

Is Your Spouse
Your SOUL Mate...
or Your CELL Mate?

The Ten Plagues and
the Gods of Egypt

Restoration Movement
History: Lard's Quarterly

Are You a Disciple of Jesus,
Or Just a Christian?

Lord, Make Our Leaves Green

Who are the Christadelphians?

What Depression Taught Me

The Polytheistic Christian in
the Corinthian Church

More Than Just a Preacher

Principles of Church Growth

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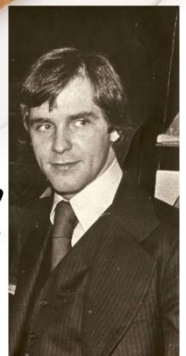
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WHY THE
PIZZA SHORTAGE
COULD BE A GOOD THING



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The Quarterly

Volume 4 – Number 2 – April 2020

POTPOURRI

We received a lot of great feedback on the last issue (focusing on evangelism), so thank you to all of you who sent us nice messages, and to the authors who wrote the articles.

It seems like it is now a requirement to mention COVID-19 in anything you write, so I just mentioned it, and can get that out of the way. But, if you just can't get enough, I recommend you read the editorial on the good that can come from this "Pizza Shortage" (just read it, it'll make sense) as well as "When History Repeats Itself..."

I promise you will find something that will interest you in this issue. Whether it's Mike Mazzalongo's own conversion story—titled "From Mafia to Ministry"—Mark McWhorter's crazy experiences in his first mission trip, Dewayne Bryant's look at the Ten Plagues and how they relate to the gods of Egypt, the biblical biography of Judas Iscariot (including some speculation about his motives), Richard Mansel on ministering to those who are chronically ill, John Krivak's reflection on learning from depression, or Michael Shank's lesson on "Principles for Church Growth—or perhaps all of them—there is definitely something for you here!

I would also like to point you to some items of special interest to people with even a passing interest in church history. Scott Harp introduces us to a *Quarterly* by brethren in the 1860s—*Lard's Quarterly*. Kyle Frank helps us know more about the often-misunderstood (or overlooked) Restoration Movement figure known as James O'Kelly. There are also two articles giving the history of a couple religious groups (the word "cult" has been used by some to describe both) that left the church of Christ—the founder of one group was once a co-worker with Alexander Campbell.

I also commend to you Gerald Cowan's article on making sure you're actually a *disciple* of Christ, and not just a Christian.

Honestly, I could have just said, "Turn the page and read the table of contents. They're all great!" But if I did, there'd be a lot of white space on this page—and we can't have that!

The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor). But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven

WHAT TO FIND AND WHERE TO FIND IT

(AKA: The Contents of the Quarterly)

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This Pizza Shortage Can Be a Good Thing!

An Editorial by Bradley S. Cobb

My kids are tired—*very* tired—of hearing the word “Coronavirus.” I think they’ve got a goal to go an entire day without saying or hearing that word. So, for whatever reason (I’m not quite sure what it is), they’ve made up their own euphemism for it. Instead of “Coronavirus,” they have taken to saying “Pizza Shortage.” I guess (and this is only a guess) that perhaps they view a pizza shortage as being truly the worst thing that could happen to this country, which (if you accept the analogy) makes a good parallel to how COVID-19 is being portrayed. (And those who know me know about my penchant for pizza...) So, for the rest of this editorial, I’m going to follow their lead and whenever you see “Pizza Shortage,” it means “Coronavirus.”

For the next few minutes, I’d like you to consider some ways in which this “Pizza Shortage” could be a good thing.

It has forced congregations to get creative

It has been said sarcastically that the church has two standards of faith and practice: the Bible, and “what we’ve always done.” There are some who, because they think any change in how we do things is a deviation from the faith, oppose anything and everything unless they’re already doing it. Back in the 1800s, there were people who got very upset because of the introduction of *songbooks* to be used in worship. They’d argue, *if you’re reading it, you can’t be singing it from the heart*. Alexander Campbell himself published a songbook—but was quite opposed to including the music, because *if the notes are there, you will focus on them instead of what you’re singing*. I’ve heard of members who opposed overhead projectors as sinful (and later on, PowerPoints as well).

But with the Pizza Shortage going on, there is an almost-universal (at least as far as I’ve seen/heard) willingness to try *new* things in following the Biblical pattern. For example, I can’t tell you how many congregations have jumped headfirst into live-streaming their worship in order to reach members who are unable to make it to services. I count the church in Charleston, AR (where I preach), to be one of those. We’re live-streaming the worship on Facebook, and also posting them on our YouTube channel (which we also just created since the Pizza Shortage started).

I know of congregations who are having “drive-in” services in the parking lot. Each member/family stays in their car, tunes their radio to a specific frequency, and with a rather inexpensive radio transmitter, the song-leader, prayer-leader, announcement-maker, and the preacher can all be heard by the members in their own “socially distant” vehicles. The Lord’s Supper is distributed by men wearing gloves and masks, and handed to someone in the car, who then passes it to his passengers. Think for a moment about how crazy and liberal you would have sounded if you had suggested that on a specific Sunday, everyone worshiped from their car. People would have thought you were an out-of-your-mind change agent! But today? People look on this creativity with admiration, because it makes it possible for people to meet together while also keeping them safe from catching the Pizza Shortage. And they realize that it isn’t sin—it’s just a different (though definitely not ideal) method of obeying the same command to assemble together to take the Lord’s Supper and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Corinthians 11:17-30). I don’t think anyone would suggest that this should be the new model of how we worship, but given the situation now, most would agree it is an acceptable plan until the crisis passes.

It can bring the congregation closer

Perhaps this one doesn’t register right at first. After all, how can being forced to be further apart bring us closer together? When people are isolated at home, sadness, depression, or just plain “cabin fever” can take over. We are so used to being able to go where we want, when we want, that when it is taken away from us, it can become disorienting. We crave connection with people, but often we don’t think about it because we see people throughout the day. Right now, phone calls, text messages, and social media conversations are greatly increasing—because people want to be able to interact with others.

Here, we have a great opportunity. The Pizza Shortage has made this need abundantly clear. The chal-

lenge is, are we going to take the initiative to meet it?

- If you're going to call someone, because you need something to break the boredom or the sadness, make it a call to a brother or sister in your congregation.
- If you're going to text someone, why not text one of the older members who can't get out or have visitors?
- If you're going on Facebook (or any of the other social media platforms), why not make it a point to comment on posts by members, or send them a message—or better yet, create a group (or a group message) made up of members of the congregation where you can just chat about whatever you want to chat about (like how much you wish there was no Pizza Shortage).

In doing this, you will do three things:

1. Relieve your own boredom (so, for selfish reasons, go ahead and interact with members).
2. Make them feel important, appreciated, and cared for at a time when people are more prone to anxiety and depression (so, because you care about your spiritual siblings, go ahead and interact with them).
3. Bring a closer bond of connection between members of the church (so, for Christ's sake, interact with them).

It can help us evangelize

The church here in Charleston (as far as I'm aware) is the only religious group in town that is still having Sunday morning services right now. The numbers have been way down (though most of the members who aren't there in person have been live-streaming the worship, singing the songs and taking the Lord's Supper at the same time), but we did have a denominational visitor come because his church wasn't meeting until further notice. Additionally, we have had non-Christians tune in to our live-stream on Facebook (as well as Christians from across the country, who are in the same predicament).

I recall reading a bulletin article about a Southern town during the Civil War. There had been battle and bloodshed, and most of the churches in town stopped meeting. When the North overtook the town and declared martial law, there was "peace" (absence of fighting), and the churches wanted to re-open. The military leader refused, saying (in essence), "When in the middle of a great trial, you decided to shut your doors instead of gathering to petition the Great God of Heaven. But now, when there is no longer conflict, you want to come back. That is not real Christianity." He refused to allow them to gather. However, there was one church who had continued to meet throughout the conflict—the church of Christ. The military leader had great respect for their dedication, and though he didn't obey the gospel, he gave them—and only them—the permission to continue meeting.

I fully understand why some members during this Pizza Shortage may feel the need to stay home. We have members who work in hospitals where there have been confirmed cases, and there is a much higher chance that they could be carriers—and out of concern and love for their brethren, they don't want to infect them. There are others whose immune system is already compromised, or who are older and prime candidates for suffering the worst if they catch it. Each person needs to make their own decision after prayer and contemplation.

But those who *are* able to worship with the saints *should* worship with the saints. You can still meet together, and if precautions are taken by all the members ("social distancing," perhaps wearing masks and gloves, hand-washing, etc.) you will be just as safe as when you go to the grocery store to pick up essentials.

But for a moment, put yourself in the shoes of someone in your community. This person perhaps realizes he isn't in control, and that he needs to "get some God" in his life. Now imagine this person decides to visit a church. He wants to find one with dedicated Christians who truly put God first. So he does a bit of looking around, and he finds that during this Pizza Shortage, only one church was dedicated enough to still have services. Which one do you think he'll choose to visit first?

It gives us an opportunity to show grace to our brethren

Let's state it as it is: people are freaking out. They are scared. They are anxious. And that's understanda-

ble. But there is a big problem that comes as an outgrowth of this fear and anxiety—two of them, actually.

There are those on one side, who think that the Pizza Shortage is being way overstated, that it is making a much bigger deal about it than is justified, because there are other things that regularly cause more deaths (car wrecks, the seasonal flu), but we don't shut down the economy and wreck millions of people's lives for those. These people can (and I've seen it happen) look down on others and treat them like ignorant wimps for being worried and scared and anxious. They will accuse them of believing anything they hear, of not being able to think for themselves and objectively look at the evidence, and of having no faith in God.

On the other side, you have the people who think the Pizza Shortage is extremely bad, something which has no definite cure yet, and that it must be taken seriously with extreme measures in order to keep it from growing. These people can (and I've seen it happen) look down on others and treat them like clueless morons because they *aren't* worried. They will accuse them of thinking that they know more than the experts, of being only interested in money instead of people, and of being guilty of "tempting God" (Matthew 4:7).

Neither one of these attitudes matches what God wants from us. Instead of being judgmental, we ought to empathize with our brethren. We are told to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). This means we are to try to share in the emotions of our brethren. If our brethren are anxious, we need to identify with them, empathize with them—and then help to calm their fears if possible. If our brethren think that the cure (closing the economy, causing—at the time I write this—16 million people to lose their job) is worse than the disease, we need to identify with them, empathize with them—and then help them see reasons why this might be a necessary (though painful) step.

Brethren who are speaking out about the job losses aren't out there worshipping some golden calf called "capitalism." Instead, they are concerned about the real-world impact on millions upon millions of people whose world just came crashing down because their business shut down, their job is gone, and they are struggling to support their family.

Brethren who are focused on "social distancing" and the related precautions because of the spread of the Pizza Shortage aren't mindless sheep who feed on whatever the media gives them. Instead, they are concerned about the real-world impact on thousands upon thousands people whose world just came crashing down because they're dying in a hospital, or because their spouse, or father, or mother has just died.

I hope that everyone who reads this can agree that both sides have legitimate concerns, and show grace instead of judging brethren for being more vocal about one section of those suffering instead of the other. This is an opportunity to show love and unity—and to have actual *dialogue* with brethren who might come at this issue from a different perspective than you.

Final Thoughts

Satan wants to use this time of crisis to separate the body of Christ. He wants people to remain isolated from their spiritual family, feeling alone and scared and depressed and anxious. He is the enemy here.

Is what you are doing in the midst of the Pizza Shortage helping his cause? If you don't reach out to your brethren to offer connection, encouragement, and comfort, you're aiding Satan. If you lambast your brethren for which group of suffering people they express more sympathy for, you're aiding Satan. If you chastise your brethren for taking this seriously and staying home out of love or fear (especially when they are watching the services online), you're aiding Satan.

But we can fight Satan and bring glory to God by simply doing what we can to help our brethren stay connected to each other and to God. We can show grace and empathy for *all* those who are affected by the disease and the steps taken to slow its spread.

We have great opportunities afforded to us, and if we take them and use them to God's glory, this Pizza Shortage can bring about good things.

[NOTE: I assume that the readers understand I am *not* saying that people dying is a good thing, but that God can use this international crisis to bring about good things, if we look for the opportunities and take them.]

*And just like that, WOW... on April 17, an article was published about how **there is now a pizza shortage because of the coronavirus**. <https://popculture.com/trending/2020/04/17/us-running-out-frozen-pizza-amid-ongoing-coronavirus-pandemic/>*

When History Repeats Itself...

Jim Mitchell

One of the biggest problems with a culture that does not know the past, let alone learn from it, is the devastation which can occur when what has taken place in history goes unnoticed or forgotten. The statement from the writings of George Santayana (1863-1952) rings true again: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Inspired Instructions Ignored by Many for Millennia

The instructions to Israel in Exodus 15:26 were:

“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.” (NKJV)

Leviticus 13 outlined the observance, diagnosis, and quarantine of individuals who became infected with leprosy. The end result:

“The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” (Lev. 13:45, 46).

Infected clothing was to be burned (Lev. 13:52) and those infected were indeed isolated from everyone else for as long as they had the disease.

Throughout the centuries, the world (especially Europe) was besieged from various plagues with very high mortality rates due, in part, to a neglect of limiting contact among the populace. The quarantine practiced by Israel as they followed hygienic laws given by God was not officially recognized by the medical community until the 19th century.

The practice of quarantine, as we know it, began during the 14th century in an effort to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics. Ships arriving in Venice from infected ports were required to sit at anchor for 40 days be-

fore landing. This practice, called quarantine, was derived from the Italian words *quaranta giorni* which mean 40 days.¹

“A Tale of Two Cities”

Information in a 2012 doctoral dissertation from the University of South Florida, titled *The Yellow Flag of Quarantine: An Analysis of the Historical and Prospective Impacts of Socio-Legal Controls over Contagion*, by Peter Oliver Okin, deals with a wealth of information about the 1918 pandemic of “Spanish Flu.” His research sheds much light on problems now being faced in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The validity of the principles of Leviticus 13 in isolating those who are infected is illustrated in the analysis of information from the 1918 epidemic which was extensive in its destruction. The dissertation section titled “*A Tale of Two Cities in the time of Flu: Philadelphia and St. Louis*” mirrors, in some horrific ways, what is taking place in 2020.

On the positive side, through the work and direction of Dr. Max Starkloff (the city’s health commissioner), St. Louis “...shut down schools, entertainment places, and even churches, and he promptly did so (although he initially allowed other businesses to continue their operations); he also limited crowding on elevators and trams. The St. Louis Health Division also imposed strict quarantine/isolations on individuals, generally... with the placarding of afflicted homes as in other disease epidemics. City policemen were charged with enforcing these social distancing and quarantining directives.” (page 265).

As a result, St. Louis was one of the cities with the least amount of fatalities from the Spanish flu of 1918.

How the 1918 epidemic was handled in St. Louis and the failure of Philadelphia to take similar actions was as different as night and day.

“In mid-September, the initial reported cases of the deadly second wave of Spanish flu appeared in Philadelphia. A well-prepared city

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/historyquarantine.html>

administration would have considered such index cases to be klaxons in the night, calling for prompt interventions, but Philadelphia's city fathers seem to have missed this opportunity. (They were hardly alone in this respect.) Instead of closing down public places and forbidding collective activities, the city held a patriotic parade on September 28. During the intervening period, influenza virus had the opportunity to double its spread almost three to five times. In any event, the pestilence had become barely controllable by the time the city's health authorities did shut down the schools and proscribed collective gatherings on October 3. Eventually, the second wave of flu and probably-associated pneumonias claimed, at its peak, the lives of some 257 out of every 100,000 Philadelphians (beyond expected levels), with a cumulative excess rate of pneumonia and influenza deaths of 719 per 100,000 by December 28..." (page 264)

When History Repeats Itself in Horrific Ways

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, the similarities between the approach of Philadelphia in 1918 and that of New York City in 2020 are shocking. Philadelphia officials told everyone to carry on with lives uninterrupted with the Spanish flu. New York Officials did the same. While the US had a travel ban in place at the end of January 2020, the New York City Health Commissioner, at a press conference on February 2nd, said, *"There is no reason not to take the subway, not to take the bus, not to go out to your favorite restaurant, and certainly not to miss the parade next Sunday."* She was referring to the Chinese New Year celebration and parade which took place on Feb. 9th. On Feb. 10th, in a MSNBC interview, the Mayor of NYC said *"If you're under 50 and you're healthy, which is most New Yorkers, there's very little threat here. This disease, even if you were to get it, basically acts like a common cold or flu. And transmission is not that easy."*²

March 1st saw the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in New York, and on March 2nd, the Mayor said, *"We have a lot of information now, information that is actually showing us things that*

should give us more reason to stay calm and go about our lives." On the 3rd of March the Mayor's message was *"Since I'm encouraging New Yorkers to go on with your lives ... get out on the town despite Corona-virus."* He even suggested a movie they might go see at theaters through the end of the week.³

Since the attitude toward the virus among New York officials in 2020 is the same as what took place in Philadelphia in 1918, it should come as no surprise that both have a very similar outcome. On March 31st, a NYC television station reported the following –

*"New York is the epicenter of it, accounting for more than 40 percent of all deaths nationwide and nearly half of the country's cases to date. As of Monday, the state had 68,363 cases, nearly 9,000 of them new, and 1,342 deaths; the lion's share of both are in New York City, which had more than 38,000 cases and 914 deaths. Most of the city's patients are younger than 50 (42 percent of the total cases as of Monday were people 18 to 44). But the vast majority (70 percent) of the fatalities have been people older than 65 — and those who died have overwhelmingly (more than 98 percent) had underlying conditions or potential underlying conditions. Asked about projections for how many New Yorkers could be lost by the time the crisis ends, Cuomo said Monday his team doesn't forecast COVID-19 like that. "We've lost more than 1,000 New Yorkers," the governor said. "To me, we're beyond 'staggering' already. We've reached 'staggering.' The point is to save every life that you can, that's what this is all about."*⁴

Even within modern catastrophes, God's Word proves its worth and truthfulness over the "knowledge" of "enlightened" humanity. Human opinions and disregard for the validity of the hygienic practices of the Old Testament wreak havoc on city after city where these principles were extremely slow to be put into practice. Through these difficult days, as the world deals with another serious pandemic, instructions from God's Word prove

² <https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/03/30/de-blasio-nyc-officials-downplayed-covid-19-threat-after-trump-restricted-travel-to-china-here-are-5-examples/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/nyc-virus-deaths-leap-from-0-to-776-in-15-days-emergency-hospital-help-arrives-monday/2350357/>

to be true yet again.

Questions which arise about the handling of this present pandemic may afford us an opportunity to let others know that many of the modern-day proposals in dealing with this crisis are actually ad-

dressed and found in Scripture. Perhaps, just perhaps, those questions (and our response to them) will provide multiple opportunities for us to set up Bible studies with those who are now thinking more about spiritual things than the material.

Our First Mission Trip

Mark McWhorter

We were excited and anxious as we boarded the plane to fly to Belize. A missionary working in Belize had asked for assistance from anyone who wanted to teach for a week in the Central American country. We decided to go.

After we disembarked from the plane we went to pick our luggage. Mine was nowhere to be found. The airline said it was lost. We went into town to buy a few changes of clothing. Their “large” was actually an American “small.” And, there were no extra-larges to be found. So, for the remainder of the trip I wore underwear two sizes too small. The shirts were very tight. The pants were manageable.

Plans were for us to go to the southern region of the country and teach among several small villages in the jungle and mountains. We were going to stay in a large two-story house in the jungle about 10 miles from any town. The house had been built by Baptist missionaries, but had not been used for almost a year. Arrangements had been made for us to get ice from the local grocer in the southernmost town.

We traveled on the only road which traversed the country from north to south. We crossed two bridges which at the time were about 15 feet above the small rivers. We stopped at the second bridge and had lunch next to the river. The road was mostly dirt with some patches of pavement. Driving was slow.

We arrived in the southern town after hours of driving. The grocer said he had given the ice to someone else even though it had been promised for us. All that was left was at the bottom of the freezer and was yellow. But we took it.

We then drove to the house in the jungle. It looked like something out of a movie. It was majestic and had wrap-around balconies on both levels. We went inside. The kitchen floor was covered in rat droppings. That did not deter us. We figured we could sweep it clean. We went to the bedrooms. Everything looked nice. However, when we pulled back the covers, each bed was now inhabited by large jungle ants. So, we would not be sleeping in the house.

We next checked on the fuel to run the generator. There was none. So, we would not have electricity. Nor would we have warm water. Nor would we have water in the house. Fortunately, the large water tower had a manual latch which we could use to take a cold shower outside underneath the tower. Even with the temperatures in the 90s and humidity of close to 100%, that water was very cold. Since I had only two changes of clothes, I wore the first set for two days and then washed it. The high humidity did not allow those to dry – even after two days. I had to wash the second set because they were getting stinky. That meant putting on the still-wet first set which had a different smell. (When we got back to the capitol, the airline informed us they had found my luggage. It had flown to Europe and then to Belize. I got it at the airport as we were flying home.)

The missionary had pulled a small pop-up camper behind his truck. We (and the other couple with us) would sleep in it and he would sleep in the cab of the truck. We felt sorry for him having to sleep in the truck, but he assured us he got enough rest.

Each day we would drive down small dirt roads

to find the small villages. We did as much teaching as we could, though they were not very receptive. We had to hike about a mile through the jungle on a very narrow path to get to one village. We were told not to get off the path – people had gotten lost just five feet off the path. The people spoke a mixture of English, Mayan, and Spanish. Communicating was not easy.

The night before we were to drive back to the capitol, it rained a monsoon. Those of us that had never been to Central America had never seen or heard rain that hard. As soon as daylight came, the missionary urged us to rapidly pack to leave. He said the rains from the mountains would come barreling down the rivers in just a few hours.

We drove close to 80 miles per hour over that very rough dirt road. When we got to the first bridge, the water was almost to the bottom of the boards. The missionary and I walked out on the bridge to make sure it was still sound enough to drive on. Before we got 25 feet on the bridge the water was lapping up between the boards. We ran back to the truck. He drove while looking out the driver's window. I looked out the passenger window. We were looking to make sure the tires were still on the boards as we drove across. The water was already above the boards as we drove. Just as we pulled off the bridge on the other side, the bridge collapsed and was washed out to sea.

We knew the second bridge would be impassable. We got out a map and found that there was a small airport at the end of a side road. We drove there. The air strip was dirt and the terminal was a palm tree. There were four buildings at one end of the compound. There was one person residing there and he called to the capitol airport to get a plane to come get us.

After a few hours the plane arrived. It was a small six-seater. The pilot asked me to sit in the co-pilot seat so he could teach me quickly how to fly the plane if something happened to him or the gauges on his side. He said all instruments were doubled for safety. I made the observation that there was only one propeller. He said, yes, if something happened to it we would all die. That was why he would fly right on the coast-line so that they would be able to find the plane if it went down. For some reason that did not give me peace of mind... The missionary stayed because someone had to look out for his truck and camper. He did not get home for

another two weeks.

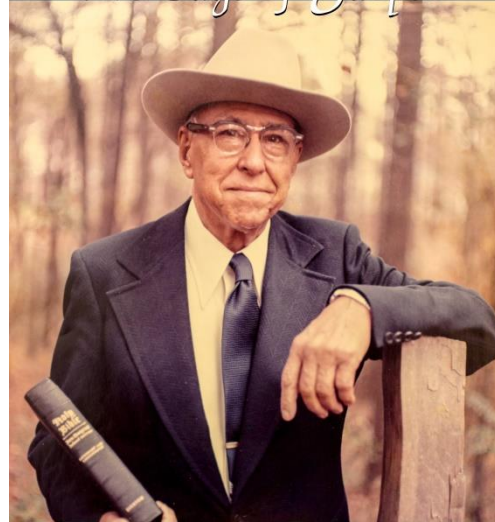
The pilot said we had to hurry because it was getting dark. The small airport had no lights, so we could not land after dark. We got to the capitol with the sun just barely peaking over the horizon. The landing strip had been built out in the ocean with a small path to the mainland. The plane stopped with the nose sticking out over the water. The pilot laughed and said we had just enough room.

When we got back to the States, we found out that my wife was pregnant with our first child. She had been through that tough week while in very early pregnancy.

The experience was interesting to say the least. Nothing went as planned. So, how could any future mission trip be worse? I was convinced to go on numerous future trips by the experience of that first one. I write this to let others know, that one should not allow unplanned incidents deter them from making mission trips. Remember, the goal is reaching a lost soul. One can overcome some discomfort for that.

“truly pleasurable”
“thought provoking”

The Sage of Jasper



Gus Nichols - A Biography
SCOTT HARP

The Sage of Jasper
Available on Amazon.com

From Mafia to Ministry

Mike Mazzalongo

When invited to speak, those who introduce me read through my bio that contains the type of stats common to those who have chosen to preach for a living:

- Degree in Missions and Mass Communications
- Preaching since 1979
- Ministered at churches in Canada and the U.S.
- Served as Dean of Students for Oklahoma Christian University
- Written over 40 books
- Specializes in the use of media for local church work
- Produces content for his Bible teaching website, BibleTalk.tv

What they do not mention, however, is the road that I traveled before my preaching career, a journey I refer to with the title, “From Mafia to Ministry.” This story explains why I went into ministry and why I ultimately chose the Internet as my chosen field of endeavor. It all began with my father, Tony, who was a boxer.

Tony the “Bookie”

They called him “Battling Mazzalongo” because of his aggressive and scrappy style. He once told me that he had 25 pro fights but quit after his nose was broken for the second time – he said that he wanted to keep his remaining good looks.

Club fighters in the 1930s in Montreal, Quebec, mixed with other athletes, show-people, and mobsters who ran the gambling that went hand in hand with the fight game.

Tony’s footwork training in the ring naturally led him to open a ballroom dancing studio when he left boxing, and that is where he met my mother, Jane. They had a great time, working by day and catching the very active club life by night where they danced

and enjoyed my dad’s local celebrity status as a former boxer and ballroom dancing champion (he competed and won several dance contests and marathons).

After a while, Tony found work as a bouncer and security man for an illegal gambling house run by some local mobsters. I remember, as a 12 year old

returning from my music lessons, I would stop by the “Rotella” club and ring the buzzer on the lime green door so someone would let me in. There were never any problems, because I was Tony’s boy. Inside were separate rooms with poker games, dice, and roulette going on. My dad was there to make sure that there was no trouble with sore losers who had lost their paychecks playing cards or trying to win at the roulette table. Tony would at times give the losers some money for cab fare or groceries to calm them down before going home.

My father tried legitimate work as a waiter in hotel bars, but that never lasted too long because he liked to gamble—so he eventually became a bookie. Unlike Britain and other places, off-track betting (on horse racing) or wagering on sporting events was illegal in Canada, and so this type of activity was controlled by organized crime. My dad had several phone lines installed in our apartment and they rang all day long with people betting on horse races or other sporting events taking place that week. Tony kept track of these transactions listing who bet what and how much was won or lost. All of this he recorded in his book (this is why he was called a bookie). Of course, everyone paid up when they lost because if they did not, they would be visited by one of my father’s associates who brought along a “Louisville slugger” as motivation to pay in full.

I still remember my mother coaching me for



Luc “Tony” Mazzalongo

“show and tell” day at school where students had to introduce themselves and explain what their fathers did for a living. Mom would insist that when my turn came by, I would say that my dad worked from home as a bookkeeper!

