

# UPLOOK

APRIL 2006

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

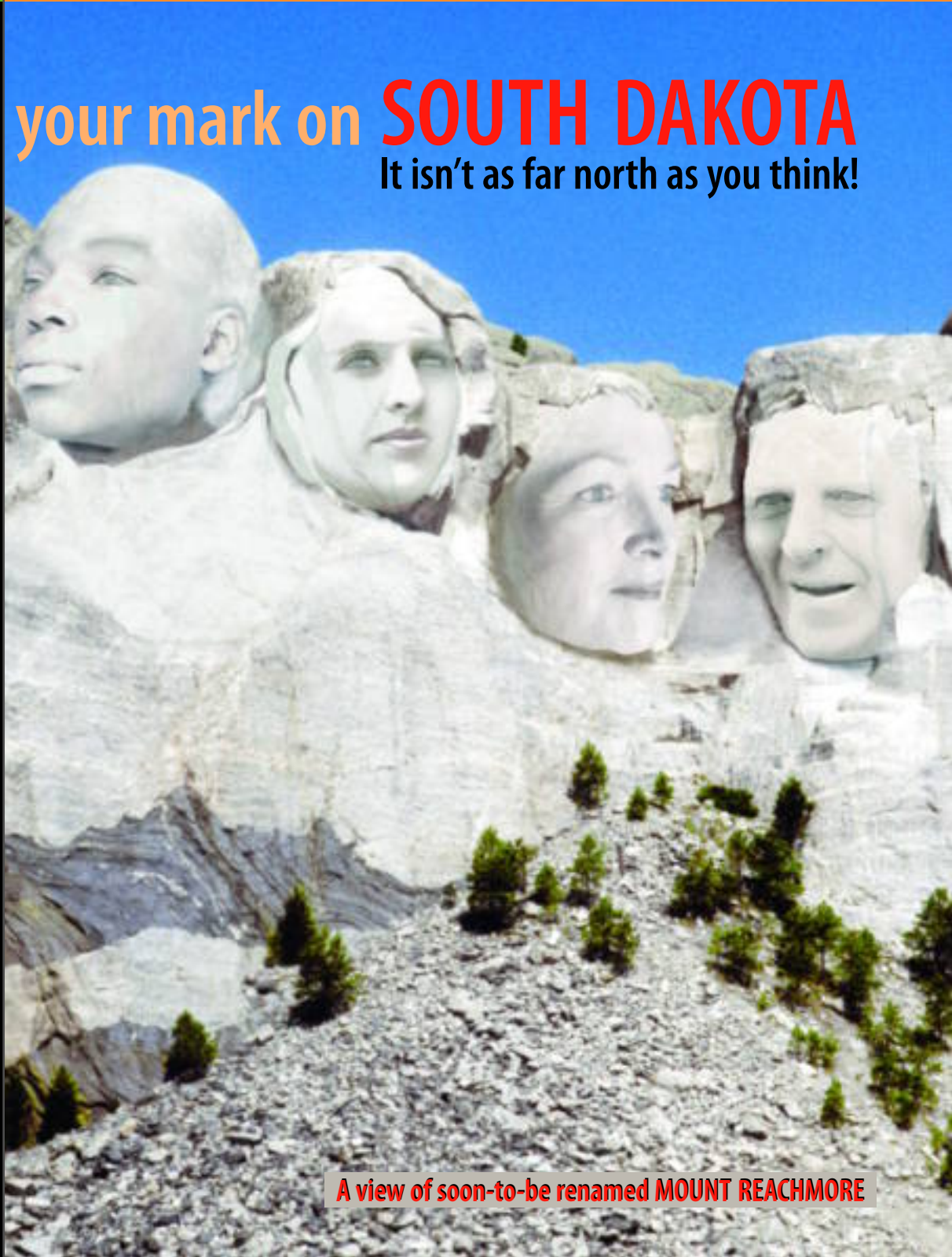
Leave your mark on **SOUTH DAKOTA**  
It isn't as far north as you think!

**GO SOUTH,  
YOUNG  
MAN!**

**Sioux Falls:**  
City of  
unlimited  
(spiritual)  
opportunity

**THIS ISSUE  
CONTAINS VITAL  
TIME-SENSITIVE  
INFORMATION  
see page 13!**

**A major  
gospel effort  
with the  
GOOD NEWS  
on the MOVE  
TEAM**



**A view of soon-to-be renamed MOUNT REACHMORE**

## The Real Miracle

Ordinary or extraordinary—it all depends on your point of view.

**W**e think of miracles as displays of raw power. And, of course, they are. But there's another factor in the miraculous: miracles are events that are out of the ordinary. If everyone had the power to turn water into wine, the events at Cana would have been unremarkable, and the glory of the Lord Jesus would not have been manifested. But Cana was a miracle—a sign—precisely because such a thing was unheard of. The healing of the blind man in John 9 was a sign, because “*since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*” (Jn. 9:32). The Lord's miracles stand out because they are foreign to us. But, for a moment, let us not think about what is unusual to us, but what was out of the ordinary for Him. Let us consider miracles from His point of view.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were overcome with a brief glimpse of His glory. To them it was an exceptional experience in their years with Him, and they never forgot it. But for the Lord Jesus, that instant of glory was the norm; it was the rest of His time on earth that was peculiar. From all eternity He was the radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:3), and no force in the universe could hide that glory. Yet He veiled it Himself, so that He could come close to us without our being consumed. The real miracle wasn't the flash of glory; it was the grace that veiled that glory for thirty-three years.

We're impressed that He miraculously provided wine at Cana and bread to the multitudes. But Christ had been sustaining others for as long as the creation existed. The truly astounding thought is that the One who could provide food and drink at will, began His ministry hungry and ended it thirsty.

Men marveled as they saw hints of the deity of Christ. But surely for the Lord Jesus it wasn't deity that was new. “*In the beginning ... the Word was God*” (Jn. 1:1). The miracle was that the eternal God stepped into time and took on humanity. “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” (Jn. 1:14).

We're told that when He returns, the touch of His feet will split the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). Surely that will be spectacular! But isn't the real miracle the fact that the mountain didn't split the first time He stood on it? The Creator of the universe—the One who fills heaven and earth—stood on this little speck of His creation and it survived!

We stand in awe of the One who could raise the dead. And well we should. But providing life was no new feat for the Son of God. All life—physical, spiritual, abundant, eternal—comes from Him. The shocking truth is that the One who had inherent life submitted Himself to death.

We wonder at His works of power. But every one of these was simply a natural consequence of His nature. They might be foreign to us, but they were natural to Him. What was unusual for Him? The Bread of Life hungered. The Light of the World was enclosed in darkness. The Life died. In truth, His entire life on earth was a miracle, a sign: a constant manifestation of the glory of God. And it was anything but ordinary.

“*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (Jn. 1:14).

Photo: Wolf Schubach



Kafr Kana, 4 miles NE of Nazareth is suggested by some to be the biblical site of the first two miracles performed by Jesus (water to wine; healing of the nobleman's son). Others prefer Khirbet Qana, 8 miles NE of Nazareth.

Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.

—C. S. Lewis

# U P L O O K

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UPLOOK magazine is intended to encourage the people of God in fidelity to His Word, fervency in intercessory prayer, labors more abundant, and love to the Lord. Believing in the practical Headship of Christ and the local autonomy of each assembly, this is not intended to be an official organ of any group or federation of local churches. The editor and authors take responsibility for materials published. For any blessing which accrues, to God be the glory.

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- 2) by using the form on our website at:

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- 3) by contacting our office at any time, by phone, fax, mail or e-mail.

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# NEW LIFE IN HIM *From seed planting to fruit growing*

## Faithful in Gathering Together

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...”

**T**en years ago a young man professed to be saved and was baptized before our assembly. He never returned. I’ve observed new converts who, at one time, faithfully attended every meeting of the assembly, begin to slowly fade away after a year or two. Some older believers have become spotty in their attendance over time because of work, needed rest, family time, or a desire to beat the crowds at the restaurant. Is this attitude any cause for concern? How important are the meetings of the local church anyway?

It may be that some who have excused themselves from the meetings of the local church are actually unsaved (1 Jn. 2:19). An unbeliever has no spiritual appetite for the Word of God (Rom. 8:5) or godly fellowship with believers (1 Jn. 1:7). In a coming day, many who professed to be saved will be exposed as unbelievers (Mt. 7:22). But it is quite possible for genuine believers to experience struggles in their Christian lives. Walking steadfastly with the Lord requires discipline (1 Cor. 9:27), utilizing the spiritual resources at our disposal (Eph. 6:10-18). It’s easy to backslide.

The Epistle to the Hebrews addressed this tendency, touching on problems such as: slipping doctrinally (2:1), lacking assurance (3:14; 10:35), spiritual laziness (5:11-14), the possibility of a false profession of faith (6:1-9), lacking patience over the long haul (6:12; 10:36), and embracing empty religion rather than a living Saviour (6:1-2). The remedy for these

problems is clearly given in the latter pages of the book, and being faithful in attending meetings is key:

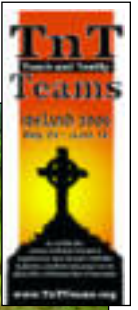
*“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:23-25).*



Of course, attending meetings does not, in itself, make one spiritual. However, each meeting of the New Testament church had a purpose for the edification of the believer.

At times they met for prayer (Acts 4:31), teaching (Acts 11:26), missionary updates (Acts 14:27), to break bread (Acts 20:7), or to hold each other accountable (1 Cor. 5:4; 14:29, 32). As the church gathered together “into one place” (1 Cor. 14:23) believers were edified, exhorted, and comforted by the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26), singing (1 Cor. 14:15), and prayer (1 Cor. 14:16). Spiritually gifted believers were present for the “perfecting [maturing] of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13). Each believer was spiritually equipped to play a necessary role in the local church (1 Cor. 12:22). One brother stated it well: “We need you and you need us” at the meetings of the local assembly.

—RANDY HORN



## TnT Teams Ireland

**"Pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers"**

**B**elievers are still needed for a short-term mission trip to Ireland May 23 – June 15. If you're 18 to 80 and believe you can help, visit [www.tntteams.org](http://www.tntteams.org) or contact Ron Hampton (e-mail: [ron.hampton@tntteams.org](mailto:ron.hampton@tntteams.org), telephone: 204-669-6026). Some comments: "I gained a fresh vision for evangelism, a new passion for seeing people saved, and a better understanding of how to witness to people. I learned about prayer dependence and personal devotion to Christ."—MIKE, BC • "Being able to work with people who are of the same mind, working to spread the gospel...an amazing privilege."—BECKY, ON • "The trip is well organized, well worth the cost...potentially life-changing."—Anna, NC • "The arrival of the TnT crew is anticipated months before & remembered years after...an immeasurable encouragement to the local believers."—LEN, DUBLIN, IRELAND • "We have really enjoyed having the team here...The work they have done has been tremendous...and I think I speak on behalf of the other missionaries in saying thanks to each assembly who has a team member here."—COLIN BURNETT, MISSIONARY • "Most people that go on short-term mission trips say that it changes your life. Well, believe me—it does! Ireland is an awesome way to begin a lifestyle of evangelism."—JONATHAN, MI

### **TURKEY HILL RANCH BIBLE CAMP**

Turkey Hill Ranch, Vienna, MO announces their 2006 camps. *Memorial Day Family Camp* May 26-29. Speakers: Jon Brower (adults) & Tom Brammer (children). *Labor Day Family Camp* Sep 1-4. Speakers: Keith Trevolt (adults) & Buddy Hughes (children). Various week-long camps are planned for ages 8-17 during Jun and Jul. Those 15 or older are encouraged to prayerfully consider serving the Lord on staff. Visit [www.turkeyhillranch.com](http://www.turkeyhillranch.com) for schedule, applications or more details. Registration info 573-744-9293 email: [thrbc@turkeyhillranch.com](mailto:thrbc@turkeyhillranch.com)

### **LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE**

The 29th Annual Ladies Missionary Conference, Windsor, ON, co-sponsored by ladies from Oakwood & Turner Road Bible Chapels, is planned for Sat May 6 at 9:30 AM. Nursery & lunch provided. Speakers are Rosy Cavanaugh (Mexico), Marj Robbins (QC) and a team of ladies reporting on their visit to Ireland.

