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"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.... And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." LUKE 24:49b&51



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Meditation

The Great Blessing of Ascension Day

Rev. G.M. de Leeuw, Nobleford, Alberta

“God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psalm 47:5).

Dear reader, the Day of Ascension is between Easter and Pentecost. It is the day that we commemorate the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ from this earth to heaven. We read in John 6 how His disciples were murmuring when He spoke to them about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Then He is asking them: “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?” (verses 60b&61).

They did not yet understand the real meaning of Ascension Day, but, dear reader, do we? Oh, how do we need light upon every step in His humiliation as well as in His exaltation, whereby we need to learn that in His steps of humiliation He is *earning* salvation and in the steps of His exaltation He is *applying* salvation. That is why we read, “Yea rather, that is risen again...” (Romans 8:34b). What a difficult time it was for Christ’s disciples when He had to end His life, hanging on the cross. Oh, who could ever think that it would go that way? Yet, it was clearly foretold to them while He was with them. Then they opposed it which, dear reader, is a clear indication of our ignorance regarding the ways of the Lord with His children. He had to go to prepare a place for them, but their heart was troubled. They had no light into it, but He explained it to them: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (John 14:1-4). Then, upon the question of Thomas, we do hear the well-known words, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6b).

Very precious words, dear reader. Did He become your Way already? Oh, realize this is the narrow way—a way whereupon the daily mortification of the flesh must take place—a hidden way until He Himself brings one from the broad way upon that narrow way. Such a one will be able to tell how that went. That happens by Word and Spirit. That happened in the life of His disciples just by the words “Follow Me”: then there follows a farewell to former friends. There comes a deep-felt shame about their former life. They never will forget the places where they had to cry out, “Against Thee, a holy, righteous and good-doing God, have I sinned.” Oh, dear reader, that true sorrow, that true repentance goes before any spiritual joy. Yet, how remarkable, with all their grief and sorrow, they do not want to exchange it with anything of this world. Their spiritual

happiness is of greater value than any other thing on this earth. Never will they forget the places and times where they received from the Lord the freedom to call upon the name of a holy, a righteous, and a good-doing God.

Is there Christ? Listen, dear reader and fellow-traveler to eternity. Before we get to know anything of this Second Person, we will learn something of the first Person who is their Judge. We read in the Bible, “...ye believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1b). We do have a fear that thousands speak about a Christ for whom there was never made any room or place in their life because it does not begin with Christ (Romans 10:4). However, when knowledge is given of this precious Mediator, then the Law has received satisfaction. Oh, beloved office bearers, when visiting our members, try to listen carefully where, when, and how they were brought to an end; there comes a time in the life of God’s child that it is impossible not only from their side but also from God’s side. There it is that they agree, not with their salvation but with their condemnation. They will never forget such a time. It is a statement of those exercised ones, “Before the knowledge of the Second Person it still can go in two directions...”

Beloved reader, you are still in the time of grace and under the means of grace. Oh, it is true; it is a one-sided work, and this will never change. Several times the early immigrants told us about their experiences when they came across the ocean, when not having our own churches they attended already existing churches, but it was disappointing. So, we were better? No, not at all; but in regard to the truth, different.

Ascension Day will bring the Church home. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). People of God, do you hear this? That is His will expressed to the Father. Will that be declined? No, dear reader, that is impossible. Read this whole chapter.

In conclusion: My unconverted reader, young, middle-aged, or older but still in the time of grace and under the means of grace, oh, implore this God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for your personal conversion. Be, or become and remain, a beggar at the throne of His grace. You can lose nothing by it and gain everything through it. People of the Lord, “Why me when so many others are passed by?” It is free and sovereign grace only. Oh, acknowledge Him day and night. A few steps more and you will be where no inhabitant will say, “I am sick.” Read your future in Psalm 31:19 which is our closing. “Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” □



Bible Study

The Life of Moses (6)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

“And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, thus saith the LORD God of Israel, let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness” (Exodus 5:1).