I also recall the police detectives coming to our house and my dad would pass along white envelopes stuffed with cash. One time, they apologized because they had to arrest him (orders from the Captain) but they did it discreetly, no cuffs or police car, in order to avoid embarrassing him in front of the neighbors. He told me not to worry and to tell my mother, who was at work, that he would be home for supper—and he was!

Tony died at home in front of me from a heart attack. He was 53, I was 15. His funeral was right out of the movies. The viewing alone lasted three complete days with people (most of whom I did not know) streaming through the funeral parlor from morning until night. The funeral procession extended three city blocks and was completed with a mass featuring a male chorus singing Gregorian chants. A few weeks after the funeral, two men visited my mother and asked her to give them my father’s “book” that contained all his client information. She told them that she had destroyed it to avoid any trouble. Later on, she recounted how these men advised her that they knew my name and even knew the school I attended as a way to intimidate her. Eventually they realized that she did not have the book and had not sold it, so they left us alone.

On the night that he died, Tony met with several men who wanted to open a restaurant that they would finance but he would front: Tony’s Spaghetti House. He left with them and was carrying \$4,000 in cash in his pocket (a lot of money in 1962). My mother thought that he had gambled it away that night before coming home since it was gone when she went through his clothing after the ambulance took his body away.

There we were, my mother and I: no money, no insurance and no prospects. Thankfully, his people in the gambling world paid for a fine funeral.

Repeating the Sins of My Father

What does a young man do when searching for direction in life? Most of the time he follows whatever directions he has already been given. The only adult male I knew was my father, Tony, so I simply followed in his footsteps. He was not a religious man, so I was not a religious man. He liked nightclubs, nice clothes, dancing, and easy money, so I set myself to do the same. I spent money on clothing, opened and operated dancehalls, hung out in clubs, indulged in alcohol and drugs, and lived an immoral life. I was also involved in shady business dealings that made a lot of easy money. I streaked through a decade of this life until early 1977 when I was addicted to drugs, had lost my home, car, and money and found myself living on my cousin’s couch—alone, broke, no job and no prospects. I had followed the directions given me and had arrived at a complete dead-end!

Seeking and Finding

Now, here is where my story takes a providential turn. All the time I was living in this darkness, I was inwardly searching for something else, something true. I knew intuitively that the life I was leading was not true, not genuine, but it was the only life I had. I found myself at an emotional and psychological place that whispered, “Is that all there is? Is this the best in life? If so, why go on living?” I was headed for the same end as my father, but getting there at a much younger age.

This is when, as I said, something providential happened. While searching the want-ads in the local paper for a job, I noticed a small, one-column ad placed there by a local church. The heading said, “Sinners are Welcome at the Church of Christ.” This was followed by a short article about Jesus coming to seek and save sinful people—people like me!

What struck me about the ad was that while other ads for Catholic, Protestant or Evangelical churches in that paper advertised things like Friday night bingo, clothing giveaways and times for services, this little ad said something that was universally true and, as far as I was concerned, deeply meaningful. The rest of my conversion story is pretty normal and familiar. I visited the small congregation (40 mem-



bers) and met the minister (Jim Meador) who wrote the article. He studied with me, and on a cold November night in 1977, this sinner was welcomed into the body of Christ through baptism. Not long after, my wife Lise was also baptized and we began serving in that small mission church in Montreal (Lachine Church of Christ). An interesting note about that small ad that caused me to visit the church: it only appeared once, and I was the only one who responded to it.

From Mafia to Ministry

After I became a Christian, I realized that this is what I had been searching for but did not know it. It's as if I was searching for God, and He found me through that little ad in the paper.

I mention these things because they explain why I eventually decided to go into ministry (to look for those who were searching) and how I would find them using media in local church work.

This idea came to me one night as Lise and I were parked at the lookout on Mount-Royal which provides a panoramic view of the city of Montreal. I remember thinking that each of the lights twinkling in the sea of homes below the mountain represented a family, and I could reach into each of these homes with the gospel through the use of various media.

It became my goal to use every form of media to search for those who were searching. Starting in the 1980s I designed evangelistic and Bible teaching projects using conventional media like radio (The Daily Gospel), TV (BibleTalk), newspapers (The Bread of Life), as well as lesser used methods like the telephone (Christian Life-Line) where we placed ads in the paper inviting people who had questions or needed help or just needed to talk, to call the Life-Line 24/7 and speak to one of our members. We had a schedule where members signed up to man the phone. It was exhilarating (we saved children from abuse, suicide attempts, countless hours

of Bible study and conversation with very lonely people), but it was also exhausting because as a small church we had a limited pool of volunteers. We eventually shut the line down and replaced it with a recorded message containing a different Bible teaching each day. This program generated over 100,000 calls in its first year of operation.

BibleTalk.tv

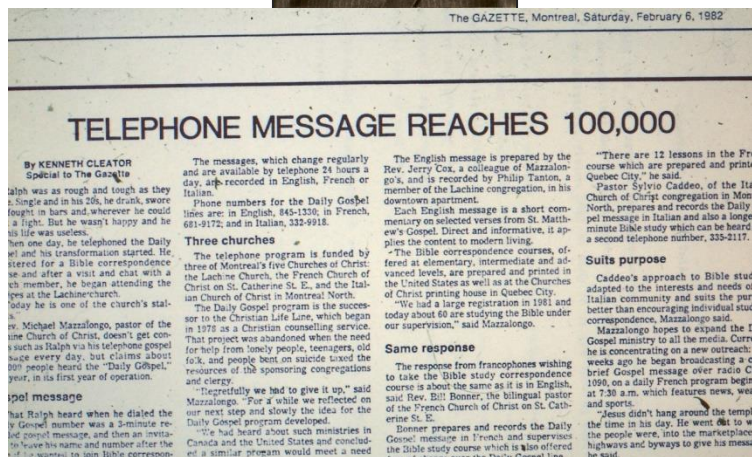
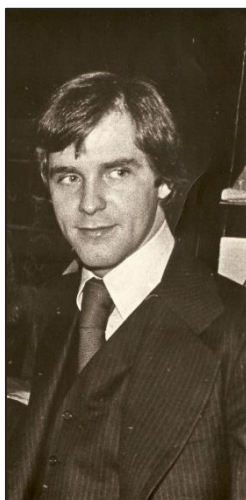
For the last 15 years, however, I have focused my efforts on using the Internet for outreach and teaching. In 2005, Hal Gatewood (technology manager) and I launched the BibleTalk.tv website. During this time we produced over 1,000 videos which contain 50 different teaching series on various topics and books of the Bible (i.e. a video series on each New Testament book), studies designed for small groups, 250+ sermons, as well as books and articles, student notes and teacher guides—all free to download and share.

We originally began the site in order to livestream our Bible class on Wednesday nights for members who lived far from the building and had trouble coming to services on cold winter nights in Montreal. We were delighted when we noticed that we had over 100 views in a week (remember this was 2005!).

Today, the BibleTalk.tv YouTube channel alone has the following numbers as of February 2020:

- Total views—6.2 million
- Subscribers—50,000 (avg. 2000 new subscribers per month)
- Monthly visits—275,000
- Monthly minutes watched—3 million

These numbers do not include the views and subscribers we generate by providing our content to other platforms including Amazon Prime, Twitch, Vimeo, Spotify, and Roku to name a few. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, BibleTalk.tv is the #1 provider of non-commercial videos for the Amazon Video platform.



The BibleTalk.tv material is designed primarily for use by Churches of Christ, however, we have found that the site is used by all types of church groups and individuals from all over the world, as much of our mail feedback indicates.

FEEDBACK

I wanted to inquire about your Bible study notes. I am a Chaplain deployed in Iraq and I'd like to use your study on the gospels for our Bible study here in deployment. I believe your study will enrich and grow us here. I watched some of your study on John and it really enhance my understanding of John.

FEEDBACK

I was an atheist all my life. Coming from Soviet Russia with atheist parents. Two months ago I open Matthew and it was best thing what is happen in my life. I start to read and listen to Bible, start to pray. All of this changed my life so much. I am living in Istanbul, Turkey. I want to be baptized. What you would suggest me?
- Benya

As I have already mentioned, we receive a lot of mail each month. Most have questions about the teaching, many have kind words of encouragement, but the main theme running through the majority of our mail can be summarized by a recent contact:

FEEDBACK

Mike, it's past 1am but I've got to thank you for your videos, especially the grace series. I'm learning so much from simple yet concise delivery. I've just passed your video onto an unbeliever who's in a bit of spiritual trouble and it's reaching him. Thank you thank you thank you I'm gonna get back to the videos now, come to London :)

- Nunzio

What God has done with one little ad and a searching heart!

Mike Mazzalongo
mike@bibletalk.tv

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Mike Mazzalongo is one of the most-prolific uploaders on Amazon Prime Video with more videos than any major Hollywood studio except Paramount Pictures.

- Erich Schwartzel, January 2020

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More than Just a Preacher

Adam B. Cozort

For the last fifteen years I have spent my weeks preparing to preach the Gospel on Sundays and teach Bible classes on a weekly basis. In exchange for my willingness to take on the greatest share of the work in this area, the congregations with which I have worked have graciously agreed to help provide for my family so that I can devote the majority of my time toward these, and other similar, efforts.

For the first half of those years I spent a large share of every week in my office, alone, with very little interaction among the outside world. It was not that I did not want to interact with others or was anti-social in any way. As a young preacher, studying was a top priority. I had an average of two sermons, two classes, bulletin articles, and other outside teaching opportunities (from newspaper articles to radio programs), all of which had to be fresh and continuously balanced in approach and substance. When combined with the fact that many congregations want the preacher to keep office hours (whether anyone else is there or not), it is a daunting task. There is good reason why preachers suffer burnout and frustration.

Before you begin thinking that this is an article about how hard preachers have it and that they need more time off – it isn't. For most of my 20's, I spent six days a week at a church building, and for most of five of those days nobody else was present. There was the occasional call to answer (though most were business spam). However, weeks would go by with nobody entering to break the monotony or change the course of day-to-day life except the occasional visit to the hospital or someone's home where there was an illness, loss, or struggle.

Then the kids came along and started getting old enough to be involved in things. I began coaching baseball and basketball teams for my kids. This opened doors on several fronts. It allowed me to spend more time in the community, it helped me spend quality time with my family, it also helped me

to be known in the local community as something more than just a preacher. Eventually, I worked in our local youth leagues enough that I became one of the board members for the youth basketball league. I worked with them for a year before we moved to work with our current congregation in Illinois. When we announced our move, it was the first time members of the community had ever come up to me saying they wished we weren't leaving. It was not because they agreed with me doctrinally—in fact they strongly disagreed with what I taught. Instead, it was because they saw me as more than just a preacher.

When we moved to Illinois, I decided to do something I had wanted to do for years but had never followed through on. I registered to become a licensed sports official with the Illinois High School Association in football, basketball, and baseball. I wanted an avenue to be out in the community, to meet and get to know people, and to do something that I enjoyed and would be beneficial for my health and well-being.

When most people think of sports officials, they see the people that are always getting blamed for missed calls and booed from the stands. While those things will occasionally occur, what most people cannot see are the interactions with coaches, administrators, and players that are good and positive. These often occur before, during, and after a contest. When I began my work as an official, one of our elders (who had been an official and a school administrator) said, "You have to be prepared to not be liked for your calls, and to have people yell at you and call into question your motives and intelligence." My reply was, "So you mean it's kind of like preaching."

Over the last few years with my endeavors, I've learned something I believe is very important to the overall health and well-being of a preacher. He needs to be more than just a preacher. We are very

good at giving titles to everything. If a man does anything other than preach and gets paid for it, he is a “bi-vocational preacher.” If a man makes more than a certain percentage of his salary from something other than preaching, he is a “part-time preacher.” But none of these, or other similar titles, are truly accurate or necessary. If a man stands up before others and proclaims the Gospel of Christ, he is a preacher—no more, no less.

Nevertheless, for a preacher to truly be as effective as he can be for the cause of Christ, he must be more than just a preacher. We recognize the importance of being a good husband, father, leader, and servant. However, those traits only reach their full potential when they can impact others outside of the immediate sphere of influence.

Therefore, it is important for the preacher to find a means to interact with the world outside of his preaching. I know of many preachers who have “side jobs,” “community hobbies,” and the like. Obviously, it becomes one more thing that must be dutifully balanced with all other responsibilities, but never underestimate its importance. Consider a couple of reasons why this is so necessary.

First, it gives the preacher a way of interacting in the community that does not require the verbal preaching of a sermon. Peter wrote, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). How do we keep our conduct honorable in the world if we are never among the people of the world? How do they see our good works, positive influence, and genuine integrity if they never see us deal with situations outside of a church function?

Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Again, that light can only shine if made available outside the boundaries of the church building.

A second reason is the ability it gives you to make contacts with those in the world. Most people are not going to just show up on the church building doorstep. Most contacts will not be made through door knocking or mass mailings. Most contacts for future evangelism come through personal interaction on a human level.

Over the last few years, I have met many individuals I would never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. Some of those interactions leave the feeling that I wouldn’t mind not coming across that person again. Others give you the ability to truly impact someone’s life.

When I first became an official, my very first contact with another official was a man that was assigned by the local association to be my mentor for the first season of football. I also found out he is an erring member of the church. Over the last two years we have developed a solid friendship, and while I haven’t yet been able to get him to return, there is an opportunity there that I never would have had otherwise. There are more such stories I could relate (such as the one where I met a fellow official for lunch because he was still reeling from his wife running off with a deacon from their religious organization a few years earlier). Suffice it to say opportunities to show the love of God, integrity of Christianity, genuineness of character, and portrayal of the Gospel to all men rise exponentially when preachers allow themselves to be more than just a preacher.

There are so many ways for a preacher to accomplish this. It may be through volunteering in community activities, taking on side jobs, working with other members of the congregation in their endeavors, or any of several other avenues of approach. Find something you enjoy, something that is beneficial for you on multiple levels, and utilize it for good to the glory of God.

Our world does not make possible the old days of street-corner preaching. There are no marketplaces where everyone comes, and people are too enveloped in their daily routines to stand and listen for any length of time. However, there are still means of reaching out to the world, still avenues to find the good soil. They won’t come just from the pulpit, and they won’t be found solely in the social media channels of cyberspace. They will mostly be found where they always have been – in the heart-to-heart interactions from one person to another. But in order to truly be able to reach out to a lost and dying world, the preacher needs to be more than just a preacher.



Are You and Your Spouse SOUL Mates ... or CELL Mates?

Cory Collins

So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. Gen 29:20

Though there are many degrees in between, and though marriages may be measured in any number of ways, we may consider it as fact that some husbands and wives are soul mates, while others feel more like cell mates. The former seem to have hearts that beat together; the latter may want to beat each other, physically and/or emotionally. Very happy couples sprint hand in hand. Sad couples drag on, feeling locked in handcuffs by the marriage “bond.”

Virtually every person, when marriage begins, thinks he or she has found a soul mate. All is blissful, peaceful, and rewarding. Yet, ironically, months or years later, the joys have turned to chains. The husband (and/or the wife) feels imprisoned and yearns to breathe free! What happened? What can be done about it? If in your marriage you feel like a cell mate ...

- Remember and renew the earlier, happier days. When you were free, you chose not to stay that way. Why? Tell your spouse, “I chose you because ...” “Some of my favorite memories with you are ...” “God blessed us when ...”
- Admit the unkind ways you have helped to create the prison. “I have been impatient ... unfair ... selfish ... arrogant.” “I have expected too much, and given too little.” Then,

and only then, ask your spouse to take responsibility for his or her part as well.

- Realize that your spouse may feel trapped as well. Give your cell mate some slack, some gratitude, some support. Decrease his or her misery, and you will ease your own. The more you pull on his or her handcuff, the more your own wrist will ache.
- Let some fresh air into the cell. Stop arguing for a week, and talk about areas of agreement, especially basic values. Read the Bible together and pray. Talk about faith, hope, and love. Go for a walk. Share a new hobby and a new church ministry.
- Invite a trusted friend into the cell. An elder or preacher, with his wife, can listen, pray, and offer confidential, godly counsel. So can a trained Christian therapist. Do not be ashamed. Do not deny your struggles. Do not let the devil win.
- Act like a soul mate first. Be the person that you would want to share a cell with, before you ask your mate to be that person. Allow your spouse time to deal with the shock.
- Become a closer soul mate of Jesus Christ. Let His beauty be seen and reflected in you. He forgives. He encourages. He affirms. His yoke is easy, because He shares and carries the load with you. The more you think, speak, and act like Jesus, the more your spouse will want to be bound to you for life.

LORD, MAKE OUR LEAVES GREEN

Gerald Cowan

What is expected of fruit trees, maybe not so much from wild trees, but certainly domesticated, planted and tended trees?

Fruit.

That's the purpose of planting the tree, that's what is expected in due season. One does not plant fruit trees for their leaves or their bark or for firewood. No matter the particular the kind of tree, the reason for planting and tending it is that it produces its proper fruit. Jesus told a parable about an unproductive fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). It was not a wild tree but rather one planted and tended in the vineyard or garden of the landowner. In the season of harvest the owner looked for fruit from the tree but there was none. He spoke to the gardener, the one tending to that tree and other trees, vines, etc. in the vineyard. "This fig tree," he said, "has no fruit. For three years I have sought figs on it and found none. Cut it down and remove it. Why should it use the ground—it burdens the ground and deprives other growing things of what the ground gives?"

There is no indication that the tree had been neglected by the gardener, no evidence that it was diseased or harmed and hindered by other plants in the garden. It was simply unproductive—a barren tree that had no proper fruit. It might have been a decent shade tree—there is evidence that sitting under one's own fig tree was comforting, evidence perhaps of some prosperity and well-being (Micah 4:4). But the reason for having fig trees, exactly the same as the reason for having grape vines, date palms, or any other vine or tree or plant is for the *fruit* they can produce.

When the land owner said of the unproductive fig tree in his garden that it should be cut down, the gardener pleaded for it: let me fertilize it and irrigate it properly and give it another year to become productive. If it fails, then it certainly should be removed.

Note: is God giving evidence that He is a Lord of second chances, that He makes it possible for past failures to become present or future successes? We like to think so. But even if that is so, let nobody

presume it means one will be spared forever. Isn't He saying that unfruitful members of His kingdom family will end up in the fire if, after suitable care, provision, and tending they do not bear proper fruit?

Some Thoughts about Cursing a Barren Fig Tree (Mark 11:12-14, Matthew 21:18-23)

Jesus, along with his disciples, saw one morning a fig tree with leaves. He was hungry so he approached the fig tree, looking for edible figs, but he found the tree was barren—no fruit at all, nothing but leaves. Mark notes it was not yet the season for ripe figs. Jesus then cursed the tree. He did not berate the tree with vile or vulgar language, "cuss" words—no doubt such language never issued from Jesus' mouth. He said, "No one will ever again eat fruit from you ... let there be no fruit from you ever again." The equivalent of a curse of perpetual barrenness and inability to produce fruit was placed on the tree. Immediately the tree began to wither. Next morning it had withered completely and was dead. Was this a sign of a bad temper, a petulant and petty and rather childish retaliation for an unfulfilled desire, a symptom of horticultural or agricultural ignorance, a demonstration of his power over nature, an object lesson to his disciples—and hence to us—or something else? Why did Jesus curse an inanimate non-rational and insensate tree?

We can draw at least two valuable lessons from this encounter: pretenders and hypocrites are not tolerated; fruitless Christians are not tolerated either. There is no need to think Jesus did not know the condition of the tree before approaching it. He often used events or circumstances and conditions found along the way as metaphors, similes, or parables to teach pertinent lessons to his disciples. One will need to apply other teachings apart from this one and its context, not taking it as a stand-alone self-evident event. Unless we understand the lesson intended for people at the time it was given we will not be able to make a correct application to ourselves and our time.

Jesus was not wrong in expecting to find fruit on the tree.

It is typical of the fig tree that thrives in Palestine and Judea to put forth leaves and fruit at about the same time, actually the buds of the fruit, the pre-figs, appear before the leaves appear. Fruit tree growers also know that ordinarily a small amount of fruit ripens prior to the main crop. It can be referred to as the first ripe fruit or the first fruits. When Jesus approached the tree, it was the time of the first fruits of figs, but it was not yet time for the main harvest. Mark 11:13, *it was not the time of figs*, must mean that the particular tree on which Christ expected to find figs was barren, because it had no figs on it at all. It did not fulfill its purpose, so, as any diligent orchardist would do, Jesus simply eliminated an unproductive tree (compare Matthew 3:10), not with an ax or a saw, but by faith and fiat. Please compare the parable in Luke 13:6-9 we have already mentioned.

The early figs—we may call them pre-figs but it is more appropriate to call them early or immature figs—are edible. Green figs are not as problematic as many other fruits in their unripe stage. When leaves appear on the tree the justifiable assumption is that edible fruit is already there. The presence of leaves could be interpreted as the tree effectively advertising that it had produced fruit. Like a hen chicken cackling after having laid an egg (boasting —“Look what I've done; look what I've done!”—or just announcing?). But the cackling is not the egg, just as the leaves are not the figs. It's just a way of drawing attention to the anticipated and now-present product.

Jesus used this incident to teach His disciples—and all Christians today—that the outward appearance is not convincing and does not count with God. Instead, what really counts is whether or not one produces godly fruit in his or her life (John 15:8, 16; Galatians 5:22-23).

The lesson is not that the hungry Jesus was disappointed to find no food on the tree.

On a different occasion Jesus and his hungry disciples plucked the heads of grain from the stalks, rubbed the husks off and ate the raw kernels of grain (Luke 6:1). Did you know that fig leaves are edible? They can be pickled, boiled, baked, or cooked in other ways just like many kinds of leafy plants: lettuce, spinach, cabbage, and greens from collard, chard, mustard, and turnips (all southerners know

and appreciate turnip greens). Some, including fig leaves, can also be eaten uncooked. Fig leaves, like grape leaves, are nutritious, low calorie, high in certain vitamins and minerals, phenols, and helpful digestive fiber—they're good and good for you. I'm not being facetious when I say if they were hungry they could have eaten the leaves from that fig tree. But that's not the point Jesus was planning to make from the incident—he was not upset by not finding food to satisfy his hunger. He was upset about not finding the particular food the tree was advertising by its abundant leaves.

Churches and individual Christians can be guilty of false advertising too by producing leaves, not fruits, thus advertising fruits they may not have.

Buildings are leaves, not fruits. No matter how attractive, costly, or ostentatious it may be, a church building cannot preach, evangelize, or minister in any way to anybody. Buildings, including the most famous and fabulous cathedrals, cannot “do the work of the church.” Yet people continue to buy into the idea that if we build a better building, they (the people of the world) will come. Nonsense! If people come for the building they may marvel at the architecture and furnishings, but they will not find God here, since God does not dwell in temples made by men's hands (Acts 7:48). Nor will adding a theater, a basketball court and other sports equipment, a pantry, a soup kitchen, a health clinic, or other benevolent gestures save anybody or keep anyone from falling away from the church or from the faith. Those things are leaves, not fruits. One may wear a Christian mask without being a true Christian. Pious attitudes, eloquent prayers, fervent singing, even sacrificial giving and zealous “personal evangelism”—such as door-knocking, street preaching, urging others to obey the gospel to be saved and added to the church—are leaves, not fruit.

Jesus warns that those abiding in him, as branches in the vine, can and must bear proper fruit or they will be broken off and cast into the fire (John 15:1-11).

If just being a Christian is not enough to secure salvation, what kind of fruit does the Lord require of his disciples? Those who actually do obey the gospel and become people of the Lord in response to your efforts to teach them can be called your fruit. This is the kind of fruit Paul sought to produce in

Rome (Rom. 1:11-13). What other kind of fruit can a Christian produce? Allowing the Holy Spirit to work in you to produce in you the character qualities of Christ (Gal. 5:22-23 *fruit of the Spirit*; 2 Cor. 3:18 *the image and likeness of Christ*, compare Rom. 8:29), etc. is bearing fruit for Christ in yourself. Peter urges diligence in adding and developing certain Christian virtues in your own life—his list differs somewhat from Paul's—that will enable you to be a partaker of the divine nature and secure your entrance into the Lord's eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:1-10). The Lord will look past the masks we wear and any pretenses of Christianity we put on. He will look deeply into our souls to find the fruit He desires. He will know if we are working out our own salvation with reverent fear, in accordance with His

own work in us and the instructions given to us in His word (Phil. 2:12-13).

One of the things we learn from Jesus cursing the barren fig tree is that he abhors hypocrisy.

He does not accept the pretense of Christianity hiding behind an outward show of leaves to conceal its fruitless reality. We must not be content with beautiful leaves but no real fruit. We should not be focused on external appearances that will attract others but rather be intent upon bearing the fruit of the Lord and the Spirit of the Lord that He requires to be in His people. We are not praying, “Lord make our leaves green and more abundant.” We are praying, “Lord make us more fruitful in your kingdom.”

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Or picture perfectly the God
Who, in him, from the very start
Showed us Himself in word and deed.
Then, by the Holy Spirit's art
A sacrifice was offered that
Grace and salvation did impart.

In Jesus Christ we can see God;
In him we see our Father's face.
In him we see the God of love,
Of mercy, joy, and peace and grace
Who knows and meets our ev'ry need.
Our ev'ry loss He will replace.
In him we see what we should be;
Our human lot he did embrace.

There is no doubt, no doubt at all
That God our Father wants to see
His Christ in us, His Son our Lord.
Redeemed and sanctified and free,
With all entanglements of sin
Removed from us. Secure to be,
And anchored by a perfect hope
That stretches to eternity.

There also is no doubt that those
Who know from Christ we take our name
Should never see or hear in us
What may bring Him reproach or shame.
Do not misrepresent the Lord,
Lest for our sins He get the blame.
Instead make sure all see in us
The good that will enhance His fame.

-by Gerald Cowan-

WHAT IS THE **City of Angels** **International Christian Church?**

Mark McWhorter

Kip McKean was converted at the age of 17 in 1972 by Chuck Lucas. Lucas was the campus minister of a Gainesville, Florida congregation. Lucas was very evangelistic, but unfortunately was creating a 'discipling' program involving forms of mind control. The system became known as the Crossroads Movement. Lucas was forced out of that church several years later due to personal sins.

McKean was a Lucas favorite. He learned well what Lucas taught. It was reported that McKean imitated Lucas to the letter. Some from within the movement stated that McKean took the system to a different level. He was very early on inserting himself into a leadership position. By the time Lucas was forced out, McKean had become quite powerful in the organization. McKean took leadership of what was soon to be called the Boston Movement and then the International Church of Christ.

McKean grew the organization into an international one. He made Boston, Massachusetts, where he had situated himself in 1979, the 'mother church.' Leaders of each congregation around the world answered to him. Fifteen years after Lucas was removed for personal sins, McKean duplicated it. Both men in their resignation letters termed their removal as a 'sabbatical.'

McKean ended up in Portland, Oregon with a congregation of the International Church. It did not take him too many years to begin to garner a following. He was again embroiled in some dispute with

other church leaders and this time headed to Los Angeles, California. He took over \$100,000 and a significant number of members from the Portland church in 2007. He eventually named this new effort "The City of Angels International Christian Church." It is also called the "Sold-Out Discipling Movement." As of 2020, there are churches associated with this Movement in over a dozen foreign countries and many major cities of the United

States. The International Church of Christ still exists world-wide as well. Both of the organizations use mind control techniques, according to past members who left them.