**Contact:** Jan Gillis at 519-967-7015 email: [neilgillis@sympatico.ca](mailto:neilgillis@sympatico.ca)

### **CONFERENCE IN INDIANA**

The annual Spring Conference at the Gospel Chapel, 321 Cliff Dr., Logansport, IN, is to be held May 6, Lord willing. Expected speaker: Ross Ragland (MO). Refreshments at 9:30 AM with sessions at 10 and 11 AM. Lunch provided. Brother Ragland will also speak Sunday morning. **Contact:** Ralph Garver 574-722-1012 email: [Leegar@Lneti.com](mailto:Leegar@Lneti.com)

### **SPRING CONFERENCE IN NY**

The Bellevue Gospel Chapel in Schenectady, NY and Northway Bible Chapel in Clifton Park, NY will hold an Annual Spring Conference at Northway Bible Chapel on May 6-7. The speaker will be Bob Hayes (NJ). Meetings begin Saturday at 3:30 PM. **Contact:** John E. Smith 518-861-6486 email: [johnesmith@aol.com](mailto:johnesmith@aol.com)

### **CHICAGO AREA LADIES' CONFERENCE**

The 61st Annual Chicago Area Ladies'

Missionary Conference will be held May 6 from 9:00 AM-1:30 PM at Palos Hills Christian Assembly in Palos Hills, IL. In the will of the Lord, the expected speakers are Alexandra Grendahl, Sharon Fleming, and Rachel Yost. Lunch tickets are \$7.00. Contact Joni Kennelly 708-974-4324 for information, tickets, directions, or accommodations.

### **WORD ALIVE CONFERENCE**

The Word Alive Southeast Annual Family Conference is planned for May 12-13 at Washington Chapel, Washington, GA. The scheduled speaker is Joe Reese (ON) on the subjects of Salvation, Security, Sanctification and Service. Children's meetings will be conducted by Scott Degroff (KS). Meeting times are Fri at 7:30 PM and Sat 9 AM-3 PM. For directions or accommodations call 706-678-3180 or 706-359-6297.

### **CREATION CONFERENCE**

Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, WI, is hosting a Creation Conference

## FRONT LINES *continued*

A house located  
on the property of the  
Shepherd Christian Community,  
Frostproof, FL.



at the camp May 12-13. Carl Kerby from “Answers in Genesis” (AiG) will be the main speaker. Programs are available for children, and families are welcome. Future conferences are planned for Aug 14-18 with Mike Riddle and Nov 10-11 with Bodie Hodge, both with AiG. Registration information can be found at [www.lwbc.org](http://www.lwbc.org)  
**Contact:** 608-634-4373

### VESSELS OF HONOR 2006

A Young Adults’ Conference convened by East Tulsa (OK) Bible Chapel will be held on the campus of Park University, Parkville, MO, May 26-29. The theme: “Reaching Out to a Lost World.” General session speakers: Jonathan Peck (NC), Steve Price (KS), and Mike Attwood (GA). Seminar speakers, along with general speakers, are Craig Rolinger, Nancy Rolinger and Warren Henderson.  
**Contact:** Jim Lindamood 918-663-1121  
email: [jimlindamood@vesselsofhonor.org](mailto:jimlindamood@vesselsofhonor.org)  
Dan Moffitt 918-744-6484  
email: [dannmoffitt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dannmoffitt@sbcglobal.net)  
[www.vesselsofhonor.org](http://www.vesselsofhonor.org)

### SPIRITUAL SPA FOR GIRLS

Faith Bible Chapel, 439 Moore Street, London, ON is hosting a conference June 2-3 for girls 12 years and older. Nadia Mikhael (ON) is the expected speaker. Plan to attend and bring your mom, your sister or a friend for fellowship, seminars, music, testimonies and a Saturday evening banquet. Meetings and meals will be at Faith Bible Chapel. Registration begins at 7:00 PM on Friday and the conference concludes at 9:00 PM Saturday. Cost is \$10.00 per person plus hotel. Accommodations can be arranged at the Radisson Hotel, 855 Wellington Rd. S. (800-333-3333) for a reduced rate

prior to May 1. Refer to “Faith Bible Chapel – Group Rate.” **Contact:** Ruth Bell 289-314-2792  
email: [ruth\\_bell@sympatico.ca](mailto:ruth_bell@sympatico.ca)

### LIVING WATERS BIBLE CAMP

Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, WI, has a full slate of camps scheduled for the summer:

Jun 11-17 Work Week  
Jun 17-Jul 1 Foundation Camp  
Jun 18-24 3rd–5th Grade Camp  
Jun 25-Jul 1 7th & 8th Grade Girls  
Jul 2-8 Family  
Jul 9-15 9th & 10th Grade  
Jul 16-22 4th–6th Grade  
Jul 16-22 Girls Out-Trip  
Jul 23-29 11th & 12th Grade  
Jul 30-Aug 5 7th–9th Grade Boys  
Aug 6-12 3rd–6th Grade  
Aug 6-12 Young Adult Out-Trip  
Registration for these camps or information can be found at [www.lwbc.org](http://www.lwbc.org)  
**Contact:** 608-634-4373  
email: [lwbc@lwbc.org](mailto:lwbc@lwbc.org)

### IOWA BIBLE CAMP 50TH

The 50th anniversary of the founding of Iowa Bible Camp will be celebrated at the Twin Lakes Christian Center, Manson, IA, Jun 23. All who have had some part in the camp are urged to join with us. For particulars, visit [www.iowabiblecamp.org](http://www.iowabiblecamp.org).  
**Contact:** Tom Baird 515-276-1309  
email [tomyrna57@aol.com](mailto:tomyrna57@aol.com)

### CAMP JUBILEE, NC

Camp Jubilee, a five-day resident camp for young people with special needs, is preparing for the second year of ministry. This Christ-centered program includes chapel time, crafts, recreation and other activities. Camper age begins at 10 years, with

disabilities in the mild to moderate range. Experienced Christian Bible teachers and counselors provide an exciting week for campers. Camp will be held at Camp Good News in Fairview, NC, Jun 26-30. The maximum number of campers is 25. Camper-counselor ratio is no more than 2 to 1. Campers and support staff are needed. Our greatest need is prayer for this challenging opportunity. Camp Jubilee is an outreach ministry of Parkway Chapel in Winston-Salem, NC. **Contact:** Janice Bishop 336-764-9169  
email: [parkwaychapel@juno.com](mailto:parkwaychapel@juno.com)  
[www.parkwaychapel.us](http://www.parkwaychapel.us) – follow the link for Camp Jubilee.

### RAMSEUR BIBLE STUDY

Brethren in the Ramseur/Randleman area of NC are planning a school year of classes through May. These classes are to be held at Ramseur Gospel Chapel one Saturday a month.  
**Contact:** Mike Moody 336-824-5525  
email: [mcjmoody@yahoo.com](mailto:mcjmoody@yahoo.com)

### SHEPHERD CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Located in Frostproof, Florida (1 hr and 15 min. south of Orlando) is Shepherd Christian Community, an assembly retirement community, started in 1976.

Facilities include: 22 pre-manufactured houses installed on 1/3rd acre plots. Each house has two or three bedrooms, two full baths, kitchen, living room, carport and some have a fully covered and air-conditioned porch. Some of these houses are owned by individuals, and some are available for purchase. Also 1/3rd acre plots (developed plot) are available to build houses on.



Lake Reedy, Frostproof, Florida

There are also 8 houses and 3 one-bedroom apartments available for rent. An RV park is also planned for completion by the end of the year. Also on the property is an Assembly Hall (seating for 120), a Fellowship Hall (seating for 100) with attached kitchen, access to Lake Reedy, picnic areas, fishing dock and boat rides. For more details, **Contact:** Main Office: 863-635-5414 email: [shepherdoffice@juno.com](mailto:shepherdoffice@juno.com)

### UPWARD BOUND

Upward Bound will be holding its summer conference at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. The first week will be a series of in-depth seminars on various biblical subjects. The schedule is heavy but there are also many opportunities for Christian growth through fellowship and times of fun with other believers. Speakers will include: Dr. David Gooding (Belfast, UK), Brian Russell (Eastbourne, UK), Dennis Leblanc (NB), and Sandy McEachern (NS). For those able, a second week of canoeing and camping in Algonquin Park will also be a part of the program. The dates are Aug 13-20 for Week One and Aug 20-25 for Week Two. **Contact:** Sandy McEachern 902-830-1305 email: [sandymceachern@hotmail.com](mailto:sandymceachern@hotmail.com)

### UNITING IN LONDON, ON

After much prayer, the saints of Edward Street Gospel Chapel and Bethel Chapel in London, ON have united as one assembly effective Feb 1. Edward Street Gospel Chapel was built in approximately 1920 and Bethel Chapel in 1934. Bethel Chapel is located in the same area of London, just a few blocks east of Edward Street and is a larger facility with plenty of parking. They have renamed this new work "Faith Bible Chapel." **Contact:** Les Doey 519-768-2356 email: [lesdoey9@sympatico.ca](mailto:lesdoey9@sympatico.ca)

### NEW NY FELLOWSHIP

There is a new assembly planted in Orange County, NY on the property of Pine Bush Bible Camp, 76 Bible Camp Road, Bloomingburg, NY. **Contact:** Richie Benetiz 845-477-0764 email: [RoyalPriest4Him@yahoo.com](mailto:RoyalPriest4Him@yahoo.com)

### MISSION SPRINGS CONFERENCE

The annual Pacific Coast Christian Conference will be held on Oct 2-6. Please note the new location, Mission Springs (75 miles south of San Francisco, CA in the Santa Cruz Mountains). The conference begins Monday with dinner at 6:00 PM and ends Friday after lunch. Speakers: David Reid (RI) and Bob Foutz (MI). **Contact:** Max Krieger 323-256-1992 e-mail: [maxnbethk@sbcglobal.net](mailto:maxnbethk@sbcglobal.net)

### NTBF, CLERMONT FL

New Testament Believers' Fellowship met at Clermont (FL) Middle School to remember the Lord and fellowship as an assembly for the first time on Mar 26. Clermont is southwest of Orlando on US 27. Believers living or visiting in the

Clermont area are invited to contact Buck Matthews 407-469-2087 or Lanny Evans 407-469-2712. email: [lanny.evans@earthlink.net](mailto:lanny.evans@earthlink.net)

### COMMENDATION

*Ed and Barbara Anthony*

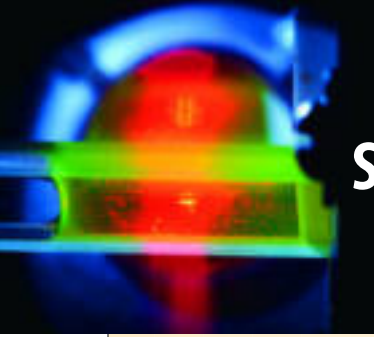
The Anthony's have served the Lord faithfully in their original home assembly in Connecticut as well as in their current home assembly in Nashville, TN. Additionally, they have given of their time to minister in other areas as the Lord has led, and their ministry has been blessed of the Lord and is therefore profitable for His people. Their commitment to the Word of God, to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and to New Testament Church principles is abundantly evident in their personal walk and ministry. The commending assemblies have recognized the call of the Lord on their lives to an itinerant Bible teaching ministry, and therefore heartily commend the Anthonys to God and His grace for the work to which He has called them.

### OUTREACH IN DENMARK, SWEDEN

A Rotary convention will be held in Copenhagen in June and volunteers are needed to give tracts out to delegates from 130 countries. Help is also needed in Germany at the World Cup outreach. **Contact:** Stan Engle 405-236-LIFE email: [sgengle@aol.com](mailto:sgengle@aol.com) [www.Lifehouse.org](http://www.Lifehouse.org)

### HOMECALL

Mr. Roger Cocking, age 93, went home to be with the Lord on Mar 12. A memorial service was held Mar 18 in Fargo, ND. 📍



## The Miracle and Mystery of Life

The sum of the parts—without God—still doesn't equal life.

**M**odern aircraft can carry passengers and cargo to altitudes as high as six miles and are assembled from many thousands of precisely machined parts. The airplane as a whole can fly, even though it is made of non-flying parts.