God had spoken clearly to Moses and called him to be His servant. Although Moses objected and expressed that he dared not, could not, but really also would not, the Lord told him he would have to go. Aaron would be his helper and speak God’s message.

The contempt of Pharaoh

It was an encouragement for God’s servant that he met his brother at the place where the Lord had told him, the mount of God. Then Moses told Aaron all that the Lord had spoken and the signs which He had commanded him. Before Moses and Aaron went to the king of Egypt, they gathered together the elders of the children of Israel. Aaron then spoke to them “all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.” The people were convinced; they believed, the Bible says. With reverence “they bowed their heads and worshipped.” Soon after, however, it would appear that their belief was as changeable as the wind. An historical or temporary faith is far from sufficient. We can receive the word with joy, but without saving faith it shall not profit us for the great eternity. Yet, there was great reverence in the heart of the Israelites. The Lord had taken notice (Exodus 3:16) and had seen their misery: “And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17).

Greatly encouraged, God’s servants went to Pharaoh. The request was, “Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.” What was Pharaoh’s reaction? “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” (Exodus 5:2b). How did he dare to say this? He showed contempt for Israel’s God and His people. He dared to say, “I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” Pharaoh showed himself unwilling to grant even the least request. God had foretold this in Chapter 3:19, “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.”

The oppression of Israel

Pharaoh made life even more difficult for the Israelites. Pharaoh increased the burdens. Straw was no longer given, which was used in the making of bricks. The Israelites had to gather this themselves, yet production of the same

number of bricks was required. Pharaoh wanted to increase the workload so that the people would have no hope left in what Moses had told them. This is not an unknown approach of the adversary in the life of a poor sinner. When the devil recognizes the first workings of the Spirit, he at once puts forth every effort to retain his victims. The burdens are increased. The poor woman suffering from the issue of blood, though she had spent all that she had, was getting worse rather than better. The burdens became so heavy for the Israelites that the foremen dared to request an audience with Pharaoh to complain about the treatment of those who were his slaves. However, it was without favorable results. Pharaoh said, “Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD.” The officers or foremen of the children of Israel were angry with Moses and Aaron and said, “The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.” (Exodus 5:21b). Oh, how discouraging must this have been for Moses and Aaron!

What a mystery. The Lord has begun with the deliverance of His people. When God works, then we expect that we will be happy and joyful. However, the reality is different.

- A) The enemy fastens his grip; he tries what he can to destroy.
- B) The need of the people is increasingly experienced.

Likewise, such an awakened sinner, though he may initially have some hope for improvement, seems to go backward. Bosom sins can be so powerful, the world can allure, and their own flesh can seem to get more corrupt. What is the purpose of this? It is that they might know from what the Lord has delivered them! God always works toward a wonder, a miracle, through impossibilities.

The comforting of Moses

Those angry officers had accused Moses and Aaron. This must have been painful for the two of them. Moses now sought the Lord and said, “Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me?” Moses was also but a son of man. He reproached the Lord that He had not rescued His people. By this he ignored what the Lord had already told him. It seemed to be a riddle to Moses. He was disappointed because of Pharaoh’s cruel measures and his people’s reaction. What he did not understand was that the Israelites would be led out in a just way; God’s justice would be revealed and glorified. Righteous judgments would come upon Pharaoh and a just deliverance of Israel. The Lord waits His time. He delays

deliverance. Pharaoh would harden his heart even more, but God would show much longsuffering and, clearly, His righteousness. Israel needed also to be further humbled so that they would more appreciate God's deliverance when it would come.

