

**Seed for Hard
Pathways**
Rex Trogdon

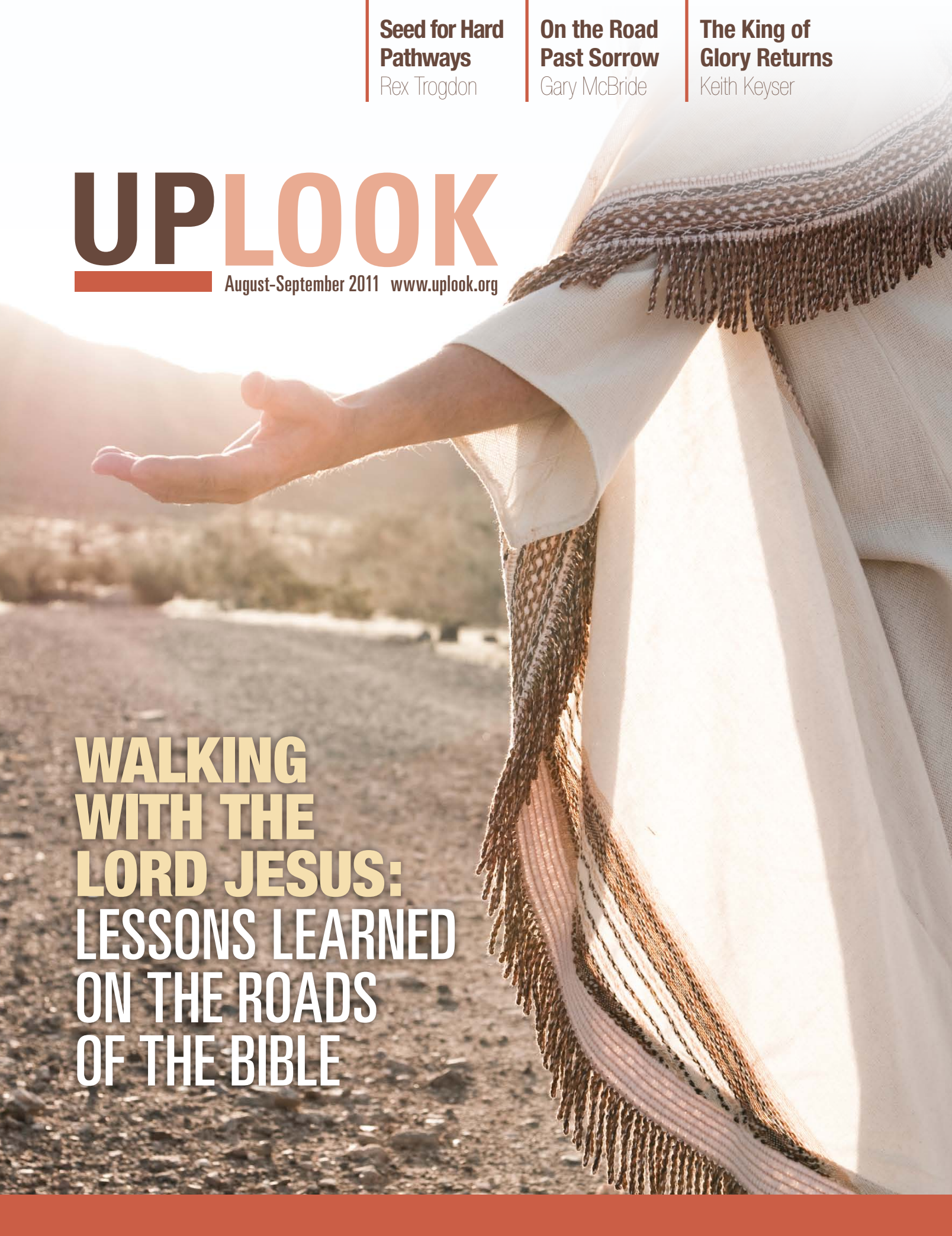
**On the Road
Past Sorrow**
Gary McBride

**The King of
Glory Returns**
Keith Keyser

UPLOOK

August-September 2011 www.uplook.org

**WALKING
WITH THE
LORD JESUS:
LESSONS LEARNED
ON THE ROADS
OF THE BIBLE**



Walking with God

"...they will walk with Me in white..."

REVELATION 3:4

The best Companion on the loftiest road

We often think of the tabernacle in restrictive terms: only the high priest could enter the holy of holies and even he could do so only once a year. While this is certainly true, there is another way of looking at it: the tabernacle allowed the God of glory to dwell among His people without consuming them. Indeed, this is the Lord's stated purpose for the tabernacle: *"And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them"* (Ex. 25:8).

Later, He went a step further (no pun intended). *"Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."* (Lev. 26:11f) Here we read that not only did the Lord want to dwell among His people, but also it was His intention to walk with them.

As hard as it is to believe, the Lord yearns for our fellowship. It is His desire to dwell among us and walk with us. He not only stated this in the Law, but also reiterated it in the Prophets.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8)

A lovely example of this is Enoch. We read, *"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."* (Gen. 5:22-24)

Twice we are told that Enoch walked with God. He made a life of it. And it's almost as if, one day, as he walked with the Lord, one foot came down on the ground of earth and the other foot came down on the streets of gold. So accustomed was he to enjoying the Lord's presence that this old planet faded away, and he stepped right into glory.

In this, Enoch is to be a picture of the church. In spite of all the work he had to do, Enoch wasn't distracted from that which is precious to the Lord: walking with Him and enjoying His fellowship until the day He brings us home. Enoch's occupation is to be our occupation: *"he walked with God."* And Enoch's hope is to be our hope: *"and he was not, for God took him."*

Finally, we can hardly think of walking with God without being reminded of the incarnation of Christ. *"The Word became flesh and dwelt [lit. tabernacled] among us"* (Jn. 1:14). In the person of the Lord Jesus, Jehovah dwelt and walked among His people.

But there's more! Remember the words of Micah? That we are *"to walk humbly with [our] God"*? That alone is a privilege beyond value. But as always, the Lord's plans for us are infinitely grander than our loftiest ideas. In unspeakable grace, our God stepped out of the glories of Heaven and walked humbly among us! He left Heaven and walked the dusty paths of Earth with us so that one day we could leave Earth and walk the streets of gold with Him.

—James Martin
editor@uplook.org

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"Follow me..."

10 In the Shadow of the Stronghold

The enemy's battlements are everywhere, and they mock our feeble attacks. But **Hanniel Ghezzi** points us to a Man standing by with His sword at the ready.

On the Road Past Sorrow

Gary McBride describes the confrontation at the outskirts of Nain: what was a dead end to anyone else was for the Lord, an opportunity for human compassion and divine glory.

14 Seed for Hard Pathways

Rex Trogdon gives a comprehensive overview of the Parable of the Sower, then encourages us not to give up on those who have become hard of hearing. Keep sowing!

Lessons on Emmaus Rd.

False assumptions lead to disappointment. But it is often at the point of our deepest despair, suggests **Steve Batts**, that the risen Lord reveals Himself.

20 A Face Set Like Flint

What was it, asks **Steve Price**, that fortified the Saviour's soul as He made His way to Calvary? It is the secret His intrepid followers need.

The Valley Route to Greatness

The snares of self-will, self-enrichment, and self-inflation are everywhere, writes **Jesse Gentile**; and the only safe approach is to follow the Master.

24 The Hosanna Highway

The account of Christ's triumphal entry produces numerous applications on the art of worship, says **Shawn Abigail**.

The King of Glory Returns

Keith Keyser graphically compares the rejection of Jerusalem's King and His coming again to establish His everlasting throne there.

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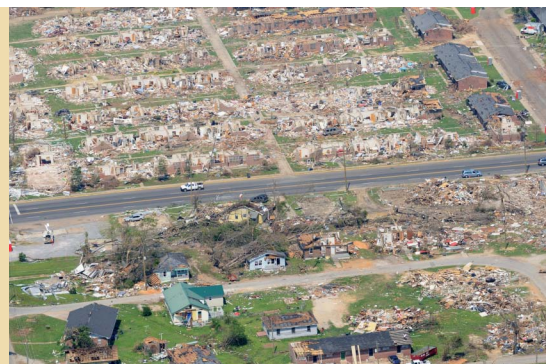
What rhymes with Bell and lasts forever?



Good Works & Good News

Tornado Relief in Mississippi and Alabama

The storms that ripped through the southern U.S. in April gave many openings for the gospel. The generosity of the Lord's people in donating funds to Uplook Ministries made it possible to be available immediately on the ground, bringing both aid and the gospel to hundreds. Relief centers were contacted as to needs, supplies were purchased and delivered with quantities of the CD "Hope in the Storms of Life." Relief workers gladly distributed these to needy families. Bibles were delivered to those who lost everything and impromptu Bible studies held. Recently an opportunity has opened to help with school supplies to poor districts resulting in invitations from schools to share the Good News with the students.



Steve Shepard

Hackleburg and Tuscaloosa, AL (shown), and Smithville, MS were among the most devastated, where EF5 tornadoes left little standing.

CONFERENCES, CAMPS & RETREATS

GREENWOOD HILLS 2011 SCHEDULE

For a listing of camps and conferences running through Oct 17 at Greenwood Hills, visit www.greenwoodhills.net

Contact: Martain Ferguson

7062 Lincoln Way East, Fayetteville, PA
ph: 866-861-1373 or by email:
martain@greenwoodhills.net

MISSION SPRINGS

The annual Pacific Bible Ministries Conference will be held Oct 3-7 at the Mission Springs Christian Conference Center (in place of Mount Hermon) 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 with lunch. Speakers: Fred Kosin (SC) and Al Sculz (CA).

Contact: Max Krieger ph: 323-256-1992
email: maxnbethk@sbcglobal.net

MAINE BIBLE CONFERENCE

A cordial invitation is extended to attend the 53rd annual Bible conference Oct 7-9 at Spring Hill Gospel Hall, Westbrook,

ME. Speakers expected are Harold Smith (NS) and Brian Taylor (PEI). Overnight accommodations available upon early request. **Contact:** John Stultz
30 Allaire Dr., Limerick, ME 04048
ph: 207-432-8881
email: stultzjf@hotmail.com

OMAHA, NE CONFERENCE

Christians gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ invite you to attend the 2011 annual Fall Bible Conference at Keystone Bible Chapel, in the will of the Lord, Oct 7-9. The guest speakers are John Gordon (NC) and Larry Price (FL). The first meeting begins on Friday at 7:30 PM. The Saturday meeting begins at 10:00 AM and Sunday will begin at 9:15 AM. Children's meetings on Saturday and Sunday as well. For accommodations please **contact:** Jeff Patterson
ph: 402-614-3743
email: j.patterson.ne@gmail.com

WORKERS AND ELDERS CONFERENCE

For nearly 80 years, this conference has continued to meet annually. The next conference, hosted by the North Ridge Bible Chapel, Raleigh, NC is scheduled

for Oct 11-13. The theme will be a central topic to assembly health: "Shepherding." This topic is vital as many assemblies have become casualties from insufficient shepherding. Each topic is prayerfully considered to equip those working in this spiritual field. All welcome. This conference has been found to be especially encouraging for younger believers who are showing maturity in the work of God. **Contact:** Steve Price
email: price10paid@gmail.com
web: www.workerselders.org

CENTRAL FLORIDA BIBLE CONFERENCE

The 6th annual Central Florida Bible Conference will be held Oct 15 at Hiawassa Bible Chapel, 1900 North Hiawasse Rd., Orlando, FL 32818. John Gordon (NC) is the expected speaker on the topic, "How To Grow Biblical Assemblies." **Contact:** Joe Jeremiah ph: 352-227-9471
email: jere8301@gmail.com

ATTENTION SENIOR SAINTS

Continuing in their 70th year of providing an active, supportive environment for assembly Christians and other believers, Rest Haven Homes in Grand Rapids, MI

front lines praise around the clock

invites you to visit during their 70th Anniversary Celebration on Oct 15th. They serve saints who are aged 60 or over with independent living, assisted living and supportive care all the way home to Glory. They also have a number of apartments available for independent seniors who wish to retire to a community of like-minded Christians where future care services are readily available. Information regarding Rest Haven is available at www.resthavenhomes.com.

Contact: Brian Wilson ph: 616-363-6819 email: brian@resthavenhomes.com



FALL CONFERENCE IN ALBERTA

Good News Bible Chapel of Calgary, AB will be holding their 5th annual fall conference Oct 21-23. Guest speakers will be Rob Brennan (BC) and Jorge Ferreira (BC).