Take, for example, a wheel or a single wing flap or the fuselage. By themselves these parts cannot fly (throwing doesn't count), but when integrated with all the other parts, they take on a new characteristic that is not inherent in any of the individual parts—flight.

It is not miraculous or mysterious that intelligent people discovered the mathematical and physical principles of flight and used them to build objects that fly. But it is miraculous and mysterious that life itself even exists, and that it exists in multiple levels of complexity. Life is really a

compounded miracle. Take one cell from your mouth. This living cell is made of non-living chemicals like water, proteins, fats, acids, carbohydrates, and salts. These chemicals obey the laws of physics and chemistry based on their composition and can be separated or combined at will in a test tube. Yet they are not alive. So the property of life is not inherent within inorganic and organic chemicals. That is, life is not the result of spontaneous mixtures of dead chemicals as some of the evolutionary faith believe. Rather, the miracle of life is that dead chemicals were skillfully and intentionally arranged by someone into a form that they do not naturally take and which is far greater than the sum of the parts—a living cell.

Compounding the miracle of life from dead chemicals are the levels of cooperation and specialization of cells that form organs, organ systems, whole organisms, and even populations of organisms like a flock of geese, a herd

of sheep, or a forest ecosystem. These complex and interrelated systems are the compounded miracles of life. Within their boundaries they obey, but they do not create, the biological laws of genetic variation, natural selection, population dynamics, and biochemistry. Instead, these physical and biological laws must have been set in place by someone outside of the entire system. Someone we will call the Creator.

So who is this mysterious Creator with the power and skill to form dead chemicals into living things? Many believe this question is unanswerable and is similar to the

historical question of who built the ring of huge stone blocks in England called Stonehenge: people built Stonehenge but they did not leave their names inscribed on the stone nor are there written records identifying the builders. Likewise, the Creator did not inscribe His name on each strand of DNA or write it in the clouds for all to see. But, unlike the builders of Stonehenge, the Creator of the Universe wants to be known, and even worshipped. Since the living world around us is a compounded miracle, isn't it reasonable to start the search for the Creator by looking for Someone who performs miracles?

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.





# Water Turned into Wine

And the best wine at that!

Lessons are more readily learned when they can be visualized. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a miracle must be worth many times more. The miracles of the Lord Jesus were not just designed to meet the need of the moment, but to also impart timeless truths. The Lord told stories in parable form. These parables were earthly stories with a heavenly or spiritual meaning. Miracles were action parables designed to impart lessons to those who would take the time to observe and consider. In John's Gospel, the miracles are referred to as *signs* since they attest to the deity of Jesus as the Son of God.

This miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana is the first, as well as

one of the best known, of the miracles of Jesus. It helps to frame the public ministry of the Lord. This first sign occurs at a wedding, His last at the graveside of Lazarus. This scene also gives validity and sanctity to marriage and emphasizes the value of having the Lord Jesus as a guest at our weddings.

This event takes place on the "third day," though the text does not tell us what to use as a framework to identify this day. Was it the third day the Lord was in Cana or was it the third day from the day mentioned in John 1:43? If the latter were the case, this would be the seventh day mentioned in the first two chapters. Fittingly, a wedding with the Lord present on the seventh day would symbolize a feast yet to come.

Involved in this narrative are people who by their conversation and conduct provide lessons for us. Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, was there at the feast. Her concern for the plight of the host might suggest this was the wedding of a relative. In first century Jewish society, the social consequences of running out of food or wine were considerable and could involve financial ruin and great embarrassment. The presence of Mary on this occasion also serves to provide contrast to her next appearance in John's Gospel. She is here at a wedding feast at the beginning of the Lord's ministry and appears next at the end of that ministry, at the foot of the cross.

Mary's only words in John's Gospel occur in this passage. She told the Lord Jesus there was no wine and then said to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do

A number of years ago this outline was given to me and I have found it helpful both for study and sermons. It can also be applied to all the miracles and parables of the Bible. There are three points to consider: the context, the contents, and the conclusions. —GARY MCBRIDE

## THE CONTEXT

Look at what precedes and follows the story or event. That will give light on what the story or event is meant to illustrate. The Lord Jesus was the master teacher and used visual and verbal illustrations to convey truth.

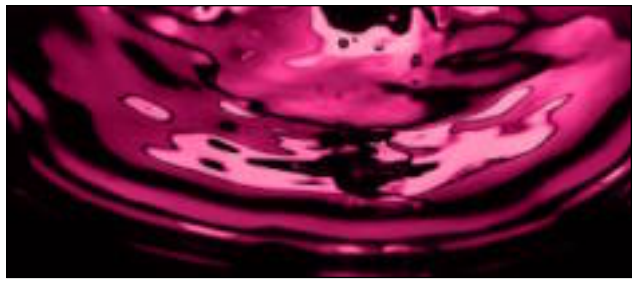
## THE CONTENTS

Look at the elements of the parable or the particulars of a miracle. Seek to understand the issues in light of the culture and customs of the day.

## THE CONCLUSIONS

Remember that each miracle and parable seeks to teach only one primary truth. That means that not every detail has a meaning or is significant in determining the message. However, although Scripture must only have one interpretation, there may be a number of applications. Devotional thoughts from meditation can be very heart-warming. The interpretation and applications are what make the teaching relevant for today.

## WATER TURNED INTO WINE *continued*



it” (John 2:5). These are words of timeless value that all would do well to heed. There was no exaltation of self but a call to submission to her Lord and ours.

Also of note in the narrative are the servants and the Saviour Himself. As to the servants, their task was to simply obey. They were obedient to the Lord, filling the waterpots to the brim. They were definite participants and, in a sense, without them the miracle would not have happened. On the other hand, they could claim no credit for what was done. They merely did what was required of them; the Lord did the miraculous. He caused the water to become a finer wine than had been offered at the beginning. There is no appeal to human logic in seeking to explain the change. Water became wine with no fruit present or time allowed for fermentation.

Key to interpreting the parables and miracles of the Lord is to keep in mind that they generally have one main point or lesson. This sign demonstrates that Jesus is Lord of creation, God manifest in flesh, affirming to His own that He was the Son of God.

There are, however, devotional thoughts that can be derived from this miracle that can feed our minds, fill our hearts, and cause praise to flow from our lips.

The waterpots were used for external cleansing, but in light of the Lord’s command to fill them, it would seem they were empty. This speaks to the emptiness of the Jewish religion and its inability to change the heart of man. The Lord produced in the waterpots wine that fed the inner man. The inner, unseen work caused a transformation that external ceremonial washing could never accomplish. The waterpots are reminders of the void within man that only Christ can fill.

The servants were charged with the task of filling the vessels. They participated in the miraculous by complete obedience. They could not boast of doing the miraculous, but they were workers together and thus involved in a great work.

Water is often a symbol of the Word of God, as seen in Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5. Like the servants, our task is to proclaim the Word so that empty

vessels can receive it. The invisible work is left to the Lord. No man can effect change in the heart of another. All over the world this miracle is replicated when the washing of regeneration takes place and souls are born again through the cleansing of the Word of God. Wine speaks of joy and the presence of the Holy Spirit and this is true in the lives of those empty vessels that the Lord transforms through His Word.

John records that the Lord Jesus had personal encounters with six individuals between the performance of this sign and His death on the cross. All six were empty vessels for which religion and ceremony had no answer. Considering them in couplets, they express the heartfelt need of mankind. Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman met the Saviour and they represent the past and its failure to give meaning to life. These two speak to the inability of religion and of relationships to fill the void within. The next two, the impotent man and the adulterous woman, speak to the present and the search for meaning in life. They show the inability of mankind to effect a change within that could alter their condition. They represent the helplessness and hopelessness that exist until the Saviour touched their lives. The last two, the blind man and the dead man, Lazarus, speak to the prospect of what is ahead and the lack of hope apart from Christ. They are reminders of the absence of light and life, both of which are provided by the Lord Jesus. All six are empty vessels that are transformed by an encounter with the Word that was made flesh.

Verse 11 gives the reason for our service and the purpose of the inner work of salvation. It is all to His glory. He alone has the power to cause empty vessels to be transformed into vessels full of joy. Salvation is of the Lord and the process is designed by God so that all the glory flows to Him. Like John, we can see the Lord Jesus, as He is presented in the Word, in His moral glory—“*full of grace and truth.*” We continue to see the glory of His work today in the lives of sinners saved by grace. Every time someone is saved there is an ongoing display of His glory manifested in the work of salvation. 🕊

## Cleansing the Leper

Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-14

**T**he miracles and parables of the Lord Jesus often appear simple in the telling, but they are, without exception, profound in their teaching. The cleansing of the leper occupies just a few verses, and the narrative is factual and uncomplicated. Yet the more we read and compare the records of the synoptic Gospels, the more we discover of the character and the power of the Saviour. It is always important when reading the Gospels to note carefully the details which are included and those which are omitted by each writer. From this we appreciate the individual features which characterize each Gospel in their presentation of the Lord Jesus.

As we consider the cleansing of the leper, we will notice that Matthew draws our attention to the *Master*; Mark in his record examines the motive behind the *miracle*; while Luke observes the *man* who was cleansed. Each in turn adds a little more to our understanding of the Lord's dealings with this poor, leprous man.

### Matthew's View

In Matthew's Gospel, the Lord Jesus has just outlined the principles which govern His kingdom, in what we commonly call "the Sermon on the Mount." Now in chapter 8 He descends the mountain, followed by a great multitude, to continue His ministry of meeting the needs of others. His teaching has been acclaimed as having authority or power. Now throughout this chapter His works display the same character: He is the sovereign Lord in every circumstance,

and as such He cleanses the leper. The man's approach to the Lord is, in itself, an acknowledgement that he recognized One who was more than just a man—he "*worshiped Him.*" J. N. Darby, in his *New Translation* suggests that this was nothing more than mere courtesy, yet the man's words and the Lord's actions indicate rather more than this. We can see the multitude parting and stepping back hastily to avoid contact with one so defiled. Not so the Saviour; He graciously awaits the man's approach.

The leper's words are identical in each record, except in Mark where the title "Lord" is omitted. His piteous cry "*if Thou wilt,*" is not an expression of doubt in the Lord's ability, but rather a recognition of his own unworthiness. Would the Lord condescend to look upon such a person? His next statement confirms his belief in the authority of the Lord Jesus, "*Thou canst make me clean.*"

The Lord's words and actions are again recorded consistently in the three Gospels. Mark alone tells us that it was the word spoken which effected the healing. The touch of the Master's hand gave assurance that the work had been done. What a moment that must have been for that man! This was the first human touch he had experienced since the priest had declared him unclean, possibly some years before!

The Lord instructed him to return to the priest and offer the prescribed offering, as detailed in Leviticus 14. This was a defining moment in the history of the nation. There is no record of an Israelite, apart from Miriam (Num. 12), ever recovering from the plague of leprosy. It was the Lord, Jehovah, who



Each gospel writer emphasizes the immediate nature of the cleansing. No period of convalescence here! So it is, too, when the sinner comes to the Saviour, the work of salvation is instant.

## CLEANSING THE LEPER *continued*

promised to be the “healer” of His people (Ex. 15:26). When, therefore, the priest saw the cleansed leper, he should have known without any doubt that Messiah had come. He, as much as the cleansed man, should have been the one to “*publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter*” (Mk. 1:45). Yet the silent priest is the epitome of unbelieving Israel, who refused to recognize their Deliverer, though the evidence was irrefutable.

Before we leave Matthew’s record, it is worth noting that he often writes from a dispensational viewpoint. We see that the leper is characteristic of the nation (cf. Isa. 1:6). When they fail to acknowledge Him, blessing comes to the Gentiles with the healing of the centurion’s servant. Once this is complete, He takes up dealings again with the nation, as seen in “*Peter’s house*” (v. 14), with Peter’s mother-in-law a picture of the remnant delivered from “*fever*” (*lit.* fire or burning). Following such tribulation, many in need are brought to Him, and the Sun of righteousness arises “*with healing in His wings*” (Mal. 4:2).

### Mark’s View

The Gospel of Mark is usually considered to be the most chronological of the four records. If that is so, then the leper’s words take on a deeper significance. Throughout chapter 1, the Lord Jesus had been constantly working. It is deeply challenging to see Him moving through the book as the perfect Servant. To think that for some thirty-three and a half years He never wasted a moment!