Also God's servants can be too hasty, too impatient, and reason too much instead of, by grace, doing what God's Word says, that is, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." What a difference there was between Moses and the great Servant, Christ! Moses had his first contradiction, and now he already wanted to resign. Of Christ we read in Hebrews 12:3, "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Christ never said that He was wearied of His task, nor did He say, "Why is it that Thou hast sent Me?" He could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Oh, if it would be left up to us, even with the clearest calling and perhaps after many confirmations, to continue in the face of opposition, enmity, and the assaults of the devil, then it would be a hopeless case. Then Paul could never have said, "I have fought a good fight, I have

finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). However, the Lord knows that we are but dust, and He will not let His people perish in the journey through the wilderness.

In Exodus 6, God encouraged Moses and said unto him, "I am the LORD." Also, in verse 4 of Chapter 6, He told Moses, "And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers." That covenant stands firm and sure whatever may come against God's work and no matter how impossible it may seem from our side. He will not alter what He has spoken; therefore, Moses and all God's servants may go in the strength of the LORD to declare His Righteousness, His only. God's name and His honor will be glorified in His covenant dealings, and God's children will once sing not only of all the riddles but also of deliverances. It will not be by their strength or wisdom or faithfulness that they will inherit the land, the inheritance that the Lord has prepared for them. □

(To be continued)



From Our Inheritance

Offering and Sacrifice (2)

F.M. Krummacher (1796-1868)

*(Taken from *The Suffering Saviour*, 1978 Edition, ISBN 0-8024-8427-1)*

What benefit do we derive from the fact of Christ's giving Himself so completely and devotedly to the Father? The greatest and the most beatifying of which thought is capable—Listen! Jehovah says in His law, "None shall appear before Me empty." Consider, that if we wish to inherit heaven we cannot do without salvation. We now possess it, and the days of our grief and shame are at an end. We may now appear boldly before the Father, knowing that He loves us and has opened the gates of His palace to us.

What have we to exhibit to Him that is meritorious? Sufficient—yea, more than the angels possess. We have, indeed, nothing of our own. In the records of our lives, we perceive only transgression and guilt. God be thanked that we need nothing of our own and are even warned against trusting and depending upon anything of the kind. We are instructed to appeal to the righteousness of Another, and this is the living "offering" of which we speak—Christ, with the entire fullness of His obedience in our stead. If He were accepted, so are we, since all that He did and suffered is placed in our account. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."

Those who are in Christ are no longer transgressors in the sight of God but are pure, blameless, and spotless. What a blissful mystery! If you are unable to believe it, grant it at least a place in your memory. The hour may come in which you will be able to use it, for we have often had occasion to witness how it fared at the last with those who supposed themselves among the most pious and holy of mankind. Whatever of a meritorious and approved character they imagined they possessed, nothing remained when the light of eternity and approaching judgment threw its penetrating rays upon their past lives. The splendor of their virtues expired, their gold became dim, and that which they had preserved as real worth proved only valueless tinsel.

What is to be done in such a case? How to weave together, in haste, such a righteousness as God requires, and without which no man can enter heaven? What answer are we to make to the accusers that open their mouths against us—Satan, the law, and our own consciences, which say to us, "Thou art the man"? If we are not to give ourselves up to despair, something which is not ours must be bestowed upon us which we may offer unto God as the ground of our claim to salvation. The living offering which Christ made

of Himself can then alone suffice, and that abundantly, to recommend us to God. Possessing this we no longer need to be mute in the presence of our accusers. In Christ as our Surety, we fulfilled the conditions to which the heavenly inheritance is attached. Henceforth, who will accuse us, who will condemn us? We rejoice with Paul and say, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Lord Jesus appears in our narrative not only as an "offering" but also as a "sacrifice." Our sins are imputed to Him, and in His sacred humanity He endured what we deserve. Let us therefore consider Him in the character of our Representative, and the sufferings which He endured and the wrongs which He sustained will then appear in their proper light.

A blissful and heart-cheering mystery is here presented before us. If I possess saving faith, I find myself in a peculiar relation to the Sufferer at Gethsemane. Know that the horrors He there experienced are not His curse but ours. The Holy and the Just submits Himself representatively to the fate of the guilty and the damnable; while the latter are forever liberated, and inherit the lot of the holy Son of God. Wonderful and incomparably blissful truth! Our only shield and comfort in life and death!

