bible literature down to support the preaching work, and to support the transportation costs to these far-reaching events. We ask you to please keep these types of efforts in mind as you contribute financially to CBMC throughout 2025 and beyond. May our Heavenly Father continue to bless efforts like these, and while time remains, continue to call out a people for His Name!

*Mark Carr,  
CBMC Link for Guyana and  
Dawne Samuels,  
Georgetown Ecclesia, Guyana*

# COSTA RICA BIBLE SCHOOL

*By David Collister*

I arrived in Costa Rica after an overnight “red-eye” flight to participate in the 2024 Costa Rica Bible School. Brother Alex Alfaro picked me up and took me straight to the ecclesial hall, where everyone had gathered to organize before leaving for the campground. It was nice to meet up with some of the Costa Ricans, as well as some of the Panamanians, for the first time. There was also a pickup filled up with luggage in front of the hall. We

picked up three of the Panamanians and headed off to Campamento San Fernando, which was quite close to the town of Santa Barbara de Heredia, where the ecclesial hall is located. When we arrived, we found that several had arrived earlier and were busy preparing. The Costa Ricans do a wonderful job involving many from the ecclesia, including the younger brethren and sisters, in the huge task of putting together a Bible school, and



Bro. Ian Neblett from Panama led the Bible classes

it shows in how well coordinated and meaningful the activities are and how smoothly the weekend goes.

This year, Brother Ian Neblett, from Panama, was asked to take a series of classes on the topic of staying the course between the waves of the truth. He brought with him his wife Nishla, his daughter Nyalayah (15), his son Neylan (11), and several others from Panama, including Nishla's parents, Brother and Sister Luis and Vanessa Sobers. Brother Ian's classes looked at the different aspects of the waves, the challenges that come along in our spiritual lives, how we can deal with them, how we can rejoice in them, and how they strengthen us spiritually. He also considered the challenges posed by the distractions and temptations of the world. At the start of the Bible School, we were all given a small notebook and

pen personalized with a Bible phrase, a thoughtful gift that encouraged all of us to take notes and helped us to get more out of the classes. The activities that were programmed throughout the Bible School were fun, supporting the theme of the school and providing a wonderful opportunity for everyone to get to know each other better and to deepen our fellowship with one another. The brothers and sisters are very willing to share when asked to do collaborative activities, some of which Brother Ian had prepared to complement his classes, as well as some planned by the Bible School committee to complement the theme of the Bible School. There was a lot of fun and laughter, as well as some very spiritual reflections as we shared. While the adult classes were being held, there were also classes for the teens and the



little ones. The brothers and sisters shared the duty for these classes so no one would miss all of the talks given by Bro. Ian. For the teens, four brothers and one sister shared the duty, while for the youth three sisters shared. On Saturday afternoon, Brother Ronald Santamaria gave a brothers' class while Sister Nishla Neblett gave a sisters' class.

The campground was very picturesque, in the hills just above the Central Valley of Costa Rica. The staff served food that was tasty and well-prepared. In all, there were fifty-eight adults, four children, and seven young people at the Bible School, including five young people from El Salvador, five brothers and sisters, and two young people from Panama. There were also several who

attended virtually. As always, these events are a wonderful opportunity to deepen the bonds of brotherhood among the Spanish-speaking ecclesias. At the end of the Bible School, we packed to go, having enjoyed a wonderfully refreshing spiritual experience.

The day after the Bible School ended, the ecclesia organized a trip to Finca Koki, a fascinating place with many recreational activities. About twenty-five of us went on a chartered bus and spent the day there, enjoying the activities of each other's company. We all hiked up to a waterfall, crossing a hanging bridge to reach the base of the falls. Several brave souls actually got into the water there. As we got back to the main trail, a tractor with a



It's not a Bible School unless there is a fútbol game!

covered trailer which makes a circuit around Finca Koki, was just arriving. We piled into the trailer just in time, as within a couple of minutes, there was a cloudburst. Unfortunately, I had not brought my raincoat or umbrella, having forgotten the cardinal rule of life in Costa Rica—always carry an umbrella. As we were on our way back to the main area, some got out to go tubing down a little river that meanders along the trail's side. Later, they told us that tubing in the rain had been fun but cold. When we arrived back at the main area, we quickly ran for the cafeteria shelter. We enjoyed our lunch together and had more time for fellowship. After a very fun day, we boarded the bus and returned to town.