A number of miraculous healings are recorded in verses 21-39, yet no mention is made of lepers being cleansed. When, therefore, we hear the appeal of this man, he does not say, “If Thou wilt, Thou canst make lepers clean.” He had no precedent for that assumption. What he does say is, “*Thou canst make me clean.*” It was a personal need, as indeed it is for any who would come to the Lord Jesus for cleansing.

Mark then considers the motive—the reason why the Lord healed him. It is a feature of the Servant Gospel that consideration is not only given to what is done by the Lord and others, but why such things are done. For us, as servants of the Master, it will be our motives in service which are examined at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Mark

tells us that the Lord was “*moved with compassion.*” His gracious, tender heart was deeply touched by this pathetic wreck of humanity. Compassion is more than pity. It indicates a deep yearning towards those in need—an emotion from the heart which moves the hand to help. Oh, that we would be more Christ-like in our response to the great need of those all around us!

### Luke’s View

The order seen in Luke’s Gospel is not dispensational as in Matthew, nor particularly chronological as Mark, but rather moral. The cleansing of the leper is part of a progression in chapter 5 which shows us how the Lord Jesus deals with those who would follow Him. First, in the words of Peter, we see conviction: “*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*” (v. 8). Then follows confession: “*If Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*” (v. 12). In the next case of the man taken with a palsy, it is cleansing: “*thy sins are forgiven thee*” (v. 20). And finally, the word of commission to Matthew: “*Follow me.*” In this way, the Lord is still dealing with souls.

Luke, as we might expect, looks at this man through the eyes of a physician. He examines him briefly and makes his professional diagnosis: he was “*full of leprosy.*” This man had not long to live; it was essential that he had dealings with the Lord Jesus that day.

Each Gospel writer emphasizes the immediate nature of the cleansing. No period of convalescence here! So it is, too, when the sinner comes to the Saviour. The work of salvation is instant.

Leprosy in the Scriptures is always a picture of sin. It is important to note that in this miracle there is no mention of healing, as with a disease, but rather cleansing as from defilement. Sin and its fruits do not result from illness, an aberration of the mind, or from social deprivation. It is a principle ingrained in every human heart, inherited from Adam. It cannot be cured; it must be cleansed. Such was its hold upon humanity that it required the greatest possible price—the precious blood of the Lord Jesus—to accomplish the work of redemption. May our hearts respond in gratitude, “Hallelujah, what a Saviour!” 📌

## Go South, Young Man!

A GOSPEL CALL TO SIOUX FALLS FOR JUNE 3 to 9

**W**e're thrilled to announce the **Good News, Sioux Falls!** outreach, now planned in the will of the Lord for **June 3-9, 2006** (note the one-week date shift). We believe the Lord has opened the way for us to join with Larry and Natalie Sax and the *Good News on the Move* team for the final evangelistic push of their gospel tour. We prayerfully expect a time of rich blessing and great encouragement.

### Where is Sioux Falls?

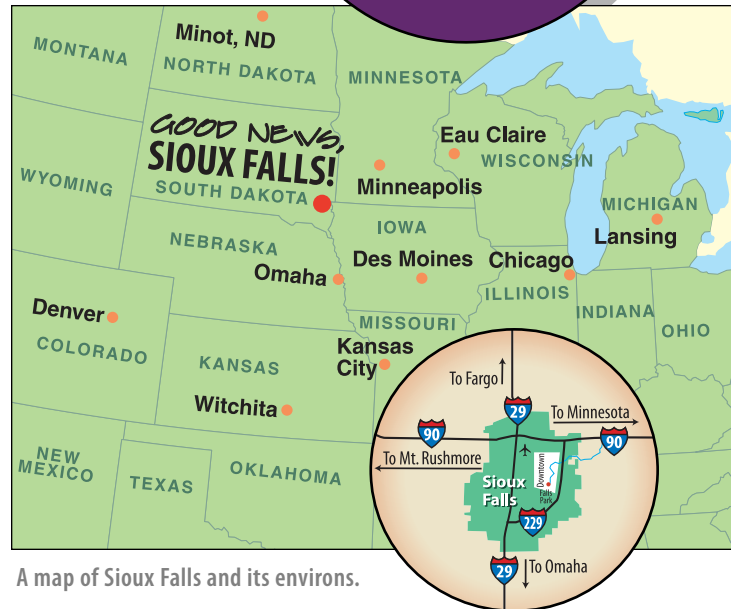
Sioux Falls is located in the southeastern corner of South Dakota, near the borders of Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. It is a little over 600 miles west of Chicago (see mileage chart to other cities, *next page*).

On the banks of the Big Sioux River, Sioux Falls is a city filled with hills, rivers, and natural parks. The September 1992 issue of *Money* magazine named the city 'the best place to live in America'. The following year, *Ryder Consumer Truck Rental* rated Sioux Falls as the nation's number one destination, based on a survey of cities with a population of 100,000+. It is the major shopping center between Minneapolis and Denver.

### Why there?

As far as we know, there is not one New Testament assembly meeting in the whole state of South Dakota (a group up north meets across the line near Wilmar, MN). For some time, Larry and Natalie Sax and their family have been laboring to see a work started in Sioux Falls, and have been helped over the years by families that have transferred in and out for business reasons.

The whole state of SD has a population of about 750,000. More than one third of that total lives in the metro Sioux Falls area. During the census of 2000, there were 123,975 people, 49,731 households, and 30,783 families residing in the city proper. The



A map of Sioux Falls and its environs.

satellite towns swell the population to about 250,000.

It is quite possible that every person in the whole state could be presented with the gospel in a relatively short time by a band of dedicated workers.

Although the state is bereft of assemblies, there are some healthy ones within striking distance of Sioux Falls—Omaha, Fargo and Minneapolis, among others. It is hoped that ongoing support would come from some of these areas should the Lord raise up a testimony for His name in Sioux Falls.

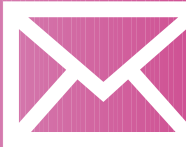
### What is the makeup of the city?

In some ways, Sioux Falls is atypical of many of your home cities. As to ethnicity, the white non-Hispanic population is a whopping 90.9%! The other 9.1% is made up of American Indian (2.6%), Hispanic (2.5%), African-American (1.8%), two or more races (1.7%), and those listed as other race (1.2%).

The 90.9% majority list their ancestry as follows: German (40.8%), Norwegian (18.7%), Irish (12.1%),

## GO SOUTH, YOUNG MAN! *continued*

You may contact LARRY SAX at:  
phone: 605-759-5781  
e-mail: larssax@alliancecom.net



English (6.6%), Dutch (6.3%), and Swedish (4.7%).

Although the area appears to be quite religious, brother Sax knows of only a few church groups in the city who are actively evangelistic—one that works in the inner city, and another that reaches out to their own neigh-

### Southern saints will ENJOY THESE BALMY CLIMES:

Average June highs in the low 80s (F.)  
Average June lows in the high 50s (F.)

borhood on the east side of the city. Our target area will be the growing south and west areas of the city, as well as the city core.

Catholicism claims one third of South Dakota's population, with Lutheranism taking second place. The Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls, one of only two diocese in the state, has its cathedral on Duluth Avenue. St. Joseph's Cathedral is the largest church building in South Dakota and one of the largest cathedrals in the United States. Sioux Falls is also the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota. The Episcopal Calvary Cathedral is the mother church for South Dakota Episcopalians. All in all, the majority of the population will likely be trusting in "works salvation" and many may be half-hearted at that.

However, religion has left some positive marks on the populace. The divorce rate is well below the national average (10.4%), and family size is above average. The news has also recently reported that SD Governor Mike Rounds signed a bill into law on March 6 that makes it a crime for a doctor to perform an abortion unless the mother's life is endangered. It will certainly be battled all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Who should be involved?

The believers that gathered for **Good News**,

**Little Rock!** spanned the age range and the continent. What they had in common was a love for souls, a desire to see a significant advancement of the cause of Christ in North America, and a willingness to work together with other like-minded believers. If this describes your heart, you are welcome to join the team.

Some will come to pray as they help prepare meals. Some will be involved with Kid's Clubs in the park, some in open air preaching. Some will serve as door hangers (simply leaving a pack of literature on the door handles), others as door knockers (seeking to engage people in spiritual conversation). The Lord will direct you as to what you can do for Him.

### What will the week be like?

Details have not yet been finalized, but here is an approximate sketch of our activities. A moderately priced, strategically located hotel will be secured for the team where we will enjoy breakfast, followed by a time of prayer and strategy. We will then proceed to various activities. We may have a noon gathering for singing, testimonies, and lunch, then back into afternoon outreach.

In the evenings we will participate in whole-team activities.

We are hoping to secure use of the historic old courthouse in the center of town for perhaps three nights for a series entitled *Christianity on Trial at the Old Court House*. We are looking into securing a strategic billboard to announce the event.

We will seek to use every suitable means in fulfilling the Pauline man-

© Rich Murphy, City of Sioux Falls

The Old Courthouse



### DISTANCE FROM SIOUX FALLS, SD

*See, it's not that far!*

Omaha, NE 162  
Minneapolis, MN 197  
Fargo, ND 230  
Topeka, KS 316  
Kansas City, MO 323  
Lawrence, KS 326  
Winnipeg, MB 462  
Wichita, KS 546  
Tulsa, OK 603  
Chicago, IL 632  
Denver, CO 719  
Windsor, ON 860  
Cincinnati, OH 860  
Louisville, KY 875  
Atlanta, GA 1169

date: *“By all means save some”* (1 Cor. 9:22).

### How do we get there?

Interstate 90 passes across the northern edge of the city. Interstate 29 bisects the city, traveling north and south (see map).

Several domestic airlines serve Sioux Falls Regional Airport (Joe Foss Field), offering non-stop service to a number of major U.S. hubs, including Chicago O’Hare, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International, and Las Vegas Airport. When booking flights, remember that Sioux Falls is in the Central Time Zone.

### What can we do to help?

First, middle, and last, pray! *“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it”* (Ps. 127:1). Here are some suggested prayer points:

- for the Sax family on whom much of the burden will fall (watch for a bio and testimony in an upcoming *Uplook*).
  - for the *Good News* team as they finish the last few weeks of their journey and then (after a break) head for a prep week and **Good News, Sioux Falls!**
  - for the brothers responsible to make the many arrangements over the next month that they will have wisdom from above and *“favor with the people.”*
  - for the many believers who hope to come who need to make arrangements with employment, family and their assemblies so they can participate.
  - for *“a great door and effectual”* (1 Cor. 16:9) in our gospel effort in Sioux Falls.
  - for two or three exercised and qualified (by the Lord) couples to hear the call to move to Sioux Falls to help establish the work there and assist in a great deal of follow-up.
  - for the Lord to be greatly glorified.
- Second, would you prayerfully consider joining us for the week? Yes, I know it will inconvenience you, and cost you, and stretch you, but many of those who made the sacrifice to be at Little Rock spoke of it as a high water mark in their spiritual



The Big Sioux River at Falls Park

© Rich Murphy, City of Sioux Falls

life. Like David, surely we would not offer something to the Lord that cost us nothing.

### Where can we give?

Those planning this effort have no interest in soliciting funds. We know the Lord will provide. But if you would like to invest financially in this work, the believers at the Meadow Ridge assembly in West Fargo, ND have a fund to use for the work in Sioux Falls. You may contact them at:

Meadow Ridge Bible Chapel  
2198 2nd Ave E, West Fargo, ND 58078

Of course, the Fargo assembly cannot provide income tax receipts for giving from Canadians, so monies from Canada can be sent to the Canadian *Uplook* office and we will forward them on. Write:

Uplook  
P. O. Box 4089, St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3

Please make checks payable either to Meadow Ridge Bible Chapel or *Uplook* Ministries but clearly earmark them for the **Good News Sioux Falls!** effort. May the Lord richly bless you for your kindness.

We also will be using the *Good News on the Move* email list to give praying friends daily updates for prayer. You may join the email prayer list at [www.uplook.org](http://www.uplook.org)



## Who are the Real Ambassadors of Peace?

Iraq Peaceniks fight the wrong battle.