O ye blessed, who belong to Christ, who can worthily describe the glory of your state! We hail the wondrous exchange which the eternal Son of God has made with you. We glorify the Surety and Liquidator of your debts. Never forget the nocturnal arrest of your High Priest. Paint it in bright and vivid colors on the walls of your chambers. If you are again reminded of the curse which your sins have brought upon you, accustom yourselves to regard it only in this sacred picture where you no longer behold it lying upon you but upon Him in whose agonies it eternally perished.

Therefore, let not shadows any longer disturb you. There will never be a period in eternity when you will be compelled to say to your enemies and accusers, "now is your hour and the power of darkness." Your Representative uttered it once for all, for you; henceforward, only the hour of triumph and delight which shall never end awaits you. Peace be with you, therefore, ye who are justified by His righteousness and forever perfected by His one offering. No longer dream of imaginary burdens, but know and never forget that your suit is gained to all eternity. Behold, Christ yonder bears your fetters, and nothing more is required of you than to love Him with all of your heart and embrace more and more closely Him who took your entire anathema upon Himself so that you might be able to rejoice and exclaim, "Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness!" □

(This installment marks the end of this series.)

Pentecost

Rev. G.H. Kersten (1882-1948)

(Translated from De Banier, May 29, 1958)

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2).

No one can exist before God as long as he remain a stranger of the heart-renewing work of the Holy Spirit. One day it must become Pentecost for us. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," so spoke the Lord Jesus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

How terrible will be the portion of many who will say in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Then Jesus will profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Oh, that each of you examine himself. We are quickly rushing to eternity with rapid steps, and our best works are glittering sins before God. Who is equal to Him who cast out devils? Who is equal to Him who did many mighty deeds? Everything which is outside of Christ has been found to be wanting. Outside of Him are all those in whom the Holy Spirit has not made His dwelling. See, that is the wonder of Pentecost; God the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in the hearts of lost sinners. That wonder proclaims room in the salvation of the blood of Christ. Who will ever be able to comprehend this? It is especially upon this day

that poor sinners are called. Oh, that we might call out so that the Lord might live in and among us. No sinner is too sinful. No heart too impure. Cloven tongues were seen upon the disciples. The gospel will be brought to all peoples and generations upon the earth, and the Lord will bring those that are His from every nation and language. No person is too wicked, and no person is too sinful. It is grace and grace alone. May this Feast of Pentecost become for us the day of our salvation. May we also learn to bow our knees before God our Judge and pray for mercy that God may be glorified in us to our salvation.

The Comforter came. Was not the Holy Spirit present before this particular Pentecost Day? Certainly, He was. As the third person of the Holy Trinity, He is God from eternity to eternity. He was, and is, and shall be. He has godly names. He has godly attributes. He works the works of God and receives godly honor. The Holy Ghost is not just a power or an attribute of God but a true Person, having wisdom and a will. Whether debating an Arian or a Socinian, a Groninger or a modern believer, let everyone keep this in mind—the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally and without end from the Father and the Son. He was there before He came on Pentecost Day, just as the Son was there before He revealed Himself in His human nature. Just as Christ was revealed in the world in the promises and cere-

monies and lived in His people which through faith found rest in Him, even so the operation of the Holy Spirit was there before He descended in Person. Without the operation of the Holy Spirit, there would be no salvation under the old dispensation, no portion in Christ, no faith. The operations of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost were but as droplets from heaven. Now the Lord promised by the mouth of Isaiah, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring." That promise has been fulfilled.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..."

Under the signs and tokens of a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues as of fire, the Holy Spirit was poured out. Just as one cannot turn a mighty wind, so the Holy Spirit works irresistibly in the conversion of sinners. No matter which powers come up against them, God draws His people out of the jaws of the hell, and they are drawn as a fire-brand out of the fire. He purifies them just as the fire purifies. Here is the deliverance from the dominion of sin even though the strife will remain until the end. In one word, the atonement and the purifying blood of Christ is applied

by the Holy Spirit to the elect so that they through faith may live and share in the communion with God.