New converts are given a "mentor" or "prayer partner." Converts are required to reveal all their

thoughts. The most private things are required to be revealed. This allows the mentor to use any weaknesses against the convert. Much of the information is sent up the line of administration. Guilt is used as a weapon to steer commitment to the cause. Leaders are never held to the same rules and regulations. Lower members are told that questioning the leaders is questioning God. Even if it is known that leaders are falling short in morality, it is not allowed to doubt or question such.

Members are pressured to give more and more money. There are actual totals set which must be met. If it is not met, the member is publicly shamed. There are "special gifts" (collections) required several times per year. These are multiples of what the normal gift is supposed to be. It has been reported



Kin McKean

that special gifts can be equal to a normal month's worth of giving. The funds are supposedly used for the travel expenses of leadership, jetting to meetings around the world, though ex-members say there are real questions regarding that.

McKean established a "college." Leaders are given higher degrees. Interestingly, some of the degrees were dated several years before the school was actually established. But a PhD is impressive to potential new converts. Most new converts are college age and early 20s. College students usually drop out because they cannot handle all the time requirements of the church and going to classes.

Many leaders of the different congregations have been married multiple times. Some have spent time in jail for fraud. Some have had children out of wedlock. Members are at times required to stand on street corners and ask for money for the church. It is reported that lower members have to get permission regarding every aspect of their lives: where to live, where to work, whom to marry, etc.

In the past McKean has been known to represent himself as an Apostle. At one event in Boston over a

decade ago, he came out on stage with a floor-length white robe and long hair. Pictures of him now show him in regular clothing and shorter hair. He does not claim to be over the Movement and has church leaders in every city. However, ex-members say he is still in control.

McKean references his days with the Boston Movement and the International Church of Christ as "the old movement." He says it served its purpose, but that now God wants this "Sold-Out Discipling." This is now what God promised in the Scriptures.

It is sad that this organization was an out-growth of what was the true church. While it may be perceived as a religious group we should not worry ourselves over, it is an example of apostasy. We can always learn from the past. And, while in the early 2000s the movement almost died, it is gaining strength again. Unsuspecting recruits and converts may be told about Kip's past in the churches of Christ and told that God led him to a better way. We should at least be able to let them know that Kip is a con-artist and an apostate.

Fulfill Your Ministry

Bill Howard

2 Timothy 4:5b says, "Make full proof of thy ministry" (KJV, RSV) or "Fulfill your ministry" (ASV, ESV). Using these or one of many other versions, the message is the same. It is a meaningful and challenging admonition from the Apostle Paul to Timothy. *There are challenges ahead for you; recognize it, embrace it, and fulfill it.* To the Christian today, this message is equally significant, meaningful, and challenging, as it was when Paul wrote to Timothy.

We know little about Paul after his first imprisonment in Rome. Tradition says he was beheaded somewhere near the end of Nero's reign, which

would be 68 AD. At the time of this writing, Paul was in Rome, as he had appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11). It is likely that he is still imprisoned because he mentions his bonds. It was certainly near the end of Paul's time as evidenced from his statements in chapter 4:6-9, 21, et al.

There are many lessons to be considered in Paul's history at this time, but we'll consider those in a different lesson. For now, we would like to concentrate on the words of Paul as addressed to the young evangelist Timothy: "fulfill your ministry."

Bible scholars generally are in agreement that this second letter was sent in 68 AD. For Paul, there

was always a sense of urgency for teaching and preaching. Now that his time was knowingly limited, he wished to impress on Timothy the urgency, the dire necessity of continuing that which he had been taught by Paul.

Paul told him: “I charge thee therefore before God.” What greater witness to this message could there possibly be, other than God? “Preach the word,” God’s message of saving grace. The words of love, pardon, and forgiveness, the means of man being reconciled to the living God. Paul tells him: “Timothy, you be ready at all times, whatever the circumstances, to preach and teach of the blessings and final outcome of God’s saving grace. There is no such thing as a convenient season as Felix might think.” Peter tells us: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Paul told the Colossians: this hope we are talking about is “Christ in us” (Colossians 1:27).

Paul exhibits, in his letters to Timothy, a deep concern for his well-being and an unbounded love. He refers to him as “my own son in the faith.” This fine Christian teacher is instructing and encouraging Timothy to stand firm, to be undaunted in his work. Timothy had a gift: the ability to teach and preach. He was given this gift for a reason. Paul said to the Ephesians: “These gifts are for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). This responsibility of making the saints complete, the teaching of the word, and the building up the body of Christ could only be accomplished through dedicated teachers such as Timothy. As Paul told the Corinthians: “we have this ministry,” it is God-given, and we faint not: we don’t stop, we don’t back off, we continue in the work in any and all circumstances. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our lord” (2 Timothy 1:7-8a). “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Romans 1:16). “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). These truths Paul embraced with all his being, and this teacher, likely in his final days on earth, was urging Timothy, in the strongest pos-

sible way, to be fearless and steadfast in his work of teaching the word so that he “might war a good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18b). Paul said: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7-8a). This is the result of warring a good war.

Other than Paul’s love for Timothy and concern for his faithfulness, what was the urgency in Paul’s message? Why admonish Timothy to fulfill his ministry? “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). These things were prevalent at that time, and Paul realized it would only get worse. He wanted Timothy to be aware of this and be prepared to deal with it. Throughout the history of mankind, where there has been truth there has also been an equal or greater amount of untruth. Paul’s admonishment to Timothy was to teach always the truth and be able to withstand those who will not endure sound doctrine—that which is truth. The adversary that promotes untruth and false teaching is always alert and on the job. Peter’s warning was: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). The evidence of his efforts are abundant and are witnessed everywhere in man’s failure to accept the teachings of God and/or to maintain that faith. The Devil’s greatest accomplishment is to keep man from being reconciled to God. Paul states: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). These truths are the reason Timothy needed to be diligent and to fulfill his ministry. In these truths, we see the necessity of today’s Christians being diligent in pursuing the same course.

As God’s children, how do we fulfill our ministry in today’s world?

An excellent beginning is to continually recognize who and what we are. We are individuals set apart because of our obedience to God’s wishes for us. We have learned about our Savior, and in simple faith believe Him to be the Son of God who gave his life a ransom for sin. We have been baptized for the remission of our sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit and been added to Christ’s body: His

church. In so doing, we are now clean; we are new and begin a new life. We are changed. We have moved from darkness to light. Peter informs us: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). The word Saint means "one set apart." More than sixty times Christians are called "Saints" in the New Testament.

Jesus pointed out to us the significance of understanding this position. "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candlestick and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Light overcomes darkness, and the light of the Christian life shines forth and overcomes the darkness of sin that abounds. Because of sin, much of the world is in darkness, and only by the shining example of Christ in us will we be able to lead others out of darkness. This is not for our glorification, but that our God will be seen and glorified and honored.

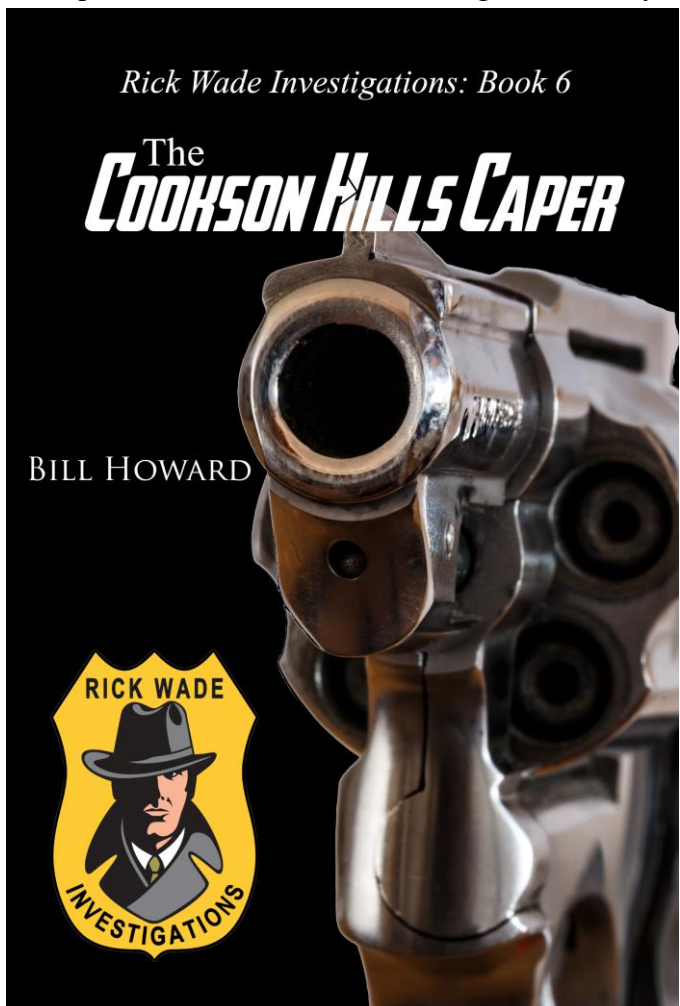
Paul admonished Timothy to be an example of the believers, in word, in life, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12). Live a pure clean life being faithful in all things. Showing love to mankind and to God in the way you live your life and what you say; the true foundation for a Christian life. Is our responsibility as a Christian any less? Our light is shining; the efficacy of our faith is shown by the example we set for others to see. When we assemble ourselves together with those of faith, when we celebrate our Savior and his sacrifice by participating in the communion service, when we give from our bounty with a cheerful heart, then and then only, are we teaching and making full proof of our ministry. The Apostle Paul told the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

There is more to being a child of God than experiencing and enjoying the magnificent blessings that are so abundant for the Christian. We do not take these blessings and privileges into our being for our benefit alone. We have access to these because God wishes for us to benefit from them, but also to use

our capabilities to see that others benefit as well.

Paul wrote this to Titus: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). *While preaching and teaching, Titus, you must show yourself in all you do as an example, a pattern for others to see and follow. The teaching will be by example as well as truth in words; be honest and sincere for you are the teacher of the message of eternal life; your light shining before men that they can see that you practice what you preach. The shining light that will lead people out of the darkness of sin and into the light of God, where there is no darkness, for God is light*

The pure life of the child of God is the example that cannot be denied. When we teach others by the example we set, then we are fulfilling our ministry



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Chronically Ill

by Richard Mansel

It's said that the Church is a healing place. We do quite well with praying for the sick. But what happens when more is needed? How do we go beyond prayers? How do we act on them and help those who are sick for extended periods of time?

We're accustomed to those who are ill in short stints. Someone gets sick, has surgery, recovers, and we move on. Their time on the prayer list is brief and all loose ends are tied up nicely. However, what do we do when someone doesn't get better?

Chronically Ill

In 2010, I suddenly lost the ability to walk. I had pain all over my body, less dexterity in my hands, and reduced strength in my limbs. I spent nine months on crutches as I continued to preach and minister. In time, I learned to walk again. However, my full-time career was at an end as a result of Fibromyalgia.

A change in perspective broadens our vision and opens new doors of understanding. I am one of the millions of chronically ill individuals in our nation.

"A chronic disease, as defined by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, is a disease lasting three months or longer. About 40 million Americans are limited in their usual activities due to one or more chronic health conditions."¹

For many, the chronic illness is a lifetime sentence. It becomes the backdrop for everything. Ease and freedom of movement are often replaced with accommodations and devices such as canes, wheelchairs, or walkers. Sleep may be disrupted and diets may dramatically change.

Life becomes exceedingly more complicated and normal activities take more work and planning.

"We need to step outside the four walls of the church and into the homes and communities of those in pain to meet the needs of the chronically ill most effectively. We need to enter their world. It's what Jesus would do."²

cally ill most effectively. We need to enter their world. It's what Jesus would do."²

A Biblical Perspective

Christians are called to be servants, ministering to those around us (Mark 9:35; cf. Proverbs 11:25). We reach out to the lost and the saved (Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 6:10). Our hands must be busy serving others (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

We must never overlook anyone just because serving them will be challenging. Ministering to the chronically ill may force us out of our comfort zones. But the Lord never expected us to have it easy. God cared for those with poor health and so should we.

Jesus told a parable of a man who called a great supper. Several rejected the invitation and the frustrated man said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind" (Luke 14:21).³

Jesus healed those with chronic illnesses (Matthew 8:5-13; 9:20-22; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 17:11-19; John 5:1-15). In Luke 13:10-17, Jesus grew angry at the Pharisees for not caring about a chronically ill woman.

In Acts 3:4, Peter and John meet a disabled man and ask him to look at them before he was healed. "Before they performed the miracle, Peter and John recognized the man's personhood. They vanquished his isolation so that he could receive God's gift of healing."⁴ So certainly we should focus on them in our ministry. Otherwise we fail God's vision of the kingdom.

Be Sensitive in Our Approach

As we deal with the chronically ill, we must be aware that we could accidentally hurt them with our words. We try so hard to say the right thing in every

¹ <https://nationalhealthcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/AboutChronicDisease.pdf>

² <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/ministering-effectively-to-the-chronically-ill/>

³ New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 1982.

⁴ <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/respond-to-chronic-illness>

situation. It's like with the grieving. People mean well, but they say so many insensitive things and bring pain to the suffering.

We want to be kind and compassionate so we say, "I understand." However, we likely don't have any idea what it's like to be the chronically ill person. We don't know what they feel and how complicated their lives are. So, no, we don't understand.

For the chronically ill, definitions change. When a person who is perpetually in pain says they are fine, it likely means that their pain is tolerable or they just don't know that the person would understand. Tolerable pain levels for one would be miserable for someone else.

Fatigue is another example. We get tired from work or life. But we can rest and get better. The person with chronic fatigue can't get rid of it. Exhausted may be their normal and there aren't any words in the English language for anything beyond that level.

An entire article could be written on what not to say to a chronically ill person.

Never say:

- "Well, you certainly don't look sick."
- "If you had enough faith, you would be healed."
- "Do you pray about getting well?"
- "You need to go to another doctor!"
- "If you would take better care of yourself, you'd get well."⁵
- "Your illness is caused by stress."
- "If you stopped thinking about it and went back to work..."
- "You can't be in that much pain. Maybe you just want attention."
- "Just pray harder."⁶

Don't:

- Don't pity me. Encourage me!
- Don't tell me this is my fault. This is not something I chose.
- Don't try to sell me the cure-all oil or nutritional supplement you are selling.
- Don't try to make my complex health situation simple. It is not.
- Don't think I am unaware of the latest re-

search and cures.

- Don't make my health my identity.
- Don't compare me to others who have similar health challenges. Each person's health is unique.⁷

Being chronically ill is very challenging and they don't need insensitive remarks. However, we shouldn't let the fear of saying the wrong thing keep us away. That would compound the problem.

They can usually tell when someone is sincerely trying to be helpful and can excuse a mistake from someone who is being genuine.

Be Patient

The health of a chronically ill person is simultaneously predictable and unpredictable. They know they will have health issues but the severity from moment to moment varies. They make plans but they don't know if they can carry them out because they can't predict how they will feel.

When a chronically ill person considers an event or an outing, it requires planning. Every activity has recovery time, so it's an investment. Going somewhere and doing something may take a day or two to recover. It's not that they can't do it, but they must factor how much it will cost in pain, fatigue, and discomfort.

So be patient with them and allow them to live and act at their own pace. They're probably eager to spend time with people and be active. But reality never goes away.

Be there for them. Suicide is common for those with chronic illnesses and the divorce rate is high.

"Chronic illnesses are often invisible. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 96% of the people who have an illness do not use an assistive device, like a wheelchair or cane, and may not show any effects of the illness."⁸

They don't look sick and they don't fit the mold of what many people have in their minds of the sick. People call them lazy and a host of other charges. But their condition is real.

Be Inclusive

We need to be conscious of including the chroni-

⁵ These come from <https://womensministry.lifeway.com/2017/07/07/how-to-minister-to-women-with-chronic-health-issues/>

⁶ <https://www1.cbn.com/700club/ministering-chronically-ill>

⁷ <https://womensministry.lifeway.com/2017/07/07/how-to-minister-to-women-with-chronic-health-issues/>

⁸ https://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/6_Ways_Your_Church_Can_Minister_to_the_Chronically_Ill.html

cally ill in the plans of the congregation. Each situation will depend on whether there are chronically ill people in the congregation. If so, their specific needs will determine the things that the leadership can do. "Meet the needs first and then they will see the love and power of their God."⁹

The main focus is to be aware of what can be done. One area specifically comes to mind. "Often youth ministry models do not fit the need[s] of young people who are sick, and healing ministries do not fit the need[s] of sick people who are young."¹⁰

It may not be common for youth groups to have members with chronic illnesses. But if they exist, we have to be creative because the specific model may not fit their needs. Moreover, when we do help those with health challenges, it's usually for older people. So once again, the young are left out.

"Feeling different from others due to illness is an overwhelming factor for sick teenagers. A collective teaching or even a panel of youth regarding common chronic conditions, including anxiety and depression, are ways a youth group can create empathy and a sense of shared experience. A suffering teen's participation in a group is more easily accomplished by building a bridge based on empathy."¹¹

Remember those who support the ill. Caregivers are often overlooked. They may be overwhelmed in their responsibilities and have little to no social interaction. Can someone sit with the ill so the caregiver can have a break? How can we support the caregiver?

"Ministering to sick kids means ministering to the parents."¹² We need to do all we can for them.

We may need to update our technology. Can we live-stream our services for those who are either homebound or who don't feel like attending that day? In some situations, we may need the ability to help the hearing impaired.

Maybe we need to make our building more accessible to the handicapped.

Food can be taken to the chronically ill. However, we need to inquire about any dietary limitations.

⁹<https://vocal.media/longevity/does-your-place-of-worship-know-how-to-minister-to-those-with-chronic-illness>

¹⁰ <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/respond-to-chronic-illness>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

Do we offer lawn care or house cleaning for the chronically ill? Can we develop friendships with them? They're so often isolated that building relationships is difficult. "If already sick, isolation makes a person sicker."¹³

Find out if we can get them involved in any way.

"The truth is the chronically ill have a lot to offer. Their experiences give them insight and sensitivity that others may lack. When you meet someone with a chronic condition or illness, why not ask yourself, 'What can I learn from this person's life?' You might be surprised."¹⁴

Of course, don't remove them from our prayers. Prayer has amazing power.

Be willing to listen to them. Find out what is on their minds and in their hearts.

"You may not know much about chronic illness or what struggles the chronically ill experience. However, if you keep asking questions, listen well, and work to understand their illness and the experience of the illness, this will not be a problem for long."¹⁵

Conclusion

I have been on both sides. Before I didn't give the chronically ill much thought. Now, I'm one of them. It changes our perspective very quickly and builds empathy. We need to build our own every day. It helps us grow exponentially.

"Jesus said 'Whatever you have done unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me' and His list is as simple as the things I offered up here: a meal, a helping hand from time to time, and love."¹⁶

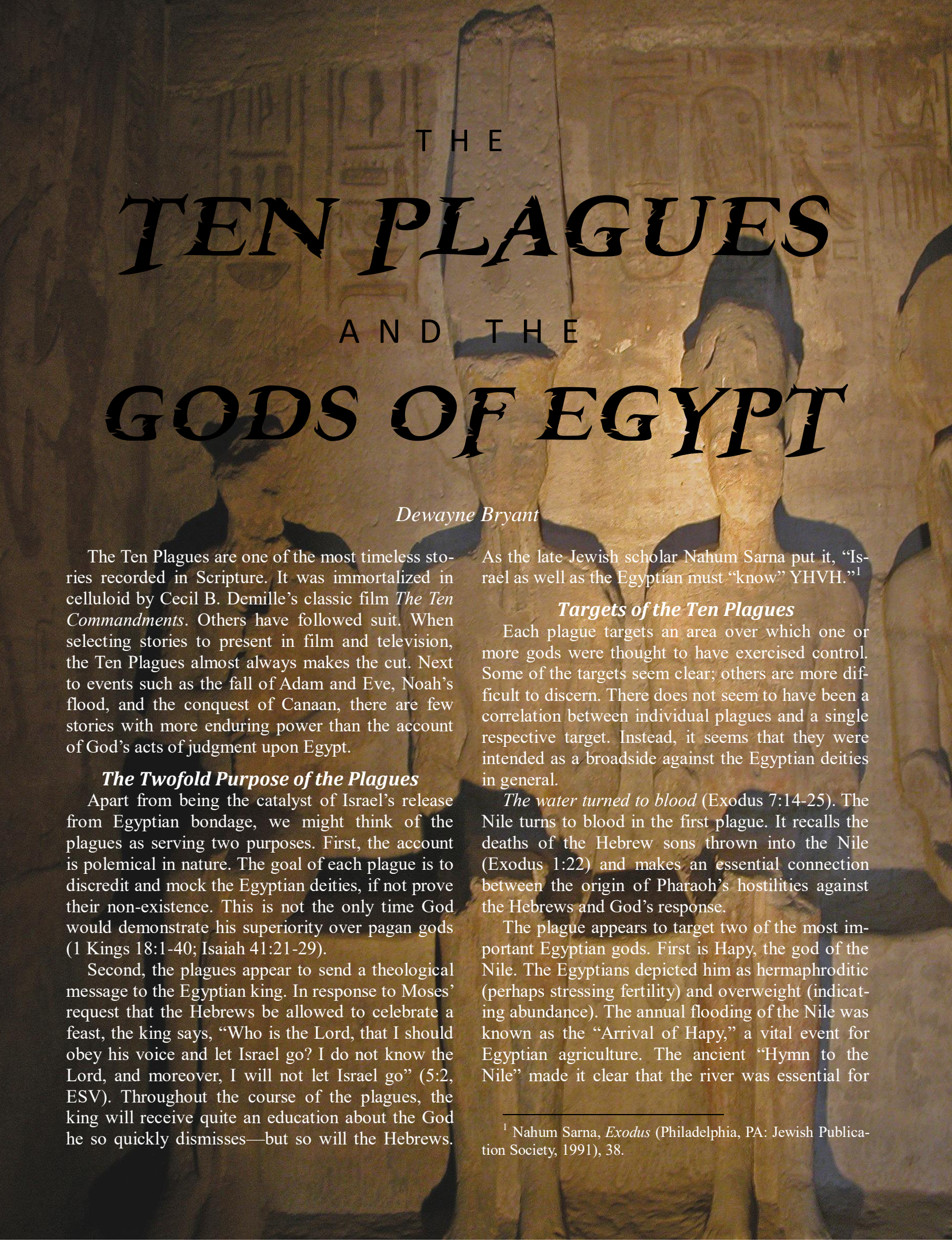
As I experienced, one second is all it took to become a chronically ill person. We don't know if we will join their ranks. Therefore, it would be good if we have already been involved with them in ministry. Let's do God's will as soon and as often as we can.

¹³<https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/respond-to-chronic-illness>

¹⁴<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/ministering-effectively-to-the-chronically-ill/>

¹⁵<https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2013/05/01/counseling-the-chronically-ill/>

¹⁶<https://morningcoffee.blogspot.com/2009/10/how-can-church-minister-to-chronically.html>



THE TEN PLAGUES AND THE GODS OF EGYPT

Dewayne Bryant

The Ten Plagues are one of the most timeless stories recorded in Scripture. It was immortalized in celluloid by Cecil B. DeMille's classic film *The Ten Commandments*. Others have followed suit. When selecting stories to present in film and television, the Ten Plagues almost always makes the cut. Next to events such as the fall of Adam and Eve, Noah's flood, and the conquest of Canaan, there are few stories with more enduring power than the account of God's acts of judgment upon Egypt.

The Twofold Purpose of the Plagues

Apart from being the catalyst of Israel's release from Egyptian bondage, we might think of the plagues as serving two purposes. First, the account is polemical in nature. The goal of each plague is to discredit and mock the Egyptian deities, if not prove their non-existence. This is not the only time God would demonstrate his superiority over pagan gods (1 Kings 18:1-40; Isaiah 41:21-29).

Second, the plagues appear to send a theological message to the Egyptian king. In response to Moses' request that the Hebrews be allowed to celebrate a feast, the king says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go" (5:2, ESV). Throughout the course of the plagues, the king will receive quite an education about the God he so quickly dismisses—but so will the Hebrews.

As the late Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna put it, "Israel as well as the Egyptian must 'know' YHWH."¹

Targets of the Ten Plagues

Each plague targets an area over which one or more gods were thought to have exercised control. Some of the targets seem clear; others are more difficult to discern. There does not seem to have been a correlation between individual plagues and a single respective target. Instead, it seems that they were intended as a broadside against the Egyptian deities in general.

The water turned to blood (Exodus 7:14-25). The Nile turns to blood in the first plague. It recalls the deaths of the Hebrew sons thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:22) and makes an essential connection between the origin of Pharaoh's hostilities against the Hebrews and God's response.

The plague appears to target two of the most important Egyptian gods. First is Hapy, the god of the Nile. The Egyptians depicted him as hermaphroditic (perhaps stressing fertility) and overweight (indicating abundance). The annual flooding of the Nile was known as the "Arrival of Hapy," a vital event for Egyptian agriculture. The ancient "Hymn to the Nile" made it clear that the river was essential for

¹ Nahum Sarna, *Exodus* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 38.

life.² The fact that the first plague turned it to blood indicated that it was Yahweh, not the Egyptian gods, who sustained humanity (a fact that would be later underscored by God's provision of water, manna, and quail for Israel in the wilderness).

The second god targeted in this plague must have been Osiris, whose mythology explains the first mummification, and his status as lord of the dead. At some point, Osiris assimilated the characteristics of a vegetation deity, which explains his depiction with either green or black skin (the first representing vegetation, the second representing the black silt deposited by the annual flooding of the Nile River). The Egyptians considered the Nile to be the bloodstream of Osiris. From an Egyptian perspective, neither deity can take control of the river after God befouls it. They would be the first divine casualties in Yahweh's war on the gods of Egypt.

Frogs (Exodus 8:1-15). During the second plague, frogs multiply out of control. The frog-headed fertility goddess Hekhet cannot stop this superabundance of frogs, nor can any of the other fertility deities. Although frogs made up an important part of the Egyptian ecosystem—mainly as food for crocodiles—their sheer numbers would have been destructive.

Gnats (Exodus 8:16-19). The target of the third plague eludes easy identification. Many scholars identify it as Geb, the god of the earth, because Aaron strikes the ground with his staff before the gnats' arrival. Fertility deities would make obvious targets, as the insects proliferate and fill the land. It is noteworthy that this is the first plague the Egyptian magicians cannot duplicate. They understand this to be a divinely-orchestrated calamity, a fact the king refuses to acknowledge.

Flies (Exodus 8:20-32). As with the previous plague, the target of the fourth cannot be identified easily. Some have attempted to identify the target as Khepren, the scarab-headed solar deity. This identification seems to be based on the fact that this god had the head of an insect that resembles a fly to the untrained eye. In reality, no one god can be easily identified. It is possible that, like the previous two plagues, fertility deities were the targets. The selection may constitute part of a more significant theo-

logical point. The first two plagues concern water or the creatures that depend upon it for life. The third mentions the earth. The fourth turns to flies—creatures of the air. It may be that God sent the message that he was in control of everything, unlike each of the pagan gods whose power affected only limited aspects of creation. It also appears to foreshadow the final plague. The text mentions that the flies “ruin” Egypt (Hebrew *shakhat*, “ruin” or “destroy”). The angel of the Lord will appear later and will be called the “destroyer” (Exodus 12:23). The plagues escalate in severity throughout the story.