Contact: Brent Rawlings ph: 403-619-2816 web: goodnewsbiblechapel.org email: contact@goodnewsbiblechapel.org

KANSAS CITY AREA CONFERENCE

The believers at the Bible Chapel of Shawnee (KS) invite you to their Fall Bible Conference being held Oct 21-23. In the will of the Lord, Larry Price (FL) will be speaking. Friday at 7:00 PM will be ministry and fellowship for high school, college and careers. Meetings begin Saturday at 1:00 PM. Overnight accommoda-

tions and nursery care available. **Contact:** Danny Chavez ph: 913-599-1358 email: djchavez1@sbcglobal.net web: www.shawneebiblechapel.org

CONFERENCE IN CONNECTICUT

The annual Fall Bible Conference at Well-spring Bible Fellowship, Welles Road, Old Mystic, CT is to be held Oct 21-23. The expected speaker is Dr. James Haesemeyer (missionary to Honduras). The conference begins 7:00 PM Friday with four sessions on Saturday, lunch provided. Brother Jim will also speak on Sunday.

Contact: John Clifford ph: 860-445-0622 email: clifford.j@att.net

50TH ANNIVERSARY IN DEARBORN MI

Dearborn Chapel invites you to attend its 50th anniversary of serving the Lord at their present location. The Oct 22 event begins at 3:00 PM with coffee and fellowship, followed by a meeting and dinner. On Sunday, the Breaking of Bread is at 9:30 AM with the Family Bible Hour at 11:15 AM. The chapel is at 4180 Monroe Boulevard, Dearborn Heights, MI.

Contact: Ross Rainey ph: 734-453-8585 or David Donnelly ph: 313-278-4592 email: davidgdonnelly@gmail.com

SEASONED SAINTS RETREAT IN TN

This mid-week event is for "empty nesters," those just needing a break, retirees or those too young but are anxious to retire. Dr. Dan Smith of Emmaus Bible College will be the speaker Oct 24-26 at Horton Haven Christian Camp in beautiful middle Tennessee. **Contact:** Horton Haven Christian Camp, Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37076 ph: 931-364-7656 web: www.hortonhaven.org email: john.phelan06@comcast.net

GA FALL FAMILY CONFERENCE

Camp Hope will hold their conference Oct 28-30. Chris Schroeder (MI) will minister God's Word to the adults and JC Schroeder (MI) will minister to the children. The conference begins on Friday with registration at 6:00 PM and ends Sunday with lunch.

There is no set charge because some young families may not be able to meet the expenses. We trust the Lord would move the hearts of others to give above the cost of their coming in order to supply these needs.

Contact: Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonga, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com or at www.camphopega.org for registration.

BROOKINGS PRAYER CONFERENCE

Brookings Christian Assembly will host a Prayer Conference Oct 28-30 with teaching on different aspects of prayer. Come prepared to spend several hours on your knees in prayer! This conference will be geared towards believers ages 15-25. Housing and meals will be provided. **Contact:** Larry Sax www.brookingschristianassembly.com brookingschristianassembly@gmail.com

AUTUMN CONFERENCE IN LA

Southside Bible Chapel, which is located at 4256 W. Congress Street, Lafayette, LA hosts their annual autumn conference Nov 12-13. The scheduled speaker is James McCarthy of the Discipleship Intern Training Center (CA).

Contact: William Walker, 103 Robert Drive, Lafayette, LA 70506 ph: 337-232-6577 email: wowalker@bellsouth.net

ISRAEL 2012

In the will of the Lord, a tour organized by Turkey Hill Ranch Bible Camp will depart from Chicago on Feb 23 and return on Mar 4. This trip is designed to give Biblical history and insight to the geography of the Bible. It aims to provide a healthy backdrop to the narrative portions of the Scriptures, which assist in explaining biblical events. Steve Price (KS) and John Heller (AR) will share the teaching responsibilities. During the tour, they hope to visit as many resident believers as possible. Space is limited.

Contact: Steve Allan

ph: 573-744-5871

email: thrbcsteve@yahoo.com

Jimmy Allan ph: 573-619-2895

email: jimmythrbc@yahoo.com

2012 BIBLE BOOK CHALLENGE

ECS Ministries invites your assembly to fellowship with other assemblies across the country in studying the Gospel of Mark, all at the same time using the 12-lesson ECS course on the gospel. For more details visit www.ecsministries.org or email rvolgarino@ecsministries.org.

TORONTO CONFERENCE RECORDINGS

Audio resources of the 2011 Toronto Easter Bible Conference are available on CD, DVD or MP3. A charge of \$20 covers all costs of seven messages and postage. The speakers are Alan Gamble from Scotland ministering on *"The Life and Times of Elijah"* and Dr. Steve Price (KS) on *"The Priesthood of Believers."*

Orders can be sent to Bill Allison,

3199 Sovereign Road,

Burlington ON, L7M 2W1

email: hw.allison@sympatico.ca

ph: 905-336-8101

CHRISTIAN WORKERS' FELLOWSHIP

The purpose of Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc. is to "receive gifts and donations of money from the Lord's people and distribute the same to workers sound in doctrine and associated with assemblies of believers and who are devoting their time to the Lord's work." Founded in 1957, it is a 501(c)(3) corporation, so contributions made to it by US residents are tax-deductible. All funds received are distributed every month.

Only funds designated for expenses are used for this purpose. The directors serve without remuneration. Funds received in the first quarter totaled \$406,662.02. Of this, \$3,075.79 was designated for general expenses, and the rest for distribution.

A financial report may be requested from: The Treasurer, Christian Workers' Fellowship Fund, Inc., Box 1117, Lawrence, KS 66044

ASSEMBLY IN SYRACUSE, NY

Syracuse Bible Chapel, located at 1419 Milton Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13209, welcomes visiting believers.

The Lord's Supper is Sunday 10:00-11:15 AM followed by the Family Bible Hour 11:30 AM-12:15 PM. Bible Study on Friday evenings at 7:00-8:15 PM **Contact:** Abyee Abraham ph: 315-399-5347 email: abey_a@yahoo.com Stephen Madgwick ph: 315-491-5553 email: madgwick@gmail.com

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

ANNUAL CALENDAR DROP

Halton Hills Bible Chapel, Georgetown, ON, will host the 3rd Annual Great Gospel Calendar Drop Sep 23-24, DV. More than 10,000 calendars containing Scripture, words of encouragement and the gospel will be dropped in mailboxes around Georgetown. Shane Johnson (ON) will be ministering from God's Word. Plan to attend for a weekend of working alongside fellow Christians to spread the gospel, enjoy great food, ministry and fellowship. Many willing hands are needed to distribute these calendars and above all, please pray!

CHECK OUT CMML'S BRAND NEW WEB SITE

www.cmml.us ▶

Planning for our new site began a year ago as we recognized the need to provide a new platform of electronic capabilities for missionaries, assemblies and supporters. After much prayer and lots of work, our site went "live" on May 10th. Please pray with us that it will be an effective tool used by the Lord for many years to come.

Our web site is designed to meet the special needs of missionaries in a variety of ways: to encourage prayer for the Lord's work, create an interest in missions, facilitate giving and improve the efficiency of CMML's office processing. This new site, in combination with the CMML Facebook page: **Facebook.com/cmmlus**, will be the focal points for our electronic communication. We will update information daily and hope you will use it as a tool to pray for our missionaries.



Contact: Hanniel Ghezzi
email: hannielghezzi@hotmail.com
Anthony Capuano
email: adcapuano@gmail.com

KINGMAN, ARIZONA OUTREACH

A Fall Gospel Outreach is scheduled in Kingman, AZ from Oct 21–28. Consider joining in this effort to share the gospel with any who will listen. Willing laborers are welcome and will be greatly appreciated. Prayer is requested. For more information, visit the web site at: www.goodnewsoutreach.info

Contact: Oliver John-Baptiste
email: obtljohnbaptiste@gmail.com
ph: 301-461-2418

GOOD NEWS ON THE MOVE

Prayer is requested for the Lord's blessing and guidance on a fresh season of GNOM's field training ministry. Leaders and team members embark on a revised vision of this program, spending longer periods in fewer regions to facilitate better follow-up. Emphasizing discipleship, follow-up and soul winning.

To learn more, visit the web site at: www.gnomteam.com

Contact: Jerry Denny
email: jerrydenny@bellsouth.net
ph: (336) 432-3284

COMMENDATIONS

KAREN CARTER

Those meeting at High Point Bible Chapel commend Karen to the work of the Lord as a teacher at El Camino Academy in Bogotá, Colombia. She completed a semester of practice teaching at El Camino and was asked by the school

administration to return as a full time teacher. Karen has been involved at High Point teaching children, a short term missions trip and with Sunday School.

JESSE AND ELLA GENTILE

The believers at Carrollwood Bible Chapel in Tampa, Florida are happy to announce the commendation of Jesse and Ella Gentile to the work of the Lord. While Jesse and Ella have been active and faithfully involved in personal evangelism, discipleship and youth work here at the assembly, Jesse has been active in Bible teaching and preaching throughout Florida and other parts of the US. He has also been faithfully serving the Lord's people through Assembly Care Ministries (ACM) and a writing ministry as well.

LUCAS RICHARD

The leadership at Southside Bible Chapel in Lafayette, LA have announced the assembly's commendation of Lucas Richard to the work of the Lord in Ireland. They write: "We commit our brother to the Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, for his safety and care."

DOUG AND KATHRYN RICKERT

Those meeting in the name of the Lord at Bethany Bible Chapel, Conway, SC joyfully commend Doug and Kathryn Rickert to the full time work of the Lord. Doug has served as an elder and faithfully used his gifts and abilities to shepherd and teach in various ministries. Kathryn has served with Doug and has used her own gift of teaching and talents in music for the glory of God and both have demonstrated hearts of compassion. Doug, Kathryn and their children have been called to the ministry of Three Springs Ministries in Morris, PA.



CHRIST PRE-EMINENT
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IN THE HOMES,
IN THE HEARTS OF ALL

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December 27-30, 2011

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- Mr. Joe Reese
- Mr. Paul Young

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Friday, December 9, 2011.

For more details, visit:

www.riseupconference.com

TIM AND YOLLY STAFFORD

Following the burden of the Lord placed on his heart, Tim has expressed his desire to go out into full time ministry for the Lord. He has left secular employment and Tim and Yolly express a great desire to look only to the Lord for their financial needs. Those at Boulevard Bible Chapel, Pembroke Pines, FL “commend them to the grace of God for the work” (Acts 14:26) of full time itinerant teaching and preaching as the Lord may lead them. Your prayers for them are appreciated.

MICHAEL AND LAURA THOMAS

The Christians who gather at Bethany Bible Chapel, Salisbury, NC are pleased to commend Michael and Laura to the work of the Lord in the areas of camp/youth work, pastoral care and speaking ministry. They have been in happy fellowship at Bethany since 2003 and Michael has continued to minister full-time since 1996 when commended by Believers Bible Chapel in Painesville, OH.

Contact: Michael and Laura Thomas,
308 Home Rd., Salisbury, NC 28147
ph: 704-636-4381
email: mdtlat308@att.net

HASSAN AND HIBA AWADA

The saints at Oakwood Bible Chapel in Windsor Ontario have withdrawn their commendation of Hassan and Hiba Awada. Hassan will be returning to secular employment.

HOMECALLS

Donald Schonberg, 88, of Lawrence, KS, was called Home on Mar 2. He served as an elder at Lawrence Bible Chapel and

enjoyed serving others. A gracious Christian gentleman, he was greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed. He had a great heart for the Lord, for the Word, for God's people, for his family, and the lost. He is survived by his wife Roene, one daughter, four sons, 24 grandchildren and 50 great-grandchildren.

Bruce Keyser, aged 70, was called to be with his Lord and Saviour on Mar 6. He was saved as a boy in the Pottstown, PA assembly and served the Lord in the local assembly through Bible teaching, gospel preaching, and pastoral visitation. He frequently preached in assemblies throughout southeastern PA, and served on the oversight of the Grace Gospel Chapel in Gilbertsville, PA from 1980 until his homecall after a lengthy illness. His Christianity molded his business activities in construction and general contracting. He also mentored his son Keith in the things of God, faithfully lived for Christ, and witnessed to his family. Please pray for his widow Patricia, as well as lost family members.