Oh, miserable and poor people in yourselves, may the rich administration of the Holy Spirit be given unto you. No matter how guilty you know yourselves to be because the light of the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and no matter how black you may be because of sin, here is your deliverance from all of your snares. May it become Pentecost for you, and ask that the streams of the Spirit would come down into your soul. Oh, that those who await the coming of the Lord may have their strength renewed. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

You who have been delivered in Christ, the Lord renew His work in you. If the Spirit of the Lord did not remain in you, what would become of you? May the Lord by renewal loosen your tongue so that you would proclaim His praise. May He comfort you in your oppression and cross and cause you to rejoice in your tribulation. May He teach you out of His Word and increase the knowledge of the hidden mysteries of His covenant wherein He bequeaths His eternal salvation.

May the Spirit of the Lord prepare us more and more to that end, until the day of complete deliverance will allow us to enter into that perfect glory where the Lord shall be all and in all. Amen.

Curatorium Announcement

The past two years have been filled with uncertainty as the judgments of the Lord have been evident upon the world and the church. May they also have brought to their knees those who sigh for the welfare of Zion, that the Lord may sanctify the solemn callings and give an increase in His true Church, whom He instructs under afflictions.

Although much remains uncertain, the Curatorium of the Netherlands Reformed Theological School has thought it best to schedule a meeting, the Lord willing, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on June 8, 2022, at the Beckwith Avenue Church. At this meeting Student Kleijer is to be examined after his third year of studies, and Student Slingerland after his fourth year, with hopes to be made a candidate for the holy ministry. As well, any who have received an attest from their consistory will have the opportunity to be heard by the Curatorium.

Baruch, the son of Neriah, was but a scribe of God's servant Jeremiah, yet he had to suffer persecution for his work, since King Jehoiakim commanded him to be apprehended along with his master. This burden he seemed not prepared to bear. "Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest" (Jeremiah 45:3). However, the time the LORD called him to his work was one of special tribulation for His Church, and thus He also prepared him for suffering under it, saying, "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil

upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest" (Jeremiah 45:5).

The time we live in is little different, for it is the end time. It is no time for a man to seek the ministry who seeks great things for himself. No, he should not expect a life of ease and honor, for the devil increases his devices against the church and the truly called servants of the LORD, both from within and from without. Yet, the LORD will keep their lives under His protection. Let such as struggle under His calling settle it in their minds, then, that the way will be filled with hardships and trials. Let them settle it in their minds that self-honor and glory is not the portion assigned to His servants here below. Yet, Baruch remained the faithful servant of the LORD as a scribe of Jeremiah, under the strengthening hand of the LORD, as He promised him. If that is sufficient for one who feels called by the LORD to His work, let him present himself to his consistory for their judgment.

If a consistory receives freedom to grant an attest, please notify the clerk of the Curatorium, who will forward a request for information. The applicant should also forward his own request to the clerk, asking to be heard by the Curatorium. Vacant congregations should seek the help of their moderator in all these matters, and all information should be submitted as soon as possible. May the LORD remember His Church and His servants in these latter days.

On behalf of the Curatorium,
Rev. J. den Hoed, *Chairman*
Rev. H.D. den Hollander, *Clerk*

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Church History

The Spread of Christianity (4)

J.N. Mouthaan, Veenendaal, the Netherlands

(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

In the first century, Christianity began as a group of one hundred twenty people. In the fourth century it had grown to a world-renowned religion.