Death of Livestock (Exodus 9:1-7). Cattle comprised a significant part of the Egyptian economy, unlike Palestine, where sheep and goats were important. This plague probably targeted the bovine deities, which included Hathor—who regularly appears with either a cow's head or as a human with horns—and the Apis bull, which was considered the living embodiment of the creator god Ptah. The latter was important enough to be mummified and entombed in the Serapeum of Saqqara. The goddess Isis also appears in Egyptian art with cow's horns, and other bull cults existed in the cities of Hermonthis and Heliopolis.³

Boils (Exodus 9:8-12). The sixth plague, like several of the others, is general in nature. The biblical text states it originates in the kilns of Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11), which recalls the fact that the Hebrews were forced to make bricks for the king's building projects. Much like the first plague, the sixth recalls an Egyptian offense and thematically connects the punishment with the crime. Some attempt to identify Imhotep as the target of this plague. He served as a vizier in the Third Dynasty in Egypt, but he was deified as a god of medicine and healing after the time of the exodus. It is more likely that the target was Sekhmet, the lioness-headed goddess of plague, or Amon-Re, whom Egyptian texts describe as having the power to heal and either extend or cut short the life of a person.

Hail (Exodus 9:13-35). The seventh plague is a severe storm, including lightning, thunder, and hail (Exodus 9:22-24), which the Egyptians would have considered an especially fear-inducing wonder or miracle.⁴ It appears to be directed at Nut, the sky

² “A Hymn to the Nile,” John A. Wilson, trans. James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 372-73.

³ John Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 111.

⁴ James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford Uni-

goddess. She appears in Egyptian art as a woman whose arched body stretches out over the earth. Her consort Geb, the god of the earth, is often depicted beneath her. Nut's body is often decorated with stars to represent her connection with the sky. As with other plagues, the goddess cannot stop God from using elements from her domain to punish the Egyptians. This plague may also target the fertility gods, as the hail is not only dangerous to man and animal but destroys crops and other vegetation. Tefnut, the goddess of moisture, may also be an intended target of this plague.

Locusts (Exodus 10:1-20). Continuing the attack on the agriculture of Egypt, the seventh plague employs massive swarms of locusts, whose voracious appetite was feared in the ancient Near East (cf. Joel 1:2-4). Once again, the fertility gods fail to aid the Egyptians to rescue anything remaining from the previous plague. Here, the

Egyptian officials beg the king to let the Hebrews leave. His hubris can be seen in his refusal to acquiesce to God's instructions despite his people's suffering. Here arrogance meets self-destruction. Readers might pity Pharaoh if it were not for his indescribable wickedness.

Darkness (Exodus 10:21-29). Without question, the penultimate plague targets the Egyptian solar deities. Egypt recognized several, including Kephren, Re', Amun, and Horus. Several other gods had a less direct connection to the sun. The Egyptians feared darkness and night, as evidenced by two things. First, the Egyptians had several hymns

stressing the importance of solar deities for life and well-being.⁵ Second, Egyptian priests engaged in sympathetic magic in the attempt to help the Re' as he traveled through the *amduat*, or underworld. Every night, Re' met considerable opposition as he sailed his sacred solar boat through the underworld.

The Apophis serpent constituted his most dangerous foe. Egyptian priests conducted daily magical rituals to aid Re' in this battle.

Nothing the Egyptians can do prevents the sun from being blotted out. The cause of the ninth plague is a matter of debate. A solar eclipse would not have been able to completely darken Egypt for three days while leaving sufficient light in Goshen (Exodus 10:22-23). The text offers a tiny clue in stating that the darkness could "be felt" (Exodus 10:21). Egyptian sandstorms (Arabic *kham-sin*) would be powerful enough to darken the land and also be suffi-

ciently localized to affect only the Egyptians.

Further, the windborne

grains of sand could be felt (and would sting slightly).

The death of the firstborn (Exodus 12:29-32). The final plague is especially tragic. While the others deal with natural phenomena, the last plague results from God sending the "destroyer" (not the "angel of death"). This plague targets the Pharaoh, who would be considered divine in Egyptian belief, and the pharaonic succession.⁶ In life, the king of



Osiris, Anubis, and Horus

versity Press, 1996), 150.

⁵ See compositions such as "The Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re" and "Two Hymns to the Sun-god" in *The Context of Scripture*, William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 37-40, 43-44.

⁶ Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 113.

Egypt held the title, “Living Horus.” His royal titulary—a formula that included the five names borne by Egyptian kings—identified him as the “Son of Re” (the only person in Egypt made in the image of the gods, cf. Genesis 1:26-27). His son would be the next god to sit on the throne of Egypt. Sadly, because of the utter hubris of the Egyptian king, thousands of sons of Egypt would draw their last breath that night.

Not all scholars are convinced that each plague targets specific divinities within the Egyptian pantheon.⁷ However, this is difficult to explain away, given the fact that other instances of polemic in the Hebrew Bible seem to be geared toward repudiating the specific attributes of the pagan gods under attack. Egyptologist James Hoffmeier argues that the plagues did not target individual gods so much as they attacked the Egyptian pharaoh, whose sacred responsibility was to secure the peace and harmony (*m3ʾt*) of Egypt.⁸ Other Egyptian compositions, such as the “Admonitions of Ipuwer” and the “Prophecy of Neferti,” lament similar conditions that befell Egypt in times of woe. However, they were written much too early to be connected to the Bible.⁹

The Ten Plagues and Ancient History

Many have asked why the plagues of Egypt do not appear in ancient literature. This is a favorite tactic used by critics, who claim the Bible is a mythological production and ask why the devastating plagues should be omitted from the historical record. There are two important considerations here.

First, we must understand the battle between God

and the deities of Egypt occurs in real time and space. Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen observes, “We are dealing with *realia* here: river, fish, frogs, insects, cattle, humans, and not a fantasy world of (e.g.) dragons, monsters, genies, Liliths, or other plainly mythical beings, and in a real country (Egypt), not in an imaginary place unknown to geography.”¹⁰ The entire account is designed not as mythology, but as a record of historical facts.

Second, we question why these events do not appear in any Egyptian texts? Here moderns must understand that nothing equivalent to today’s media existed in the ancient world. Unlike reporters in Western media outlets who delight in highlighting the flaws, mistakes, and failures of politicians, ancient scribes would have never written anything about such a disastrous defeat as the one suffered by Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods. The hubris of the Egyptian monarch would never have ordered his scribes to record the story, and no media outlets existed for the story to be published anyway. Occasionally, ancient writers did mention times of tragedy in Egypt’s past, but it seems they did so to highlight the success of the current king and his success in restoring the natural order of things.

Egyptian pharaohs glorified themselves, as did numerous other kings in the ancient Near East. Their writings contain many references to their power, glory, and military successes. No king would have humbly admitted that a group of foreigners under his control and their lone, obscure deity could have ever defeated him, his army, and his gods. Thankfully, the biblical record preserves the story when no one else ever would have done so.

⁷ See James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 150. Although Hoffmeier believes that the plagues were the result of God’s power against Egypt, others adopt a naturalistic approach and dismiss the entire narrative as fiction or as an attempt on the part of the Hebrew writer(s) to dress up actual events in theological language.

⁸ Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 151.

⁹ Some have tried to down-date the “Admonitions of Ipuwer” because the text refers to numerous calamities, some of which bear a resemblance to the biblical plagues (the text does mention the Nile turning to blood, which seems to be a naturally-occurring event whose language is used in the Pentateuch). However, Ipuwer cannot be claimed as an eyewitness to the plagues. Instead, we might argue that the fact that the biblical text uses some of the same descriptions as Egyptian authors indicates that the author—in this case, Moses—was raised and trained in Egypt. Even though the text cannot be seen as an eyewitness to the events of the exodus, it still serves an important apologetic purpose.

¹⁰ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 249.

(and the Israelites didn’t learn...)

*And [Aaron] received the gold from their hand and fashioned it... and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it.
(Exodus 32:4-5)*

RESTORATION MOVEMENT HISTORY:

Lard's Quarterly

Scott Harp

The printed page! The voice of reason! The jelling of a movement! Progress toward a solid return to New Testament Christianity in the early 19th century depended greatly on the interaction between periodical editor and reader. Once an issue left the printing presses, only Providence knew where upon the American landscape they would land. Only the open-hearted reader, utilizing his God-given talents for reason, could see that restoration was possible. Published letters to the editor allowed other readers to see the proximity of like-minded disciples of Christ, and in a short time, unity on the basis of the Scriptures was the result.

By 1844 there were no less than seventeen periodicals, “devoted to the interest of primitive Christianity.”¹ Twelve were distributed monthly, three were semi-monthly, and two were published weekly. Due to the wide range of information distributed in each issue, the potential for in-depth and more comprehensive exposure to topics was nearly impossible to provide.

In the inaugural edition of his third series of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Alexander Campbell envisaged a paper that went beyond the boundaries of the common periodical of his day. He stated,

“Had I the means of accomplishing my desires, I would have a Quarterly Christian Review, of solid and substantial reading, composed of sacred literature, various biblical criticism, reviews of new publications on Theology, notices of persons and things ecclesiastical; from which would be excluded every thing merely ephemeral and light.”²

¹ Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, “Periodicals,” Third Series, vol. 1, no. 9, September 1844, p.427,428.

² Ibid. “Introduction,” Third Series, vol. 1, no. 1, January

Moses Easterly Lard (1818-1880) was born in Bedford County, Tennessee the 20th of October 1818. Raised for the most part in Missouri, he attended Bethany College, in what was then Virginia, in March 1845. Reaching the top of his class in academics, he gave the Valedictory address at the graduation of 1849. Returning to his Missouri home, he proceeded to fill his life with ministry opportunities initially around Independence, and soon thereafter at Liberty.

While at Liberty, his friend and former teacher, Alexander Campbell, commissioned him to write a rebuttal to a recently published book which attacked the Restoration Plea. The title of Lard’s effort, printed in 1857, gives context. It was called *A Review Of Rev. J.B. Jeter’s Book Entitled, “Campbellism Examined.”*³ His stern treatment of Jeter’s allegations, along with his iron-clad arguments in support of the truth, served to more than please not only his mentor, but also a much appreciative brotherhood. Within a short time, invitations began arriving for him to write for other periodicals, like Benjamin Franklin’s *American Christian Review*.⁴ In a short time, he was invited to take the leadership of Missouri Christian Academy For Girls in Camden Point, Missouri. Moving there, he began teaching in the college, as well as helping two alienated churches unite.⁵ Within the next two years, he left the classroom and

1844, Bethany, p.3,4.

³ Moses E. Lard, *A Review Of Rev. J.B. Jeter’s Book Entitled, “Campbellism Examined.”* Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co. c. 1857.

⁴ Olan L. Hicks, “The Restoration Principle” *Being the Abilene Christian College Annual Bible Lectures*, 1962, Abilene: Abilene Christian College Students Exchange, c.1962, p.357.

⁵ Kenneth L. Van Deusen, *Moses Lard: That Prince Of Preachers*, Joplin: College Press, c.1987, p.90ff.

moved to St. Joseph to take the pulpit of the church there.

It was at this point that the forty-year-old preacher determined that it was time to make good on the sentiments Campbell had heralded fifteen years before concerning the brotherhood's need for a quarterly. On the 16th of March, 1859, he wrote to the *Millennial Harbinger* of his intentions to begin a Christian Quarterly, "devoted to the promulgation and defense of Christianity as announced in the Old Testament, and distinctly and fully taught in the New."⁶ The intended release date was January 1860 if he received two thousand pre-paid subscriptions of \$2.00 per year. A follow-up notice came in June that people should send in their names with no money initially, "to signify the fact without cost or risk to them... in case of a failure."⁷ Again, in January of the following year, Lard wrote that, "the required number of Subscribers for the Quarterly has not been obtained; the work will not be published."⁸

With the onslaught of the Civil War that began in the Spring of 1861, like so many fought-over regions, Missouri was among the hardest hit. At one point, the "U. S. military government banned church services and made free passage impossible..."⁹ This led to the departure of the Lard family from their beloved Missouri home for Georgetown, Kentucky.

Finally, in September 1863, the first issue of *Lard's Quarterly* was published for distribution. Other than a slight name change from the intended, "Christian Quarterly," the issue was single columned and 112 pages in length. In the Preface, Lard expressed that his chief desire was, "laying before the age in which we live, the claims of *Primitive Christianity*."¹⁰ Further, he explained that the work provided for a "larger medium of thought than we yet have."¹¹ And nothing was more true to the plan than his first contribution entitled, "The Reformation For Which We Are Pleading—What Is It?"¹²

⁶ Moses E. Lard, *Millennial Harbinger*, "Prospectus Of The Christian Quarterly," Series 5, vol. 2, no. 5, May 1859, Bethany, p.289.

⁷ Ibid. "The Christian Quarterly," vol. 2, no. 8, August 1859, Bethany, p.474.

⁸ Ibid. "The Quarterly Not To Be Published," p.102. vol. 3, no. 2, February 1860, p.102.

⁹ Kenneth L. Van Deusen, *Moses Lard: That Prince Of Preachers*, Joplin: College Press, c.1987, p.98.

¹⁰ Moses E. Lard, *Lard's Quarterly*, "Preface," p.1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. p.5

The essay proved to be a powerful explanation of the efforts of the previous forty years to restore New Testament Christianity. Clear definition of the "theory" of restoration was shown to depict the application of the Word of God in every detail in the present reformatory effort.¹³

The perfect follow-up to his more technical explanation of the church of Christ in the present age, was the wonderful and heart-warming story of "Dick And Point South." Dick was a Christian brother, and a slave back in Missouri, who walked fifteen miles just to attend a meeting where Lard was to preach. He was not alone. He brought his good friend—his Master—to hear the preaching of the gospel. A powerfully impactful piece!

Over the next five years, Lard's Quarterly continued to be published in loose fashion. Several brethren contributed articles, among whom were J.W. McGarvey, H.T. Anderson, L.B. Wilkes, James Challen, Thomas Munnell, I.B. Grubbs, Robert Graham, and G.W. Longon, to name a few. The series concluded with Volume 5, Issue 2, in April 1868, with a closing explanation that due to the inability of the work to support itself and its editor, it was to cease publication.

In 1949, John Allen Hudson published through his Old Paths Book Club the five volumes of *Lard's Quarterly* with issues from two additional periodicals, *The Christian Herald* (Volume 2, Number 5, June 1865)¹⁴, and *The Christian Quarterly* (April 1876).¹⁵ The series continues to be available in digital format and provides the present age with a most comprehensive presentation of the thinking of leadership in churches of Christ during and soon after the Civil War.

¹³ Note: This essay should be read and studied by every Christian to envisage the purpose and meaning of the Restoration Plea.

¹⁴ Note: *The Christian Herald* was a small monthly paper started by John W. Karr (1836-1910) and Dudley Downs (1839-1969) in Wapella, Illinois in 1865. The next year it was moved to Eureka, where its publication was continued until 1869.

¹⁵ Note: *The Christian Quarterly* was a different paper than the one published by Moses Lard. It was produced in Cincinnati, Ohio, under the editorship of W.T. Moore (1832-1926) from 1869-1876. Still later, J.H. Garrison (1842-1931) and B.W. Johnson (1833-1894) began producing *The New Christian Quarterly* in 1892 from St. Louis, Missouri. In 1899, *The Christian Quarterly*, New Series, was once again edited by W.T. Moore.

RESTORATION MOVEMENT HISTORY:

James O'Kelly

(1735-1826)

Kyle D. Frank

James O'Kelly is considered by many as the very first to plead for the ideals that of the Restoration Movement. The date and circumstances of his birth are disputed, with different dates and even different continents given for his birth. It seems that James O'Kelly was likely born in Ireland and that he came to this country at an early age and settled near to Moring's Post Office in Surry County, Virginia. He resided there for some time before moving to North Carolina.

Regarding his education, nothing is given and we are left to wonder how and why he came to be an educated man. There is some evidence, taken from his work *Apology*, that he had a fair knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages and that he was very well versed in general history. Tradition also tells us that in his early life he was a champion fighter and fiddler. Also, there is no date known of his marriage to Elizabeth Meeks. Tradition is mute except that they knew each other in early days. Again, it is thought that they were married early in life—Mr. O'Kelly under twenty-five and she under twenty. This would put their marriage around the year 1760.

At some point afterward, Methodist preachers came into the neighborhood and Mrs. O'Kelly was at once converted and joined the society. His son William was twelve years old and was also converted. He felt that he ought to preach but was dissuaded by his father. James was converted in 1774 and began to work on behalf of Methodist principles. He

labored with them for several years and was raised to the level of Circuit Rider, or lay preacher, meaning he travelled around a circuit of different Methodist Churches each month and ministered to their various spiritual needs. He was highly regarded in this task. O'Kelly was of the sort of whom scripture saith: *whatever you seek to do, do it with all of thy might*. He was a mighty man, and was recognized as such by the Methodist leadership in that area. He immersed himself in the Scriptures so he was able to make proper judgment in spiritual matters whenever and wherever they might arise.

After the close of the Revolutionary War, the Methodists of America had separated from their brethren in the Church of England. John Wesley wrote from Bristol, England, September 10, 1784, to Dr. Coke, Francis Asbury, and others, advising them how to proceed in the future. Asbury and Coke desired to Episcopize the church in America, and made an announcement to that effect in the conference; and for the purpose of deciding the matter, a General Conference was called to meet in Baltimore in 1792. Preparatory to this meeting, James O'Kelly, too, had been studying concerning this subject, and came to the conclusion that the Bible was sufficient as a standard of faith. During the discussion, he arose with the Bible in his hand, and cried out, "Brethren, hearken unto me. Put away all other books and

forms, and let this [holding up the New Testament] be the only criterion, and that will satisfy me.” This, with other propositions of the same nature, were bitterly opposed by many, and the majority voted against him. Francis Asbury was made Bishop, the first in the Methodist Church, and James O’Kelly, with about one thousand others, left the body and organized what was originally called “Republican Methodists.” His purpose was to organize a body on a scriptural and not a man-made basis. In this he labored long and hard.

He was a pure, good, and holy man, to the day of his death, and even to the present time, the name of this good man is held with peculiar veneration by thousands of his fellow church members. Meeting houses and other things of sacred association are named after him. He was a writer of considerable ability. The following are some of the works he published: “*Annotation on his book of Discipline*,” 1809, “*Apology for Rejecting Episcopacy*” 1802, “*Vindication of the Author’s Apology*,” with reflections on the reply and remarks of Bishop Asbury,” “*The Divine Oracles Consulted, or an Appeal to the Law and Testimony*,” 1820, “*Church Government*,” in which he opposed American Slavery.¹

He was also a friend of Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry and spoke in congress at Jefferson’s request. He went to the Capitol to see his friends, who were to speak the next day.

Mr. Jefferson told O’Kelly that after the speaking, he must preach. He tried to excuse himself, but his two friends would have no excuse, so he consented. The next day, the speaking being over, Mr. Jefferson moved an adjournment to give Mr. O’Kelly an opportunity to preach. Congress was adjourned, and he preached one of his best sermons to the Congress of the United States, in the Capitol. After the sermon, Mr. Jefferson arose with tears in his eyes and said he was no preacher, but he believed that James O’Kelly was one of the greatest divines living.²

¹ E.W. Humphreys, *Memoirs of Deceased Christian Ministers* (Dayton, OH: Christian Publishing Association, 1880), pp. 258-259.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

After Mr. O’Kelly left the Methodist Church, he became a leader and established the Christian Church, then moved to Chatham County, North Carolina.³

It is said that Mr. O’Kelly “preached to five different congregations in one day, and there was no sameness in one of the sermons—all different.” The biographer continued, mentioning some problematic issues regarding this man: “Mr. O’Kelly was a strong advocate of infant baptism, was virtually opposed to immersion, and would not baptize by immersion. He was a man of deep piety. He breathed his last near O’Kelly’s Chapel, in Chatham County, N. C., in the midst of his children, grand-children, and friends, and was buried at the church which bears his name.”⁴

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³ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*

WHAT DEPRESSION TAUGHT ME

John Krivak

*“The righteous cry, and the LORD hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.
The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
Psalm 34:17-18 (NASB)*

When I went through a five-year depression, I took a different path. I chose not to manipulate my brain chemistry to allow an instant cure. Some might criticize or judge me for taking five years to end something that might have ended in 30 days with prescribed medication. I also passed on self-medicating with booze or illegal drugs.

Although my experience was miserable in many ways, I believe that my feelings were authentic and appropriate to what precipitated my depressed state. Depression was understandable after what I had been through! I felt it important to process the whole thing through—whatever the difficulty and however long it might take. I sensed that there was something I had to learn here, though I sometimes was tempted to skip the curriculum and course work.

I had help and should make clear that I had strong support that gave me hope that I would finally make it out the other side. Without this support holding me up with extra stability, I doubt I would have even started on this path. Still, there were long

stretches where this vague optimism seemed hopelessly impossible. There was a risk that I had chosen folly. My support was God. I will individually list ways that I found support, but all of them God supplied.

Before hard times hit, I already had a Biblical worldview in place. God’s people ultimately would be saved and blessed even after horrendous treatment in earthly life. Whatever I faced would be swept up into a glorious eternity that would give final place to satisfaction and victory. Depression felt eternal, but deep down I knew better. And behind my depression was a deep sense of disappointment and injustice. I didn’t deserve this! I was a modern-day Job, who was made to suffer even though he was righteous. It was inescapable that God stood idly by while I took major hits. I grew angry with Him and felt abandoned just when I needed Him most. How many urgent and desperate prayers had gone unanswered? Still, my overarching philosophy was that good would win over evil—that was Bible.

Major support came from my wife (and she is God’s gift). Her love and faithfulness brought fresh strength to our marriage when I was often self-absorbed, despondent, and wrapped up in my own issues. She was a saint; I was a basket case! OK, I am forced to admit: I did not have it as bad as Job—

"Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!'" (Job 2:9, NASB).

The Christians at church helped too. And that's ironic, because my depression began with problems in church! My gratitude is without limit to those good and sympathetic friends—and it seems that I again must admit that these Christian friends were not at all judgmental and condemning like Job's friends! They too were a gift from God when I needed it most.

Finally, I was buoyed-up and carried-through by the Scriptures of the Bible. God was speaking to me, and I heard Him most clearly in the ancient Psalms. I will share my experience in hopes that others will be helped.

What do you do and where do you turn when you are depressed? How do you recover from the losses and disappointments that toppled you from the exhilarating mountaintop of a life that had been going so well? And most of all, what do you do with God as you sort it all out? You realize that God watched your slide down and did nothing to stop it—what kind of "relationship" was this when it allows that?

I turned to Bible Scripture—mainly to the Psalms. And to Job, who, second only to the crucified Jesus, was hit with the most unfair downturns while God merely watched. Unlike Jesus who accepted His undeserved suffering with no more protest than a lamb led to slaughter, Job did not hold back his complaints and shook his fist at Heaven. Then God fired back, humbling Job and roughly putting him back in his place. I too needed humbling, and got it. I also gravitated to 2 Corinthians where Paul—usually the superhero apostle—admits his fears, weakness, fragility. He learned under painful experience to trust God instead of himself. Paul also had multiple prayers go unanswered in a way he would have found helpful and meaningful (2 Cor. 12:8). As I read, I took mental notes.

But the Psalms brought healing. These ancient writings are unique among the Scriptures. The Psalms were the worship songbook for the Old Covenant people of God. Usually the writers direct

their inmost expressions to God (though sometimes they address other worshipers). As such, a Psalm is as much prayer as song. The sacred words originate on earth and are raised to heaven (whereas usually Scripture is revelation from heaven to earth). And by selecting 150 of these (plus a few others located outside the main collection) and sanctioning them for a place in holy Scripture, God set forth the Psalms as examples of appropriate expressions that people might direct to God. In the Psalms, God is saying to us: "When you pray, lifting up words from the earth, these are the sorts of things that I would like to hear from you!"

Which is remarkably amazing, because Psalms contain expressions that sound truly inappropriate, unspiritual, and nearly blasphemous! Is it right to complain against God and to blame Him for misfor-

tunes? Maybe not, but the Psalms do! The song-prayers are generous to God with praise and thanksgiving. We expect that, but how do you explain Psalm 88—which has not a

single good thing to say about God? It's as though God is saying to you and me, *"I realize that you have been hurt and are disappointed. I know that you blame me! Don't bury those feelings and don't turn away from me. You don't have to worry about offending me—I love you and won't lash out. I need you to honestly express what is in your heart. Lift that up to me where, together, we can safely and appropriately process all of that. Let's work together to address anything that threatens our relationship."*

I learned to lift what I call "dirty prayers" to God. Usually, our prayers are filtered and scrubbed up until they are pristine as stained glass—only then do we dare raise them up to where God can see them. Sometimes we polish them up with the piously archaic pronouns that KJV translators would approve. Without apology, while under depression my heart was tainted and so were my prayers—I lifted them anyway. They were not preened, but they were authentic and true to whatever filled my heart. Criticize if you feel compelled, but God heard these "dirty prayers"—and answered them!



Likewise, there are “imprecatory” Psalms that take aim at other people rather than at God—praying to God for their downfall, destruction, and damnation. Should such expressions have a place among sacred devotions from spiritual people? Maybe not, but listen to Psalm 137—“*O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, how blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock*” (Psalm 137:8-9, NASB). Only two considerations sanctify this ungodly expression. First, instead of acting upon the vicious impulse, the psalmist lifted it up to God where it could be safely and responsibly processed out. Second, it is understandable that irrational impulses shoot through the hearts of people who had recently been defeated in war, losing friends and fortune and freedom—and, on top of that, had to endure taunting from their victoriously gloating enemies. The psalmist has eyes full of tears as bitterness floods his heart. None of us are immune, but we can find healing and restoration after lifting bad thoughts to God.

Depressed, I read Psalms and learned that rela-

tionship with God goes through both the highs and the lows of life. And, I came to know God to stay with me through the hard spells (when, for reasons not always clear, He failed to prevent my pain). I learned that it’s OK to hurt—it feels fatal, but usually is not. I saw flaws in my inner self that embarrass me, but I lifted them to God and found healing. God and I are better together for having gone through this, even though I did it the hard way.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:7-12, NASB).

SUNDAY IS COMING

Tom Baxley

Peter, like many Jews of his day, was eagerly awaiting the day when Messiah would come and restore Israel to what they believed was their rightful place; they were looking for the Conquering King to defeat their enemies and restore David’s glorious kingdom. When Jesus allowed Himself to be taken, Peter’s hopes were shattered; three years of earnest expectation was gone in a flash. All hope was lost. What Peter couldn’t see was that Sunday was coming: the day when hope would be restored, when the Conquering King would conquer the real enemy. In this life we can expect to have troubles; James says “*when* trials come,” not “*if* trials come” (James 1:3). No matter how bad things seem to get, always remember that they will eventually come to an end. It may take longer than we’d like and be harder than what we expect, but they will end. Hope is not lost. Sunday is coming.