“I need some time to get reacquainted with my partner, Dan, my family, my community, and freedom itself” – March 26, 2006

With those words, quoted in every major news publication across Canada, James Loney—former Canadian hostage—arrived home after four months as a prisoner in Iraq. Loney and two others had been the targets of a successful American, British, and Canadian rescue effort on March 23rd. Sadly, just prior to the rescue, the body of another member of Loney’s team—Tom Fox of the US—was found abandoned in the streets.

Throughout their ordeal in Iraq, Loney and his team became a media *cause célèbre* and were repeatedly referred to in the press as members of a “Christian” activist group. The casual reader is to be forgiven for the mistaken impression that Loney and his team were essentially a missionary work.

Loney’s work in Iraq was performed under the auspices of the Christian Peacemaker Teams ([www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)). The CPT’s mission statement—displayed proudly on their web site and in press releases—reads as follows: “committed to reducing violence by getting in the way.” Reading further on the CPT’s site would lead one to the following: “CPT does not participate in any missionary activities ...While CPTers have chosen to follow Jesus Christ, they do not proselytize.”


Christians may well rejoice and see answered prayer in the fact that Loney and his team are now removed from the possibility of further immediate harm in Iraq. We may even partly understand the CPT’s somewhat naïve attempts to promote peace while avoiding mention of the Prince of Peace Himself. But one wonders how someone could take the name of Christ and claim to “follow” Him while explicitly denying His clear request.

Loney compared his ordeal to that of Jonah’s: “For 118 days, I disappeared into a black hole and somehow, by God’s grace, I was spit out again.” Perhaps the comparison is apt—but Loney has stopped well short of learning any lesson Jonah learned and is returning to his “partner.”

In stark contrast to Loney’s brief celebrity, real Christian missionaries continue to labor tirelessly around the globe in the cause of the gospel. Often the true “ministry of reconciliation,” which believers have been entrusted with, is being carried forward in lands where sharing Christ’s love with the lost is grounds for imprisonment or execution. To all this the press turns an indifferent eye and instead elevates Loney and CPT. Why? Perhaps because CPT is taking a stand against a war that is overwhelmingly unpopular with the media. Perhaps because many media outlets knew of Mr. Loney’s unfortunate “orientation” and are overwhelmingly sympathetic to his cause.

But regardless of the media’s motivation, the temporary celebrity of Loney and CPT serves as yet another reminder to all believers who love the Lord Jesus to pray for the real and largely unsung heroes—those of whom it may truly be said: “*Because that for His name’s sake they went forth*” (3 Jn. 7).

There is real work that is going on today as you read these words; work that honors the Lord Jesus Christ and His request that those who knew, loved, and obeyed Him should take Him seriously when He said “*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.*” The work of the gospel is often dangerous and, by any of this world’s measures, usually thankless and obscure. But it should not be so in Christian gatherings and Christian homes where the labors of the real missionaries are to be brought before the Master often in prayer.

If you took even a brief moment to rejoice that James Loney and his co-workers were released unharmed, will you not take a moment today to bring those who remain in danger for the sake of the Name before the throne of grace? 

—MARK ANDERSON

# The Widow of Nain's Son

What happens when death and Life meet?

**Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.**

**Resurrection is more than life. It is life meeting death and overcoming it.**

I suppose that many, if not all of us, can identify with the human conditions described by Luke in this section of chapter 7. Can any say that they have never shed a tear, never wept? As we grow older we become increasingly conscious of the brevity of life. We are here for only a short time, and we often fail to appreciate just how short that time is. This woman had lost a husband! Her partner in life was gone. Her provider, financially and materially, had been taken from her. The father of her child and head of the household had died. For a woman in the Israel of that day, this would have meant considerable uncertainty. She had become completely dependent on her only son. Now, that son was dead also! Can we enter into the real sorrow and sense of loss that this woman felt?

We need to consider, too, that there would be no other means of support for her now, other than to take to begging in the streets. Mark 12 and Luke 21 tell the account of the poor widow who cast into the temple treasury

two mites which make a farthing. Less than a quarter of a penny was her offering and the Lord Jesus described it as all that she had. This was the gravity of this woman's situation.

But the precious truth from Luke 7 is that we see the evidence of a God who cares in a Saviour who cares: "And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain" (v. 11). It was no matter of chance that the Saviour

arrived at the gate of the city just as the funeral procession did. This was simply the purpose and plan of God. We need to appreciate the reality of this situation—nothing happens by chance. The real difficulty for us, like the widow we are considering here, is to look through the tears and the depth of sorrow and loss and commit all into the hands of the Lord.

## The sympathetic Saviour

We might legitimately ask the question, why? We know that death is an enemy. It is the result of sin and the Fall. But why wait for a husband to die and then a son to die? Why wait for a funeral procession, a coffin, and a grave? Could not the Saviour have come earlier? Remember the words of Martha and Mary as they greeted the Lord as He went to the graveside of Lazarus, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (Jn. 11:21, 32). It is almost as if they are saying, "Where were You Lord, when we needed You most?" Have you been in that situation? The answer is found in the opening verses of John chapter 11, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (v. 4). How remarkable to think that through our circumstances, and in our crises, God can be glorified and the Saviour magnified! It is difficult to appreciate, but those very crises and that seemingly significant delay are to enable God's timing and God's purpose to be realized.

Into this scene of sorrow and death steps the Saviour. How precious to know that we have a sympathetic Saviour. Isaiah describes Him as "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3), One who has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (v. 4). Although the Lord was ever sinless, He was



## THE WIDOW OF NAIN'S SON *continued*

familiar with the effects and consequences of sin in the lives of others. We need only remember Him standing at the tomb of Lazarus, weeping. We know the reality of His sympathy! The writer of Hebrews reminds us: *"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:15-16). Doesn't this make the difference? The Saviour is not powerless to intervene. There is a ministry that He alone can perform!

We read, *"and much people of the city was with her"* (v. 12). A crowd was following the cortège—a crowd of sympathetic but powerless people. They could offer condolences. They could cry with the widow. They might put a sympathetic arm around the shoulders of the bereaved. They could not restore her son to life.

We need to remember that there is a significant line that should be drawn between the Lord's people and the world. It is a line that affects us in our circumstances, sorrows and grief. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that, *"ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"* (1 Thes. 4:13). With believers there is the prospect of seeing that departed saint again, of being united with them in the Lord's presence. There is also the real opportunity to preach the gospel and present a Saviour, to bring some sinner out of death into life! In this there is an opportunity for the glory of God!

### The sacrificial Saviour

What does the Lord say to this woman? *"Weep not"* (v. 13). For such issues that are beyond the scope of any mere man to resolve, we would regard such words with incredulity. How could anyone be so thoughtless! All of this is measured by the fact that we are unable to offer any real comfort or solace when we are impotent, powerless to effect change. What was different here was the presence of the Saviour. In Him there is the power to change things. The mother had lost her most loved son. A meeting with the Saviour and

death is conquered; the son is restored. We're reminded of another death where the words of the angel were: *"He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Mt. 28:6).

We might think of the experience of the children of Israel in Exodus 15. They had been rejoicing in the song of Moses telling of the triumph over the Egyptians. Then they came to the waters of Marah and found them to be bitter and undrinkable. Moses records, *"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet"* (Ex. 15:23-25). The Lord showed him a tree! How can we really offer sympathy to the bereaved and solace to those who mourn? How can we comfort the dying? How can we offer strength to the weak? The answer is: tell them of the victory of Calvary.

But then Paul wrote: *"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"* (2 Cor. 1:3-4). We can bring comfort, solace, strength, and support in the measure that we have experienced it ourselves by pointing fellow saints to *"the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."*

Perhaps John Newton's hymn summarizes the thought:

*How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.*

*It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
And calms the troubled breast;  
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,  
And to the weary, rest.*

What a testimony can be borne by those who have proved it; who know it from their own personal experience. 🕊



**The Lord showed him a tree!  
How can we really offer sympathy to the bereaved and solace to those who mourn?...  
The answer is: tell them of the victory of Calvary.**

## Preaching from John's First Epistle

Evidence of walking in the light.

One of the first challenges of the early church was detecting false teachers and wrong doctrines creeping into the churches. This struggle brought about some very important events, including the writing of John's first epistle. First John is a series of tests for eternal life. It is a wonder we don't use this epistle as the early church would have. If a person claims to have eternal life, it should be visible, evident, and therefore testable.

### What caused John to write it?

Understanding the background of a book guards against misinterpretation and misapplication. Preaching on the background of 1 John will help the Christian to realize its value, power, and purpose.

- The recipients had lost their joy because they were no longer sure if they were in the truth. Who truly had eternal life? John writes to comfort them and reveal those who had gone off into error. Notice the strong "we" vs. "they" pattern throughout the letter.
- The claims of the opposition party (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9)
- The departure of the opposition and its "anti-Christ" position (2:18-19)
- The attempt of the opposition to deceive the readers (2:26; 3:7)
- The opposition's theory that the readers needed their special Gnostic teachings to enter into eternal life or know God (2:26-27)
- The opposition's teachings about Christ (2:22-23; 4:2-3; 5:10)
- The lifestyle of the opposition (2:4, 9; 3:4, 8, 10)
- The popularity of the opposition (4:5)
- The opposition's treatment of the readers (2:9, 11; 3:15, 17; 4:8, 20)

### The structure of the letter

The structure of 1 John does not clarify its meaning and, therefore, it should not be used to interpret meaning. All commentators point out the difficulty of outlining the book. Most outlines tend to be a little forced and stray

from the text. This is because 1 John is similar in structure to parts of Proverbs.

### A) Concept structure

John uses three tests to examine a person's claims to have eternal life: proper behavior, proper love, and proper doctrine. These three tests cycle throughout his writing. This may be the only clear pattern in the epistle. David Gooding suggests three main movements and notes that the world is presented in a different way in each movement (see *Preaching Ministry of David Gooding: New Testament in "Other Helpful Resources on 1 John"* below):

#### MOVEMENT 1 (THE WORLD WANTS OUR LOVE)

- A) The test of proper behavior or righteousness – 1:6-2:6
- B) The test of proper love for other believers – 2:7-11
- C) The test of proper doctrine about the Christ – 2:22-24

#### MOVEMENT 2 (THE WORLD WITHSTANDS US)

- A) The test of proper behavior or righteousness – 3:3-10
- B) The test of proper love for other believers – 3:11-18
- A) The test of proper behavior or righteousness – 3:22-24
- C) The test of proper doctrine about the Christ – 4:1-3

#### MOVEMENT 3 (THE WORLD MUST BE OVERCOME)

- B) The test of proper love for other believers – 4:7-12
- C) The test of proper doctrine about the Christ – 4:13-15
- B) The test of proper love for other believers – 4:16-5:3
- C) The test of proper doctrine about the Christ – 5:6-13

### B) Grammatical structure

Below is a structural outline based solely on grammar and where the thoughts clearly change from paragraph to paragraph. The preacher will be helped more by developing his own titles after studying each section than by adopting someone else's.

1:1-4    1:5-2:2    2:3-11    2:12-17    2:18-29    3:1-10  
 3:11-19    3:20-24    4:1-6    4:7-5:5    5:6-13    5:18-21

## PREACHING FROM JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE *continued*

### Three warnings in 1 John

- The warning against false christs – 2:18-26
- The warning against false spirits – 4:1-6
- The warning against false gods – 5:20-21

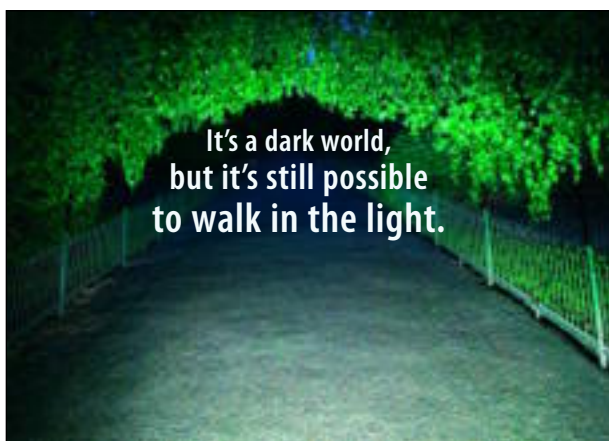
### What John hoped to accomplish

Knowing an author's goal can help in understanding his writings. When writing his Gospel, John clearly stated its purpose (Jn. 20:31). Such is also the case in the epistle of 1 John (see 5:13).