Number wise, Christianity had bypassed Judaism. Heathendom as found in the Roman Empire was thereby defeated. This can only be understood as a result of the power of the resurrection of Christ. The growth of Christianity is a certain proof of the truth of the resurrection. It shows how unreasonable it is that so many see the gospel today as only a collection of nice words. On the contrary, the gospel is a power of God unto salvation. Christ sends forth His Word and thereby gains one victory after another—not only then—but also now. He who looks with nostalgia at this flourishing time of the church would do well to read the writings of the church fathers. The growth of the church was a work of the Spirit of Christ, but, at the same time, it was also a growth which came to fruition indirectly. The theology of the church fathers had a missionary fervor. The thought of the further spreading of God's Word was never far from their minds in their writings. To avoid being incomplete, we would like to provide a few examples to illustrate this.

Undeserved forgiveness

It appears that the church fathers had not forgotten their heritage. They had not forgotten that they themselves were at one time heathen, strangers of God's grace, and without hope in the world. This comes clearly to the forefront when they themselves can speak of a clear conversion from heathendom. Tertullian speaks of his preeminence in transgression (*Over het geduld*, IV, 2). Cyprian confesses the innumerable errors committed in his earlier days (*Aan Donatus*, IV). Augustine cannot forget the stealing of the pears and wonders about the undeserved forgiveness of his deceit to his mother. "I have lied to my mother; yes, to such a mother, and I have remained unpunished for it, for even this deceit hast Thou forgiven me" (*Confessions*, Book 5, Chapter 8, paragraph 15).

Also, in the light of the history of salvation, they had not forgotten their past life. The missionary work under the heathen was, according to Irenaeus (circa 140-202), the blessing of Japheth (*Demonstrations of the Apostolic Preaching*, 42). The heathen, therefore, have received their salvation via the descendants of Shem. The message of the apostle was also not forgotten, not to exalt himself above

the unbelieving Jews. Ambrose says that since mercy was shown to the heathen, how much more shall mercy be shown to the Jews to whom the promise was given (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Chapter 11:30-31).

Another fact which repetitively returns is that the forefathers prayed with fervor for the conversion of all people. The text taken from 1 Timothy 2:4 played therein an important role. Even after the strife with the Pelagians, this text remained an important ground for prayers for all people. Prosper of Aquitania (circa 390-455), a pupil of Augustine, proposes that all people should be prayed for but that God in His unsearchable judgments does not always give what the church prays for (*About the Calling of All Peoples*, Book 1, Chapter 12-13).

Missions and evangelization

In the third place, the church fathers speak lovingly and encouragingly about missions and evangelization. Against the bitter reproach of the heathen Celsus, Origen replied (circa 183-254) that Christians should endeavor to bring and spread their message over the entire world. "It is for this reason that some have solemnly made it their life's work to not only go from city to city, but also from village to village, and from farm to farm, to win others to belief and faith in God" (*Against Celsus*, Book 3, Chapter 9). The command to do mission work, according to the church fathers, was still in effect and was not only meant for the apostles. The promise of Matthew 28:20 Chrysostom connected specifically to the command in verse 19. "The Lord will also be with us if we follow His command" ("Homily 5 upon 2 Thessalonians," paragraph 8).

In the last place, the church fathers allow, at times, an unexpected glance into their work as to how much they were occupied with the extension of God's kingdom. How stirring is the commentary of Augustine of the High Priestly prayer regarding the petition "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1b). According to Augustine this means "Awaken Me so that Thou mayest be known by Me throughout the entire world" (*Treatises on the Gospel of John*, Treatise 105, paragraph 1). Here the longing for the success of mission work is brought back into the mediatorial heart of Christ.

It is only in connection to Him that the western church of today can, with a moved heart, look toward those who still stand from afar and yet sometimes live so close by. ◻

(To be continued)



Commentary

The Man Born Blind (2)

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Franklin Lakes, NJ

“I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

The day He works the works of Him that sent Him

Dear Reader,

Last month we meditated on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ said in connection with the man born blind, “I must work.” We often say we have work to do. It is good when a father of a family may have work. Business owners are happy when they get orders so that their employees have work, but the work that the Lord Jesus speaks of here is specific: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me.” Christ is speaking of a charge; He is sent. He has stopped by the man born blind and there He speaks these words. This declares the eternal love that the Father has for sinners. He sent! He sent a qualified one, His own dear Son. “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4&5).