John Martin (Nov 16, 1910 - May 3, 2011) was born into an Old Order Mennonite family near Wallenstein, ON. His life changed dramatically after he attended a gospel meeting in 1931. “I told the Lord that I was a helpless, hopeless sinner,” John wrote, “and that now I understood that Christ died for me personally, that here and now I would trust Him as my Savior.” Almost immediately he began to proclaim the Word.

On May 8, 1932, John married Melissa Brubacher and they were commended to the Lord's work in 1935. Over the years, John's persistent and effective use

of door-to-door visitation, home Bible studies, radio work, and community gospel efforts was richly blessed by the Lord in the establishment of gatherings of believers in northern and southern Ontario as well as the Maritimes.

At age 62, when most think of retiring, he started Conestoga Bible Camp, (www.conestogabiblecamp.org) which continues today. In 1980, John and Melissa moved from Hawkesville to Tavistock, ON to help build a new assembly there, one of four assemblies that he helped start after age 65. More details of John Martin's life can be read in his concise and encouraging autobiography, *Saved to Serve*, published by Gospel Folio Press. www.gospelfolio.com

Mun Hope, (May 1, 1919 - July 8, 2011) passed into the presence of his Lord on July 8, 2011 at age 92 years. Born to a Chinese Buddhist family in Vancouver's Chinatown, young Mun was given the gospel by a courageous woman. Trusting Christ, he immediately began to preach and was initially rejected by his family. Later most of them trusted the Lord.

For almost 70 years he tirelessly and fearlessly testified to individuals and crowds, including thousands of school children and many government leaders. He is survived by his wife Adeline; two sons, 5 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. ■

NOTE: NEWS SUBMISSIONS

The news editor reserves the right to determine those items best suited for the magazine. Editorial decisions are final. Photos accepted. News items are also posted online when time allows. Send news items to: frontlines@uplook.org

Divine Dominos

Can “What?” lead us to “Whom?”



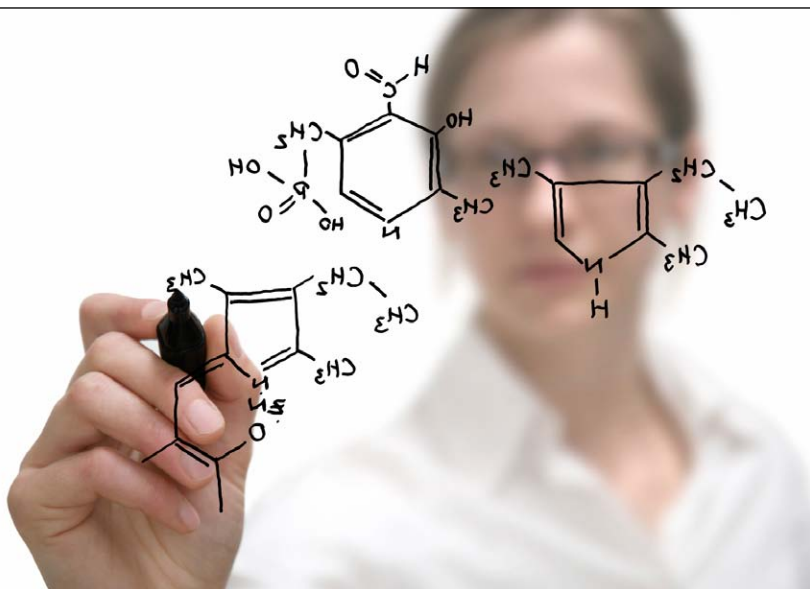
The forecast was for an icy winter blizzard, and the cars needed to be inside rather than outside the garage. The problem was that the garage never cleaned itself. Someone always had to deliberately clean it. Before closing down my garage woodshop, however, I decided to tackle one last project: shelves to organize lumber scraps. But one project often leads to another and, suddenly, there was a whole series of projects to complete before I could even begin to clean the garage. Building the shelves would be easy, but, before that, the outer wall of the garage needed to be insulated. So I cut holes in the sheetrock, rented a blower, purchased insulation and spent 4 hours in a cellulose cloud. The holes had to be closed and sanded smooth. And then the wall needed to be repainted. Only then could I start on the shelves...

This domino-like sequence of cause and effect events that must be completed before an intended event can occur is mirrored at the submicroscopic-scale in a living cell by a process called *signal transduction*. In its most basic form, it is a series of chemical “dominos” where activating one step triggers the next, and the next, so as to carry a chemical signal from the outside of a cell to the inside. The process is somewhat like sensory nerves signaling the brain, except a cell has no brain to interpret the signal. There is, instead, a pre-programmed response, such as turning a gene on or off. In other words, the dominos fall accord-

ing to the pattern in which they were placed, with the result being a pre-set action. This raises the question of what, or who, designed the placement and the programming. After all, the garage had to be cleaned by someone. So who programmed the cell’s signaling process?

There is, I think, evidence of the Divine in the cascading dominos of signal transduction. Each “domino” is actually a specific enzyme whose function is based on

between the molecule that starts the signal on the outside of a cell, the enzymes within the signal pathway, and the eventual response made by the cell. These levels of agreement on how chemicals function do not happen by chance. Choices about design and function are made by intelligent beings—in this case, a Divine being who can organize a microscopic, self-sustaining machine (cell) that can sense and react to its environment.



strings of amino acids folded into a unique shape. But enzymes alone cannot account for the complicated web-like design of signal pathways. This arrangement is a higher order of organization in which each enzyme occupies a specific and appropriate place in one or more signal pathways. There is also an amazing correspondence

One project often does lead to another, like falling dominos. But discovering how cascading cell signal pathways work ought to lead us from simply understanding what has been created and how it works, to worship and serve the One who did the creating.

— Michael G. Windheuser, Ph.D.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE STRONGHOLD

by H. R. Ghezzi

Georgetown, Ontario, is home to the Canadian headquarters of the Watchtower Organization (Jehovah's Witnesses). Its gated compound sits on 172 acres of land. In comparison, the home office of the President of the United States, leader of the free world, sits on only 18 acres of land. The compound's influence goes well beyond its gates, as it is responsible for producing one in every four of all J.W. soft-cover publications in the world.



Not only is Georgetown clearly overshadowed by Satan's stronghold, but there is a very significant Roman Catholic presence as well. To the casual observer, it appears that Georgetown is all but lost to these religious opponents of the truth. Why bother preaching the gospel on their domain? They're bigger, they're stronger, and there are more of them! But those were the very reasons why Georgetown was the perfect place for my family to help start a New Testament assembly four years ago

and reach out to the community with the gospel. How is that possible, you ask? Well, we know a Man who makes it His business to break down the strongest walls.

The fortress of Jericho

Situated 800 feet below sea level in the Jordan valley, Jericho is one of the lowest cities in the world, not to mention one of the oldest continually-inhabited cities. A fertile home to palm trees, its name denotes "fragrance." Later used as a winter resort by historical figures ranging from Cleopatra to Herod the Great, the city was a source for all pleasure; you could find anything your heart desired in Jericho.

Nevertheless, the stench of Jericho's idolatry and disobedience ascended to God, resulting in its doom to complete destruction (Josh. 6:17). The impenetrable fortress was the first obstacle standing in the way of the children of Israel after they had crossed the Jordan River to take possession of the land, c. 1400 BC. However, we discover that imminent victory would not be Joshua's to claim, but would be at the hands of an armed Man, the pre-incarnate Christ, who met him on the road to Jericho (Josh. 5:13-15). Similarly,

believers in Christ are involved in a spiritual war regarding their spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:1-14; 6:10-12). As was the case with the children of Israel, the believer in Christ must take heed to not go into battle unprepared.

Holiness: the pre-battle regimen

In advancing towards Jericho, one would think that the children of Israel would be involved in rigorous military drills to strengthen the flesh. However, crossing the Jordan resulted in something quite the contrary: circumcision. Literally, putting off the flesh (Josh. 5:2-9). Following this, they observed three feasts of the Lord (vv. 10-12). First, they ate the Passover. Secondly, they ate the old corn of the land, unleavened cakes (cf. Lev. 23:6-8). Finally, manna ceased as a result of their eating the old corn of the land, upon which the children of Israel ate the fruit of the land (cf. Lev. 23:9-14).

Likewise, the believer in Christ has undergone spiritual circumcision, the putting off of our flesh (Col. 2:11). There are also three New Testament observances that must precede our combat:

See what
a proper
pre-battle
regimen can
accomplish!



- 1. Our Redemption** – We must identify with the Lamb that was slain. Just as the Passover reminded the children of Israel of the cost of their redemption, so the New Testament remembrance meeting reminds us of ours (1 Cor. 5:7; 11:23-26).
- 2. Our Sanctification** – We must purge our lives from the leaven of malice and wickedness and live according to sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:8).
- 3. Our Glorification** – We must place our hope in Christ, the firstfruits of the harvest (1 Cor. 15:20). Because His suffering ended, so will ours. Because of His glorious resurrection, we also will be glorified! Without this blessed hope in view, how could we even consider fighting the battle?

By observing the feasts of the Lord, the children of Israel were proving their devotion to Him, relaying the message that they were God's chosen people—separate from the heathen of the land. Likewise, holy living is a proof that the believer is in Christ, having denied himself worldly pleasures and lusts (Titus 2:11-14).

The Man with the sword

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand: and Joshua went unto Him, and said unto Him, ‘Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?’ And He said, ‘Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, ‘What saith my Lord unto His servant?’ And the captain of the Lord’s

host said unto Joshua, ‘Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy.’ And Joshua did so” (Josh. 5:13-15).

My three-year-old daughter loves to sing about Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho. However, the careful observer would realize that the One who actually led them into battle was the same One who had brought them out of Egypt and led them in their sojourn in the wilderness for 40 years: the Angel of the Lord (Ex. 23:23). Although He looked like a man, He was not human. But God’s grace provided the Son of God with a human ancestor that week, the believing harlot from the other side of the wall (Josh. 6:25; Mt. 1:5). This same Man will go before us into battle if we wish to overcome spiritual strongholds.

The fact that He stands with a drawn sword tells us that He is ever ready to wage war on our behalf. This was not the first time He appeared with His sword drawn (Num. 22:23), nor would it be the last (Rev. 19:15). The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, happens to be the Christian’s only offensive weapon (Eph. 6:17). If the Lord saw no substitute for it, why should we?

His title, captain of the host of the Lord, tells us that He is in charge and He is the one that truly leads us into victory. Recognizing his God, not to mention his own dependence, Joshua falls before Him in worship. Do not expect the Lord to lead you into victory unless you are prepared to worship Him first. He must have first place in our lives; second place is not an option.

More than 40 years earlier, the Angel

of the Lord had instructed Moses to take his sandals off, for the place in which he stood was holy (Ex. 3:5; Acts 7:30). The Lord’s promise had come full circle. Moses brought the Israelites out of bondage, and Joshua was to bring them into their land. The Lord always keeps His end of the deal, whether we do or not.

Whose faith follow

In our opening, I described the religious stronghold in whose shadow our local assembly meets. Are there strongholds preventing you from possessing your blessings in Christ? Perhaps an academic institution is trying to shipwreck your faith in the Lord. Maybe the workforce is draining your time and energy, leaving you with little time for fellowship. The entertainment industry entices the flesh in both obvious and subtle ways. Praise God that His Man with the sword is still in the business of bringing down such strongholds!

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.” (2 Cor. 10:3-6)

Joshua’s godly faith obliterated a fortress (Heb. 11:30). Greater walls can tumble down today. Do you believe it? ■

On the Road Past Sorrow

by Gary McBride

Starting in Luke 6:20 and continuing to 6:49, the Lord Jesus gives a sermon, either a condensed version of Matthew's account or a second Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is preached on a level place, which could be either on a plateau on the mountainside or at the bottom of the mountain. Either way, what follows both here and in Matthew could be referred to as the Sermon on the Move.

The Lord Jesus comes out of the "pulpit" and meets people in need. The people He comes into contact with in Luke 7 would be considered to be outside the realm of Jewish sympathies. The Lord meets a Gentile, a dead man, and a sinful woman. The Jews in prayer would thank God that they were not born a Gentile or a woman. To touch or deal with any one of these individuals would result in ceremonial defilement, the condition of being unclean. Yet the Lord Jesus could talk to the centurion and grant his request. He could touch the coffin and impart life. He could allow the sinful woman to wash His feet with her hair. In doing all of this, He was neither unclean nor defiled.