- John writes so the readers would enjoy fellowship with the Lord and with the apostles (1:3)
- John writes to bring about his own joy as a shepherd and apostle (1:4)
- John writes to stop the spread of sin that was resulting from the opposition's new teachings (2:1)
- John writes to give assurance of salvation (2:12-14; 5:13)
- John writes to establish his readers in the truth (2:21, 26)

### Individual tests found throughout 1 John

- How can we know that we know Him and are in Him? (2:3, 5)
- How can we know that we have passed from death into life? (3:14)
- How can we know that we are "of the truth"? (3:19)
- How can we know that He abides in us? (3:24)
- How can we know if the Spirit of God is motivating a person or speaker? (4:2)
- How can we differentiate between the spirit of truth and spirit of error? (4:6)
- How can we know that we really abide in God and God in us? (4:13-16)



- How can we know that we love the children of God? (5:2)
- How can we know who has overcome the world and who has not? (5:4)
- How can we know that we have the petitions we ask of Him? (5:15)

### The challenge of the absolute statements of 1 John

As John exposes the opposition, he makes several strong statements concerning sin and the believer (e.g., 3:6-10 and 5:18). Many Christians have struggled with these verses, and some use these verses to teach false doctrines such as the doctrine of sinless perfection. The preacher needs to understand these statements and clarify them for the listeners.

### Key contrasts in 1 John

- Saying vs. doing – 1:6-2:11
- Where we walk vs. how we walk – 1:6, 7, 11 vs. 2:6
- The spirit of truth vs. the spirit of error – 4:1-6
- Jesus Christ vs. antichrists – 2:18-27
- The family vs. the world or children of God vs. children of the devil

### Important words and phrases in the letter

Defining these words and phrases, and observing their use in 1 John, is vital to understanding the epistle.


**1. Key words and phrases:** fellowship, eternal life (not just living forever), abide, overcome (note the positional and practical aspects of this word), children (1 John is all about family traits and spiritual lineage), perfect love

**2. Common words:** manifested, love, hate, righteous, commandments, sin, little children, brethren

### OTHER RESOURCES

*Preaching Ministry of David Gooding: New Testament* (MP3 CD) by David Gooding. Available through Gospel Folio Press. If one were to consult only one source, this is it. His eight messages are excellent.

*In These Last Days; 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John & Jude in the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest. This will bring out the sense of the original Greek to the English reader. See especially for section on the Absolute Statements.

*New Testament Introduction, Rev. Ed.* by Donald Guthrie. This is an authoritative source for questions of dating, authorship, and background. Highly academic yet helpful and accurate. 

# From Darkness to Light

Who can transform hell's slaves into heaven's servants?

**T**he powers of darkness confront mankind on every side. As 1 John 5:19 expresses it: “*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*” (ESV). Unwitting humans are pawns in the hands of infernal powers who use them to inflict damage. The situation of the Gadarene demoniac mirrors the state of planet earth. More importantly, his encounter with the Lord shows the solution for the raging malevolence that besets the world.

The Lord Jesus repeatedly faced opposition from Satanic forces. Both Matthew 4 and Luke 4 detail His direct temptation by the “*accuser of the brethren*” himself. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ’s first miracle is the casting out of an unclean spirit which afflicted a man in the Capernaum synagogue (Mk. 1:21-27). In Mark 5, as soon as the Lord Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee, He was met by a demon-possessed man from the tombs. Other Gospel accounts show that there were two demoniacs, but Mark chooses to focus on one of them in particular.

## The domain of darkness

His dwelling place indicates that there was something gravely wrong with this man: he lived in the tombs. Realtors are not in the habit of showing their clients prospective homes in graveyards; this is because such places are reserved for the dead, not the living. The wicked spirits within him drove this poor man from civilized company, to dwell on the fringes of society. Day and night he cried, screamed, and acted with frenzied violence. He was a hazard to others and himself, as his self-mutilation with stones demonstrated (v. 5).

Apparently, the community had tried to restrain the man by chaining him. But these measures were a total failure in thwarting the

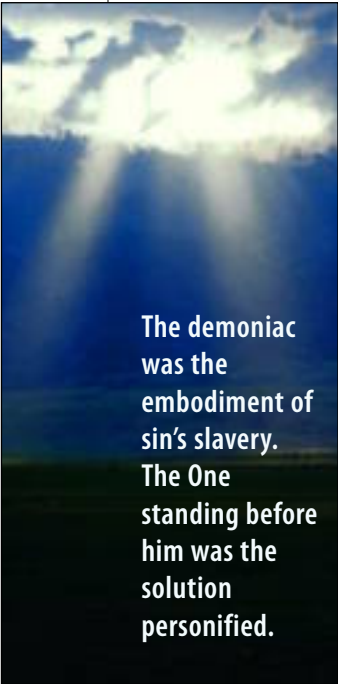
demons that controlled the unfortunate man. In trying to subdue evil, lost men can only lock up the malefactor; they cannot change his iniquitous heart.

Many people today dabble with the occult, hoping to gain supernatural power. Such forces are more cunning and stronger than humans; those who experiment with them discover too late that they only bring misery and spiritual oppression into their lives. Ouija boards, tarot cards, astrology, psychic readings, and astral projection all hold forth the tantalizing promise of prescience and power. In reality they are only means for unclean spirits to influence lost souls. Mind-altering drugs also seem to open their users up to demonic influence.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the Gadarene demoniac sought power from spiritual beings. Unfortunately, he possessed unbridled strength without the ability to marshal it. Instead of manipulating the spirits, they enslaved him.

What a tragic picture of what the contemporary world is like. Matthew 8:28 describes the demon-possessed men as “*fierce*.” This word means “hard to bear, troublesome, dangerous, harsh, fierce, savage,” and only occurs in one other passage: 2 Timothy 3:1 uses the word to depict the character of the last days as “*perilous*.”<sup>2</sup> Modern times are typified by this demonic, unbounded hostility. Only the power of Christ can counter the cruelty that proliferates on every side.

Despite his supernatural strength, the demoniac prostrated himself before the Lord Jesus. This is not “*worship in spirit and in truth*,” but rather an involuntary obeisance that foreshadows the day when “*every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that*



The demoniac was the embodiment of sin's slavery. The One standing before him was the solution personified.

## FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT *continued*

*Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Php. 2:10-11, NKJV). As James 2:19 notes: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." They recognize the Judge of all the earth and implore Him not to torment them. One day they will be imprisoned for their rebellion but, for now, the Lord Jesus accedes to their request of entering into the swine.

### The kingdom of His dear Son

His name makes it clear that a formidable host of unclean spirits ruled over this poor wretch. "Legion" was a Roman military term that denoted between 4,000 and 66,000 soldiers.<sup>3</sup> But in spite of the demons' numerical superiority, they were no match for the authoritative word of the Lord. He commanded them to come out and they had to obey.

Mark 5:15 describes the dramatic threefold change in the demoniac. Whereas before he was running around greatly agitated, now he was seated at Christ's feet. The Lord is the master teacher, who is able to bring out the fruit of the Spirit—including self-control—in a human life. The man discovered the truth of Col. 1:13: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Furthermore, the man had been naked, but now he was clothed. The Lord is able to take away our shame, and to clothe us with the righteousness of God (Rom. 5:17-19; Rev. 19:8). Sin debases human beings. By contrast, the gracious work of God removes our guilt and defilement.

The final evidence of change is seen in his mindset. Instead of being dominated by a foreign, infernal intelligence, the man was in his right mind. His experience reminds us of Ephesians 4:22-24: "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

At first glance, the reaction of the local people seems strange. Instead of rejoicing at the man's miraculous healing, they were afraid. Rather than ask Christ to liberate them and others from the power of Satan, they begged Him to leave their territory. Likewise, people today are often opposed to dramatic conversions. They tolerate all sorts of sin and debauched lifestyles, but they will not endure a righteous life. They sigh at addicts and perverts, but only hate them when Christ has freed them from their

iniquitous chains. If God visited their community, they might have to change their sinful ways. "No thank you," said they. "We'd rather continue with business as usual, and not be interrupted by the holiness of the Lord." Thus, they asked him to leave.

It also seems odd that of the three geographical requests made of Christ in this passage, He heeds the two by demons and lost men, but refuses to listen to His new disciple. He begs the Lord to allow him to accompany Him, but Jesus says no. Why? The answer demonstrates the grace of our God, for Christ says: "Go home to thy

***"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee..."***

*friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee*" (Mk. 5:19). He denies the man's request so that the region would not be left without a witness. Although the local populace asked Him to leave, He graciously left behind a messenger of the gospel. The Lord does not "beam up" believers to heaven at conversion. Instead, He sends them into the world to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Even though humans rejected and crucified the Lord, He still seeks to win them. Even though millions tell Him to leave them alone, He persists in wooing and warning them. Anyone who, in the end, finds himself in the Lake of Fire, will be there because of his own negligence, and not any deficiency in the grace and love of God (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). 📌

### Endnotes

1. See Gal. 5:20. "Witchcraft" (KJV) or "sorcery" (NKJV) is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which the English language derives "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical." Several ancient and modern cults employ hallucinogenic substances to facilitate visions and contact the spirit world.
2. See 2 Tim. 3:1. The definition is from *Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Edition*, ([www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net)).
3. Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.215.

## Saints in a Storm

Any belief will do in smooth sailing. But what happens when the storms come?

**Be still, my soul:  
The waves and  
winds still know  
His voice who  
ruled them  
While He dwelt  
below.**

—Katharina  
von Schlegel

**T**wo emails recently arrived on my computer within twelve hours of each other. They were from saints passing through serious storms with very ill children. The wind and waves were taking their toll. Have you been there? I have. In Mark 4:35-41, we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples were suddenly surrounded by a great storm of wind and waves. As we view their dilemma, may this passage provide help and hope for fear-filled saints in the storms of life.

### The story's setting

The Lord had taught a large crowd a number of meaningful parables, but with His teaching finished, He sent them away. Turning to His disciples, He said, "*Let us pass over unto the other side.*" His teaching was needed there, where there was derangement, disease, and death. The disciples obliged and "they took Him as He was" (v. 36). To them, His request was a com-

mand and they immediately obeyed. The Scriptures add one statement that might initially seem almost unnecessary: "*And there were also with Him other little ships.*" The God of the elements wasn't in those boats, but they would experience the gracious blessing of the Saviour because of their close proximity. Through history, unregenerate mankind who has

refused to trust the Saviour has, nonetheless, benefited from His influence for good.

### A sudden storm

In the warm evening breeze and gently-moving boat the weary Man, Jesus, fell asleep. As He rested on a cushion in the stern, cyclone-like winds swept through the gorge of the Galilee and furious waves broke over the boat.

The Lord and His disciples left the shore when evening came, likely sometime between 6 P.M. and darkness. As the evening of the day of God's grace settles on us, the storms on life's sea seem to increase. They could be storms within the family, the church, or place of employment. Each area has the potential to foster great storms. Fortunately, we can cry out for help from the One who travels through the storms of life in the boat of our lives. Aren't you thankful He entered your boat on conversion's day? He is now available for your call, whenever the need arises.

The Psalmist writes of God's willingness to help in Psalm 50:15: "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.*" What a comfort to saints in a storm!

Still the storm raged. Still the Master slept. Often our storms are unexpected. They may be announced by a doctor as he describes the recently-discovered signs of a dreaded disease. The shrill ring of a telephone may signal a great storm as the result of a serious accident. A note or a call may inform the recipient of another's intention to break a relationship in—what was thought to be—a warm and sincere bond. The waves of heartache break over the distraught saint.

### Supplicating Saints

In the tempest-driven waves, the disciples were alarmed. Their boat was filling with water and the Master slept. In desperation they cried,



*“Master, carest Thou not that we perish?”* (v. 38). The wind and waves did not wake Him, but the urgent cry of His fearful children did. His response was immediate: *“He arose, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace be still”* (v. 39). The humanity of Jesus is seen in verse 38, and His deity flashes forth in verse 39.

*“Carest Thou not that we perish?”* they cried. What a question! Did He care? He had left His Father’s glory-circled throne to become the virgin-born Son of Man and to eventually die for them! He most assuredly cared! I wonder if Peter was in that boat, and if the experience added emphasis to his words of 1 Peter 5:7, *“Casting all your cares upon Him; for He careth for you.”* What comfort for storm-tossed believers!