BIBLICAL BIOGRAPHY:

Judas Iscariot

Bradley S. Cobb

The twelve men chosen by Jesus to be His apostles all had the potential to do great work for the Lord, to make an incredible impact for good, for God, and to go down in history among the most influential men the world has ever seen. Most of them worked hard for the Lord to fulfill this potential; one, however, lost his way and instead of being remembered for good, his name has gone down in history as the greatest traitor to ever live.

Judas Iscariot

The origin of the name “Iscariot” is uncertain, though most agree that it is a reference to the hometown of Judas and his family. Most likely it means “man of Kerioth,”¹ a small town in the south of Judea.² This town was mentioned in Joshua 15:25 as part of Judah’s inheritance. Amos and Jeremiah³ both mention another city called “Kerioth,” which archaeologists believe was another name for their capital city.⁴

Some, however, give the name “Iscariot” a different meaning. Some say it means “a man of murder” or “a hireling.”⁵ The most interesting (though not likely) suggestion is that it means “man of the Sicarii.”⁶ The Sicarii was a band of assassins, seem-

ingly a sub-group of the Jewish Zealots, whose goal was to remove Roman officials from power by murdering them. The originator of this group was a man named Judas of Galilee, who Gamaliel mentions in Acts 5:37.⁷

The name “Iscariot,” however, is not given just to Judas, but also to his father, Simon. John 6:71 and John 13:26, literally from the Greek, says “Judas, of Simon Iscariot.”⁸ So whatever it means for Judas, it also means for his father. It is because of this that their hometown is probably what is under consideration.

Judas the Disciple

Judas was a religious man. He had to be in order to follow Jesus. It’s most likely that he was either one of the multitude that went out to hear John the Baptizer preach, or one of the ones baptized by Jesus’ disciples in Judea.⁹ We aren’t told by the biblical writers when it was that Judas decided to start

and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, “Sicarii” (in Vol. 9, page 726).

⁷ Judas of Galilee’s “revolt had a theocratic character, the watchword of which was ‘We have no lord nor master but God,’ and he boldly denounced the payment of tribute to Caesar, and all acknowledgement of foreign authority, as treason against the principles of the Mosaic constitution, and signifying nothing short of downright slavery. His fiery eloquence and the popularity of his doctrines drew vast numbers to his standard, by many of whom he was regarded as the Messiah.” (McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 9, page 726).

⁸ The ASV translates John 6:71 and 13:26 as “Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot,” though similar language used in 13:2 they translate as “Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son.” Manuscript evidence is divided in these passages, though the general consensus is that Judas’ father is called “Simon Iscariot” at least once.

⁹ It is generally agreed by scholars that Judas was from Judea, thus a call from Galilee isn’t likely. See Mark 1:5 and John 3:22, 4:1-2.

¹ *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, “Iscariot.” See also Thayer’s definition.

² James Hasting’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, “Judas Iscariot.” See also Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Judas Iscariot” for manuscript evidence that supports this belief.

³ Amos 2:2; Jeremiah 48:24.

⁴ See James Hasting’s *Dictionary of Christ in the Gospels*, “Judas Iscariot,” for more information.

⁵ *Hitchcock’s New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*, “Iscariot.”

⁶ This word is used in Acts 21:38, and is defined by Thayer as “an assassin. One who carries a short sword under his clothing, that he may kill secretly and treacherously any one he wishes to.” Strong says “a dagger man or assassin; a freebooter (Jewish fanatic outlawed by the Romans). See McClintock

following Jesus, but they do tell us in no uncertain terms that Judas was a *disciple* of Jesus.

*When it was day, [Jesus] called His disciples; and from them, He chose twelve, whom he also named “apostles.”*¹⁰

One of those disciples who Jesus made an apostle was Judas Iscariot.¹¹ Some have suggested that Judas was never really a disciple of Jesus, but just pretended to be; but God’s inspired writers say otherwise. Luke literally says “Judas Iscariot, who also **became** the traitor,”¹² showing that he wasn’t a traitor when he was chosen. At the beginning, Judas was a faithful follower of Jesus.¹³

Judas the Faithful Apostle

Judas, some time after being selected to be an apostle, was called (with the rest of the twelve) by Jesus. They were all probably surprised at what Jesus did: He gave them miraculous power like He had. They had power over evil spirits (demons) and power to heal every kind of sickness and disease. Then Judas listened as Jesus gave him instructions.

Don’t go into the road of the Gentiles; and don’t enter into a city of the Samaritans. But instead, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. You have received this freely, give it freely. Don’t you get gold, or silver, or brass in your belt-bag; nor a bag for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staffs; because the workman is worthy of his food.

And into whatever city or town you enter, ask who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. And as you come into a house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it isn’t worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever won’t receive you,

nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

*Behold, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, you be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*¹⁴

Judas was given miraculous power, and told to go use it. He was told to proclaim that the hope of Israel—God’s new kingdom—was close to being realized. He was told not to tell the Samaritans or the Gentiles—at that point, this was something for the Jews only. He was told that whoever rejected him and his message would be eternally condemned before God.

If Judas was a nationalistically-minded Jew,¹⁵ then these words of Jesus would have excited him greatly, because he was being given a place of power in bringing in the new kingdom—which to most Jews meant the overthrow of the Roman oppressors and the establishment of a new physical Israelite kingdom that would never be overthrown again. Judas must have been incredibly excited by this prospect.

Simon the Zealot, a Jewish patriot who despised the Romans, was Judas’ preaching partner in the “limited commission.”¹⁶ You can imagine the discussions these two men had. They went into different Jewish cities, and Judas proclaimed the gospel. Judas had sick people and diseased people brought to him, and he healed them. Judas saw some people who were possessed by demons, and he rescued them from their torment, casting the demons out.¹⁷

When their mission was finished, Judas and Simon (along with the other apostles) returned to Galilee where Jesus was, and told Him all the things that they had done.¹⁸ Then they accompanied Him

¹⁰ Luke 6:13.

¹¹ Luke 6:16.

¹² Luke 6:16. It is a form of the word “ginomai,” which means “to become.” Therefore, Judas was not a traitor from the beginning, but later **became** a traitor. You cannot *become* what you already *are*.

¹³ The gospel writers do not try to build suspense and make mysteries out of who was going to betray Jesus. They point out at the first mention of Judas’ name that he is the one who would eventually betray Jesus. See Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; and John 6:71.

¹⁴ Matthew 10:5-16.

¹⁵ This author believes that this is part of Judas’ character. Reasons for that will be given later in this chapter.

¹⁶ Compare Mark’s statement that the apostles were sent out “two by two” (Mark 6:7) with Matthew’s list of the apostles during this time, dividing them up into groups of two (Matthew 10:1-4).

¹⁷ This is proven by the powers that Jesus gave them (Matthew 10:1) and the command He gave them (10:8); along with the express statement “they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13).

¹⁸ Luke 9:10. It is perhaps significant that the apostles re-

to an uninhabited place around Bethsaida. But the crowd heard about it, and Judas was no longer in a small group with Jesus, but was now surrounded by thousands of people, all wanting to get in close to the Lord. Judas heard Jesus welcome them, preach the kingdom to them, and saw Him heal the ones who needed it.¹⁹ But as the day stretched onward, Judas came to Jesus and tried to convince Him to send the crowds away to find lodging and food.²⁰ Instead, Jesus told Judas and the other eleven to divide the crowd up in groups of fifty and tell them to sit down. Then He miraculously made five loaves and two fishes turn into enough food to feed five thousand man.²¹

Sometime after this event, Jesus was alone with the twelve, and He asked the twelve “Who do people say that I am?” They all answered with different answers: Elijah, John the Baptist, one of the old prophets risen from the dead.²² But when they were asked “Who do *you* say that I am?” only Peter spoke up, and said “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”²³ Nathanael (Bartholomew) had already made this declaration to Jesus before being chosen as an apostle,²⁴ but here it was said in front of the whole group of apostles. Some of them certainly had wondered whether Jesus was the Christ, but when Jesus told them to keep it quiet, the suspicions were confirmed.²⁵

If Judas is like most Jews, this news would have been absolutely exhilarating. The Messiah, the one that the Jews had been waiting on for hundreds of years, was standing right in front of him. And the kingdom, which all the Jews longed for, was almost there! But a bit of confusion and doubt must have entered Judas’ mind when the next thing Jesus said

was:

*The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be murdered, and be raised the third day. If any man desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever desires to lose his life for my sake, the same will save it. For what is a man benefitted, if he gains the entire world, and loses himself or is cast away? For whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of man will be ashamed of him, when He shall come in His own glory, and His Father’s and of holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here, who will not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God.*²⁶

When Jesus said to the disciples²⁷ that *some* standing there wouldn’t taste death, the implication is that at least *one* of them *would* die before the kingdom came. Judas almost certainly didn’t think it could be him.

Getting closer to the time of Jesus’ resurrection, Judas was with Jesus when Peter told the Lord, “Behold, we’ve forsaken everything and followed you. Therefore, what will we receive?” The Lord’s response was incredible to the ears of the twelve:

*Truly, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man will sit in the throne of His glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake will receive a hundred-fold, and will inherit eternal life.*²⁸

Judas heard a promise of power and authority. He was a man who struggled with covetousness and selfishness (as seen in the fact that he stole from the money bag), and so the promise of this place of prominence must have really appealed to him. So, it’s no surprise when he got very upset with James and John when their mother requested the two best

ported all the things *they* had done, as though it was about *them*. Certainly they were excited, and wanted to share their new miraculous experiences with Jesus, but their focus, it seems, was more on their actions than on the response of the people to the message.

¹⁹ Luke 9:11. If, as was conjectured in the previous footnote, Judas thought things would be more about *him*, this would have been a blow to his ego, as everyone wanted to see Jesus, not the twelve apostles.

²⁰ Luke 9:12. Judas wasn’t the only one, but he was one of the “twelve” who said it.

²¹ Luke 9:13-17.

²² Luke 9:18-19. Compare also Matthew 16:13-14.

²³ Matthew 16:15-16.

²⁴ See chapter on Bartholomew for specific details surrounding this event.

²⁵ See Luke 9:20-21.

²⁶ Luke 9:22-27.

²⁷ While Luke says that Jesus said this to “all” (Luke 9:23), it means all the disciples (see Matthew 16:24-28).

²⁸ Matthew 19:27-29.

places in Jesus' kingdom for them.²⁹

But then came the final trip of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem...

Judas the Betrayer

Jesus had told the apostles on more than one occasion that He was going to be murdered, but "they understood none of these things; and the saying was hid from them, nor did they understand the things which were spoken [by Jesus]."³⁰ After arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus boldly condemned the scribes and Pharisees, pronounced judgment on the Jewish nation, and foretold the destruction of the temple.³¹ As a result, the Jewish leaders gathered together and plotted how to secretly capture Jesus and kill Him. Meanwhile, Jesus told His disciples that He would be betrayed in two days' time.³²

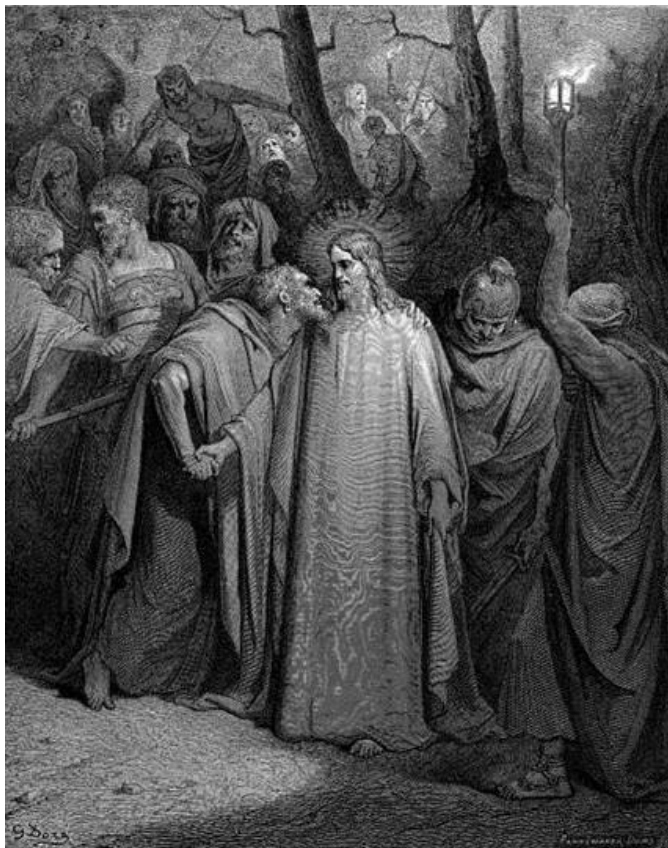
As a Jew, Judas had certain expectations of the Messiah—one of them being that He was going to reign as a King over Israel and overthrow the oppressive Roman oversight. But while Jesus claimed to be the Christ, and was indeed a worker of miracles, He seemed to be rather willing to die—something that would make it hard (at least in the eyes of Judas) for Him to reign as a king. Matthew's account seems to give the final straw in 26:6-16:

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him there, having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head while He sat eating. But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, "Why is this being wasted? For this ointment

might have been sold for a lot, and given to the poor."

When Jesus heard, He said to them, "Why are you troubling the woman? For she has done a good work on me. For you always have the poor with you; but you don't always have Me. For in that she's poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel will be preached in the whole world, will also be this, which this woman has done, told as a memorial of her."

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, "What will you give me, and I'll deliver Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray Him.



John records a very similar event (possibly the same one)³³ which singles out Judas as the main complainer about the "waste" of ointment that could have been used to aid the poor. But he wasn't concerned about the poor at all; he was interested in lining his own pockets. It is possible that as talk about Jesus' impending death increased, Judas started setting aside money for himself out of the bag, possibly with the rationalization, "Well, Jesus sure isn't going to need it if He's dead." Regardless, he was already falling into Satan's temptations be-

²⁹ Matthew 20:20-24, but especially verse 24.

³⁰ Luke 18:33-34.

³¹ See Matthew 23-24.

³² Matthew 26:1-5.

³³ There is debate as to whether this is the same event or a different one. Matthew and Mark seem to date this at two days before the Passover (see Matthew 26:2, 6-13; Mark 14:1-9), while the event recorded by John takes place "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1-8). The similarities are incredible, and it is almost unthinkable that any of the disciples would make the same exact (word for word) condemnation of a woman in front of Jesus just four days apart, even down to the "this could have been sold for 300 pence and given to the poor" (compare Mark 14:5 with John 12:5).

fore he made the conscious decision to go to the Jewish leaders with an offer of betrayal.

*Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and took what was put in it.*³⁴

In the Old Testament, thirty pieces of silver was the amount a man had to pay if his ox accidentally killed another man's slave.³⁵ This amount was prophesied by God through His prophet in Zechariah 11:10-13.

I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited on me knew it was the word of Jehovah. And I said to them, "If you think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear." So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And Jehovah said to me, "Cast it to the potter: a goodly price that I was valued by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of Jehovah.

While Judas was fulfilling prophecy, he still had a choice in the matter. No one was *forcing* him to betray Jesus. So, while some wish to make excuses for him, as though he was fulfilling an important service for Jesus Christ,³⁶ we must remember that the Bible calls what he did "transgression," that is, **sin**.³⁷

But even after Judas made this decision, he kept up the ruse of being a faithful disciple (though Jesus wasn't fooled).³⁸ He was with Jesus and the rest of the twelve in the upper room for the Passover³⁹ when Jesus stood up and prepared a basin of water to wash their feet. Judas sat like nothing was wrong as Jesus came to him and washed his feet. Then Jesus stood up, put his outer garment back on, and sat down at the table and began to foretell that He

wasn't just going to die, but He was going to be betrayed by someone in that room.

Truly, truly I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither is the apostle greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are happy if you do them. I do not speak of you all. I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." Now, I tell you [this] before it comes, so that when it comes to pass, you might believe that I AM. ...

*When Jesus had said this, He was very troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Truly, truly I say to you, that one of you will betray me."*⁴⁰

The act that Judas was putting on had convinced the other apostles, for they all said, "Is it me?"⁴¹ They didn't say, "Is it Judas?" Even after Jesus gave a specific answer to them, "It is he to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it," and then handed it to Judas, the disciples didn't realize that Jesus was identifying him. Even when Jesus said to Judas, "That which you are doing, do quickly," and Judas got up and left, the apostles assumed that Jesus had sent him on a special mission to buy something for their feast or to give money to the poor.⁴²

So Judas went out into the night, descended the stairs, and ran to meet up with the chief priests and Pharisees.

It has been argued by some that Judas wasn't intending to betray his Lord, but that he was trying to force Jesus to act and reveal Himself as the Messiah.⁴³ While this sounds plausible on the surface, it is very hard to accept, since Judas accepted money for his part, and since Judas was already a thief. It is also difficult to accept when one considers that the biblical writers said that "Satan entered into him."⁴⁴ Did Satan really want Jesus to display His power and prove to the Jewish leaders that He was the mighty Messiah? The entire Passion scene is a last-ditch, all-out attack on Jesus in an effort to get Him

³⁴ John 12:4-6.

³⁵ Exodus 21:32. This was true whether it was a male or a female slave.

³⁶ See *The Gospel of Judas*.

³⁷ Acts 1:25.

³⁸ Jesus had already foretold the betrayal in John 6:70-71.

³⁹ Matthew 26:20-25.

⁴⁰ John 13:16-19, 21.

⁴¹ Mark 14:19.

⁴² John 13:26-30.

⁴³ Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible*, page 104 mentions this argument and attributes it to Thomas de Quincey, but gives no specific reference.

⁴⁴ John 12:27.

to sin, just once.⁴⁵ So it wouldn't make sense for Judas' motivation to be a noble one, trying to get Jesus to reveal Himself as the Messiah. The fact that Jesus refers to Judas as "the son of perdition"⁴⁶ between the time he left the supper and the time he returned with soldiers shows that Judas had given himself completely over to willful sin.⁴⁷

Still dark, Judas returned with a band (approximately 600 men)⁴⁸ of soldiers and officers from the chief priests, carrying lanterns and torches and weapons.⁴⁹ The soldiers, not knowing who Jesus was, had to rely on Judas to identify Him. He walked up to Jesus, and we see no trace of fear, no trace of concern, no struggle within Judas over what he was doing. As he drew near, the Lord said, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?"⁵⁰ But Judas just said said, "Hail [or Greetings!], Rabbi," and kissed Him.⁵¹

Jesus' reply was unexpected. He said, "Friend, why have you come?"⁵² But Judas stepped back with the soldiers, showing his true loyalty did not lie with the Lord.⁵³ Jesus addressed the soldiers, with whom Judas was standing, and said, "Who are you seeking?" When the soldiers said "Jesus of Nazareth," the Lord replied, "I am."



Then they all (Judas included) fell backwards to the ground.⁵⁴ Peter, realizing what was happening, drew his sword, and Judas almost certainly heard the disciples utter the words, "Lord, shall we attack with the sword?"⁵⁵ He probably saw Peter swing the sword, removing the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest.⁵⁶

As the day dawned, the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death, and bound Him and sent Him to Pilate to begin the proceedings for crucifixion. When Judas saw what was going to happen—that an innocent man was going to be put to death because of him—he felt remorse, and tried to undo what he had done.

*He brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood." They said to him, "What is that to us? You will see to it."*⁵⁷

*And he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple, and left, and went and hanged himself.*⁵⁸

Judas' Death

Matthew tells us that Judas "hanged himself,"⁵⁹ while Luke records that he "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the middle, and all of his bowels gushed out."⁶⁰ How can these two descriptions be reconciled?

First, remember that Luke is writing some thirty years later, and describes what happened to Judas' body. Even if, as some believe, this is a quotation from Peter just 40-50 days after the event, it would still be a description of what happened, looking back at the event. So, it is quite possible that Judas went out and hanged himself from a tree, and over the next few days (or even weeks) the branch broke

⁴⁵ The beatings He endured, the betrayal, the abandonment, the miscarriages of justice, the rejection by the people, even down to His being offered alcohol, could all be viewed as attacks by Satan in an effort to get Him to sin.

⁴⁶ John 17:12.

⁴⁷ Hebrews 10:26-31.

⁴⁸ The word "band" means "approximately 600 men" according to Thayer, though it can also be used for groups of 500 or 1,000.

⁴⁹ John 18:3.

⁵⁰ Luke 22:47-48. There is some difficulty in where to place the statements of Jesus, since each one is recorded in a different gospel account. Some might place this statement after Judas kissed Jesus.

⁵¹ Matthew 26:49. *Vincent's Word Studies*, quoting Meyer, says that the word translated "kissed" means "embraced and kissed," and is emphatic, thus making this scene even more despicable.

⁵² Matthew 26:50.

⁵³ John 18:5 shows that Judas was back with the soldiers.

⁵⁴ John 18:4-6.

⁵⁵ Luke 22:49.

⁵⁶ John 18:10.

⁵⁷ Basically, they are saying to Judas, "that's your problem, you'll have to deal with it, not us."

⁵⁸ Matthew 27:3-5.

⁵⁹ Matthew 27:5.

⁶⁰ Acts 1:18.

from the strain, and Judas' bloated body exploded in the middle as it hit the ground.

Second, it is possible that by "hanging," we shouldn't imagine a noose. Some have suggested that Judas took a long wooden post, sharpened on one end, and dove on it, impaling himself, causing his bowels to gush out as his body fell forward to the ground.⁶¹

Regardless of exactly how it took place, the death of Judas was a well-known event to the Jews in Jerusalem, for the place where it happened received the name "field of blood."⁶²

Why Did Judas Do It?

As stated earlier, some have taught that Judas was specially chosen to do a great work for the Lord in fulfilling prophecy, and that instead of being seen as a wicked traitor, he should be viewed as a hero.⁶³

Others, trying to give Judas the best possible motives, argue that the traitor was actually only trying to force Jesus' hand, to make Him show Himself as the Messiah so that the Kingdom of Heaven could be inaugurated.⁶⁴

Others, not willing to give Judas any good will, say that he was only interested in the money. The problem with that is that thirty pieces of silver wasn't really all that much money, especially if Judas had already been skimming money out of Jesus' treasury bag. That doesn't mean this *isn't* the proper understanding, but it does present a difficulty to accepting it.

It seems that the best way of understanding what Judas did is that he came to Jesus with Jewish expectations of the Messiah. He expected a powerful earthly kingdom that was going to throw off the shackles of Rome and return Israel to its former glory. He saw the miracles of Jesus as divine confirmation that he was right in his assumptions. And when Judas himself was endowed with miraculous gifts during the "limited commission," he must have felt excitement over the imminent arrival of that kingdom which he was preaching. But Jesus started doing things that made Judas unsure. He saw a group of Jews who were ready to crown Jesus as the king,

but when Jesus saw what was happening, He left and went to a mountain alone.⁶⁵ He wasn't ready to abandon Jesus, but it was after that event that the Lord said to the twelve, "one of you is a devil."⁶⁶

Then, as Jesus' ministry went on, He kept saying things about dying, and being murdered. Judas, with his preconceived ideas about the Messiah, must certainly have been questioning whether or not Jesus was really the One. No doubt he had heard the opposition that the Pharisees and chief priests had presented against Jesus, and perhaps it continued to encourage his doubts. Then, leaning more and more towards the conclusion that Jesus wasn't really the Messiah, Judas saw no problem with stealing money from Him. And when Jesus said that He was being anointed for His burial, that cinched it for Judas, who went to the chief priests and elders and offered to betray Jesus to them.

Even in the middle of all that mental struggle and doubt, Judas apparently didn't realize just how much the Jewish leaders hated Jesus. When he realized that Jesus was going to be put to death, Judas freaked out and tried to hurriedly undo it all. He did have a conscience after all. Judas apparently thought that they would simply arrest Jesus and throw Him in prison.

Ultimately, Judas' biggest problem was that he allowed his own preconceived notions to overrule the evidence. Jesus did miracles—**Judas** did miracles—which should have confirmed for him that everything Jesus said and did was exactly what God wanted. It's easier sometimes to believe what you've always believed than it is to accept what the Bible actually says.

Judas' name has gone down in history as the ultimate traitor. His name is not on the foundation of the holy city. He is known as "the son of perdition" who "by transgression, fell, so that he might go to his own place." Such a sad state of affairs when one who had so much potential falls to the lowest depths.

Perhaps the saddest part of the entire history of Judas is that, had he not killed himself, he might have been able to see the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Had he waited, and heard about the empty tomb, he might have come back to Jesus, begging forgiveness. And Jesus would have forgiven him, and welcomed him back.

⁶¹ This possibility was presented to the author several years ago during a discussion of the topic.

⁶² Acts 1:19.

⁶³ This is the view presented in the so-called *Gospel of Judas*, a Gnostic document from the second century.

⁶⁴ Lockyer, in *All the Apostles of the Bible*, presents this possibility, attributing it to de Quincey.

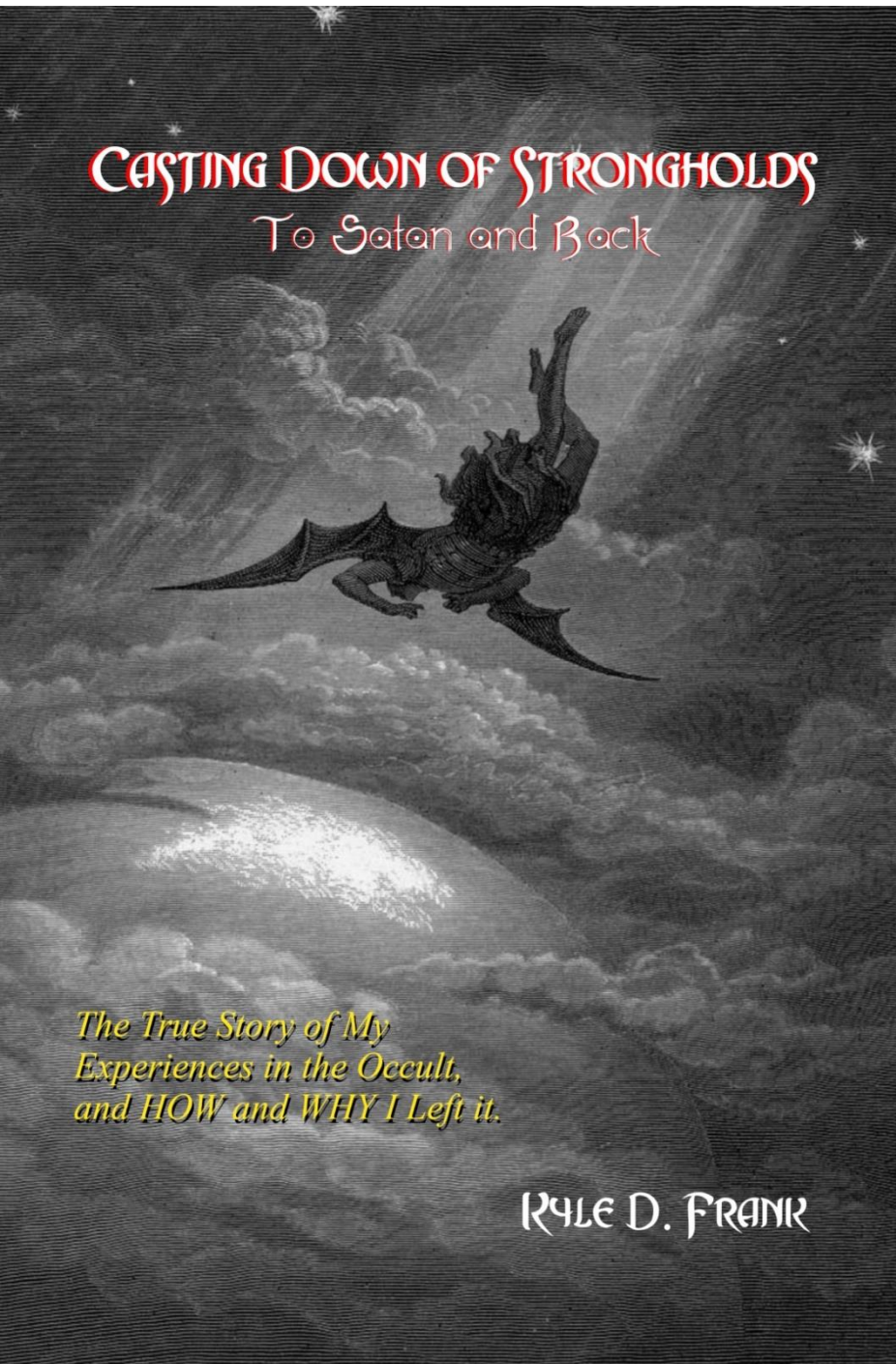
⁶⁵ John 6:14-15.