MEETINGS

Nain was a small village southwest of Capernaum, a distance of over 25 km

away. It was an insignificant village, but it gained fame because of a great miracle. The Lord Jesus arrives, unannounced and unrequested, but just at the right moment to meet the procession as the funeral party leaves the town. Warren Wiersbe points out that there were a series of meetings at that moment. Two crowds met: one was mourning and the other rejoicing. Two only sons met: "one alive but destined to die, the other dead but destined to live." The Lord Jesus was the only Son in a different way in that He was the only begotten or unique Son of God. Two sufferers met: the woman in her sorrow, mourning the loss of her son and facing an uncertain future, met Jesus, the Man of Sorrows. Also two enemies met: life met death. Death is the last enemy, but life conquered.

The two crowds were heading in different directions. The crowd surrounding the Saviour was reveling in His presence and marveling at His power, as was revealed in the previous story. The other crowd was headed toward the burial ground and was in the presence of death. This crowd was weeping in sympathy with this woman and her tremendous loss. One crowd had no hope while the other was with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The latter's focus was on Him, the Lord of life.

The Lord Jesus sympathized with the woman in her time of sorrow and had compassion on her. How often this phrase is used to describe His emotional response to the plight of people! His compassion moved Him to action, to reach out and touch the funeral bier. The One that has life in Himself imparted that life to a corpse. So like the work of the Lord in the gospel: moved with compassion and reaching out. His work is taking spiritually dead sinners, giving them life, and raising them to walk in newness of life.

LESSONS

There are devotional lessons from this scene that can warm the heart of the believer. Note that on the three occasions the Lord appeared at a funeral, the mourning stopped; or, to put it colloquially, He spoiled the party. In raising Jairus' daughter, in raising Lazarus, and in giving life to the widow's son, He turned sorrow into gladness. He brought life to the dead and joy to the living. This is a reminder to God's people that *"weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning"* (Ps. 30:5b).

“On the three occasions the Lord appeared at a funeral, the mourning stopped.”

The scene is also a precursor to a coming day when the Lord will speak, and the dead in Christ will arise.

Luke alone of the Gospel writers records that the Lord had dealings with three “only” children. Jairus’ daughter was his only child; the boy with a demon in Luke 9 was an only son; and the dead man in this story was the only son of his mother. The Lord Jesus was especially gracious to those in these extreme circumstances.

For the first time in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is referred to as “Lord” (v.13). This word meant “master” or “owner” in the common usage of the day. It is used by the translators of the Septuagint to translate the Old Testament names of God including that of Jehovah. As the New Testament progresses, the title is almost exclusively used of God and of Christ. It is found in Thomas’ declaration, “*My Lord and my God*” and in Peter’s proclamation that “*God has made Him...Lord*.” Jude, in verse 4 of his epistle, addresses “*our only Lord*” as the Lord Jesus Christ (see marg.); then, in the next verse, Jehovah is called the Lord. This is a strong affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ, who is the originator of life and the Lord over life and death.

The crowd also exclaimed, “*A great prophet has risen up among us*.” This would be in response to Moses’ words in Deut. 18:15: “*The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from your midst*.” This is another of the Messianic designations of the Lord, though He was greater than the prophets.

Norman Crawford points out another word of note in this account. It is found in the response of the crowd in verse 16: “*God has visited His people*.” The word *visited* is found in Zacharias’s song in Luke 1:68: “*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people*.” Later in the Gospel, the Lord Himself would say, “*You did not know the time of your visitation*” (Lk. 19:44). It was a word that in secular use meant “to look on in a charitable way,” such as a doctor visiting a patient. When used of God, it expresses His loving concern for a sick and fallen humanity. Luke uses it again in Acts 15:14, speaking of “*how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name*.”

RESURRECTIONS

This miracle is also one of a series of significant events found throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, there are three individuals brought back to life. There are two children, one brought to life through Elijah and the other through Elisha. The third was the soldier who was put into Elisha’s tomb; and when his body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came back to life. In the New Testament, there are also three individuals



brought back to life by the Lord: Jairus’ daughter, Lazarus, and the widow’s son. That makes the Lord Jesus the seventh individual in recorded human history to be resurrected. This is one of many such patterns found throughout the Bible.

The Lord Jesus did a good work; when He let His light shine, others saw it and glorified God. They also had a reverential fear; they praised God and published the news far and wide. Believers today have a similar story to tell. They are aware of God’s great love, know the fear of the Lord, and have been brought from death to life. There is also a sense of symbolism in that just as the crowd went with the Lord Jesus along the road, believers today can experience His presence along the path of life. They also can see Him at work as the gospel is shared and the spiritually dead are given new life. “We’ve a story to tell to the nations, a story of truth and love.” ■

Warren W. Wiesbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989).
Norman Crawford, *What The Bible Teaches – Luke* (Scotland: John Ritchie Ltd, 1989).

hear the Teacher's perfect response

Seed for Hard Pathways

BY REX TROGDON



The road of the Sower leads us to Capernaum, the home base of our Lord's ministry. Capernaum was located to the north of the heart-shaped Sea of Galilee, the heart of His ministry. There He performed the majority of His miracles, taught in the streets and synagogue, confronted the scribes and Pharisees, and fulfilled the prophetic Word that He would speak using parables: *"I will open My mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old"* (Mt. 13:35; Ps. 78:2).

The word *parable* means to throw alongside. It was a story told, or a familiar image used, to illustrate a spiritual truth—using something we understand to teach us something we are seeking to understand. The road of the Sower leads us to the parable of the sower, which is not only the first of the seven kingdom parables but is also key to understanding the others: *"Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"* (Mk. 4:13).

The parable of the sower

In this parable, the road of the sower illustrates the different responses of people to the message of the Word of God. Considering the components of the parable will help us to understand

how this works. First, the *characters* in the parable are the sower, the seed, and the soil. Then the *conditions* of the soil described in the parable are the wayside (the road), stony ground, thorny ground, and good ground. Finally, the *comparisons* of the parable are given to us by our Lord Himself.

After the Lord spoke outside to the multitudes by the seashore, He came inside the house where the disciples asked two questions, *"Why do You speak to them in parables?"* and *"What does this parable mean?"* (Mt. 13:10; Mk. 4:10). His answers reveal much.

To answer the first question, Jesus said, *"To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables."* The fact that it had been given to them to know the mysteries does not mean there was no need to study and inquire of the Lord as to the meaning of the mysteries. The beauty of parables is that they draw out our hearts to follow Him and seek His face (Ps. 27:4). Thanks to the desire of the disciples to understand the parable, we also benefit—as if we, too, heard what He said outside and then came inside and sat at His feet to hear His word.

Then He answered their second question about the meaning of this parable. The parable of the sower, recorded in all three synoptic Gospel accounts, is unique in that it was first spoken, then explained, and also expounded. Therefore, the comparisons we make are accurate because we are not left to our own surmising. It is clearly stated that the sower is the Son of God, the seed is the Word of God, and the soil represents the four different types of hearers. The parable is all about the way we listen.

The Lord began the parable with the call to *"Listen!"* When He finished the parable, He challenged the people saying, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* Overall, the word *hear* is found nine times in the verses of Luke 8:4-15 and even more in Matthew's account. The four different types of hearers are easily noted. The wayside pictures those who are indifferent hearers: the message does not penetrate their lives but is stolen away by Satan. The stony ground represents those who are emotional hearers: they get excited about the message, but only for a short time, until testing comes. The thorny ground reminds us



“The birds of the air snatch the seed up. That’s a good reason to sow again and again.”

of worldly hearers who allow the message to be choked out by the cares of this world and the desire for gain. The good ground speaks of receptive hearers that bring forth fruit in differing degrees, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. The good ground is the only one of the four that truly receives the Word of God for salvation.

Seed by the wayside

So what happens on the road of the sower? We see the roadside mentioned in the first of the four soils in the parable. Whenever the Word of God is presented and the hearer does not respond, the Lord compares this to the seed that has fallen by the wayside. The wayside is the ground that has become so hard that nothing can take root. The seed lies on the top of the barren ground and the birds of the air snatch it up. The Lord Jesus said the birds that swoop down and snatch up the seed represent Satan snatching away the Word. That’s a good reason to sow the seed again and again.

What is the problem when people hear but don’t understand? I should know, and you should, too. How long did we hear but not understand? The Lord quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah and gives us the detail of that wayside hearer and the hardness that has prevented the seed from taking root. He states, *“And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull’”* (Mt. 13:14-15a).

We see the progression of the wayside hearer. First, they are **hard of hearing**. The Lord continues to quote, *“Their ears are hard of hearing”* (Mt. 13:15b). There are so many voices and so much noise in our clamorous world that deafen the hearer to the truth. Men become hard of hearing. But it gets worse.

The unbeliever is **hard-headed**. I know. I was likeminded. “Don’t confuse me with the facts!” is the expression that describes what the Lord quotes next from Isaiah, *“And their eyes they have closed,*

Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears” (Mt. 13:15c). This is the lot of those who have already determined that they not only cannot hear but will not hear! But, again, it gets worse.

They become **hard-hearted**. Just as the wayside ground is impenetrable, hearts become hard to the gospel message. As our Lord’s final quotation from Isaiah declares, *“Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them”* (Mt. 13:15d). We hear from Isaiah and from the Lord Jesus that the readiness and desire of the heart of God is to get through to their hearts.

He weeps over Jerusalem saying, *“How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing”* (Mt. 23:37). He would, but they would not!

Truly, the road of the sower calls to us to put our ear to the ground and ask our hearts the question, “Are we listening?” He pleads, *“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”*

Why is hearing so important? Think of it. We have two parables in Luke 8: the parable of the sower and the parable of the lamp. Both are surrounded by three warnings to listen (Mk. 4:3; Lk. 8:8, 18) saying, *“Therefore take heed how you hear.”* Then, these two parables are followed by an interruption from His mother and brothers who were outside desiring to see Him. He seized the moment and concluded His teaching saying, *“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the Word of God and do it”* (Lk. 8:19-21). We need to hear His Word if we are to obey it and please Him. ■

distressing assumptions dispelled!

Lessons on Emmaus Rd.

by Steven Batts



Luke 24:13-35 records the story of two disheartened disciples and how the Lord met them in their need. There are many times in our lives when we may feel like the two forlorn travelers walking the Emmaus Road. We thought we had a handle on things. We believed we were being led by the Lord Himself. Then one single event, a calamity, shatters all we thought we knew. All at once, everything changes, and we're forced to question assumptions we once held.

One thing we can learn from the story of the Emmaus Road is that the Lord can use these moments to teach us more about Himself. He uses these opportunities to help us see that our vision of His will and His plan is so often distorted by our own limited understanding. We fail to grasp the big picture, and His picture is so much bigger than we can imagine.

These disciples were suffering from some false assumptions. First, they thought that Christ's plans while here on earth could not possibly have included His crucifixion at the hands of His enemies. Their second error was in thinking that He could not possibly have risen from the dead. Our Lord gently dispels these assumptions. Using Scripture, He brings them to a more complete understanding of Himself.

An unexpected guest

The Lord Jesus found these men wandering down the road discussing current affairs. They were distraught since they had pinned all their hopes on Jesus. Now He was dead. They were at a point where their faith and their plans did not coincide. In verse 24, one of them says, *"We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel."* Rumors were swirling that His grave was empty and He had risen from the dead. How could this be? It was impossible. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Were these women, who reported that Jesus had risen, misled by their emotions?

As the Lord spoke with them, He challenged their preconceived notions of what the Christ should do and what He should be. He turned their thoughts to the Word to show Himself to them. He explained the big picture to them—a beautiful tapestry woven throughout Scriptures. There we learn that the Law, with its sacrifices and offerings, points to Christ. We find the prophets spoke of Him, as we would expect. However, I have a feeling that the prophecies Christ pointed out that day had more to do with a suffering Messiah than those disciples had ever considered before.

What I find most interesting about this story is how the Lord does not reveal Himself to them until the very end. He started by joining them on the road and asking questions. The travelers were surprised to find someone that apparently had not heard of the developments in Jerusalem. In verse 18, one of them asks the Lord, *"Are you a stranger to Jerusalem?"* That is like a saying we have in the southern United States when we encounter someone who is unfamiliar with something. We say, "You ain't from around here, are you?" But our Lord was using this to cause these men to open up. He was moving and positioning them for what He was going to say next. He was setting them up for a learning opportunity.