There He stands, Immanuel, God with us. Oh, that blind man will no doubt be happy to have Christ by Him. That blind man will probably jump to his feet and embrace Christ. No, dear reader. There is a false doctrine that makes that presumable, but here you see that the Scripture leaves no room for such errors. Christ needs to be revealed, and for Him to be revealed, our blindness needs to be taken away. Do you read with me the scriptural order of conversion? Many theories have been made about how we must accept Christ, and how the command to believe is pushed to such an extent that with our responsibility we are able to believe. However, the infallible Word of God says that Christ was sent by the Father to a people who are blind from birth, whose eyes must be opened. His people are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Some people can get frustrated with these matters, but we are called to bring doctrine no different from what the Holy Scriptures reveal. It is the doctrine which Christ preached. I read that He preached in one place, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Yet, in another place I read, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him...” Here, Christ stands to declare that He has a work to do in which nothing of man can be added.

The work whereunto the Lord Jesus has been called is a holy work; it is a pure work. This work will be established in righteousness—that means a work right with God. Dear reader, has it become reality for you that you need to be made right with God? Then you read the callings in the

gospel, but they are for someone else. Then you read the callings of the gospel, but you cannot apply them yourself. Those are a people who are glad that the Bible records that He has been sent to do that work—to make blind ones right with God. This makes those people seek God in their secret places and point to His Word. There is a Church that will be saved because the Father sent His Son to do the work which exalts the free and sovereign grace of a Triune God.

The Lord Jesus reveals a time period in these text words, “while it is day.” He has been sent into this world, and He placed Himself in the state of humiliation. He humbled Himself here, that is in the time of His life on earth. During that time, He did the work of Him that sent Him. One of the gospels records, “And He healed them all.” This “day” which Christ refers to was the time period to prove that there was not a case too hard for Him—to prove He was truly sent; to prove He was qualified for His Mediatorial work; to prove He is the Saviour. He is the Messiah sent of God.

He still is presented like that in the preached and written Word today. The apostle admonished the Corinthians, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The psalmist of Psalm 118 recorded that, “This is the day which the LORD hath made.” My dear reader, I tell you it is still the day. Shall you take heed to that? If we are unconverted, we are blind. In your unconverted state we call out to you, “It is day.” The Holy Spirit will use the means to make the blind to see. Those means will be used to gather sinners while it is day.

The Lord Jesus revealed something else: “The night cometh, when no man can work.” By this He reveals that His work will once end—the work of healing; the work of standing by the blind. Oh, my dear reader, He reveals here to Israel that He has come to walk among them during the day, but the night cometh when no man can work. So, for you and me the time will come that He will pass by. Oh, then I must warn you, dear reader, that the night cometh. Shall we take heed to the time while it is day? Because upon every day follows a night.

Today He still stands by you my dear, blind, unconverted reader. The One stands there because He has been sent by His Father to do a God-glorifying work. Oh no, then He is not waiting. Nowhere in the Bible do I read that Christ was idly waiting. He came for the divine purpose to convert what is unconverted. He has prayed to His Father, “Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” □

(To be continued)



Doctrinal Studies

The Fall (4)

Rev. G.H. Kersten (1882-1948)

(Taken from *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1*, Chapter 16, The Fall)

God did not spread a snare

Thus, it is evident that:

- (1) sin was committed voluntarily;
- (2) the punishment was not too severe but in proportion to the evil;
- (3) the ground for imputing Adam's sin to his posterity lay in the fact that Adam was the head of the Covenant of Works.

Now we must answer the question: Why did God plant the tree in the garden and allow the devil to use the subtle serpent to tempt Adam and Eve? Without God's permission Satan could not have used the serpent. Has God thus laid a snare for man, and then is not God the cause of man's Fall?