⁶⁶ John 6:70-71.

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ARE YOU A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST, OR JUST A CHRISTIAN?

The Call, Cost, and Consequences of Being Disciples of Christ

(Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 11:26)

Gerald Cowan

Are you a true disciple of Christ, a real Christian? I will ask the question again later. A proper definition of disciple will be scattered in parts through the essay. All will surely agree that there is no disciple without a disciple-maker, but the truth that the disciple-maker cannot succeed unless there are persons willing to become disciples needs more emphasis and more agreement than it gets. Calling oneself a disciple or a Christian does not make it so. According to some reports, almost a third of the people in the world identify themselves as Christians, yet the world seems to be getting less godly, less like Christ—how can that be explained if one in every three persons claims to be following Christ?

The intended purpose of the present lesson is to call and enlist new disciples for Christ and to strengthen and equip current disciples for more effective discipleship. After the definition of disciple and discipleship, seven related points will be discussed briefly, but the brevity of the discussion should not indicate relative unimportance or irrelevance of any part of the study.

DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION:

Are You a Disciple of Christ?

What is a Disciple of Christ?

The common definition is something like this: A disciple is a learner, follower, and imitator of a certain teacher, person, or concept. Like many other popular definitions of words we use, that definition is imprecise and incomplete (something important is missing), therefore it is inadequate and incorrect. Let us see if we can correct, expand, and sharpen the definition.

The disciple is a *learner*; one who hears from or is taught by a teacher. Without faith, that is, without

belief in Him, one cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6) and one cannot have faith in a God about whom he has not heard or in whom he has not believed (Romans 10:15, 17). An uninstructed uninitiated person to whom the teacher is unheard or unknown cannot be that teacher's disciple.

But some hear without learning—not everyone who hears actually learns, perhaps because he does not understand what he hears or is taught. And too, not everyone who hears and understands actually believes and accepts what he has heard, learned, or been taught. So it is proper to say **a disciple is a believer who learns, understands, and accepts the teaching he has received.**

The disciple is a *follower*. He does what he is told or shown, in the way he is told or shown. He stays behind his teacher and guide—he does not try to lead his guide; he does not instruct or suggest corrections to his teacher. The follower is not the leader; the disciple is not the teacher. He accepts and obeys commands and instruction. So it is proper to say **a disciple is obedient and does what he is told to do by his teacher and follows where he is led by his leader or guide.**

The disciple is a copier, an *imitator*; a reproducer, a reproduction but not an imitation. He copies the actions of the teacher, follows instructions and does what the teacher does in the way the teacher does it. But imitating what another does in the way the other does it does not make one a genuine copy of the other. One must imitate and reproduce the attitudes and character or nature and the motives and intentions as well as the actions of the other to become “like” the other, to be formed or fashioned into a valid copy, reproduced and remade in the image of the other. God's desire is that disciples of His

Son Jesus Christ be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29) and actually, through the work of His Holy Spirit and the cooperation of the would-be disciple (2 Corinthians 3:18), He brings about the desired inward transformation, beginning in the mind (Romans 12:1-2) in a continuing process, not a radical instantaneous conversion. A disciple seeks to duplicate or replicate Christ spiritually in his own person. It seems proper to say then that **a disciple is a work in process, developing, transforming and being transformed into a recognizable duplication of the model, an execution of the pattern set by and personified in Jesus Christ.**

Only a true disciple of Christ can be a functional *representative* of the Master. The disciple can serve as an instructor, teaching the words and ways of his own Teacher, a guide who can be safely followed because he himself is faithfully following his own Guide (*follow me as I follow Christ*, Paul said, 1 Corinthians 11:1). He can assist others in their conversion and transformation while he himself is being converted, while he is transforming and conforming to the image he wants others to receive, trying to help those others as Christ is being formed in them (Galatians 4:19). It is proper to add to our definition that **a disciple of Christ is a representative of Christ the teacher as well as an advocate and facilitator for those who are also willing to become disciples of the same teacher, the same Lord, the chief discipler and disciple-maker Jesus.**

But the disciple is a *worker* with the Lord. He does not work alone, he is not able on his own to do anything. Disciples of the Master must be workers together with Him (2 Corinthians 6:1-2, Philippians 2:12-13), teaching as they are taught, guiding as they are guided, working with others as they are worked with by Christ. But do not forget that in addition to being workers *with* him we are also workers *for* him. We are not contract workers, doing a stipulated work for a stipulated reward. We are fellow-workers; our service to and for him is fellowship. We do, as much as it is possible for us, what he has done and what he would do if he were physically present (Colossians 1:24). A disciple is an *adjunct* to the teacher, not a substitute or replacement for the

teacher, but prepared and willing to function as the teacher would, say and do what the teacher would if he were present—it might not be out of place to say **a disciple must be ready to step into the shoes of the master and continue his work** (what Paul seems to be saying in Colossians 1:24). A disciple does not start his own school of thought diverging from the master. Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Mormonism, and tens of thousands of denominations and cults may claim to be founded in and based upon Jesus and his teaching but the fact is they are treasonous traitors to the Lord, travesties of Christianity

which are not true to Christ or to the words of God in the Bible—unicorns hiding among the horses but easily distinguished from true equines. If they are not true to Christ they cannot be called disciples of Christ or Christians. **A disciple is an example of Christian faith and practice, a sample of Christianity.** Every

Christian, not just preachers and evangelists like Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12), is expected to be an example of and to the believers, a *sample* Christian. Only an exemplary disciple can be called a true Christian. In Antioch the disciples were called Christians for the first time (Acts 11:26). Notice, it does not say the Christians were called disciples but rather that the disciples of Christ were called Christians. It is true now: all true disciples can be called true Christians but not all professing Christians can be called disciples.

Now I will ask the question again: are you a disciple of Christ or just “a Christian?” You know the difference so you can answer properly. From here on we will discuss briefly some seven matters related to discipleship.

THE CALL:

How is One Called to be a Disciple of Christ?

Jesus chose twelve of his disciples, addressed them by name. “Peter, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, Bartholomew ... stop what you are doing and come along with me and I'll make you a fisher of men, an apostle, a prophet, an oracle, a spokesman for me.” He gave them a personal invitation to follow him and be with him in his ministry. Later he

gave a personal verbal invitation and call to Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Because of this some assume that's the way they too will be called. If the Lord wants them he will give them a direct personal invitation. Do you expect to hear a personal call from Jesus? If you are waiting to hear, “(Insert your name), come follow me and I will _____,” stop waiting. If you hear such a thing, ignore it. Christ doesn't call you directly by name anymore, though he once did in a few isolated cases.

The call may come to you as a conviction, after hearing a gospel sermon, reading some part of the scripture, meditating on what you have learned by attending church meetings or Bible study classes, or even the impression received from acquaintance with Christians, that you ought to accept and commit to what you know of the will of God for your life.

Access to God through Christ, as taught in His word, is the only way one can be called effectively, but it must be accepted and obeyed before one can join *the called of God* (John 5:39-40, 6:44-45; Romans 8:28). **A disciple is one who has understood his calling from God and is responding properly to it (Ephesians 4:1, 4).** When you have learned, in any way, about the existence and nature of God, about the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, about the availability and method of salvation, you have been called to discipleship and salvation in Christ. Until you have been taught and have learned these things and know what to do, you have not been called by God. Until you accept the way stipulated in the calling you are not among *the called*, not a true disciple, not a true Christian.

THE COMMISSION:

The Sending of the Disciple to do the Work of the Lord

The apostles were directly commissioned, sent into the world with a specific work to do for the Lord. Jesus said to them: “You are sent; I am sending you into all the world. Make disciples in every nation, baptize them... teach them to observe all things that I have commanded” (Matthew 28:18-20). “Go into the world and preach (as you are going through the world be preaching) the gospel to everyone” (Mark 16:15). “Repentance and remission of sins must be preached in (my) name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. I send you. I send the promise of my Father upon you” (Luke 24:44-

47).

Those who heard the gospel—those who hear it now from any preacher or teacher of God's word—should obey it, thus becoming disciples of Christ, and then themselves become teachers of others who may—hopefully will—obey it and become disciples too (2 Timothy 2:2). Our commission from Christ is simple: Obey him and then teach others and assist others in obeying him too.

THE COMMITMENT:

Implied, but also Clearly Stated in the Call and Commission

All Christians are called to be disciples—all disciples are called Christians (Acts 11:26), called to be saints of God in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7). The word or name *Christian* must also be defined, as also must the word *saint*. Christian is an adjective which means: of Christ, belonging to, pertaining to, identified and affiliated with Christ. It implies one who is submissive, obedient, and pledged to serve Christ, as Christ requests. Saint means sanctified, set aside for and belonging to or identified with someone or something. Saints of Christ are set aside for him, identified with him, belonging to him, and being reserved for service to him. Saint and Christian are synonyms, words that effectively mean the same thing. **A disciple of Christ is a Christian saint identified with and reserved for Christ.**

One who obeys from the heart the doctrine of Christ (Romans 6:17), is identified and made part of the body of Christ by faith, repentance, and baptism into Christ (Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 1:12) puts on Christ and is given new life in Christ (Romans 6:4, Galatians 3:27). But that obedient action implies and includes a pledge to serve Christ, to serve God in Christ in righteous ways, bearing holy fruit, receiving at the end everlasting life (Romans 6:17-18, 22).

Look at the last part of Romans 6:22 (this is also an important part of discipleship, about which we will say more shortly). Disciples are fruit-bearers, bearing fruit for righteousness and holiness. Without such fruit-bearing one cannot really expect to receive the ultimate reward of eternal life (John 15:1-8). The desired “fruit” of the disciple of Christ is not making more disciples, being “soul-winners” by persuading others to become Christians too, but is rather the development, in oneself and in others whom one wants to disciple for Christ, of the same

character and qualities as those present in Christ himself, particularly righteousness and godliness expressed in service to God and to His people—even His potential people.

THE COST:

Giving Up Some Aspects of Personal Will and Choice

This may be the most difficult part of discipleship for some. Freedom of will and choice in one's way of life, freedom to make and maintain meaningful relationships, and freedom to pursue goals of special interest and value to oneself are particularly precious. But some things must be overridden or given up to follow Christ. The will of the Master supersedes the will of the disciple. Jesus himself showed this in his willingness to bend and accede to the will of the Father, even when it required denying his own will. "*Father, let Your will, not my own, be done*" (Luke 22:42 and elsewhere). To follow the will of Christ is also to follow the will of God the Father.

One must assuredly give up the world and its sinful ways that oppose and contradict God (Romans 6:1-2, 1 John 2:15-17). One may be separated from family, from friends, from business and social connections (Luke 14:26, Matthew 10:37, 1 Corinthians 16:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Christian discipleship can place one in jeopardy and danger of persecution. Being true to Christ and to God and preaching the truth of God's word without compromise may lead to persecution and difficulties for oneself, for others, and for the church everywhere (1 Peter 4:16).

THE CONSEQUENCES:

Rewards and Results

We have already noted that the end result and reward for the faithful Christian disciple is eternal life in the heaven of God (Rom. 6:22), true for the discipler and promised to those who are disciplined by him. For those who are reward-motivated the prospect is both exciting and fulfilling. How rewarding and joyful it is to see those one has taught and brought to Christ walking faithfully in the Lord (3 John 4)!

Christians are responsible for the impact their lives and lessons have on others. It may seem reasonable and valid to say: "I am responsible for what I do for you, say to you, and give to you—that is my business. I am not responsible for your response.

How you respond, what you do with what I give you is your business." There is, of course, a basic truth in that concept: If I tell you the truth and show you the right way, you must accept it and apply it to have the benefit of it. I will not—actually cannot—force you to accept and obey what I say. That is true even in the Lord's case. He has given and presented to us his truth, his way, the remedy for our situation, the supply for our needs. But he does not force us to take it. However—it is imperative that we know and understand—our response determines the result: if we do what he says we will have salvation and eternal spiritual life; if we do not do what he says we will have condemnation and eternal spiritual death. To balance the concept we must know both the positive and negative results and consequences of discipleship; the results of success and the consequences of failure must be understood.

But the concept—my job is to tell you, but what you do about it is up to you—may be flawed. My words and my efforts to teach and make disciples of others must be appropriate because my attitude and approach may affect the outcome. Everything the disciple says and does, whether directed toward a particular person or not, should lead to glory for the Lord. Do not knowingly or deliberately lead anyone astray or cause anyone to sin (1 Corinthians 10:31-32). Admonition and encouragement given in concern for the welfare of others is more likely to be accepted and appreciated than accusations based upon assumptions and associations. If we can "win" others for God through Christ we share in the joy of their salvation. If we contribute to or cause their failure we must share the pain of that failure too. Our own joy in discipleship comes from personal effort and involvement. We make up, by our discipleship, what is lacking in the work of Christ—what will not be realized or accomplished by what Christ has done, unless it is continued and administered by us to others (Colossians 1:23-24).

THE COMMUNION:

Sharing the Works, Fruits, and Blessings of Fellowship in Christ

Christians are one body of believing, functioning disciples. Each member is an individual, a separate person, like others in some ways and different from all others in some ways. Christ's members are distinct from each other with different abilities and opportunities, and therefore different responsibilities

in the church body (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12-20). All the members give what they have to each other and to the body, all receive what they need from each other and from the body, so that the body itself grows up in the Lord and develops into the precise and proper image the Lord designed it to have (Ephesians 4:11-16). Each member, according to ability, shares in the support of the body and the various works of its individual members. Paul uses himself as an example of the principle. He commends and thanks the church in Philippi for their physical, material support in addition to their support in words, in prayers, and in fellowship in the Lord (Philippians 1:27, 4:10-17).

The church is one family of God—congregationally and universally. All members are sons and daughters of one Father, God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), brothers and sisters with each other in one family spiritual family in which gender, race and ethnicity, social status, and physical relationships are, for practical purposes, irrelevant (Galatians 3:26-29). Each member shares in the comforts, benefits, and blessings of family.

THE CONSUMMATION

Humans were and are commanded to be fruitful and multiply, to populate the earth. This design and plan was announced to our primal parents, Adam and Eve, to be carried on by all descended from them (Genesis 1:27-28). When mankind strayed from the path and purpose of God it became necessary to reduce them to four couples and start again. So, after the great flood, God directed Noah and his three sons and their wives to *be fruitful and multiply, to (re)populate the earth* (Genesis 9:1-7). That

has not changed since the flood, and God promised there would be no further or similar interruptions on His part, as long as the earth remains (Genesis 8:20-22 and 9:8-17). And so it is, as it was from the beginning, male and female shall marry and reproduce themselves through their children—with no deviation from the plan accepted by God (Matthew 19:4-6). Those who have no children or cannot produce children can be active in protecting and nourishing those who can do so, for the sake of the human family, for all of humanity.

Christians are commanded to be fruitful and multiply too, in order to populate heaven. That is the intent expressed in various forms of the “great commission,” incumbent upon every Christian (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16) and figured into Acts 2:41 and 47. *The Lord adds to* (is adding and will add together in and as) *His church, every day, those who are being saved.*

Therefore, as you have opportunity, do good to all people, especially those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10)

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WHO ARE THE CHRISTADELPHIANS?

Kyle D. Frank

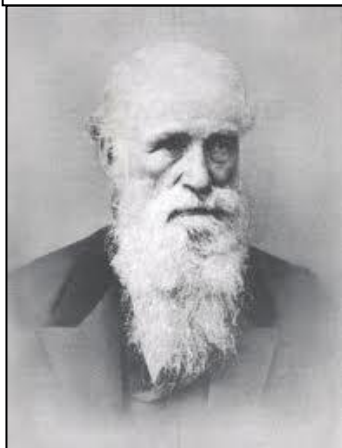
The Christadelphians are a religious movement, originally based upon the ideals of the Restoration Movement in the United States in the nineteenth century.

The founder of the organization was a medical doctor named John Thomas, who came to North America from Great Britain around 1832. His purpose was to avoid the rampant sectarianism which was so prevalent in his home country. He met and was convinced of the necessity of baptism by Walter Scott, who later introduced him to Alexander Campbell.

However, things did not go smoothly, as one would have hoped. While Thomas saw great things in the Restoration Movement, such as individual congregations independent of one another but with just the right amount of interdependence that would allow for some form of governance, and a constant appeal to Scripture, he believed that it didn't go far enough, and he challenged the leaders on several doctrines he believed they misunderstood or were flat-out wrong on. Among other things, he wanted a bigger focus on the book of Revelation (on which he wrote a five-volume commentary). He insisted his interpretations (which included several predictions which later turned out false) were the true Bible doctrine. Campbell took him to task for majoring in "heretical speculation."¹ Thomas later rebaptized himself, and was withdrawn from in 1837.



(above) John Thomas,
PhD. (below) near the
end of his life.



"The Christadelphian community in the United Kingdom effectively dates from Thomas's first lecturing tour (May 1848 – October 1850). His message was particularly welcomed in Scotland, and Campbellite, Unitarian, and Adventist friends separated to form groups of 'Baptized Believers.' Two thirds of their "ecclesias" [their name for individual congregations] and members before 1864 were in Scotland."²

Since his medium for bringing change was print and debate, it was natural for the origins of the Christadelphian body to be associated with books and journals, such as Thomas's *Herald of the Kingdom*. The name "Christadelphian" comes from two Greek words, which together means "brothers of Christ,"³ a name that was necessary to obtain a conscientious objector status from the American Civil War.

Although the Christadelphian movement originated through the activities of John Thomas, he never saw himself as making his own disciples.

He believed rather that he had rediscovered 1st century beliefs from the Bible alone and was seeking to work those ideals out through the process of debate and the printed page. Through these ideas the form of a denomination was worked out. Thomas died in 1871, but his ideas were continued through the ef-

¹ C.C. Walker (most likely), from the "Biographical Notes" section of John Thomas' *Elpis Israel*, 1924 edition.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christadelphians>

³ The actual combination of *Christos* [Christ] and *Adelphoi* [brothers] into one word is never seen in Greek. This word is one that Thomas created.

forts of Robert Roberts, who edited a journal called *The Christadelphian*. This journal was used to help craft the structures of the Christadelphian body.

In the twentieth century, the Christadelphian position on conscientious objection came to the forefront with the introduction of conscription during the First World War. Varying degrees of exemption from military service were granted to Christadelphians in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. In the Second World War, this frequently required the person seeking exemption to undertake civilian work under the direction of the authorities. After the Second World War, efforts were made to unite all the various different groups that existed under the common name. Some were successful, some not so much. Today various groups maintain the common name but are different in doctrine and form.

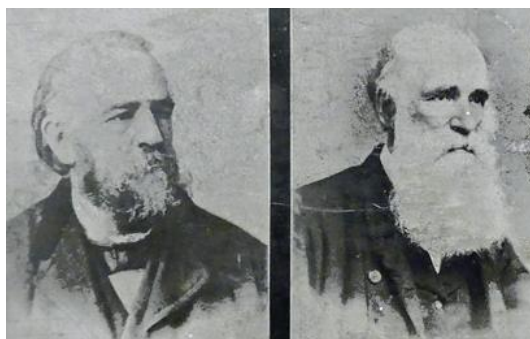
The different forms of Christadelphians are maintained in belief and in practice. What might be acceptable in one congregation might bring expulsion in another. The relative uniformity of organization and practice is undoubtedly due to the influence of a booklet, written early in Christadelphian history by Robert Roberts, called *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias*.

Christadelphians do not have a paid ministry but male (and now female) members are assessed by the congregation for their eligibility to teach and perform other duties, which are usually assigned on a rotation basis, as opposed to having a permanently appointed preacher. Congregational organizations co-ordinate the running of Christadelphian schools, the “Christadelphian Isolation League” (which cares for those prevented by distance or infirmity from attending an ecclesia regularly), and the publication of Christadelphian magazines. These are all that they seem to need to maintain the function of the various activities that are deemed necessary to move onward.

There are no official figures for the membership of the scattered congregations but are thought to be approximately 50,000 among nearly 120 countries. There are a good number of different fellowships that are maintained. Each of these is composed of groups of “ecclesias” that maintain common beliefs

and activities. The majority of Christadelphians today belong to what is commonly known as the Central Fellowship. The term “Central” came into use around 1933 to identify ecclesias worldwide who were in fellowship with the Birmingham (Central) Ecclesia. There is one in North America called “The Unamended Fellowship, consisting of around 1,850 members, found in the East Coast and Midwest USA, as well as Ontario, Canada. This group separated in 1898 as a result of differing views on who would be raised to judgment at the return of Christ.

The various ecclesias maintain various ideals but some agreement can be maintained regarding the following doctrines. They believe that God is the creator of everything, Jesus Christ is His Son, and that the Holy Spirit was the active force that was responsible for all of creation, spiritual or physical.



Salvation is because of Jesus’ sacrifice, and the Spirit is God’s force in salvation. Christadelphians believe that Jesus is the promised Jewish Messiah, in whom the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament find their fulfillment. They believe He is the Son of man, in that He inher-

ited human nature (with its inclination to sin) from His mother, and the Son of God by virtue of His miraculous conception by the power of God. They believe the Devil is not an actual being, but more of a concept of evil that tends to reside in humans. There is no biblical hell as a place of torment for unbelievers or the disobedient. Those who are disobedient simply cease to exist after death. The historic *Commandments of Christ* (publication) demonstrates the community’s recognition of the importance of Biblical teaching on morality. Marriage and family life are important. Christadelphians believe that sexual relationships should be limited to heterosexual marriage, ideally between baptized believers.

So, Christadelphians maintain some unusual beliefs and doctrines. They have maintained their existence throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and apparently are seeking to continue in this way, even though their unusual structures isolate them from the greater community of believers throughout the nations. Their history and denominational structures appear to enable them to continue as they have up through this point in time.

SHORT TERM MISSIONS—ARE THEY WORTH IT?

Jason Floyd

How do you decide how much something is worth? The easiest way is to put a price tag on it, but that isn't always a good way to assess value. Could you ever put a price on love? Marriage? Happiness? Children? Most importantly, can you put a price on salvation for ourselves and our neighbors? This question seems ludicrous, because, well, it is, but "going into all the world" requires time and money, both of which we are told to manage with good stewardship (Eph. 5:16; Acts 16:1ff). At times, even evangelistic techniques must be evaluated to decide if they are worth the necessary time and money.

Such is the case with short-term mission work. Some have said that the money spent on these efforts is not worth the reward – that there is not enough time in a short trip to have any real impact, and that it essentially becomes a glorified vacation. Sadly, sometimes this can be the case if a trip is not well-planned in advance; the results can be less than ideal, and in some cases, perhaps even hurtful. I believe that short-term work can be extremely beneficial to both the workers and the recipients, but I also believe that successful trips require careful preparation in presentation of the gospel message, cultural awareness, coordination with the local congregation (if applicable), and selection of mission trip participants.

If we look at how the apostles handled much of their evangelistic work, it seems they would agree. Perhaps one of the greatest examples of short-term mission work would be Paul, who, of course, is famous for his missionary journeys, during which he would frequently only spend several weeks or a season at one location before moving on to another place. The Holy Spirit Himself even directed him as to which place he should or should not go (Acts 16:6-10), so it seems that there is certainly inspirational precedent. An additional interesting note is that sometimes Paul himself would be the one to receive the encouragement from the Christians he was going to visit (2 Tim. 4:11).

From a personal standpoint, I have had the life-changing privilege to be on several short-term campaigns, both foreign and domestic – and it was indeed a privilege. The connections made and points of view presented are invaluable and are a blessing long after the trip is over. In fact, it was on one of those trips that I became close friends with the woman who would later become my wife.

I've lived part of my life in Henderson, Tennessee, where there are so many Christians that you can't step out your front door without hearing a cappella singing. It's a wonderful thing to have so many members of His Body in one place, but I now live in a part of the country where His people would greatly benefit from some help. In our county of Bennington, Vermont, there are approximately 35 members of the Lord's church in a population of over 35,500 people. The weeds of the world can easily choke out a Christian lifestyle in this unchurched area. My current location emphasizes the purpose of a short-term trip – to reach the lost and strengthen the brethren in an area with insufficient funds or manpower to evangelize. These life experiences have given me a passion for short-term mission campaigns.

When it came to evangelism, Jesus and His apostles always proclaimed the truth regardless of their circumstances. Paul told Timothy that the Word should be preached in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2); that is, when it's popular as well as when it's not. The gospel message is the same yesterday, today, and always, and it is no different no matter where you live or what background you have. However, how we present that message can make a world of difference in how it is received. The New Testament is filled with different approaches to teaching the gospel to people, whether they were Jew or Greek, rich or poor, or any number of other cultural factors. Paul was brilliant (or perhaps simply inspired) at meeting people where they were and teaching them from that point. He took special note in Athens (Acts 17) that the people there were quite

religious, and he used this as a springboard into his conversation. Having noted while in town that there was an inscription to an "unknown god," he proceeded to tell them about the One they'd been missing. Jesus, the master evangelist, certainly approached people differently depending on their circumstances; in fact, some today might call His methods either too harsh or too soft and fluffy, depending on how He handled a specific situation. For example, His hard-line approach in calling one of his own apostles "Satan" definitely varied from how He handled the adulterous woman.

There is no flexibility in the truth, but there is significant flexibility in how that truth can and should be presented. Sometimes it's easy to get comfortable with a certain way of doing things. Sometimes, we may have great success with an event, program, or method of evangelism and might be tempted to believe it should work anywhere. In reality, that isn't always the case. Without the help of divine inspiration like Paul had, a short-term missionary needs to rely heavily on the experience of the locals and listen carefully to the do's and don'ts of a particular culture. Even among ethnically homogeneous areas, there can be huge differences from one congregation to the next in knowledge and/or maturity level. A tender young congregation that is still being fed a diet of milk could experience dangerous effects if a missionary suddenly brings in the sirloin steak! Find out from the local leaders where the congregation is from a spiritual standpoint. What are their struggles? What are the "hot button topics"? What is most helpful? What should be avoided? Ask questions and listen very carefully to the answers.