As they opened up to Him and told Him things He already knew, our Lord used their own account of the events to explain to them the picture that is painted of Himself throughout the Old Testament. He prefaced what He was about to say with the loaded question: *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?"* (v. 26). This gave Him the open door to explain God's plan and how it was foretold in Scripture.

“When our faith and our plans don’t coincide, we need to ditch our plans.”

Oh, what I would give to have been at that Bible study! To have the Lord Jesus Christ Himself give an Old Testament survey of Messianic symbolism and prophecies. To have the One who put the plan together and executed it walk with you and explain it all would have been superb! Through it all, the Lord was correcting their vision of the Christ and who He is.

Other wandering disciples

How often do we find ourselves on life’s road with a broken dream? We have had our bubbles burst by some event. We feel God should have acted in a certain way. We have our own preconceived notions of the direction our lives should go and ultimately how we think God should act in a particular situation. When things don’t go that way, or when the props are knocked out from under us, we can find ourselves, like the disciples, questioning what is going on. We come to a place where our faith and our plans do not coincide.

It is at this point that God will speak to us and instruct us. God uses these times of disappointment and sorrow to draw us closer to Himself and teach us more about who He is. He may reveal more of His plan to us. C.S. Lewis wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

On the road, the Lord found His own people struggling with His plan for the salvation of the world. They could not understand how the death of the Messiah could be a good thing. He found their hearts opened by their pain and He poured His truth into them.

A final revelation

As always, once someone responds to the revelation that has been given them, our Lord reveals more of Himself to them. When Jesus acted as if He was going to continue on, they pressed Him to stay with them a little longer. I don’t think they were done with their Bible study.

It is after this that the Lord revealed His true identity. I think it is significant that *“He was known of them in breaking of bread”* (v. 35). How many of us, as we sit and reflect on Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection every week, find that He reveals more of Himself to us. When we meditate on His person, He in turn ministers to us. We are there to worship Him, and yet we go away having been ministered to.

When we look back at the times in our lives when God has used our pain and grief, we can often see His leading and prompting as well. These are the times that we can say, *“Did not our hearts burn within us?”* as we sense His guiding and ministering to us. As He corrects those false assumptions that we have of Him, He teaches us more of His true self. At those times when our faith and our plans don’t coincide, we need to ditch our plans and find out what His plan and purpose is. It is then that He will reveal more of Himself to us. ■

FOR YOUR STUDY: JESUS AS HE JOURNEYED

THE ROAD TO	REFERENCE	WITH	LESSON
Jericho	Jsh. 5:13-15	Joshua	the leader of His people
Nain	Lk. 7:11	the widow and her son	Christ’s victory over death
the road of the sower	Mt. 13:4, 19; Mk. 4:4, 15; Lk. 8:5, 12		receiving the Word
Caesarea Philippi	Mk. 8:27	the disciples	the identity of Christ
Capernaum	Mk. 9:33	the disciples	true greatness
Jerusalem	Mk. 10:32; Mt. 20:17-19	the disciples	laying down one’s life
Jerusalem	Mt. 20:30; Mk. 10:46, 52; Lk. 18:35	Bartimaeus and fellow blind man	Christ’s victory over blindness
Jerusalem	Mt. 21:8; Mk. 11:8; Lk. 19:36	Israel	the triumphal entry – a dry run of Psalm 24
Emmaus	Lk. 24:32, 35	the two disciples	enlightenment and encouragement
Damascus	Acts 9:27; 22:6; 26:12-13	Saul	the union of Christ and the church
Jerusalem	Ps. 24	the armies of heaven	Christ’s victory over His enemies
the tombs	Mt 8:28	two demon-possessed men	Christ’s victory over the forces of darkness
Jericho	Lk 10:30-31	a certain man	the Good Samaritan

Tomahawks, Totem Poles, Teepees and a Tower

A few years back, my sister and brother-in-law invited me to spend a few days with them on vacation in the Adirondacks. It was summertime. They had rented a house along a lake near Lake Placid, NY—the famed place where the US Hockey team had won a gold medal during the 1980 Winter Olympics. Not too far away is Whiteface Mountain, where downhill skiing events were held. Any avid skier would know that Whiteface is one of the more impressive mountains—at least by east coast standards.

One afternoon I decided it might be fun to ride the gondola up Whiteface. I had heard that it runs year round and leads to one of the more impressive views on the 4,867-foot tall mountain. I have



done my fair share of hiking up and down mountains, but couldn't resist the chance to ride up a lift that does in minutes what it might take a day to hike. With my nephew and niece in tow, up the mountain we went. The gondola won't get you all the way to the top – but it does take you to a peak called Little Whiteface.

It just so happened that the day we

were there, a Native American Festival was being held. Tribal dances as well as Native American art were there for the viewing. What really caught my attention though was a member of the Mohawk tribe as he told a captivated audience some of the ancient tribal legends. The Mohawk tribe along with the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora tribes make up the Haudenosaunee Confederation of Nations. This confederation is more commonly known in history books as the Iroquois.

The hair on the back of my neck stood up when I heard him talk about the legend of how there came to be so many tribes in the world. Long, long ago, the ancients had attempted to build a structure (a teepee of sorts) that reached up to the sky. They were trying to reach the Great Spirit in the sky. But when He saw their rebellion, their language was confused and all the tribes were then formed at that point.

Afterwards, I spoke with the tribal chieftain. He mentioned that many Native American tribes had stories in their past that bore eerie similarity to accounts from the early chapters of Genesis. The Choctaw Tribe today is comprised of nearly 200,000 members.¹

At one point, they dominated much of the Southeastern portion of what would become the United States. A distant memory of early Scriptural events can be seen in their legends as well:

"Many generations ago Aba, the good



spirit above, created many men, all Choctaw, who spoke the language of the Choctaw, and understood one another.

These came from the bosom of the earth, being formed of yellow clay, and no men had ever lived before them. One day all came together and, looking upward, wondered what the clouds and the blue expanse above might be. They continued to wonder and talk among themselves and at last determined to endeavor to reach the sky.

So they brought many rocks and began building a mound that was to have touched the heavens. That night, however, the wind blew strong from above and the rocks fell from the mound. The second morning they again began work on the mound, but as the men slept that night the rocks were again scattered by the winds.

Once more, on the third morning, the builders set to their task. But once more, as the men lay near the mound that night, wrapped in slumber, the winds came with so great force that the rocks were hurled down on them.

distant memories of eternal truth

The men were not killed, but when daylight came and they made their way from beneath the rocks and began to speak to one another, all were astounded as well as alarmed—they spoke various languages and could not understand one another.

Some continued thenceforward to speak the original tongue, the language of the Choctaw, and from these sprung the Choctaw tribe. The others, who could not understand this language, began to fight among themselves. Finally they separated.

The Choctaw remained the original people; the others scattered, some going north, some east, and others west, and formed various tribes. This explains why there are so many tribes throughout the country at the present time.”²

The account of Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel is not all that is veiled in this legend. There even is a memory of mankind’s formation out of the dust (or “clay”) of the ground.

The fact is that ancient cultures the world over have stories or traditions that seem to echo a distant memory of the God of the Bible and/or of events described in the Scripture. Though some corruption or degradation may have impacted these accounts, the basic premises are still in tact.

In Polynesia, on the island of Hao, an ancient tradition holds that a Great Flood once occurred. The sons of a key figure by the name of ‘Rata’, were said to have survived. They attempted to erect a giant structure that could reach to the sky. Their hope was to see the creator god whom they called Vatea. “But the god in anger chased the builders away, broke down the building, and changed their language, so that they spoke divers tongues.”³

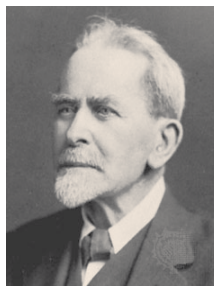
A strong argument could be made that ancient Chinese pictographs testify to the presence of the Tower of Babel story within Sino culture.

In short, the Chinese word for “Tower” is comprised of pictographs piecing together the words for “Grass” or Plain + “Clay” + “Mankind” + “One” + “Language” or Mouth. Interesting, at the very least.



Literally hundreds of cultures have stories or traditions that parallel the happenings described in the early chapters of Genesis. And this makes sense! Remember, the early events of Scripture (the events up to and including the dispersion at the Tower of Babel) would be recollected. These events are shared history across humanity. The dispersion of the human race really only begins en masse post Babel. This explains why so many of ancient cultures have somewhat similar Creation accounts, Flood accounts, and Tower of Babel accounts...

I am just skimming the surface here. Noted anthropologist Sir James George Frazer in the early 1900’s documented some 175 different ancient cultures the world over that have a Global Cataclysmic Flood account of one sort or another.⁵



Frazer was hardly an apologist for the Bible. Yet, his work demonstrated a collective memory around the globe of the early scenes of Genesis.⁶

When taken in the aggregate, such material builds a tremendous case supporting the reliability of the Bible.

—Rob Sullivan

For more information on this and other topics, please feel free to visit us:



www.christianevidences.org

1. www.choctawnation.com/history/

2. www.bit.ly/first-peoples-babel-choctaw

3. www.varchive.org/itb/confus.htm

and also R. W. Williamson, Religious and Cosmic Beliefs of Central Polynesia (Cambridge, 1933), vol. I, p. 94.

4. Image: www.cogwriter.com/china.htm

Source material, see C.H. Kang and Ethel Nelson *The Discovery of Genesis* (Concordia Publishing, 1979), p. 106.

5. www.bit.ly/more-about-archaeology

6. www.bit.ly/frazer-folklore

and also Sir James George Frazer *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend & Law*.

A Face Set Like Flint

by Steve Price

Every nation has its heroes and heroines. Governments often set aside a day to honor the brave men and women who have served in defending their country. The United States celebrates Veterans Day. Fellow citizens of our nation take a moment to recognize the self-sacrificial lives of our soldiers as they faced the realities of war. Civilians are reminded that on the night a soldier is deployed, he very well may be eating his last meal with his family or kissing his spouse and children for the last time. It is all too possible that the service person could fail to return home. These sobering considerations understandably produce anxiety and fear in the soldier. Dread, nervousness, and consternation could easily dominate his mind and emotions.

A public walk and private talk

In a small way, such thinking among the disciples could have easily been the backdrop of Mark 10:32-34 where the Lord began His final ascent toward Jerusalem. He would ascend with the Passover-destined crowd some 1100 meters over 52 kilometers. This trek, however, would be more than a mere exhausting walk. It came on the heels of the Lord's

teaching on discipleship: a disciple's approach to marriage (10:1-12), a disciple's parental approach with children (10:13-16), and a disciple's attitudes toward his possessions (10:17-31).

The Lord's statements vividly portrayed a violent end for the disciple. This would no doubt create uneasiness in His listeners commensurate with that of a deployed soldier. The Lord's entourage, for example, would be uncertain of what the Lord might do or what the religious sector might do to the Lord or what unpredictable and self-preserving plot Herod might contrive against the Lord. After all, this was the third time the Lord Jesus had announced the fate that awaited Him in Jerusalem (cf. 8:31; 9:31). Indeed, the text indicates not only the apprehension of the crowd but an unusual astonishment at this peculiar Man's calm and purposeful demeanor. Most men would shrink back and follow from behind, thus distancing themselves from the unknown of what lay ahead. The Lord, on the other hand, was in the front. He "was going before them," much like the familiar shepherds of that culture (10:32). These Jewish listeners would easily recall how Jacob handled his fears with his brother, Esau, and how

Jacob dealt with those fears by putting his entire family, servants, possessions, and flocks between himself and his brother (Gen. 32:13-21). The Lord stood in stark contrast to this biblical icon. No wonder the crowd was amazed!

The Lord's unwavering peace is further displayed when He privately converses with His disciples. I would have expected the Lord to give a soothing speech to calm their fears in the flammable situation. Time and breath might be better used to downplay what may or may not occur at the end of their journey. However, this is not the nature of His valor. Instead, our Lord minced no words to describe in detail what would transpire within the approaching city walls. He did not downplay the reality of what lay ahead. Rather, He underscored the dreadful dealings in store for Him. No doubt His disciples would assume their fate was the same. Fright and trepidation would easily begin to simmer under their calm exterior.

Setting the example

At the minimum, we have to confess that such bravery is most admirable.