Mark tells us *“the boat was now full”* (v. 37). Troubled saints have often felt their little boat full—they could take no more. They have said with David, *“From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I”* (Ps. 61:2). Isaiah said, *“A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest”* (Isa. 32:2). Our covert from the storm is *“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever”* (Heb. 13:8).

### A Serene Scene

The disciples thought He was sleeping, but the God of Israel *“neither slumbers nor sleeps”* (Ps. 121:4). Their cry wakened Him and, rebuking the wind, He said to the sea, *“Peace, be still.”* The voice of God was heard as He censured the wind with the words from the original text, *“Be muzzled and stay that way.”* The words of the Psalmist strengthen and encourage us. *“Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them”* (Ps. 89:9). At His command the wind ceased, or fell back exhausted in weariness. He had stilled the wind. Then, with a similar decree, He ordered the sea, *“Peace be still”* (v. 39). *“He gave to the sea its decree, that it should not pass His command”* (Prov. 8:29). He had spoken these elements into being at creation’s dawning. Now creation once again heard the Creator’s voice and obeyed. Dear storm-

tossed saint, He is still in control. Job, in his storm, said, *“He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). What a prospect!

The Lord desired His disciples to learn lessons from the wind and sea. So, with patient pity, He asked, *“Have ye no faith?”* Prior to their leaving the shore He had said, *“Let us go over to the other side.”* He did not say, *“Let us go to the bottom.”* Sadly, their faith was like ours. He dealt more gently with them than they had with Him. They suggested that He had an uncaring attitude that might result in their perishing. His care was deeper than the sea and His word declared, *“As the Father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear [revere] Him”* (Ps. 103:13).

The disciples were amazed. One moment they were in *“a great storm”* (v. 37) and the next they were in *“a great calm”* (v. 39). The voice of their great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, had made the difference. His voice still calms storms. Pray for it. Listen for it.

The narrative draws to a close as the disciples ask each other, *“What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”* W.E. Vine tells us the original wording: *“From what country has this man come that even the wind and the waves obey Him?”* From what country had He come? He had come from heaven to be born in Bethlehem’s manger, to live a perfect life, to die as our substitute, to rise victorious from the grave, and to ascend triumphantly to His Father’s throne.

How thrilling to know He is there today, caring for His own. I believe saints in a storm are the special object of His love. The writer of the Hebrew epistle reminds us, *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted [tested] like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15). As He sits upon the throne, He is touched by our infirmities (diseases or weakness). He is with you in your storm-tossed boat. I pray you will also see the great storm become a great calm. 🕊



**One moment they were in “a great storm” and the next they were in “a great calm.”**

## Feeding the Multitudes

A hunger that only God can fill.

Do you think this is what the Lord does with everything we put into His hands?

Of the many miracles performed by Jesus, about thirty-five are recorded in the Gospels. Each incident was selected by the Holy Spirit to clearly illustrate the true identity of the Lord Jesus and demonstrate His power and authority. Of these, only two are included in all four Gospels: the feeding of the five thousand and His resurrection.

On at least two occasions, Jesus fed a large multitude of people using only a few small loaves of bread and fish sufficient for one or two people. We read about the 5,000 men (besides women and children) in Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:32-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-13. The story about the more than 4,000 hungry people is found in Matthew 15:32-39 and Mark 8:1-10.

### What exactly happened?

In both cases, great multitudes, intrigued by the healing miracles and teachings of Jesus, followed Him. When He left the cities and towns and went into the wilderness, the people tracked Him down. This fascination with Jesus initially transcended their personal comfort because, “*No man ever spoke like this Man!*” (Jn. 7:46). Or, as the leading teacher of Israel said, “*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*” (Jn. 3:2).

At this point in the public ministry of the Lord Jesus, the general population was attracted to Him. In contrast to the staid, self-righteous, religious leadership of the day, here was a fresh face, a new voice with a rather unusual approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Perhaps there was also a secret sense of satisfaction in the hearts of the people as they observed this man named Jesus take on the

status quo and send the Jewish leaders scurrying to formulate a rebuttal. However, despite their admiration for Him, the people did not comprehend who Jesus was.

Jesus was moved by compassion for the people because they were hungry and a long way from home. He turned to Philip and tested him with a question: “*Where will we buy bread so everyone can eat?*” (Jn. 6:5f). But Philip did not answer the question “*Where?*” He jumped to question 2: “*How much?*” Thinking only in the natural realm, he quickly did the math. Even if there were a bakery nearby—and there wasn’t—financially it was impossible. The tab to buy supper for this crowd would take eight months’ salary. Andrew half-heartedly pointed out a lad who had a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish. But then he asked, “*what are they among so many?*” (Jn. 6:9). He was right. Humanly speaking, it was an impossible situation.

These two followers of Jesus were stumped. They shouldn’t have been. Previously, at a wedding in Cana, they had observed Jesus instruct the servants to fill six 20-gallon stone jars with water. Then He told them to draw out some of the water and serve it to the master of ceremonies. Miraculously, Jesus had transformed 120 gallons of water into the best wine they had ever tasted. Interestingly, the narrative says, “*This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him*” (Jn. 2:11). So where was their faith in Him now?

The Gospels record the faltering journey of the disciples as they took three steps forward then two steps back in their struggle to comprehend the deity of Christ. It wasn’t until after the resurrection that they came to a clear

Photo: Wolf Schubach



Mosaic artwork to commemorate the feeding of the multitude. Estimated to be from the late fourth or early fifth century.

## FEEDING THE MULTITUDES *continued*

understanding of the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

Of course Jesus Himself knew exactly what He was going to do. Taking the loaves into His hands, He gave thanks. He then took the food and began distributing it to the hungry campers on the hillside. Over and over again the disciples returned for additional quantities of bread and fish and Jesus continued to hand it out to them. In keeping with His generous nature and unlimited ability to supply human needs, no one was left out and no one wished for more. John says they received “*as much as they wanted. So when they were filled...*” (Jn. 6:11-12). So generous was the provision of food that, in the case of the 5,000 men fed by five loaves and two small fish, twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered up. The seven loaves and few small fishes which fed the party of 4,000 produced seven large baskets of fragments.

### **A prophet or a king?**

The diners were impressed! The hands of this teacher had been able to stretch a boy’s lunch into a meal for a multitude. They did not comprehend all that was involved in the sign performed, but they did see it as something amazing. They concluded, “*Truly this is the prophet who is to come into the world*” (Jn. 6:14), likely recalling Moses’ prophecy that God would raise up a prophet from their midst (Deut. 18:15-18).

Interestingly, they had earlier asked John the Baptist whether he was the Messiah. Being told “no,” they then asked whether he was “*the prophet*” (Jn 1:20-21). The Jewish people seemed to be expecting two distinct people: a Prophet and a Messiah.

Knowing that the multitude was determined to make Him king—by force if necessary—Jesus withdrew (Jn. 6:15). They wished for a militant Messiah who would liberate them from the domination of the Roman occupiers. They wanted Jesus to meet their preconceived notion of a king—a king on their own terms.

### **Eternal life**

This miracle laid the groundwork for the Lord Jesus to speak of filling a greater need. Shortly afterwards He spoke of bread from heaven (Jn. 6:32f). “*Give us this bread always,*” they demanded (Jn. 6:34). If Jesus were truly the Messiah He should be able to provide a daily supply of bread, just like the manna that appeared daily

for 40 years in the wilderness. But manna, wonderful as it was, had no ability to prolong earthly life forever. In fact, all men over twenty years of age died in the wilderness, despite a daily diet of bread from heaven. “*Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead,*” Jesus reminded them (Jn. 6:49). Even the bread Jesus miraculously created to feed them would only sustain them until the next mealtime. It didn’t give them eternal life.

So the Lord made the statement, “*I am the bread of life*” (Jn. 6:35). This is the first of the seven great “*I am*” statements in the Gospel of John, and it was intended to cause the people to see the link between the provision and the Provider. In the same way that bread is essential for sustaining and maintaining physical life, so the Lord Jesus is vital to eternal life.

The purpose God had in mind for the Israelites when He provided bread in the wilderness was that “*You shall know that I am the Lord your God*” (Ex. 16:12). In other words, the miraculous provision of bread would meet their physical needs, but they were not to get so mesmerized by the little, white, honey-flavored wafers that they forgot the Giver. God told Moses that He would send down bread from heaven every morning for the children of Israel, with the express purpose that every morning they would “*see the glory of the Lord*” (Ex. 16:7).

There was a significant difference, however, between Moses announcing that God would provide manna in the wilderness and Jesus giving thanks to God for the few small loaves they had, then proceeding to create more and more and more bread, until every last person was satisfied. While the Israelites generally revered Moses (between bouts of murmuring), they did not see him as a deity. Moses could not supernaturally create the manna each morning for two million hungry people. It was God who sent the bread from heaven.

The Lord Jesus proved that He was greater than Moses. He did something only God could do. As the multitudes observed Jesus performing this miracle, they ought to have remembered the words written by Moses nearly 1,500 years earlier: “*...you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.*”

If they had simply opened their eyes, ears, and hearts they would have seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! He would have then given them the bread of life so that they could live forever! 🕊

## The Signs of the Times

What can't a miracle do?

The author outlines the purpose of miracles for Israel

The word “miracle” is not found in Matthew’s Gospel; rather, the miracles that the Lord performed are referred to as “signs.” Signs of what? His miracles were signs of the times and were a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 29:18-19; 35:4-6). The signs witnessed by Israel were irrefutable evidence proving that Christ was who He claimed to be—the Messiah. The kingdom message to the Jews was composed of both the Lord’s

preaching and His signs. His miracles were not simply exhibitions of power, or manifestations of God’s grace; they were sermons in action. In this way, His miracles supplemented His preaching in an evidential manner. And for this reason, Israel was the primary beneficiary of Christ’s miracles.

But on at least two occasions His miracles directly benefited Gentiles, while at the same time profiting on-looking Jews as well (Mt. 8:5-13; 15:21-28).

The Lord often appealed to His teaching and miracles as credible evidence to the nation of Israel that He was the Christ. “And Jesus went about

*all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people”* (Mt. 9:35).

While in prison, John the Baptist’s faith wavered concerning the Messiahship of Jesus. What was the Lord’s response when John’s doubts were conveyed to Him by John’s disci-

ples? “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Mt. 11:4-5). John the Baptist was exhorted to examine the evidence—Jesus’ miracles and message proved He was the Messiah.

Notice the Lord Jesus’ exhortation to His disciples as they departed to evangelize the Jewish nation: “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give” (Mt. 10:6-8). They were to proclaim the kingdom message and do the supernatural to validate the message. Miracles were an integral part of the kingdom message.

On this point Arthur Pink writes: “[The miracles] are among the most important of ‘the signs of the times’ concerning which the Messiah reproached the Pharisees and Sadducees for their failure to discern (see Mt. 16:1-3). Similar miracles of healing shall be repeated when the Messiah returns to the earth (Isa. 35:4-6).”<sup>1</sup> At that time the kingdom message will be heeded.

Peter declared the following to the nation of Israel at the feast of Pentecost: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).

Peter emphatically proclaimed that the miracles which Christ did were undeniably of God and a sign to Israel that Scripture had been fulfilled—Jesus Christ, whom they crucified, was indeed their promised Messiah.

During the next few decades, until Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, numerous signs, such



Illustrations: New Tribes Mission, Inc.

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES *continued*

as speaking and interpreting tongues, would confirm to the Jews that the message of the apostles was an extension of Christ's ministry and that there was imminent national judgment if they did not repent (Deut. 28:49; Jer. 5:15; Isa. 28:11-12). But towards the end of the apostolic age, judgment came upon the Jews, and the signs of the times ceased.

Though the Lord knew that the Jews would not believe in Him through signs alone, He understood the need to fulfill Scripture and work wonders before them. The miracles served to establish the Messiah's credentials. Therefore the Lord referred to the signs He had performed accordingly: *"But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me"* (Jn. 5:36). To the religious Jews He pleaded, *"If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him"* (Jn. 10:37-38).