I had the privilege of visiting the country of Guyana on a 2.5-week campaign. I loved it...the country, the food...and the people! The people were so friendly, and so receptive to the gospel! Our days were filled with Bible studies and baptisms, and I was feeling good about the work we were doing. One day, my door-knocking partner and I cold-called a house in hopes of being able to have a Bible study. We climbed the stairs to their porch and met a teenage boy who seemed quite open to the gospel. It seemed like a promising study opportunity, and we agreed to meet back the next day. When my partner and I arrived back when we said we would, instead of being greeted by the young man we hoped we would be able to baptize, the parents came out of

the house fuming at us. As I would soon learn, in Guyana, a front porch is considered to be a part of one's house in a way we might not consider in America. In their perspective, we had charged into their living room, sat down with their child, and taught him a strange religion the parents might not have understood. Obviously, it is always important for the gospel to be taught to anyone willing to listen, but we were the guests there, and we had violated a cultural taboo of not respecting personal boundaries. In doing so, we had left a very bad taste in the mouth of a family that might have been receptive to the gospel if we had only slightly tweaked our evangelistic method. Remember, the local Christians are the experts and will guide us away from such pitfalls. The last thing we want to do is leave a mess behind for them to have to clean up.

Along this same line of thinking, we must keep in mind in our short-term mission efforts that we shouldn't merely consult the local congregation; it should be at the helm of the endeavor. It's important that local Christians own the work and are actively involved in making it a successful campaign. In preparing this article, I reached out to several missionaries currently serving in the U.S. and abroad and asked for their opinions of the benefits or drawbacks of short-term works. Lance Mosher, nine-year missionary in New Zealand, cited the importance of making sure trips were a team effort between both parties, to the extent that he believes that in most cases, all meals and accommodations should be provided by the host congregations, even if the mission budget allows for a hotel. Brother Mosher feels that this opportunity for bonding creates innumerable blessings for both the visitors and the local church.

Another important factor to consider in short-term mission work is how to select the participants for the trip. Some potential missionaries may not be considered mature enough to be of any real benefit or even seen as a hindrance, but the blessings that come from going on a mission trip are often equally or even more valuable for the participants. I will often learn more about God and His Word by teaching than I ever could listening to someone present a lesson on the same subject, and the lessons learned in the mission field are invaluable to growing as a Christian. At the same time, some works require more maturity than others; those leading the group or overseeing the work must show wisdom in de-

termining who should go, while at the same time extending grace and realizing that there is work for everyone, even if they have more growing to do. Certainly, it would not be wise to send a dozen immature teenagers into a difficult mission field with few mentors to help them, but likewise, there is no reason that a trip into a receptive part of the world be attended only by veteran Christians. The Great Commission is just as much for that young person baptized two weeks ago and still struggling with foul language as it is for the deacon who has 50 years of door-knocking under his belt.

These decisions can sometimes be controversial, so not everyone will always agree, as is evidenced by the conflict between Paul and Barnabas in Luke 15:36ff. Barnabas, ever the great encourager, wanted to take John Mark along as they visited congregations to see how they were doing. But Paul, ever with his nose to the grind-stone, still remembered how John Mark had abandoned them in Pamphylia. The argument grew heated, and they eventually went their separate ways. It's important to note, however, that the work still got done; it was simply necessary to divide it up differently than was originally planned. We don't know if either person ever admitted wrongdoing in the argument, but we do know that Paul would later find great encourage-

ment from John Mark while he was in prison. There is also no doubt that the time John Mark spent on his mission trip with Barnabas shaped who he had become at that point. When we select short-term mission team members, we should seek Christians who share a desire to go, a love for God, and a dedication to His truth. These qualities can cover a multitude of mistakes.

I believe mission work is valuable even if it only takes place for a few days or weeks. If Christians don't proceed cautiously, then the time and money spent might be better used for a different purpose. However, if short-term campaigns are well-organized and coordinated with both the local culture and the local congregation, and everyone works together toward the same goals, they can be one of the greatest returns of investments for God's kingdom.

[Note: I am making one assumption as I write this: In all the works I have been involved in, and I believe most short-term work falls into this category, is that there is a group of believers usually of the Lord's church already in place. Obviously, a church plant would be a very different scenario than what I'm suggesting here.]



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The Polytheistic Christian in the Corinthian Church!

John Krivak

“However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.”
1 Corinthians 8:7 (NASB)

Christianity is a monotheistic religion. I know that. Christianity stands in opposition to polytheism. I know that, too. So does Paul. But it sure looks like the Corinthian church once had a polytheist in its membership! Paul knew this, yet shows no desire to remove the Christian who believes there are other gods. In fact, Paul sides himself with the polytheist against informed Christians who know the Bible truth about monotheism.

Every church has a mix of knowledgeable and unknowledgeable Christians. Perhaps the best Scripture teaching how to integrate such diversity into Christian fellowship is 1 Corinthians 8. How far may diversity extend and still have God’s approval? Perhaps further than you and I may wish to condone! How is responsibility to be divided between those who—to put it bluntly—believe lies and falsehoods, and others who know “the Bible truth”?

Let’s just run through this brief chapter with a bit of commentary:

8:1 Paul introduces his subject: meat from idol sacrifice as potential food for Christians. Sacrificed animals from idol worship went to markets where Christians might shop. He follows by immediately downplaying the value of knowledge. The opening line displays obvious attitude. Try reading it as follows, with an exasperated sigh and a rolling of the eyes: “Yes, yes—we know that we all have knowledge—sigh...” That attitude is confirmed by what follows: “Knowledge puffs up; but love builds up.” To “puff up” suggests someone who is full of himself, swelling with pride, arrogant. Notice what kind of knowledge this is—not scientific, or historical, or mathematical knowledge. This is Bible doc-

trine, theology, God-knowledge—and it is all true! “Knowledge about God” may be detrimental, may even be dangerous! It puffs up! Knowledge is pitted against love, and love wins. Love builds up rather than puffs up; love edifies.

8:2-3 What one knows—however much and however true—counts for nothing; what counts is “Who knows you” (i.e. God)—and that happens only with your love for God. Relationship is what matters. With love, He recognizes you and, with that said, Paul further establishes supremacy of love over knowledge.

We have so far heard Paul correctly, however this does not sound at all like Paul, does it? I think the original Corinthian readers would have sensed incongruity between this and the Paul whom they have come to know and love! Would *that Paul* ever describe God-given knowledge as detrimental, as something capable of bringing out the bad in people? Is this “Paul the apostle”—for whom “knowledge” absolutely is his stock-in-trade? Could we ever imagine the writer of Pauline epistles—like the present letter, or that to the Romans, or any of the others—to speak derisively of knowledge? Simply do a concordance-search for the writings of Paul for words like “know” and “knowledge”! You will turn up lots of positive evaluations, and nothing detrimental such as we find in 1 Cor. 8 (and 13)! Would Paul not be forced into accusing his own ministry of “puffing people up”? Moreover, Paul knows that, like love, knowledge also can edify or “build up.” In Chapter 14, he only promotes the spiritual gifts that transmit knowledge, because only those gifts edify the church!¹ Why that promotion, if

¹ A full discussion of revelatory spiritual gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) is not possible here, but a fair reading of 1 Corinthians would suggest that the purpose for them has been fulfilled. We should not look for them any longer. However, do note that the “love chapter” (1 Cor. 13) which speaks to this concern falls right within a larger section (1 Cor. 12-

knowledge surely puffs up? Elsewhere the same Paul writes: *“And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another”* (Romans 15:14, NASB). How could the Paul of this text so differ from Paul elsewhere?

To resolve this paradox, we must understand that Paul requires knowledge and love to be allies. Brought together, each increases in value. But divorced from one another, each drops in value—whether loveless knowledge or foolish love. When (in condition normal) Paul speaks of knowledge in glowing terms and with positive regard, it is because he is assured of its alliance with love! In such cases, Paul without hesitation will commend knowledge and the Christians who attain it. Knowledge is good (because it rides with love)!

Remember how he had contrasted knowledge and love, pitting one against the other? That suggests (in condition abnormal) that Paul is troubled by his awareness that knowledge has become unhinged from love. That is why we hear a different Paul in 1 Cor. 8! When Paul senses love is no longer allied to knowledge, he will mark even the truest knowledge with warning. This knowledge becomes a danger. Paul rarely has to speak about loveless (or unloving) knowledge, but here is another example:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-2, NASB)

We see the pattern again in Chapter Fourteen. Paul makes an extended promotion of those spiritual gifts which have capability to transmit knowledge to the church—primarily prophecy, but tongues also if an interpreter makes the message intelligible to the church. But Paul promotes the “revelational gifts” (which impart knowledge) only after this introduction: *“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy”* (1 Corinthians 14:1, NASB). Such charismata, imparting knowledge and expressing love, were then able to edify (build up) the church—love allied with

knowledge has such power!

So, what of the declaration, *“Knowledge puffs up”*? That is not what Paul would normally say about God’s knowledge! Please—don’t preach that! The detrimental evaluation, *“knowledge puffs up”* is not Paul’s absolute view. It should not be taken that way; nor, as “the essential Christian valuation of knowledge”! It should be apparent why here he speaks contrariwise: Paul senses that he is speaking to a situation where knowledge is divorced from love! The rest of Chapter Eight will make this clear.

8:4 Again appears the topic, about which “we know” something—idolatry is a religious fiction. Any spiritual implication for the meat, then, is based on fiction. The meat is fine for Christian consumption. We know that because we are informed monotheists—see the Shema (Deut. 6:4-6). We find polytheistic idolatry also forbidden as the first of the Ten Commandments.

8:5 Of course, we are aware that other people do, in fact, worship other gods and have built systems of religion around them. False gods indeed exist in such belief systems, but we know the idolatrous religions are built on lies. Worse yet, behind the idol’s attractive portrayal is really a skulking demon (1 Cor. 10:14-22).

8:6 Paul affirms this monotheism, here without downplaying the knowledge of it, indicating that this truth is not the problem; knowing that is not the issue. Monotheism is true Christian doctrine. Note that Jesus is mentioned as Lord here alongside God the Father, in the same breath, within a “one God” discussion! Paul, as Trinitarian, sees no discrepancy in this.

8:7 Not all have “this knowledge” (that monotheism is true, rather than polytheism), and so they (mis)understand that eating pagan sacrifices involves them with real gods—with idols that are considered to be real! Who lacks such knowledge? Christians converted from paganism, that have not yet learned the one-God truth! Their “weak” conscience is defiled because it senses no danger and leads them to do the wrong thing—engage with idols without concern. When Paul says “not all men have this knowledge”, what he means is “not all [Christian] men” or “not every church member.” When you evangelize pagan culture and territory, you are going to get some of that—in the church.

8:8-9 But the food (from sacrifice) is not the issue (Mark 7:19). We have this as a liberty or right,

14). The same “love vs. knowledge” concern that plays in Chapter 8 is also lively in these chapters.

but if we exercise this right it can hurt others by setting a “stumbling block” before them. So what I do—even though there is nothing wrong with it—trips somebody up and I am liable for the damage!

8:10 How? Because someone recognizes you to be a “knowledgeable Christian” and he is watching you, *to see what you do* with sacrificial meat! There is nothing wrong with you eating, but when he sees you, he is going to put two and two together and come to the wrong conclusion. Remember, he thinks idols are real! So, when he sees you eat, he deduces, “Well, it must be OK for Christians to have more than one God!” You never meant to convey any such thing. You surely would deny that, if someone were to ask you straight up. But after watching you, this is what another member of your church now believes!

8:11 The causal factor in this mistake was your knowledge and your acting upon it! The polytheist who stumbles is a Christian “brother”! QUESTION: We have already established that this person is a polytheist! How could a polytheist ever be a Christian???? The only answer that makes sense is that he is only polytheistic in a philosophical sense. Yes, he believes that many gods exist—that’s what he’s been taught all his life and he still believes that—even after becoming a Christian! However, this polytheistic Christian knows Jesus, has heard the gospel of His crucifixion and resurrection—and ever since he heard that, there is only one God that he gives his life to. Yes, there are other gods (he believes that) and other people give their hearts and their devotion to them. But this man gives his everything to only one God among many—God the Father of his Savior, Christ Jesus. No other god can make any claim on him! He has a polytheistic worldview yet does not have an idolatrous heart. The only breach is in his knowledge, not in his love for God.

8:12 So, we have a monotheistic Christian and a polytheistic Christian. One has false knowledge and the other has true knowledge. And as Paul sees it, the one having “knowledge” is guilty of the spiritual murder of a poorly-informed “brother” Christian! His crime (sin) is not eating meat sacrificed to idols—that’s OK and Paul grants Christians the liberty to do what brings no violation to one’s own conscience. The crime came because eating set a stumbling block in front of a misinformed (or uninformed) Christian brother. Before he saw you eat,

his heart only claimed the One true God. But now, after watching a “knowledgeable” Christian like you, he is considering opening his heart to a different god as well. His conscience is so uninformed by true knowledge about God that, not only does he fail to see that other gods are religious fiction, his weak conscience (thanks to you) is no longer bothered when he considers sharing his heart’s devotion with other gods. This weak brother—for whom Christ died!—has now lost his spiritual life!—all because you “knew” what was right and insisted on your right to do that! Your stumbling block changed him from merely being a “philosophical polytheist” into becoming a practicing idolater! But when you could plainly see the effect this had on another Christian (who happened to be misinformed about the center-most doctrine of the whole Bible, of both Judaism and Christianity—monotheism!), where was your love for him? Where was your love for Christ who saved him?

8:13 Paul says that, were he in this situation, he would never eat meat again! Knowledge would allow him to do that; but love would not. Knowledge can lend itself to heartless arrogance; but love carefully watches out for the members of God’s family.

Remember the shocking Paul who declared his readiness to be separated from Christ, if that would bring salvation to the Jewish people (Romans 9:3)? The apostle we meet in 1 Cor. 8 is the same shocking fellow. Here, he stands ready to sacrifice the last filet-mignon of his life—never another bite! It would not have bothered him if that prime beef had been raised to Jupiter/Jesus by a pagan priest just two hours before. But love would not allow him to damage in conscience a polytheistic Christian brother! Paul, who poured out his life as a drink offering on the altar of apostolic ministry—in order to impart God’s knowledge—now turned against that knowledge and roughed it up: “*knowledge puffs up!*” That knowledge lost all value once broken away from love. And if a knowledgeable Christian strayed from love, Paul would likewise turn on him with accusation of spiritual murder against a brother! The polytheistic brother was wrong in his facts, yet was recognized by God for his undivided love and faith. The monotheistic Christian might well have complained, on the basis of true doctrine, that he was treated unjustly by Paul. Paul’s response might be to stop his ears and exclaim: “*All I hear is a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal!*”



Principles of Church Growth

Michael Shank

The growth of the first century church was both spectacular and constant; 3,000 on day 1 (Acts 2:41, 47), followed by 5,000 (Acts 4:4), then multitudes more (Acts 5:14), and even the Jewish priests were added by God to the church (Acts 6:7).

What caused this tremendous growth? I am sure there were many factors, probably some that we have no way of knowing of today. But in the book of Acts there is a verse that speaks of growth, and factors are named which helped this growth occur.

Remember that persecution arose at Jerusalem, and the disciples had to leave for safety. But as they did, they preached Jesus to people they met (Acts 8:4). As they spread the gospel abroad where they went, the church flourished.

Acts 9:31 gives the factors that helped this growth to occur. If we are serious about church growth, we will pay close attention to these four principles.

1. THE CHURCH HAD PEACE

Throughout all the church there was PEACE. Of all people on this earth, the church of Jesus Christ should be at peace, for Jesus is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Jews and Gentiles had always been at enmity with each other, so notice what Jesus did—He broke down the wall that separated them (Ephesians 2:13-15). There’s a reason why the message which Jesus gave to the early church to preach to the lost is called “the gospel of peace” (Acts

10:36). It is by this gospel of peace that men are led to salvation in Christ and in His church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47).

It is because of sin that we are separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and no longer in fellowship with Him (1 Jn. 1:5-6). But notice what Christ did for us in Romans 5:1, 9-10 and Colossians 1:20-22—He gave us *peace* with God.

As a result of having peace with God we must also have peace with each other (1 John 1:6-7). Notice what the Lord prayed for—Unity of His followers (John 17:20-21), in other words, *a church at peace among its members*. John 13:34-35 adds that we must *love one another*, which greatly facilitates peace in the church.

When brethren fight and bicker, the world will hear a message (not a good one), but when the church has peace, hearts are opened to the “gospel of peace”

2. THE CHURCH WAS EDIFIED

To “edify” means to build up, to strengthen and encourage. Edification equips the church for growth (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16, 2 Peter 3:18)—in fact, it *must* take place before growth can occur (see 2 Thessalonians 1:3).

When the disciples grew in faith, in love, in dedication, and in commitment to the Lord—is it any wonder that the church grew?

How can we accomplish the edifying of the

church? There are several ways (and none should be neglected):

Good Bible classes (2 Timothy 2:2), with good material, sound material (these aren't necessarily the same). The whole council of God must be taught by prepared teachers (James 3:1), qualified teachers with knowledge, and who live out their lessons.

Sound preaching (2 Timothy 4:1-2), taught in love (Ephesians 4:15—note “truth” must be present), without ignoring or overlooking parts of God's will (Acts 20:27).

Personal study and effort (Hosea 4:6), which has the benefit of making one approved (2 Timothy 2:15), and able to teach others (Hebrews 5:12).

Encouragement, building one another up, which leads to peace (Romans 14:19), and brings grace to those who receive it (Ephesians 4:29).

3. THE CHURCH WALKED IN FEAR OF THE LORD

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is searching for the true meaning to life. He didn't find it in pleasure, in material things, in work, or in worldly wisdom. Instead, he discovered it in fearing the Lord, and keeping His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

To “walk in the fear of the Lord” means more than to just fear God. It means having a changed life because of reverence for God.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro. 1:7).

“By fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Pro. 16:6)

The church of the first century grew because they were intent on serving God “with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28). The church of the first century was doing just what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12—working out their salvation with fear.

The first century Christians were an active people, walking as God wanted, in the work He gave them to do. Even though they sought God's kingdom first (Mt. 6:33), they realized that they could not do it alone—God was working with them (Philippians 2:13).

But notice back in Acts 9:31 (our main passage) that they walked in the “fear of the Lord” and in the “comfort of the Holy Spirit.” The Spirit is said to “strengthen” us (Ephesians 3:16). But how does the Spirit do this? Through the word of God (2 Peter 1:3). Men, inspired of the Spirit, wrote the words of God to comfort, strengthen, and instruct us in our

endeavors as a Christian (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We will be victorious as we will rely on the comfort of the Holy Spirit

4. THE CHURCH WAS MULTIPLIED

Look again at the growth of the early church in Jerusalem: 3,000 on day 1 (Acts 2:41, 47), followed by 5,000 (Acts 4:4), then multitudes more (Acts 5:14), and even the Jewish priests were added by God to the church (Acts 6:7).

When people live for God, as He wills, they accomplish His work according to His purpose.

A simple fact of farm life is that before there can be a harvest the seed must be planted.

“The seed is the word of God” (Lk. 8:11).

Just as was true then, the gospel is still “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16).

Notice again what the Christians of the first century did—they went everywhere, preaching as they went (Acts 8:4).

The soon-to-be apostle Andrew had heard Jesus and was convinced He was the Christ, but notice what he did—he went and told others, specifically his brother Simon Peter (John 1:41-42).

This was the pattern with all those believers; they were busy telling others about Jesus. It was natural that they speak of their Savior, just as natural as breathing (2 Corinthians 4:13).

A FINAL QUESTION

Is your congregation growing as it should? If it isn't, maybe it is time to examine again the early church and pattern our lives after the lives of those people. Remember Acts 9:31.

It worked for them 1900 years ago, it will work today!

*Then the churches had rest
throughout all Judaea and
Galilee and Samaria, and
were edified; and walking in
the fear of the Lord, and in
the comfort of the Holy
Ghost, [they] were
multiplied (Acts 9:31)*

FAITH FORTIFIES THE FUTURE

(Part 1) (Hebrews 11:1)

Jake Schotter

INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 11 is one of the most familiar chapters and has been called many names: “Faith’s Hall of Fame,” “The Westminster Abbey of Scripture,” “The Heroes of Faith,” and even simply, “The Faith Chapter.” Being familiar with this chapter of Scripture is wonderful! However, we must be on guard, because while familiarity with certain passages is great, it can also be dangerous – we may become so used to the words of a chapter that we lose sight of their meaning and function, even possibly thinking that we have discovered everything we need to know from it. One of the most important things we lose when we have this “cloudy” mindset is the context.

The context of Hebrews 11 extends back into the previous chapter in verses 38 and 39. In verse 38, the author alludes to the prophet Habakkuk (2:4). *“But My righteous one shall live by faith”* is an important phrase, especially in relation to the nature of our salvation. Salvation is based on our faith – a faith that is developed by God through His inspired Word (See Paul’s detailed use of Abraham, showing that he was justified on account of his faith—Romans 4-5; Galatians 3-4). But, there’s an even wider context that we need to be aware of in the first 10 chapters.

In the first 10 chapters, the author focused on proving one point: the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ is completely superior to the Old Covenant which was marked by animal blood. He demonstrates in the first 10 chapters how Jesus is better than anything connected to the Old Covenant: Jesus is better than angels, prophets, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and previous priests and any sacrifice they performed. Jesus is a better seal, sign, and sacrifice than any animal offered under the previous Covenant. The point, then, that the author is making is this: “Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Move on from the symbolic Old Covenant to the New Covenant in Jesus.”

For that to happen, the author gives six warnings throughout the book of Hebrews. He warns against drifting away from salvation (2:1-4), against departing because of hardened hearts (3:12-15), against disobedience to the will of God (4:11-13), against dullness in hearing spiritual instruction (5:11-6:6), against despising God’s grace (10:26-39), and against defying the One speaking from heaven (12:25-29). It was written in 10:38, *“If he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him,”* but he encourages them by saying, *“we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”*

This is not the first time faith is mentioned in the book. It is mentioned in chapter 3 where the author detailed the faith of Moses and Jesus and contrasted that with the faithlessness of the Israelites. In 4:2, the author observed that the good news preached to them was of no profit because *“it was not united by faith in those who heard.”* He followed that statement by saying, *“For we who have believed enter that rest”* (4:3). In 6:12, he encouraged the Hebrew Christians to *“not be sluggish, but [be] imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”* He also pleaded with them to *“draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith”* (10:22). Why does the author of Hebrews write these things? Because he is writing to Jewish Christians who are sick infants in the faith. They have been facing several obstacles and they need to be encouraged to hold fast to the revelation they have received (1:1-2a; 12:1-3; 13:7-9, 14).

Therefore, it is important to note that these examples of faith are not to show how one develops their faith. Rather, the chapter details how faith remained firm in these people’s lives despite what, at times, seemed like overwhelming obstacles. What do you say, then, to someone who is in danger of spiritual defection, in abandoning the only thing that will give them confidence that they are not neglecting their great salvation, entering the true rest, ma-

turing, enlightened so as to taste the heavenly gift and the Word of God, a new and living way, a sacrifice for our sins, approval, and be in a kingdom that cannot be shaken?

Hebrews 11 gives us a guide on how to remain steadfast in the faith. In the opening three verses of this wonderful chapter, we see three facts on how faith can fortify the future – even if our faith is fumbling and faltering. In this first article, we will examine the definition of faith.

FAITH ASSURES US (11:1)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”

When determining what something is, it is helpful to know what it is not. Although we can look at many more examples, this will only be a sampling. First, faith is not gullibility – accepting or believing something simply because someone said or wrote it. The Bible warns us about giving an ear to false teachers and doctrine (Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 John 4:1). Sadly, multitudes never listen, study, nor question what they hear or read. Genuine faith is not gullible because one studies the Scriptures as the noble Bereans did to determine the truthfulness of what has been heard. Second, faith is not rash foolishness. We do not need to take unnecessary risks for the sake of proving our faith. Even Jesus refused the request of Satan to display His faith when taken to the top of the temple and asked to jump off (Luke 4:9-12). Finally, genuine faith is also not “seeing is believing.” Faith accepts what it cannot see (Psalm 27:13; John 11:40; 2 Corinthians 5:7). In John 20:24-29, we see Thomas, like so many, say, “*Unless I see... I will not believe.*” Jesus says, “*Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.*”

So, what is faith? There have been several definitions given by various people. Webster defines it as “belief in God, revelation, or the like. That which is believed; complete confidence.” Another person said faith is “a firm, unshaken conviction based on testimony.” Another wrote that faith is the “acceptance of things beyond our reason and our senses are able to certify.” These all lead us to the Biblical definition of faith. In our text, the Hebrews author gives us two statements that are closely related to each other.

“In a form the old Hebrew poets often used, the writer expresses his definition of faith in

two parallel and almost identical phrases. It is not a full theological definition, but an emphasizing of certain basic characteristics of faith that are important in understanding the message the writer is trying to get across.”¹

Faith is belief; the ability to visualize our hope.

The first clause in the definition of faith is “*the assurance of things hoped for.*” The New King James Version translates this as “*the substance.*” That is a helpful way of saying it; it puts weight and form into what we are placing our confidence in. We have faith in things that we do not currently have or see. We’re looking into the future and confidently believing that it will be reality. Faith gives what we hope for substance and reality.

As you go through this chapter, you see men and women who acted on their faith in expectations that did not become reality during their lifetimes. In other words, all of them had nothing except promises. Their faith was in things not seen – they were invisible. This is repeated 11 times (11:1, 3, 7, 8, 13, 15 (2x), 20, 26, 27, 39).

In these verses, we also read of these great examples of faith putting “*substance*” to what they “*hoped for.*” These people had a clear visualization in their minds of what they were putting their faith in: the Patriarchs saw the promises and welcomed them (11:13), the Patriarchs were thinking of the promise (11:15), Isaac regarded the things to come (11:20), and Moses considered Christ (who was only a Messianic hope at that time) and looked to the reward (11:26).

So, what is our hope in? Are we putting substance, weight, special consideration in our future rewards? The men and women of Hebrews 11 were looking forward to their heavenly reward, that far better country (11:13-16). Why would we look forward to heaven? Because we confidently believe in the testimony of Scripture! Heaven is not just a wish – it is a reality to us that we must put substance to, and it impacts how we understand and anticipate it to be!

So, let’s put some “*substance*” to our ultimate hope and look at some ways it is described in God’s Word. Heaven is described in a multitude of ways. Heaven is described as (1) a place of reservation

¹ MacArthur, John. **Hebrews**. MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series. Chicago: Moody Press, 1983: 286.

(John 14:2) (2) a place of rest (Revelation 14:13) (3) a place of reward (2 Timothy 4:8) (4) a place of righteousness (Revelation 21:4, 8; 22:11) (5) a place of reunion (1 Thessalonians 4:14) (6) a place of recognition (Matthew 17:3), and it will be (7) a place where we will reign (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 22:5). Do we anticipate heaven? Do we have the assurance that it will indeed be our home soon? If not, there is more than enough encouragement for us to have assurance in what we hope for!

We do not possess our hope right now, but we can know for certain that it is ours in the future. Faith is neither possession nor sight since we cannot see with our eyes, currently, what God has promised to give us. Although we cannot have a physical or visible guarantee of what God offers, we are so assured in His promises that we live our lives in such a way as if we were already given these things. Only a Christian, through the perspective of faith, can see what God has prepared and promised for those who believe (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

E.W. Bullinger wrote:

“As to our hope for eternity, it all rests on the faithfulness of God’s promise. If there be no God; or, if His promise be not true, then we have no foundation whatever for our hope; all is baseless. Everything, therefore, depends upon the fact that God has spoken, and that what He has said is true.”