One must confess, who would not want to follow such a Man?



This type of man is rare and would be worth following even in the face of death. He is the living version of His preaching which said that a true disciple is one who will “*deny himself and take up His cross and follow Me*” (Mk. 8:34-38). Who wouldn’t be drawn to a Man of this caliber?

His example sets the bar for what is expected of any of His devotees. Indeed, this is what ought to be normal for any believer—even today. The Lord was not concerned with mere self-preservation and personal will. He had unmistakable danger in His path, yet He refused to turn from it. His face was “set as a flint” toward this endpoint (Isa. 50:7). He was resolute. He was unwavering.

The Lord walked the path He would require of each and every would-be follower. He did not merely speak theory. He was our General, showing the enlisted man how to fight the fight. Self and its own interests must be relegated to a place under the will of God. This is the attitude of the martyr and it was demanded and demonstrated by our Champion. One must confess, who would not want to follow such a Man?

The calm of confidence

What is intriguing is the motivation that held His “steadfastly to this path.” How could this Man carry the weight of certain humiliating death, knowing He would endure God’s wrath for mankind’s sin and yet still proceed with unwavering resolve? What was it in His soul that provided such an anchor for His conduct? Fortunately, the Bible tells us. In the face

of reviling, suffering, and death, the Lord “*committed Himself to Him who judges righteously*” (1 Pet. 2:23).

Does not Gethsemane’s garden dramatically display that He had entrusted right and authority for decisions about His treatment and future to His Father in Heaven? With few audible words, He quietly showed His full confidence in His Father to make the correct and right evaluation. It is this simple trust in His Father’s purposes that allowed the Lord Jesus to stay calm in a volatile and otherwise overwhelming situation.

Interestingly, Daniel’s three faithful friends demonstrated the same disposition as the Lord Jesus. Though they faced a terrifying fiery end at the hands of a maniacal despot, they, with calm and poise, declared their intentions about the matter at hand. Their actions proclaimed to all their trust in God. But notice the answer they gave when granted a second opportunity to bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (Dan. 3:8-15). They informed the king that there was no need for a repeat symphonic performance or to give them another opportunity to evade the grim fate that awaited them. They were not going to bow down because “*our God whom we serve is able to deliver us*” (Dan. 3:17). However, if their God chose not to deliver them from the hand of the king, they were clear: “*Let it be known to you...we do not serve your*

gods...nor will we worship” (Dan. 3:18). These seemingly fearless men had their bravery firmly rooted in their absolute confidence in their God. Whatever decree came down from heaven as to whether He chose to deliver them or not, such would be perfectly satisfactory. They were fully comfortable in whatever decision the Lord exercised as pertaining to their fate. Thus, they had the wherewithal to spar with this notoriously brutal and wicked ruler.

The disposition of these three bold servants was also that of the Lord centuries later and is the very mindset that is required of a servant of God today. Indeed, this quiet internal trust keeps the soldier in active combat. We cannot survive unless this kind of unspoken confidence pervades the soul. We will never be able to ascend the hills to our “Jerusalem(s)” unless we adopt Christ’s mindset. We must entrust ourselves to Him who really does judge our affairs with a right outcome. In so doing, we are given the peace which surpasses the world’s natural understanding and confounds the unbeliever as to our resolve as a follower of Jesus Christ. His trustworthiness gives us the fortitude to lay down our lives and take that path that leads up to our God-appointed destinations. ■

The Valley Route to Greatness

BY JESSE GENTILE

We live in a world of celebrities. Media and web technology have brought the lure of earthly greatness to the fingertips of millions. Thousands line up to audition for reality TV shows and a chance at fame. Others claw their way up ivory towers to achieve academic greatness. Many set sail on the stormy sea of capitalism hoping to reach the shores of financial greatness. In a society where the idea of the eternal is fading fast, men want to be anything but lowly.

While the modern west has outpaced past generations in its pursuit of greatness, such behavior has stained our race ever since the tower of Babel. Even before the fall of man, the sinister grimace of pride spread across the face of Lucifer, who in the dateless past rejected his place as a “ministering spirit” (Heb. 1:14) in hopes of making himself like the “most high God” (Isa. 14:12-14). Millennia ago Jeremiah wrote, “*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty glory in his might, let not the rich glory in his riches*” (Jer. 9:23). In the days of our Saviour, the Jewish rulers knew the Lord Jesus was “come from God” (Jn. 3:2), yet they suppressed their knowledge because they “loved the praise of men” (Jn. 12:42-43).

In the assembly, false greatness finds an easy hiding place behind the façade of spiritual zeal and wisdom. James, one of the earliest New Testament writers, warned that any so-called wisdom that led to “envy and self seeking” was not wisdom from heaven but was earthly, sensual, and even demonic (Jas. 3:13-16). Paul, writing to the Corinthians, addressed a similar Christian elitism (1 Cor. 1-2). John warned his readers about the “pride of life” (1 Jn. 2:16). This same John was refused by Diotrophes, who loved to have the preeminence among the assembly (3 Jn. 9).

False greatness comes in several forms. Jeremiah 9:23, quoted above, contains three: the glory associated with wealth (Lk. 12:15-21; Jas. 2:1-7), the glory of might and power, (1 Sam. 17:1-11; Dan. 4:30; Acts 12:22-23), and the glory of intellectualism and wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1-3:5).

What then is true greatness? True greatness is greatness that reflects the life of our Saviour and the servant leadership principles of His kingdom. In the kingdoms of men, greatness is measured by outdoing others: more wealth, more popularity, more power. In the kingdom of God, greatness is measured by ministering to others: more humility, more service, more dependence upon the Saviour.

The Saviour’s road

No one demonstrated true greatness more than our Saviour. Philippians 2:1-11 sets the entire pattern before us. His great humiliation and exaltation remind us of the shape of a “V”. Though equal with God, our Lord stooped unfathomably far to walk on earth as a man. If God must humble Himself to look upon the heavens (Ps. 113:5-6), what did it mean for Him whom the heavens could not contain (1 Ki. 8:27) to be “handled” by men (1 Jn. 1:1)? Trace your finger down the slope of a “V” until, near its valley, the Creator stands blindfolded while men slap Him (Mt. 26:67-68), taunting Him who knew all things to prophesy regarding His abuser. See Him descend further still, submitting to false accusations, a shredded back, a mocking crown, and criminal execution. Lastly, He sinks out of sight beneath the waves and billows (Ps. 42:7) of God’s judgment (Isa. 53:6).

But this is not the end. The Father, because of Christ’s great humiliation, lifts Him up (the right side of the “V”), exalting Him above every name (Php. 2:9-11). In God’s kingdom, the way up is to stoop down. The path to glory lies through suffering. Note how the behavior of Satan takes the opposite shape.


Originally a “ministering servant” (Heb. 1:14), he exalted himself “like the most High” (Isa. 14:14). But at the apex of his glory, he was cast down (Isa. 14:15).

Why did the Lord humble himself? He did it because He knew His Father wanted redemption accomplished. He did it because He loved the lost. He did it because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. He did it because it needed doing. He did it because an earth cursed by sin did not give God the glory it was originally designed to do.

Great in God's kingdom

Take your Bible and turn to Mark 9:30-50. There, true and false greatness collide in stark contrast. Our Saviour’s ministry was drawing to a close. In His desire to prepare His disciples, He announced on three occasions that He would be betrayed and crucified (Mk. 8:31-33; 9:30-50; 10:32-45). Each time, the disciples responded with confusion. Twice they responded with concerns for their own greatness.

As they walked to Capernaum, they were afraid to ask Him to explain Himself (Mk. 9:32). Private discussion ensued. What could the Master have meant? How could the Messiah die and rise (Mk. 9:10) when He was supposed to restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)? Perhaps the topic of the kingdom was too much to resist. Oh the glory! What titles would they have? What positions would they hold? Quickly



“If the Messiah wore the title “my righteous Servant,” how can we shun lowliness?”

the Master’s death was forgotten, and they began discussing who would be greatest in the kingdom. The discussion became a “dispute” (Mk. 9:34).

Mark records how, after entering the house in Capernaum, the Saviour graciously questioned the disciples regarding their dispute. They were embarrassed to admit their previous debate (Mk. 9:34), as many will be when they stand before the Lord. Realizing He knew their thoughts (Lk. 9:47), they asked Him, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Mt. 18:1). Taking the position of a teacher, He sat and expounded the way they could become truly great—a method available to you and me. “*If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all*” (Mk. 9:35).

Those who wish to be great in the kingdom must imitate the King of the kingdom. If the Messiah wore the title “My righteous Servant” (Isa. 42:1), how can we shun lowliness? If the Lord from heaven operated as “one who serves” (Lk. 22:27), how can we say, “Insignificance is not for me”?

To press the lesson home, our Lord set a child, small enough to be held in His arms, in their midst. In that day children had little social rank; they were not praised and catered to. At least one rabbi equated them socially with the deaf.

They were humble, utterly dependent, and hardly concerned with status. This was the position necessary for entrance into the kingdom (Mt. 18:3) and for subsequent greatness within it (Mt. 18:4).

Our Lord used the child for an additional lesson. Our mindset towards our own importance affects not only our service but also how we view others. Those seeking greatness not only find menial tasks distasteful but also menial people. The greater we see ourselves or our assembly, the more we look down upon other followers of the Lord, and the less likely we are to receive them as He receives them.

Even the lowest disciple is a representative of the Lord. He who receives the child (representative of a lowly or young believer) receives the Son and thus the Father! Those who marginalize even the least (e.g. children), “despise” those whom the Father has chosen (see Jas. 2:5-6)!

“*Have peace with one another*” (Mk. 9:50) ties together everything in Mark 9:33-50. Christ-like greatness is part of that “savor” that believers need in order to be useful as a preservative in a fallen world. He who misunderstands true greatness becomes “savorless salt.” He becomes an ineffective preservative and thus insignificant in God’s kingdom. ■

The Hosanna Highway

by Shawn Abigail

In the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the synoptic Gospels present us with a delightful picture of some of the finest pre-resurrection worship in the Bible. As we read these accounts in Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19, our hearts rejoice at the way in which the Lord was received, albeit temporarily, into Jerusalem. But in addition to the beautiful emotions this passage inspires, it is also a rich source of instruction about worship.

The first thought we must explore is what this event meant to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. One of the very special titles used of the Lord is that of the Son of David. Indeed, as we read through the Gospels, it seems that the Lord Jesus Christ frequently granted the requests of those who approached Him as the Son of David. So this passage is particularly beautiful in showing the Son of David

entering the City of David in a manner that befits a king. The King is returning to that which is His own! Of course, the Lord Jesus had been to Jerusalem many times before, but the triumphal entry was something special and unique. This recognition of Jesus as a king entering His royal city is not just some thought suggested by Christians, but the Jewish crowds themselves shouted out, “*blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord*” (Lk. 19:38).

In Matthew 21:2f, Mark 11:2-6 and Luke 19:30-34, we see a detail which may seem odd to us. The Lord sent His disciples to fetch a colt with instructions of what to say to the owner. When questioned as to why they were taking the colt, they were to say, “*The Lord has need of it.*” Here we see that God arranges the setting, the means, and the inspiration for worship.

THE CONDITIONS OF WORSHIP

The setting is the presence of the Lord. Worship cannot take place apart from the divine Persons. Whether personal or corporate worship, it comes when He is present. Our fondest thought, our most precious memory of Him, our deepest meditation, and our most explosive emotion of love all come together in worship.

What is the means of worship? In Matthew 21:7, we see the people laying their coats on the colt. Here we see a reminder that in worship we bring what we have. What we have stored up in our hearts overflows in worship, whether personal or corporate. But in the next verse, we see the crowd cutting branches to spread on the road ahead of Jesus’ mount. This is a reminder that in worship there is often something fresh.

“Worship is an opportunity that God gives to us. One might even call it a gift.”

One thought which is prepared ahead of time leads to new thoughts which are inspired then and there by the Spirit.

And what is the inspiration for worship? It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; He is the focus of worship. We see this in Matthew 21:9, as the crowd began crying out “Hosanna!” To be with Him, to share in His joy, to see Him in His rightful place—all inspire us to worship. For three years, the crowd had seen confirmation of the statements made at the Lord’s baptism, and now those thoughts overflow. Though it is a simplification, it can be stated that in worship we are merely agreeing with the Father’s estimation of the Son.