### No signs needed now

Paul acknowledges the natural propensity of the Jewish people to be guided by sight rather than faith, *"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom"* (1 Cor. 1:22). The Lord Jesus called them "an evil generation"



because they sought a sign (Lk. 11:29). Though the signs provided proof that Jesus was the Christ, they would prove insufficient to cause the Jews to trust Him as Messiah for salvation. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]"* (Heb. 11:6), and faith requires the soul to venture beyond what the senses can naturally verify.

The Lord Jesus stated that it was the unrighteous who wanted to see a sign or a wonder in order to believe in Him, and He called these sign seekers an evil generation (Mt. 12:38-39). Even those people who had witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 were found pestering the Lord the very next day: *"What sign showest Thou, then, that we may see and believe Thee"* (Jn. 6:30)? Had they not recalled the miracle the day before? Did they not fill their bellies with a boy's multiplied lunch?

The Israelites saw miracles every day in the wilderness for forty years, yet it did not increase their spirituality—for they constantly murmured against God and His leadership. This shallow spiritual mentality was clearly evident while the Lord Jesus was hanging on the cross: *"Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we*

## CHRIST'S MIRACLES IN REVIEW *by Warren Henderson*

*"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you" (Acts 2:22).*

Only a fraction of Christ's miracles were written down for our appreciation. Mark notes, *"For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues"* (Mk. 3:10). The following is a summary of the miracles recorded:

**Miracles of Physical Healing:** Included are healings of fever (2), blindness (4), hemorrhage (1), dropsy (1), leprosy (2), paralysis (4), deaf-mute (1), and severed body parts (1).

**Miracles of Resurrection:** It is worthwhile to note that only three resurrections were recorded in the Old Testament; Elijah and Elisha

accomplished these. The Lord raised three people from the dead during His ministry on earth, then effected His own resurrection also (Jn. 10:17-18). The Lord Jesus was the seventh and, thus, the perfect resurrection.

**Miracles Related to Demon Possession:** The Lord is recorded seven different times as driving out demons from the host they possessed. In each case, being freed from demon possession brought emotional and physical healing.

**Miracles Related to Earthly Physics:** Besides miracles that brought personal healing, the Lord Jesus performed supernatural feats to demon-

may see and believe..." (Mk. 15:32).

Peter shows us that true spiritual faith opens our eyes to understand the spiritual things of God. When the Lord asked His twelve disciples if they, too, would turn away from Him, as many had done, Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (Jn. 6:68-69). The unrighteous want a sign to believe, but the righteous believe, then understand. Thus, until we exercise faith, we will not understand from where we come and to where we journey. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). Oswald Chambers summarizes the matter of believing and understanding this way: "I must know Jesus Christ as Saviour before His teaching has any meaning for me other than that of an ideal which leads to despair."<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, John recorded only seven public miracles of Christ in his Gospel account, but emphasized the necessity of believing over a hundred times. So what was his main purpose in writing? "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence

of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:30-31). We need no signs to believe this message; and for those who do believe the most wonderful miracle of all will be experienced—new birth.

C. H. Spurgeon once said, "God never works needless miracles; if His purposes can be accomplished by ordinary means, He will not use miraculous agency."<sup>3</sup> When it comes to salvation, there are no ordinary means; there is only grace through Christ—no sign, no miracle will induce saving faith! 📌

### Endnotes

1. Arthur Pink, *Why Four Gospels?*, (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., no date), pp.46-47
2. Edythe Draper, *Draper's Quotations from the Christian World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers Inc., electronic copy)
3. C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), Sept. 17 evening

God will not do for us by miracle what we may do by simple obedience.

—Boyd  
Nicholson

strate His power over creation. Twice He calmed a raging storm by a simple command. Water became His sidewalk for crossing the Sea of Galilee, and for Peter's brief excursion as well.

Immediately after this event, the Lord instantaneously moved their boat a great distance across the sea to arrive at Capernaum.

#### Miracles Related to Plant and Animal Life:

Though the Lord had no tax liability, He graciously agreed to pay taxes so as to not stumble the unsaved. For this reason, and for this purpose only, Peter received the money via the mouth of a

fish. On two different occasions, the Lord commanded fishermen to drop their nets for a great draught of fish. Near the end of the Lord's ministry, to demonstrate His disgust for fruitless Israel, He cursed a fig tree. The disciples noted the next day that it was completely withered.

**Miracles Related to Food and Drink:** On two different occasions, the Lord took a few fish and loaves of bread and multiplied them to feed thousands of people to their fill. In so doing, He demonstrated that He was the Master of quantity. The Lord's first miracle, turning water into

the best wine, confirmed Him to be the Master of quality. He is both willing and able to share all that He has and the best that He has with those who will trust Him.

What more could the Lord Jesus do to prove His credentials as Messiah and Saviour, the incarnate Son of God? He changed, controlled, and multiplied the elements, healed the sick, rebuked evil spirits, raised the dead, and effected His own death and resurrection. He truly was who He proclaimed to be, and His miracles provided irrefutable evidence of this truth.

# The Healing of Bartimaeus

Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus.

**Bartimaeus is thought to mean “son of the unclean.” Was he being punished for his father’s sins? It was a popular notion. But God doesn’t hold a man responsible for being born blind. He is responsible, however, for staying blind when Jesus passes by.**



**H**e was blind. And a beggar. He had no hope for a cure; and, in that day, no hope for anything resembling a fulfilling life.

For him, hope had been reduced to sitting beside the road wishing that passersby would have sufficient pity on him to part with a few coins. We don’t know how many days, or months, or years Bartimaeus had spent in this grim occupation. But we do know that that day was to be like no other.

Of all the people who might have walked past Bartimaeus that day, none could truly help him. None, save One. Had Caesar or Caiaphas come by, it might have been interesting—possibly exciting—but after their passing, Bartimaeus would have been unchanged. But this was no Caesar or Caiaphas. This was the Christ. And one of the marks of the Messiah was, *“the eyes of the blind shall be opened”* (Isa. 35:5).

When Bartimaeus heard who it was who was passing by, his plea was simple and eager: *“Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me”* (Mk. 10:47). There was no appeal to his works,

or to his merit, or to his religion. In humility he begged for something far greater than money: the mercy of the Saviour. And whether or not he knew it before, on that day Bartimaeus learned that God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4).

The response of the Lord Jesus was equally simple: *“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole”* (Mk. 10:52), and immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight.

It’s a lovely picture of salvation; of what happens when a sinner, who has spent a lifetime walking in darkness, acknowledges his need,

casts himself on the mercy of the Son of God, and becomes a child of light.

We have another picture. For the next verse tells us that, after curing Bartimaeus, our Lord approached Jerusalem. We call it the Triumphal Entry. And it fulfilled Zechariah 9:9, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an donkey.”* The prophet had commanded them to *“behold”* their king—to see! And so the Lord opened the eyes of Bartimaeus.

But there is more. Because, as we read on, we discover that Bartimaeus wasn’t the only blind man to meet the Lord. Our Lord Jesus was riding into a city of blind men. Not physically blind, of course—something far worse. Of all the cities on earth where Messiah ought to have been recognized, surely Jerusalem was the one—His city—the city of the great king. And yet the Lord Jesus came into the very temple where men studied the Scriptures, and they did not recognize Him. They were blind. In the events that followed, members of each group of Jewish leaders came to the Lord Jesus to reject Him. In response, no fewer than five times He referred to them as *“blind,”* blind to who He was and who they themselves were. And that wilful blindness led them to crucify the very One they claimed to be looking for.

That was no chance meeting with Bartimaeus. Just before entering a city of blind men, the Lord met a blind man who truly saw: a man who saw himself in his desperate need and who saw the Lord Jesus as the only One with the power and love to save him. And so our Lord opened his eyes, as a sign that He would be willing to open the eyes of blind Pharisees, too. And that, one day, He would open our eyes. 🕯



Notice the difference between the Lord Jesus speaking to Nicodemus and the woman at the well. He didn't presume on the woman's Bible knowledge. Instead He used an illustration from her life—the well of water. He could have used the smitten Rock, but didn't.

Yet with Nicodemus He *does* refer to a Bible story—the serpent on the pole. There He could ask, "Aren't you a teacher in Israel? Don't you know these things?"

## Do You Speak "Brethren"?

People might think we're talking in a foreign tongue. Often we are.

Anyone sitting at a truck stop beside a big rig driver and asking, "Are you washed in the blood?" or "Are you in the shadow of the Great Rock?" cannot expect to be rewarded with a knowing smile. Both phrases are sound biblical ideas, but they are no longer used in the marketplace where ideas are exchanged. I heard an elder instruct "the unlearned" before the Lord's Supper to "pass the elements by." Which elements would they be? Helium? Plutonium? Perhaps "bread and wine" might have been clearer to those not familiar with such terms.

Some words and phrases are understood by our hearers in a different way than we might expect. We know this is true of "church" (and many try to rectify this by replacing it with "assembly," a suitable switch for the local church, but a word which also should be defined). We also are skittish of "pastor" because it is often used of those who rule at the top of a pyramid of "laymen" rather than modeling the biblical concept of shepherds serving among the flock.

But today such confusion may also exist when we use what we consider to be very basic words like God (to a Hindu, one of thousands of peculiar deities) or justification (to a Mormon, a spiritual elevator through which the "faithful" arrive at heaven's penthouse).

When a friend in Belfast asked a group of inner city children if any of them knew anything about Jesus, only one boy tentatively raised his hand. When acknowledged by the teacher, he asked, "Why did his mommy give him a swear word for a name?" That was it—the group's collective knowledge of the Son of God. Welcome to the new Dark Ages.

Or consider the man who came when invited to a Bible talk near Glasgow, Scotland. When the speaker raised the issue of Adam in the Garden and original sin, the man became belligerent and stormed out. Turns out his name was Adam! "That man invited me here," he objected, "to blame the whole thing on me! And I don't even have a garden!"

An evangelist told me how he took a young believer for some door-to-door work to show him the ropes. While pouring out a steady stream at one door, he was, to his consternation, interrupted by his understudy. "May I ask the man something?" When grudgingly granted permission by the senior evangelist, he asked the puzzled listener, "Do you know who Jesus is?" The man slowly nodded No. Can you presume a knowledge of Joshua? Not even Jesus.

There are also terms that, with certain audiences, will work as well as a matador's cape in the eyes of an agitated bull. Gospel "crusades" bring back unhappy memories to both Muslims and Jews. Many terms also seem to make those not yet saved into our war spoils: we Christian soldiers "win" souls with the help of prayer "warriors." And I wonder what words like "Evangelism Explosion" bring to their minds. Who actually explodes? Sounds like Iraqi news reports.

Our Lord refused to use certain words—good words—that could be misconstrued. For example, rather than calling Himself "Messiah" because the Jews' concept of a temporal warrior was wrong, He used "Son of Man" (see Jn. 12:34 for its understood equivalence). So let us learn from the Master—keep it simple and understandable. Because not everyone speaks Brethren.

## LET'S FACE IT

**T**hinking BIG may not come naturally for most of us, but that couldn't be said of Doane Robinson, the superintendent of the South Dakota State Historical Society in 1923, or of Gutzon Borglum, the amazing sculptor of the four presidential faces etched into Mount Rushmore in South Dakota's Black Hills.

Robinson's suggestion was to carve regional heroes like Buffalo Bill Cody, explorers Lewis and Clark, and the now discredited General George Custer into granite outcrops. But Borglum (who also designed the Confederate memorial at Stone Mountain, Georgia) felt otherwise: *"We believe the dimensions of national heartbeats are greater than village impulses, greater than city demands, greater than state dreams or ambitions."* He insisted on the faces of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt.

Through scorching sun, blinding snow, shortage of funds, and the Great Depression, Borglum and his crew of 400 miners chipped, drilled and blasted 450,000 tons of granite to make the faces. Amazingly there was not one death during almost seven years of work.

There were some in Borglum's day who objected to the project; they still thought the project too small. They asked how a mortal sculptor "could hope to improve on what a higher authority [read 'God' here] had designed." Yet, in a spiritual sense, this is what we are hoping God will do in Sioux Falls this June: with the use of the chiseling work of the Word and the blasting of the convicting Spirit, to begin the slow but steady work of changing the visage of mere mortals into the likeness of the universal King! *"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"* (1 Cor. 15:49). *"We shall be like Him."* It doesn't get any bigger than that.