Faith is behavior; our actions vindicate our hope.

The second clause of the author’s definition of faith includes *“the conviction of things not seen.”* This takes the first clause, *“the assurance of things hoped for,”* further. It’s not simply hoping, or hoping for something specific, or even strongly hoping for it... it is the conviction that it is true. The word *“conviction”* implies an unwavering confidence. It is more than an idea that has weight and substance that we believe in – it’s a firm conviction. Faith is living on the basis of things not seen and being so sure of them that they become our convictions. So, the author has moved from what we believe to how we believe, because we live by our convictions.

See how the concepts of belief and behavior are interrelated and demonstrated in the lives of these faithful people. Notice all the “crazy” actions these

people had on their “to-do lists” (11:7, 9, 27, 30). Can you imagine how they must have felt with their neighbors and friends in conversation? I would assume Noah got tired of hearing, “You think water is going to fall from the sky?” What about the others? “Abraham, do you even know where you’re going?” “Moses, are you really hanging out with the slaves?” “Joshua, are we really going to walk around the city that many times?” Every single one of them would have said, “Yes!” The reason is they were convicted about what they believed.

So, what is the “nitty-gritty” here? Conviction is a firmly held belief which implies a deeper manifestation of the inward assurance we have. Christians are people of faith and they are prepared to live out their belief. If you believe the truth, your behavior should manifest that belief. In other words, our lives should reflect a commitment to what our minds and hearts are assured is true. We should be so sure of God’s promises and blessings which are future that we behave as if they were already realized. Ultimately, having a faith that gives the promises of God weight and substance, and behaving based on that belief, is what assures us that we actually do have faith.

The author of this wonderful passage begins with assurance as the first leg of a three-legged-stool. In the next article, we will note the second and third legs.

CONCLUSION

Everybody lives by faith. Granted, what we’re talking about is usually a form of natural, human faith and we talk about our experiences confidently because we have a history with them. Therefore, it’s not really living by faith, but experience. However, we put our whole lives in the hands of God based on promises we have not received. Faith provides a firm ground for us to stand on while we wait for the fulfillment of God’s promises. Faith believes God and relies on His faithfulness.

Our faith is fortified by our assurance, allowing us to be confident while waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises.

ISRAEL:

A BREAK IN THE KINGDOM

David Dean

While the book of Samuel starts off with a beautiful story of a mother's love, we see quite the opposite in our introduction to the period of Kings. It is quite appropriate that the book of 1st Kings begins, not with a cheerful account of the time, but instead with a sad picture of David. Cold and unable to be warmed, David is shown as a man facing the end of his life. Likewise, the kingdom that he spent his life building will soon be broken.

The trouble starts when Adonijah, David's son, "exalted himself, saying 'I will be king.' And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, 'Why have you done thus and so?'" (1 Kings 1:5-6). This results in various plots being formed by various parties. Nathan turns to Bathsheba and has her approach the king on behalf of her son Solomon. Meanwhile, Adonijah gathers supporters and makes himself king. Solomon with David's help would be made King and Adonijah is banished to his house (1 King 1:53).

This troubled succession is really a start to the problems we see plaguing the reign of Solomon. The rise of Solomon is sadly coupled with a rather bloody start. David, in what can only be described as a pitiful farewell address, calls on Solomon to be "strong, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the LORD your God" (1 Kings 2:2-3). Yet, as he continues he then undermines all of these charges by demanding personal vengeance:

Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether,

whom he killed, avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother. And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol (1 Kings 2:5-9).

Thankfully, while the start of Solomon's reign is darkened by these deeds, we quickly see why God has chosen him to be the David's successor. The reign of Solomon has several high points: Solomon's humble request for wisdom; the building of the temple; and the visit by the Queen of Sheba, which only serves to bring Glory to God. In fact, a quick reading of 1 Kings 1-10 shows a kingdom that is prospering. Yet, the eleventh chapter reveals some of the behind-the-scenes events taking place in the Kingdom. "Solomon loved many foreign women... which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, you shall not enter into marriage with... Solomon clung to these in love" (1 Kings 11:1-2). These

wives would turn the heart of Solomon away from God and the wealth and glory God had blessed him to have would in turn be used to build pagan houses of worship. We are left with the reality that while Solomon built the Temple of God, it sadly was not the last temple he would build.

Because of the sinful acts of Solomon, God raises up enemies against the house of David. We see people rise to snatch away the kingdom at the command of God himself! Jeroboam, servant to Solomon, is told by the prophet Ahijah that God has given him ten of the tribes of Israel because he was “about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon” (1 Kings 11:31). Solomon’s behavior upon learning of these prophecies mirrors Saul’s attitude instead of his Father. Solomon’s last recorded act is that of rebellion towards the God’s plan as he attempts to kill Jeroboam. [Note: this author holds that Solomon later repented, as seen in the book of Ecclesiastes].

With Solomon’s death treated as a footnote in the passage of time, the Bible then picks up with the reign of his son, Rehoboam. The prophecy given by God will now take place. The kingdom given to David is about to be ripped out of the hands of Rehoboam, his grandson. However, as is God’s way, even this event in context is a direct result of the sinful nature of man. The twelfth chapter of 1st Kings gives us a bit of history concerning the conditions of the common people during the time of Solomon. They assemble before Rehoboam and cry out, “Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you” (1 Kings 12:4).

During the reign of Solomon the picture we are given is that of hard working conditions and heavy taxes. The multiple building projects of Solomon take great amounts of wealth and labor, and now Rehoboam is given an opportunity to lighten the load on the people. However, instead of taking the advice of “old men, who had stood before Solomon his father” (1 Kings 12:6), Rehoboam instead followed the advice of his friends and in a rather vulgar manner expressed how much harsher he would be than his Father.

This event serves as the final straw that breaks the United Kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam having returned from Egypt where he fled during the reign of Solomon unites the tribes against Rehoboam and started open rebellion against the king. Eventually, he would establish himself as king of Israel and

prove to be a man that rebels not only against his King, but against his God as well.

It is difficult to determine the start of the collapse of Israel. Should we pinpoint it at David’s sin with Bathsheba (1 Sam 11-12)? What about the contested succession when Adonijah announces himself King, and nearly steals the Kingdom away from Solomon even before the death of David (1 Kings 1)? Maybe it is caused by the sinful practices brought into Israel by Solomon during his reign. After all, he allows his multiple wives to lead his heart away from God (1 Kings 11:4). It quickly becomes apparent that several key events point to the ultimate division that would come shortly after the death of Solomon. When we study the collapse of Israel, what we find is that the pattern stays true. When Israel’s rebellion to God reaches its peak, He turns them over to their own desires allowing them to suffer the consequences. These events lead to the curses God warned of in the book of Deuteronomy and ultimately results in “A Period of Captivity.”

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TABERNACLE SHADOWS

THE LAMPSTAND

Mark McWhorter

God spent a significant amount of space giving regulations for the Tabernacle. He gave the Tabernacle as a forepicture of Christ and his Church. The Tent sat inside the Court of the Tabernacle. The Tent was entered through the Door. As a priest walked through the Door he saw to his left the Lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24; and 39:37).

The Lampstand had seven branches. It was made from one solid lump of gold, weighing a talent. A talent was over 90 pounds, or 1,500 ounces, or about 1,370 troy ounces. Some estimate the talent was 125 pounds. At \$1,000 U.S. per ounce that would make it worth \$1,250,000.

The Lampstand would need to be tall enough to give light to the top of the Golden Incense Altar. This would make it at least 2.3 cubits high (3.5 feet). The Lampstand might have been hollow for it to be that tall.

Stem

It had a central stem. This stem was called “the candlestick” (Exodus 25:34). It was called “his shaft” (Exodus 25:31). And it was called “the branch” (Exodus 37:17). Jesus is prophesied as the “Branch” (Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15; 23:25; Zechariah 3:8; and 6:12).

Branches

There were three branches on each side. Each branch had ornaments of bowls (almond blossoms), knops (pomegranates), and flowers (lilies). The terms in parenthesis are what most scholars agree upon. All three were on each branch. Four of them on the Stem. The ornaments were part of the one solid piece of gold.

Snuffers

There were snuffers (tongs or tweezers) used to trim the wicks, and snuff dishes which were used to hold the trimmings. These were made of pure gold, indicating that they can only point to deity. No human is qualified to perform their duties.

Wicks

The wicks represent the three members of the Godhead coming together to produce the Light. They cannot be Christians who are cleaned up of their imperfections by trimming. The trimming of Christians was already done at the Altar and Laver before entering into the Holy Place for worship.

The High Priest trimmed the lamps. The symbolism is that of Christ, our High Priest, who is always active in making sure the Light will never dim. In the physical world there were trimmings from the wick. In the spiritual realm there are no trimmings. Nothing burns up or out. Even in the physical realm, the trimmings (ashes) were holy.

Since Christ is our example, we should work to never allow our lamps to go out (see Matthew 25, the tale of the virgins and their lamps).

There must be enough oil, the Holy Spirit, which today translates into the Scriptures.

It requires having the Lampstand, Christ, who is the perfect Sacrifice of grace, mercy, and love.

It requires having the Fire, the Father, who is the Law and Judgment.

All three are needed to make our Light shine.

Oil

The lamps were fed with pure beaten olive oil.

This gave a finer oil than grinding. The Spirit gave pure truth. That truth never stops. It is said that the lamps burned continually. Christians take the truth and are “instant in season and out of season preaching the word” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The High Priest took care of the lamps. He made sure the light and the oil were sufficient. Christ as our High Priest does the same. He is ever active in making sure there is enough light for all of us. Since he no longer is on earth, and finished his work on earth, there is nothing he needs to do on earth in making light.

Light

The Lampstand gave the only light in the Holy Place. It sat on the South side of the room.

The word of God was revealed through the Spirit. Without Him there was only darkness in the Holy Place. Without the Bible in worship, there is only darkness. 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The Holy Spirit gave fuel (the words and works) to Jesus when he was on earth. The Spirit came to him at his baptism and it was then that he was able to perform miracles and teach and preach the word. Thus, the lamps give light over against it. Isaiah 61:1, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Isaiah 11:1-2, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

Zechariah 4:1-14

Zechariah gives a picture of the Candlestick. The Lord tells the prophet that he will accomplish his purpose with the Spirit. There are two olive trees in the passage. The prophet is told that they are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord.

In Revelation 11:3-4, the olive trees are called witnesses. Who are the two witnesses? In John 5:39, Jesus calls the Old Testament Scriptures a witness to him. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus says the gospel of the kingdom was a witness. Thus, the Holy Spirit gave the Old Testament and the New Testament as two olive trees that give continual oil supply to light the Holy Place. Today the Holy Place is the Church. The light is held by Jesus. He is the one who sup-

ports the oil, the Truth.

The Spirit and the Christ

These two work in tandem. You cannot have Christ without the Spirit. They are both crucial for the Light (Isaiah 11:2-5). The top lamp is the Spirit resting on Him. The next two lamps are wisdom and understanding. The next two lamps are counsel and might. The next two are knowledge and fear of the Lord. All of these work together in demonstrating his righteousness and faithfulness. All of these demonstrate that he can supply all spiritual needs.

Revelation 3:1, “He that hath the seven Spirits of God.” Jesus received the Spirit at his baptism. The anointing of oil of Aaron as high priest was representative of the Holy Spirit. The word “Christ” means “the anointed.”

The Fire

The fire from the Brazen Altar was what was used to light the oil on the Lampstand. Remember the fire came from heaven, from the Father.

2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Jesus said he was the light of the world (John 9:5).

Thus, all three personalities of the Godhead are seen in the Lampstand. The gold stands for the Christ. The oil stands for the Holy Spirit. The fire stands for the Father.

Those Outside of the Holy Place vs. Those Inside

Those outside the Holy Place have light. It was, and is, given from the Cloud and the Fire. These brought attention to the Tabernacle. Those outside the Tabernacle can see the evidence of God as he hovers over the Tabernacle. They see the beauty of the white Courtyard Wall. They see the beauty of the Gate. They are made to have curiosity and interest in what is inside. They see the march of the camp as Christians go out into the world. They should be drawn towards the Tabernacle.

God shines on – gives blessings to – the Just and the Unjust (Matthew 5:45).

But what is garnered from that shining is not enough to make one know and understand what is revealed by the Light in the Holy Place. This is why even for a Christian it is not enough to tie to the horn and stand on the Altar. It is even not enough to constantly look at oneself in the Laver. One must

join other priests in the Holy Place. One must participate in those things inside the Tent. To purposefully refrain from joining the other priests is to sin. (Hebrews 10:25-26 – While the context of this passage is that Christians were going back to the Old Law and forsaking Christ, the principle holds that if a person willfully refrains from gathering with the saints, that person is in sin. See Hebrews 10:29.)

By having been inside, after standing on the Altar and after washing at the Laver, there is a better understanding, a more intimate relationship with the Light, its blessings, and those things associated with it in the Holy Place. (There are activities within the Holy Place that sanctify a person. A person cannot be a faithful priest without that sanctification. These will be addressed later.)

After having been in the Holy Place, a person can more easily go about the daily activities in the Courtyard. There is an anticipation of returning to the Holy Place. And by applying the knowledge and wisdom which comes from it, there is a better life in the Courtyard. This is not anything like a ‘holy umph’ or a ‘holy wow’ as some professed Christians claim. It is not saying that there is a baptism of the Spirit when one is converted that gives the Christian a special power to understand. It is not saying that a non-Christian cannot learn and understand many aspects of the church and God’s salvation (for without those one cannot become a Christian).

But, God designed the worship of the church as a place of intimate relationship and learning. Proper growth of the Christian cannot occur without worship with the saints.

Private study is a form of worship giving great gains. “O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day... I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation” (Psalm 119:97, 99). The righteous person meditates in God’s law day and night (Psalm 1:2).

But, the Christian needs corporate worship or he/she slowly dies. “...in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36: 9b). This is group activity within the Light. This gathering not only is for personal gain but also for encouraging the other priests to remain faithful (Hebrews 10:24-25).

It is after one is properly enlightened by the Light, that one goes out into the world able to say, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:130).

It is after proper meditation day and night that

one can prosper and have good success (Joshua 1:9).

The Perfect Unwavering Light

Without the Light from the Candlestick it was impossible to see the Table of Shewbread or the Altar of Incense. The path to them was by the Light of the Lampstand. “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

Isaiah 60:19-20, “The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” This was shown to be a reference to the Cloud and Fire Pillar. It also applies to the Holy Place. There was no light available inside from the sun or the moon. God is the only source of light for the spiritual life of a Christian.

Zechariah 14:6-7 is part of the prophecy of the church. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, no day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” Again, this applied to the Cloud and Fire Pillar. But, it also applies inside the Holy Place. It was never day or night. The light remained the same at all times. This being a forepicture of the spiritual light for the Christian.

There is no waxing or waning of light in the church. Jesus is constantly shining.

The Cloud and Fire Pillar kept a constant, steady light. James referenced this in 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” It is referenced again in Revelation 21:23, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

No Mold

There was no mold for the Lampstand. The one lump was beaten into the Lampstand. Jesus as a man learned obedience unto death to be glorified as King and High Priest – bringing the fullness of light to man.

Isaiah 53:5, “He was bruised for our iniquities.”

Isaiah 53:10, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed."

He is the pattern. Jesus is the mold for us when it comes to suffering. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:10-11).

Fruit Blossoms

The fruit blossoms indicate fruit that is brought forth through Christ, the Word, via the Holy Spirit.

Almond is from the Hebrew word which means "to hasten." The almond tree is covered with blossoms before it shows leaves. In Jeremiah 1:11, God asks the prophet what he sees. The prophet answers, "A rod of an almond tree." God says, "thou has well seen, for I will hasten My Word to perform it." The word "hasten" can also be translated "wakeful." Psalm 121:4, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." When the Jews saw the almonds they were assured of a new Spring bringing new life. This shows the continual Spring of spiritual life brought through Christ. He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). In Numbers 17, we read about Aaron's rod. It brought forth buds, blossoms, and yielded almonds. Like the rod, Christ was cut down in death, but rose as the first fruits of them that are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Lilies are used for the purity and pleasantness of love (Song of Solomon 2:1).

The **pomegranate** pictures reproduction and fruitfulness (Song of Solomon 7:12). John 15:5, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

The Shaft

In Exodus 25:31, the word "shaft" comes from a Hebrew word which can mean "outside of the thigh; loins; side; or body." This brings to mind Christ having a sword coming out of his mouth (Revelation 1:16; 2:16; 19:15, 21). This showing he has his sword unsheathed.

The loins were used to reference, 1) work (Luke 12:35); 2) a sound mind (1 Peter 1:13); 3) the readi-

ness of warfare (Ephesians 6:14); 4) righteous preparation (Isaiah 11:5); or 5) reproductive power (Genesis 46:26). All of these are seen in Christ. He performed the perfect work. He was of sound mind. He was always engaged in spiritual warfare. He perfectly prepared himself in righteousness. He is the one who brings forth spiritual children.

The side brings to mind the water and blood coming from his pierced side. This being the symbol of his personal sacrifice. The body brings to mind his total sacrifice. He gave all.

The Branch

In Exodus 37:17, the main stem is "the branch." Isaiah 4:2, "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." Jeremiah 23:5, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch." Isaiah 11:1, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." The Hebrew word here for branch is "Netzer" which some believe to be a connection with Nazareth.

The Branches

Many commentators state a belief that the branches are representative of Christians coming off of the main tree. Hebrews 2:11, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." The tent is called the tent of the congregation (Exodus 40:2, 6).

However, there is no wood inside the gold. Wood is representative of humanity. Pure gold is deity.

For it to represent Christians lighting the world, the Lamp would have to be taken outside the Holy Place into the Court. For only priests are allowed in the Holy Place. The Lampstand, with its branches, is not taken out of the Holy Place.

Conclusion

It is all Christ and the Spirit. This is shown in Revelation 1 with the seven Candlesticks. Christ is in the midst of the candlesticks. Christ has authority to remove the candlestick from each congregation.

Revelation 4:5, "Out of the throne proceedeth lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." Revelation 3:1, "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God."

About the Authors

Tom Baxley is presently the minister for the Highway 9 church of Christ, but has high hopes of one day venturing to Middle-earth, hoping to rebuild and minister to the great city of Osgiliath, and finally teach them the greatness of ultimate frisbee and disc golf. Until that time he will remain in Alabama with his wife and three children.

Dewayne Bryant is the minister for the New York Ave. church of Christ in Arlington, TX. He has served as a professor of Bible for four different schools and works as both a minister and as a Christian apologist for Apologetics Press and the Apologia Institute. He is also the host of the “Light From the Past” podcast (which your editor enjoys).

Cory Collins is a preacher, teacher, husband, father, and marriage counselor who blogs regularly at <https://coryhcollins.blogspot.com/>.

Gerald Cowan earned degrees from Freed-Hardeman College, Lambuth University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He has preached the gospel to which he is committed for a bit more than 60 years. He is also committed to short-term missions, focusing for the past 22 years on the European country of Albania (Biblical Illyricum). He and his wife Neda have produced children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Though he was a late comer to the gospel and a late bloomer as well, an underachieving writer, and is considered a lame duck by many, he steadfastly resists retirement, is still a student, and glad to be called a preacher.

Adam Cozort works with the Lakeside church of Christ in Springfield, IL. Over the last 15 years, he has preached full-time with congregations in Illinois, Mississippi, and Georgia. He is a licensed high school sports official in football, basketball, and baseball. He and his wife Shea have five sons who they have been homeschooling since before COVID-19 made homeschooling a requirement.

David Dean serves the church of Christ in Fouke

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Jason Floyd is one of the few people in this world for whom “talking about the weather” is actually an important topic. His role as a weather-watcher at the Albany, NY, airport requires it. He and his wife, Sarah, homeschool their two sons. Jason preaches for the church in Bennington, Vermont. They are quite adept at making elderberry syrup (which, I hear, is great for fighting off sickness).

Kyle Frank is a disabled workaholic whose idea of fun is spending twelve hours a day reading the American Standard Version (of 1901), Restoration Movement biographies, sermons, and seeing how many writing projects he can keep going at once. He also runs So and So Publishing.

Scott Harp may be best known for running the incredibly informative, detailed, and interesting website, www.TheRestorationMovement.com. (You can spend days digging through all the information there). He is also the author of *The Sage of Jasper: Gus Nichols – A Biography*.

Bill Howard is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his “retired” time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others.

John Krivak is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted via email by using jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Richard Mansel is a preacher, writer, book-lover, and former editor of *Forthright Magazine*.

Mike Mazzalongo, a Canadian by birth and Oklahoman by choice, has been mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal* for his work with BibleTalk.tv. All of his teaching series are available on YouTube, BibleTalk.tv, Amazon Prime, as well as separate podcasts.

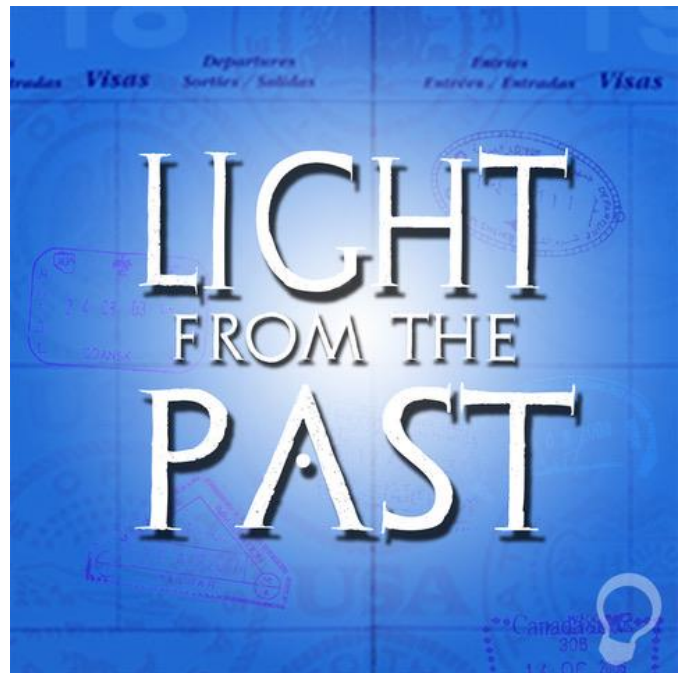
Mark McWhorter is an extremely knowledgeable medical expert who assisted with heart transplants, and developed protocols which today are standards. In addition to writing for the Quarterly, he also sells used books at affordable prices, and tries to help people be rational in the face of medical crises.

Jim Mitchell recently purchased the copyrights to Ivan Stewart's Open Bible Study program, and has been using it to great success. He and his wife Jennifer live in Oklahoma City, where he works with the Cherokee Hills congregation.

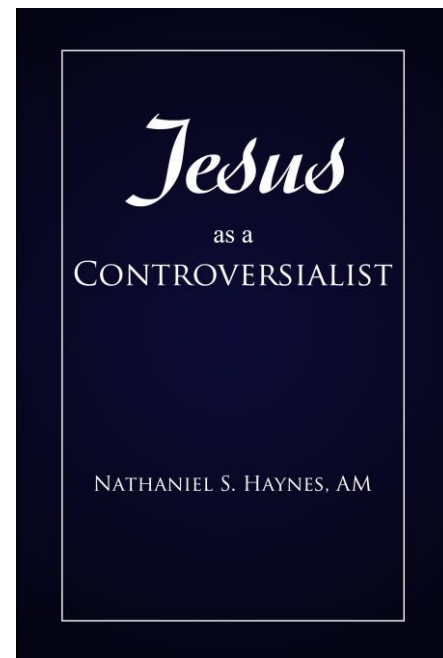
Jake Schotter loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He has been very fortunate to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them cheaply. He is a sophomore Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

Michael Shank is a former electrician who wrote a book called *Muscle and a Shovel*, describing his conversion to the Lord, and another, *When Shovels Break*, that shows that Christians who fell away can come back to the Christ. He is currently getting acclimated to the higher elevations since moving to Colorado.

Bradley S. Cobb has defied the odds and successfully repaired the steering column on a riding mower, completely rewired a bedroom, installed new walls, ceiling, and insulation (though not in that order) in the same bedroom, preached at a WWII veteran's funeral (that brother reminded him to do it for the past 5 years), went mountain-hiking, live-streamed sermons and devotionals, shot a nail through his finger, and personally loaded or unloaded over 100,000 packages since the Coronavirus panic began. He is married to his best friend, and they are presently celebrating twenty years since they started dating (7,316 days as of the time this was typed—but who's counting?).



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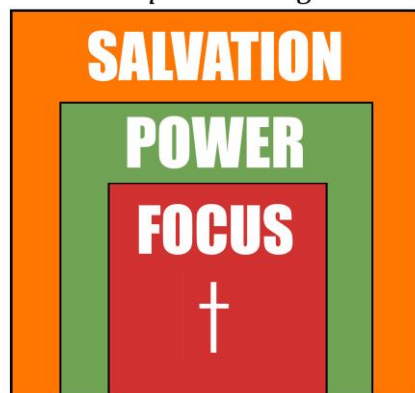
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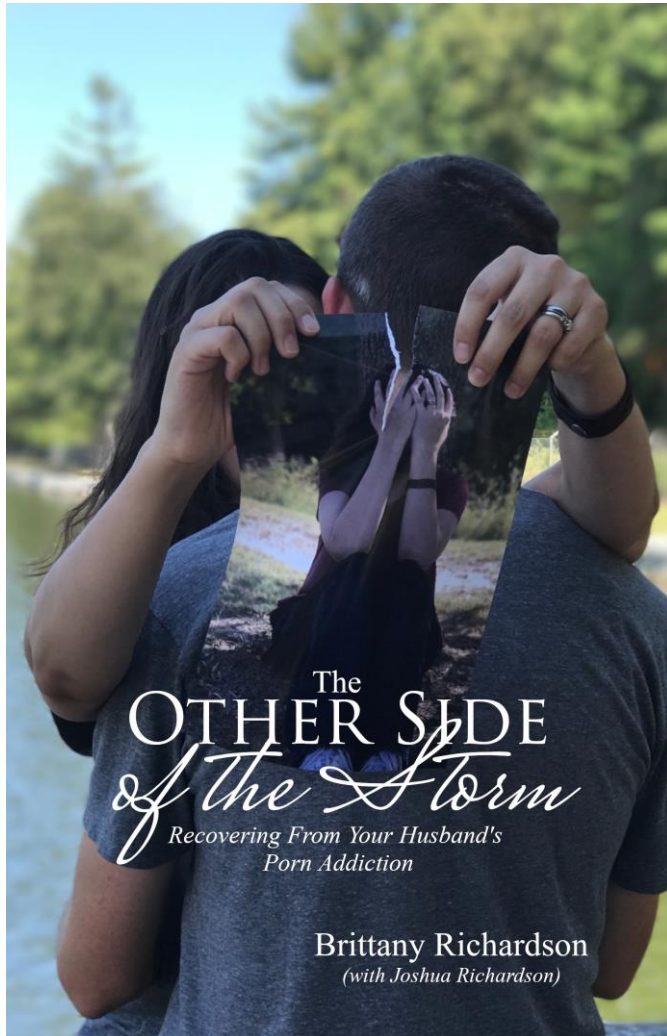
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