THE PREPARATION OF WORSHIP

In Mark 11:2 we read, “*you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.*”

Here we learn that some things belong exclusively to God. There is no room for anyone to share the worship of God; to God alone be the glory! To receive worship is the exclusive prerogative of God. But there is also a reminder that within the Godhead there are thoughts that are not shared with created beings. Only the Father can truly comprehend the perfections and beauties of the Son. Try as we might, our worship is only a pale shadow of what will take place for eternity, and we would have it no other way. It goes without saying that in worship there is no place for the flesh to be on display. Our eloquence adds nothing to the symphony of praise that the Holy Spirit

leads. No mere man is on display, but only the one who is both God and man.

Sometimes in worship, God makes arrangements that are not visible to us. We do not know what arrangements were made ahead of time in Mark 11:6. Did the Lord Jesus have some dealings with the owner of the colt ahead of time? Or did the Holy Spirit make the arrangements then and there? We don’t know. But what we do know is that God Himself made arrangements that were not visible to the disciples. As we walk through the Christian life, we sometimes find ourselves in situations where it becomes clear to us that God has made arrangements of which we were not aware. This is particularly the case in worship. When our hearts are desirous of singing the praises of the Lord, we often stumble across a precious thought, or we are reminded of something from our daily Bible reading, or another believer during corporate worship has a thought that perfectly dovetails with our own.

But for all the joys of worship, we must acknowledge that worship can sometimes be costly and calls for actions which are out of the ordinary. We see this in Mark 11:8 when the crowds placed their coats on the dirty road to have the colt walk over them. This is not the regular purpose of a coat! Yet the people delighted to use their coats in this manner. Another of the costs of worship is our time. It takes a sacrifice to set aside time for worship, whether personal or corporate. A greater sacrifice is that of self.

There is no room for self when we come to worship. Our thoughts, even the good ones, must be reined in as we meditate on the highest theme.

THE PREMINENCE OF WORSHIP

A failure to worship invalidates all other religious virtues. We see this in Luke 19:39. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that many of the Pharisees were good and devout men. They earnestly followed after God. It is likely that they were far more religious than any of us today. But their religion had no place for the Lord Jesus Christ, and they had no sympathy with the worshipping crowds. As such, they literally missed the opportunity of a lifetime. Whatever religious virtues they may have had were squandered when they failed to worship.

Finally, worship is an opportunity that God gives to us. One might even call it a gift. When the Pharisees tried to get Jesus to restrain the expressions of praise coming from the crowd, He replied, “*I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!*” (Lk. 19:40) It is not as if the Lord God is short of worshippers. He can have the worship of the angels any time He wants. He can even animate the stones themselves to worship Him! And yet He has requested the worship of mankind with gentle words like, “*Do this in remembrance of Me*” (Lk. 22:19). To deny Him the worship that is His due is the grossest indecency. We are given the opportunity to worship Him, personally and corporately, and, both humbly and joyfully, we obey. ■

dare to think love God with your mind

How Important is the Assembly?

Many evangelical Christians view the local church as an option in their lives. It is like a theater: you may choose to go or not. It is not a necessity in your life. You may say, “I can read my Bible at home and pray. I can worship God when camping or hiking. I can hear a preacher on the radio if I wish. I do not need the church in my life.”

But the Bible emphasizes the importance of the local church. Paul said that he wrote to Timothy, *“that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:15, NKJV). This is a lofty description of the assembly, emphasizing its importance. It is also called the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3:16-18). It is God’s house and He has a right to direct conduct in His house. It is a temple and should be marked by purity, holiness, and worship.

Believers are exhorted to be faithful in attendance at the meetings for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25). All four of these activities were part of the weekly meetings of the early church. These meetings will nurture one’s spiritual growth and maturity.

The assembly is vital for one to develop



“Is the assembly an integral part of our lives...?”

spiritual gifts and usefulness to God. The Bible inextricably links its teaching on spiritual gifts to teaching about the church.

The local church is also necessary for the safety and health of believers. It is to be led by a plurality of elders: godly, mature men, schooled in God’s Word (1 Tim. 3:1-7). These men will shepherd the believers and keep them from straying from God’s truth.

Our loyalty to the assembly reflects our loyalty to Christ. The Lord taught this lesson to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and he never forgot it: Christ takes the way we treat the church personally. It is impossible to love God if we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Jn. 4:20).

Do our lives center in the work of our local church? Or do other things come

first: business, family, pleasure, sports? Do other pursuits have a priority in our lives so that we miss meetings frequently? Is the assembly an integral part of our lives throughout the week—praying for the saints, visiting, serving, encouraging, showing hospitality? Other activities are important but Christ and His assembly are more important. God should be first, then family, followed by work. Our Lord said, *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”* (Mt. 10:37). His claims on us are absolute for He is God.

Let us then be loyal and whole-hearted in our devotion to our assembly family. In doing this, we will be loyal to Christ Himself. And then all other things will have their rightful place in our lives.

— Donald L. Norbie

<Sowing the Seed Online>

In Matthew 13, the Lord Jesus tells a parable of a farmer who sows seed. In it, He gives us keys to spreading the gospel. In verse 4, Jesus says, *“As he (the farmer) was scattering his seed”* The main activity of evangelism is scattering seed. The farmer wasn’t concerned specifically with where each seed fell. His job was simply to scatter seed on the ground where it could grow. Now that doesn’t mean we should be careless and unthinking in our evangelism. The farmer, however, wanted to get the seed out to as much of the ground as possible.

The other key to understanding seed sowing is that we never know whom God is speaking to and what condition of heart (soil) the listener or reader has. In verse 23, the Lord says, *“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.”* The farmer didn’t know where each seed would fall, but, invariably, some of the seed found good soil.

The internet is an excellent place to scatter the seed. Billions of people are now searching for answers online, and we must be there to spread the gospel. We don’t know who is watching or reading, and we must acknowledge that God (who cares infinitely more about souls than we do) can lead a seeker right to where they will meet Jesus in honesty and clarity.

I recently read of a young woman in college who had deep questions about life. She had no time or interest in church

or God, but she couldn’t let go of the burning questions within her. While visiting a friend at another university, she saw a student wearing a T-shirt that had the address of a website. The Lord wouldn’t let that website get out of her mind until she finally visited it. There she learned who Jesus is and what He has done for her. Without ever stepping into a church building or attending an outreach event, she found salvation. Did she find it in a website? No, she found it in the person of Jesus: the way, the truth, and the life, but the pathway to finding Him was online.

While social media focuses on building two-way, open relationships, there are many ways that we can reach the lost online. Here are four seed-sowing tools to consider:

Evangelism websites:

A website with appealing, attractive content is an excellent starting point for spreading the gospel. Many countries do not allow Bibles or the gospel but a website often can cross these boundaries.

Email newsletters:

This is a great way to send out the good news. Make your emails interesting by speaking on relevant, up-to-date events and topics.

Podcasting:

This technology is becoming more and more popular as people move to main-

stream audio and video. Podcasting is simply providing a channel (like on your TV) of audio messages that can be easily downloaded to a person’s computer or mobile device.

Twitter:

While Twitter is not as big as Facebook, it’s growing rapidly as a key tool to publish content. 140 character messages can be sent, and, as people search for your topic, they can start to follow you.

As we have already noted, there are many great methods of sowing the gospel seed outside of the web—methods that have been used effectively for the Lord’s glory for centuries. But why not learn a bit more about these newer tools and consider them for your own personal evangelism as well as for your local church or ministry? There’s a new harvest of souls searching for answers. What can you do to scatter seed their way? ■

These suggestions for getting started online have been compiled by our friends at mySonlight. If you need additional assistance, please contact them about their services.

The logo for mySonlight, featuring a stylized sun icon to the left of the text "mySonlight".

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The King of Glory

At the outset of His last visit to Jerusalem prior to the cross, the Lord Jesus stood outside the city and uttered these poignant words: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord’”*

(Mt. 23:37-39). Despite His astonishing miracles and unparalleled Bible teaching, He never enjoyed a good reception in the historic capital of Israel. Ironically, the One destined to reign as King of kings was criticized, opposed, and ultimately rejected by *“the city of the great King”* (Ps. 48:2). There is no record of His spending the night in Jerusalem during those years; instead, He preferred the hospitality in nearby Bethany (Lk. 10:38) and sometimes stayed on the Mount of Olives (Jn. 8:1). At Christ’s first coming, Jerusalem was a place of controversy and hostility for the long-awaited Messiah.

Evicting the heir from his vineyard

Even with His healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5), His teaching at various feasts, and many other authenticating signs, the leadership of the nation firmly decided to do away with Jesus (Jn. 11:50).

Consequently, they cast Him out of the city, demonstrating their disapproval of His person and deeds. They would not receive such a one as their King and Deliverer. As the Lord carried His cross out of the city, His enemies congratulated themselves on being rid of Him.

From their vantage point, this was a one way trip; He would not be returning to Jerusalem. Surely after suffering the shame of crucifixion, the idea of praising the name of Jesus or offering Him glory would be banished from the minds of anyone observing His brutal

Like their Lord, Christians are also despised in this age. In many countries they are a vilified and persecuted minority.

execution. Little did they know that Jerusalem would see Him again under far more glorious circumstances. The world still thinks of Christ upon the cross—or, to the more adversarial, He is viewed as occupying some undiscovered tomb. Although the historical evidence for the empty tomb and Christ’s resurrection is substantial, most moderns dismiss any

notion of this crucified Figure returning to have any effect on this planet.

Like their Lord, Christians are also despised in this age. In many countries they are a vilified and persecuted minority. In the West, believers are commonly degraded as being intellectually deficient, unscientific, and naïve. In the public square, they are likened to flat-earth believers. For the most part, their views are ignored or mocked in the halls of power. For example, no world leader begins a policy speech by referencing the Lord Jesus’ future kingdom; to do so would invite the derision of the global media and perhaps incite an impeachment by one’s own government. At best, some of Christianity’s ethics may be embraced, but the world’s regimes have no place for the holy God and Creator.

Open season on the saints

Through the centuries, the Lord’s enemies have preyed on weak, often defenseless groups of believers. As Hebrews 11:36-38 describes them: *“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”* This beleaguered band seemed

In the West, believers are commonly degraded as being intellectually deficient, unscientific, and naïve.

Returns

by Keith Keyser

like easy targets to their persecutors. As the Psalmist laments:

You have made us like sheep for slaughter and have scattered us among the nations. You have sold your people for a trifle, demanding no high price for them. You have made us the taunt of our neighbors, the derision and scorn of those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples. All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face at the sound of the taunter and reviler, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger. All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten You, and we have not been false to Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way. (Ps. 44:11-18, ESV)

Seeing the unseen

Yet the believer's actual position is quite different from how it seemed to their adversaries in the former and current dispensations. Faithfulness to the Lord is a lonely endeavor, as Elijah well knew (1 Ki. 19:10). Nevertheless, that intrepid prophet's protégé, Elisha, knew of the great forces on God's side. When surrounded by the Syrian army, He prayed for the Almighty to open his frightened servant's eyes. As a result, that young man beheld angelic, flaming chariots and horses surrounding the prophet. His enemies were smitten with blindness, and the victory went to the man of God rather than to the fearsome invaders (2 Ki. 6:13-23).

Psalm 24 portrays the future return of Christ to Jerusalem. He will not enter the city the way He left it: physically tortured, humiliated, and scorned. Instead, He will come as the King of glory, accompanied by His victorious army. The sentry's challenge rings out from the city walls: "Who is this King of glory?" (v. 8); the conquering King's identity is revealed: "The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory" (v. 10).

The once reviled Saviour will bring His formerly despised believers to share in the glories of His Millennial and eternal kingdoms.

The title *Lord of hosts* refers to the great forces that the Son of God commands.

As Franz Delitzsch explains: "Jehovah's hosts consisting of celestial heroes, Joel 2:10-11, and of stars standing on the plain of the heavens as it were in battle array, Isa. 40:26—a reference for which experiences and utterances like those recorded in Gen. 32:2f, Deut. 33:2;

Jdg. 5:20, have prepared the way. It is, therefore, the Ruler commanding innumerable and invincible super-terrestrial powers, who desires admission."¹

Another commentator adds: "Originally perhaps it designated Jehovah as 'the God of the armies of Israel' (1 Sam. 17:45), who went forth with His people's hosts to battle (Ps. 44:9; 60:10), and whose Presence was the source of victory (Ps. 46:7, 11). But as the phrase 'host of heaven' was used for

the celestial bodies (Gen. 2:1) and celestial beings (1 Kings 22:19), the meaning of the title was enlarged to designate Jehovah as the ruler of the heavenly powers, the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Hence one of the renderings in [the 70th] is *kurios pantokrator*: Lord Almighty, or rather, All-sovereign."²

Astonishingly, the Lord Jesus returns to Jerusalem to reign with redeemed humans as part of His hosts. By His grace, His administration will include the saints (2 Tim. 2:12). The once reviled Saviour will bring His formerly despised believers to share in the glories of His Millennial and eternal kingdoms (Rev. 20-22).