The foreign visitors returned to their homes within the next day or two. Overall, the Bible School and other activities deepened the bonds of brotherhood. We look forward to the next time we can be together as a group. The Costa Rica Ecclesia maintains a presence on Facebook and YouTube, where they preach and post talks and information. If you are interested, search “Iglesia Cristadelfiana Costa Rica” on either of those platforms.



Teambuilding games were fun!

*David Collister,  
CBMA Link for Costa Rica*

# *So God Made A Son*

**I**N the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth in six days. Then, on the seventh day, He stopped and looked around and said, “I think this will need some more rearranging.” So, He put His angels to work, moving parts of His creation from here to there and from there to here until a beautiful garden appeared.

But still, there seemed to be something missing.

And God said: “I will make a man and a woman in my image. And they will be the beginning of my family on this earth.” So, God made Adam, and then because Adam had no companion, God made Eve also. And together, Adam and Eve began to have children.

But soon, things started to go wrong with this little family. There was envy, anger, hatred, violence and even death. And later, families were even worse. So, God said, “I need to make a special child who will grow into a man, and walk among my family, and show them how to live and how to love one another.”

And with the help of a young woman named Mary, a child was born, and his name was Jesus—which means “He will save us.” This young man Jesus was the most important “creation” of God.

While God had created the heavens and the earth in six days, it took Him about thirty years to finish His most special work—what we might call His greatest “creation”—a human being in whom the glory of the Father dwelled, thereby making Jesus the “temple” of God. God also made sure that His Son was left in the care of a poor carpenter, Joseph, who taught Jesus to build things and not to tear things down. God also made sure that His Son would watch and work alongside shepherds—who kept watch over their flocks every night and protected them from wild beasts, even caring for the blackest sheep in their flocks. God taught His son to observe and enjoy all the beauty to be found in his world because it was all his Father’s world.

God made sure that His Son would grow up in a large family, where he learned, at an early age, to care for his younger brothers and sisters. For all of his life after that, Jesus loved children, sat with them, held them in His strong arms, and taught them about his Father—even while his disciples thought it was a waste of time.

Under God's teaching, Jesus learned to love every individual whom he met, even those who hated and persecuted him and also others who tried to take his life.

God also said: "I will need a Son who can wake in the middle of the night, climb a tall hill, and there pray to me, and talk with me, for the rest of the night. And I need a Son who can scatter the seed of the gospel in all the "soil" of mankind's souls... and then wait patiently for the "seed" to take root and produce fruit."

With God's instruction, Jesus learned to approach people in just the right way so that he could touch their hearts. He sternly challenged a well-educated rabbi until he got his absolute attention. He gently encouraged a woman of questionable character until she accepted him as the Messiah, asked for the living water, and ran to tell all the people in her village to come and listen to such a wonderful man.

With his Father's guidance, Jesus learned to care for the richest tax collectors as well as the poorest beggars. He touched lepers and rebuked rulers who threatened to kill him. He also learned how to reach out and forgive all sinners, young and old, poor, and rich.

Under his Father's care, Jesus needed no money but relied on what food he might pick up along the way.

God also said: "I will need a Son who has no fear but will stand up to powerful men and say what needs to be said."

He also said: "I will need a Son who can go into the wilderness, where he will fast for a long time, and then also delve into his own mind, where he will hear that little voice—which is a liar and a deceiver—and say to that voice: "No, I will serve my Father, and not you."

Most importantly, God said: "I will need a Son who can pass all these tests, and then fall down in a dark garden on a mountain, waiting for soldiers to come and arrest him, and lead him to his crucifixion, while he is still thinking of how to protect his disciples. And I will need him to say to me: "Nevertheless, it is not what I wish, but what You want." And then I need him to fulfill His Father's wishes. So, God did make such a Son. Because of his loyalty to his Father, and because of that Father's love for His Son, Jesus did carry out his tasks.

And for this, we can all be eternally grateful.

*George Booker,  
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

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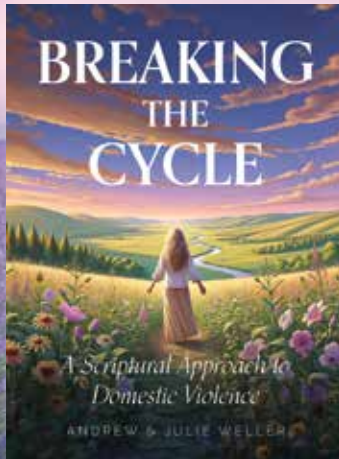
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