*Sinners in derision crowned Him,
Mocking thus the Saviour's claim;
Saints and angels now surround Him,
Own His title, praise His name.
Crown Him! Crown Him!
Spread abroad the Victor's fame!*

*Hark! those bursts of acclamation!
Hark! those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station;
Oh, what joy the sight affords!
Crown Him! Crown Him!
"King of kings, and Lord of lords!"³*

1. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol.1, electronic ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), p.339.

2. A.F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms: With Introduction & Notes.*, electronic ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1902), p.131.

3. Thomas Kelly, "Look ye saints the sight is glorious", *Spiritual Songs* #371, <http://stempublishing.com/hymns/ss/371>

What rhymes with Bell and lasts forever?

I know I'm behind the curve. Rob Bell's book *Love Wins* was released March 15. In spite of some Christian chains not handling it, HarperOne had an initial run of 100,000 and the book spent considerable time on the Best Seller list. Bell, from Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI, at least injected the subject of hell back into the conversation.

Encouraged by HarperOne's success with *Love Wins*, look what else showed up this summer. With a six digit marketing budget is *Erasing Hell: What God said about Eternity* by Francis Chan. Mark Galli, senior managing editor of Christianity Today, follows with *God Wins: Heaven, Hell, and Why the Good News is Better than Love Wins*. Also *Is Hell Real? Or Does Everyone Go To Heaven?* a compilation from Tim Keller, Albert Mohler Jr. and other well-known evangelicals.

What's at stake?

On the Mars Hill site, an answer is given to the question: "What does *Love Wins* say about heaven and hell?"

Those who reject the invitation [of eternal life] experience a purifying "fire" of judgment in hell, yet there is hope. We live in the hope that the redemptive work of Christ is beyond what we can ask or imagine. *Love Wins* helps us have a biblical imagination that leaves room for the hope of the redemption of all.... *Time* magazine's issue released for Easter had on its cover "WHAT IF THERE'S NO HELL? Inside, Jon Meacham writes, "Is Bell's Christianity—less judgmental,

more fluid, open to questioning the most ancient of assumptions—on an inexorable rise? 'I have long wondered if there is a massive shift coming in what it means to be a Christian,' Bell says. 'Something new is in the air.'" Such ideas have been heard before; perhaps what is new is the inability of many to see when their teachers have "turned to fables" (2 Tim 4:4).

The book in brief

Bell defines hell as both here and now and also a future process for those who die before they have yielded to God's love. Hell isn't forever since, by Bell's definition, the Greek word translated "forever," doesn't mean that (p. 31). It is Bell's belief that God will get what He wants (p. 98). Every sinner, Bell imagines, having endless chances to turn to God, will realize that Christ's death for all means that he is already reconciled to God; he just needs to believe God's story. In the end, "God's love will eventually melt even the hardest hearts" (p. 108).

I felt I was walking through a carnival house of mirrors, where doctrines are so distorted I no longer recognize them. Bell uses these distortions as if they are the real issues. No wonder his own conclusions are so dangerously dismorphic.

In *One Minute After You Die*, Erwin Lutzer quotes Gordon Kaufman of Harvard Divinity School: "I don't think there can be any future for heaven and hell." Lutzer comments, "Admittedly, hell is an unpleasant topic. Unbelievers disbelieve it; most Christians ignore it..." (p. 97).

Universal longings

We know that Scripture plainly states the Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). But does Scripture actually teach that all will be saved? Meacham, in the *Time* article, writes:

The Christian tradition since the first church has insisted that history is tragic for those who do not believe in Jesus; that hell is, for them, forever; and that love, in the end, will envelop those who profess Jesus as Lord, and they—and they alone—will be reconciled to God. Such views cannot be dismissed because they are inconvenient or uncomfortable.

Likewise it would be easy to dismiss *Love Wins* out of hand, state the obvious orthodox position, and claim the high ground. I've seen articles like this in the past months. But in doing so, we don't even attempt to answer some serious issues raised in this book full of questions—more than 300 of them! True, some of them are irreverent and irrelevant. In the book's video teaser, he asks:

Millions and millions of people were taught that the primary message...is that God is going to send you to hell unless you believe in Jesus. And so what gets subtly sort of caught and taught is that Jesus rescues you from God. But what kind of God is that, that we would need to be rescued from this God? How could that God ever be good?

How could that God ever be trusted?

This may be the sloppy way the gospel has been presented to many, but how simple it would be to quote one verse in answer

to this distortion (unless Bell wants to discount the true gospel in order to introduce “another gospel”).

The Word declares: “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation*” (2 Cor 5:19). Note! This truth is not alienating but reconciling in its effect.

Questions that hide the truth

Again Bell writes: “Has God created millions of people...who are going to spend eternity in anguish? Can God do this, or even allow this, and still claim to be a loving God?” (p. 2). Bell might better have asked, Could a loving God consign the abused and persecuted to live forever in the same place with their unrepentant abusers and persecutors?

Other questions seem to be intentionally confusing rather than clarifying. Talking about what determines if a person goes to heaven, he asks, “Would he have to perform a certain rite or ritual? Or take a class? Or be baptized? Or join a church? Or have something happen somewhere in his heart?...What about people who have never said the prayer and don’t claim to be Christians, but live a more Christlike life than some Christians?” (pp. 5-6). Is Bell blurring the lines to suggest there are other ways to be saved?

But Bell goes farther: If “all we have to do is accept and confess and believe, aren’t those verbs? And aren’t verbs actions?... Does that mean, then, that going to heaven is dependent on something I do? How is any of that grace? How is that a gift? How is that good news?” (p. 11).

Is this designed to throw everyone off the gospel trail? Does he really not understand the myriads of verses that call sinners to repent, believe, come, trust—in other words, to obey the gospel? Doesn’t he understand that a gift, to be a gift, must be received? And is God being gracious if He takes people to heaven when it’s the last place they want to be?

Bell also asks questions where God is all but silent. For example, What about those who have never heard? Of course, there are some things we can say beyond “We don’t know.” We know that “*the Judge of all the earth*” shall do right (Gen 18:25). We know that the Light “*gives light to every man coming into the world*” (Jn 1:9). We know this Judge has stated the reason why people perish: “*The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*” (3:19). The “blackness of darkness forever” is both a condemnation and a choice.

But a few of Bell’s questions deserve to be addressed. Here I will select two.

Sin in time, suffer forever?

He asks, “Does God punish people for thousands of years with infinite, eternal torment for things they did in their few finite years of life?” (p. 2). A few observations are in order, beginning with this: if, in this world, the crime of a moment, like murder, can justly cost the perpetrator the rest of his earthly life, what of crimes of high treason when committed against the government of the universe?

We must also ask: If killing a citizen is more serious than killing an animal, and killing a policeman is more serious than killing an ordinary citizen, and killing a head of state is more serious than killing a policeman, “*Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot?*” (Heb 10:29).

Bell’s question is similar to asking about those held at Guantanamo Bay: If a combatant is unrepentant and determined to continue hostilities when he is released, can we afford to end his incarceration?

Would heaven be an escape?

Another question Bell poses is this: “How could someone choose another way with a universe of love and joy and peace right in front of them—all of it theirs if they would

simply leave behind the old ways and receive the new life of the new city in the new world?” (pp 113-114).

The tragic fact is that they do, and God tells us they will. “*He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*” (Prov 29:1). And Jesus warned: “*Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able*” (Lk 13:24).

How could Balaam preach the word of God and die with the enemy? How could Lot’s wife hold the hand of an angel and perish? How could Judas kiss the Door of heaven and go to his own place? And how ever could men crucify God’s Lamb?

Spiritual blindness is willful blindness. Our Lord applied Isaiah’s words as only He could: “*Their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*” (Mt 13:15). After the Lord healed the man born blind in John 9, “*some of the Pharisees...said to Him, Are we blind also?*” (v 40). No, responded the Lord, He could heal blind people. Their problem, He said, was that they were pretending they could see, and as long as they pretended, they could not be helped.

Bell should also have asked: Is love—even divine love—guaranteed to be returned? Was our Lord’s lament over Jerusalem mere drama when He cried, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often I was willing to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*” (Mt 23:37)?

Although hell was not made for men, it can be the only option for those who “will not” have that Man to reign over them. We should thank God even for hell. It shows us He takes people’s choices very seriously. And such a place should spur us to make every effort in pleading with our fellow men now to “*flee from the wrath to come*” (Lk 3:7).
—Jabe Nicholson



Bread and to Spare in the Father's House

A true life story, retold by Jabe Nicholson

Anthony, son of Guiseppe Cetola, was born November 24, 1912 in Foggia, Italy, and raised in the hill country south of Rome. As a young man he worked as a shepherd there, but hearing of America, the land of possibilities, he saved his lire until he could afford the least expensive one-way passage to New York. After an arduous journey, Tony settled in New Jersey. Life was hard in his new country. Tony found a bed at the YMCA and a job working the graveyard shift, from 11 to 7.

One morning, as he wearily headed for his bed, someone offered him a small pamphlet. Its title read simply, *"The Bread of Life."* Now Tony Cetola had been warned before he left Italy about people like this who wanted to brainwash good Catholics. He didn't want to take any chances, but he had also been taught to be polite. What should he do?

He took the tract, but when he had a moment of privacy on the bus, he surreptitiously tore the tract into small pieces and slipped it back into his pocket. He would have to wait for a later time to dispose of it. But with his bed waiting, he completely forgot about the torn pieces in his pocket.

One morning some days later, Tony stood waiting for his bus. He was tired and cold. Rain began to fall. He moved to stand under the awning of a nearby bakery. The smell of fresh baked goods wafted to his nostrils.

Tony's stomach reminded him that he was very hungry, but he had no money to spare. To warm his hands he shoved them deep into his pockets.

And felt the gospel tract. He remembered the title: *"The Bread of Life,"* and couldn't help a hint of a smile from flitting across his face. He knew God was speaking to him. The rain from heaven had moved him to stand near enough to the bakery to enjoy its smells. The chill wind from heaven had caused him to push his hands into his pocket at that moment. And the message from heaven was waiting, though torn in pieces, there in his grasp.

As soon as Tony arrived at his room, he began to reassemble the tract pieces until he could, although with some difficulty, read the message he now believed was sent from God Himself. On that cold, drizzly New Jersey morning, after a long night of manual labor, Tony Cetola realized his true hunger was in his heart, a hunger for God's Bread, the Lord Jesus, and salvation through His name.

There in the YMCA, at the age of 22, he heard the words of the Saviour as if they were directly to him, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever"* (John 6:51). He received Him, and his soul was satisfied. He found a group of believers,

and for the next 67 years, Tony Cetola quietly and humbly served the One who had re-deemed him. It could well be given as his testimony the words of 1 Timothy 6:6, *"Godliness with contentment is great gain."*

On his deathbed, the one-time shepherd boy from the Southern Apennines looked up at his son. Barely able to speak, he asked if they could sing one of his favorite songs:

*I have a Shepherd, One I love so well,
How He has blessed me tongue can never tell,
On the cross he suffered, shed His blood and died,
That I might ever in His love confide.*

*Following Jesus, ever day by day,
Nothing can harm me when He leads the way;
Darkness or sunshine, whate'er befall,
Jesus, the Shepherd, is my All in All.*

*Pastures abundant doth His hand provide,
Still waters flowing ever at my side,
Goodness and mercy follow on my track,
With such a Shepherd nothing can I lack.*

*When I would wander from the path astray,
Then He will draw me back into the way;
In the darkest valley I need fear no ill,
For He, my Shepherd, will be with me still.*

*When labor's ended and the journey done,
Then He will lead me safely to my home;
There I shall dwell in rapture sure and sweet,
With all the loved ones gathered round His feet.*

(lyrics by Leonard Weaver)