The answer to this question must be an unflinching, no. On the contrary, it was necessary that this tree be there, that the probationary command be given so that there would be a way whereby man could demonstrate his superiority above the lifeless and irrational creatures and bring it to full development. The entire Creation followed the way ordained by God, but it did so unconsciously. How could it be proved that man served his Creator consciously and with a free will and in that respect was superior to the irrational and inanimate creation, and how would man ever be able to develop the glory of his creation after the image of God, unless he were placed before a choice of serving God or not serving Him? Adam faced this choice in the probationary command and in Satan's temptation. Obedience to God would have made him triumph eternally, as disobedience became his fall to death.

Indeed, as Julian said, the sin of Adam did not penetrate to his descendants by a narrow crack, since the child does not sin that is born, nor the parents that begot it, nor God who is that Maker. Julian was a follower of Pelagius and thus concluded that there was no crack left by which sin could enter. Augustine answered correctly, "Why does he seek a hidden crack when he has an open door? Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. What does he want wider? What does he seek more open?"

The disastrous Fall

The one sin of breaking the covenant was such a terrible act that it is the mother of all transgression. Although God glorified Himself in His justice and mercy through the depth of the Fall, yet the Fall is far from blessed; it is, rather, disastrous. It is not right for us to speak of the "blessed fall." The Fall is destructive because in this fall God's honor was grievously violated; man had torn himself loose from God

his Creator; the threefold death was brought upon Adam and his posterity, and the curse was brought upon the earth.

Who could ever speak of a blessed fall if he had ever seen what sin really is and what the consequences of sin are? What? Shall we call sin blessed? It is the opposite! The fall of Adam was a disaster for Adam and all his posterity.

In the Fall the Covenant of Works is broken in its power to give life. The law has become weak through the flesh (Romans 8:3). However, the covenant is not broken in its power to demand perfect obedience, nor in the punishment expressed. In these respects, the covenant cannot be broken.

Thus, sin in the first place makes man guilty before God's righteousness, and in the second place the Fall has entirely corrupted man.

Guilt and pollution

Sin is both guilt and pollution. Guilt is liability to punishment for Adam's sin; pollution is the corruption which is extended over the whole man, (See Hellenbroek's Catechism, page 42). Pollution flows from guilt. It is the result of the imputation of sin. It is the spiritual death also threatened by God. As in the Fall the imputation precedes pollution, so also in the restoration in grace, justification precedes sanctification. Another order is impossible. God the Holy Spirit cannot renew a sinner's heart unless reconciliation is first made by satisfying the justice of God. This order refers to what took place in the Fall. There the guilt preceded the pollution. Therefore, it is not as Prof. Doedes teaches, that the pollution comes first and results in man being guilty. On the contrary, the guilt comes first, and the pollution of sin follows from the judicial imputation of Adam's fall. There would be no pollution if the sin of Adam were not imputed to his posterity. On the ground of imputed guilt, Adam fell under the judgment of death; he lost the image of God, and God's image is withheld from every child that is born.

It is necessary to emphasize that pollution results from the imputation by the justice of God so that the Pelagian cannot catch us in their diligent search for the manner in which pollution is propagated, in order to contend against original sin itself. From the imputation of Adam's sin, it follows that children are polluted already in their mother's womb. (See Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 15; Canons of Dort, Chapter 3 and 4, Article 1,3&4.) These texts speak of the pollution of sin: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4); "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).

By the imputation of original sin, man came into such a state that he can do nothing but sin. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).

He is as one cast out in the open field. His father was an Amorite, and his mother a Hittite (Ezekiel 16:45). Sin is not committed by imitation, as Pelagius says, but by imputation and therefore by inheritance.

(This installment marks the end of this series.)



For Young and Old

Are There Still Rechabites?

Rev. A. Moerkerken, Capelle a/d IJssel, the Netherlands

(Taken from De Saambinder, June 30, 1988)

They were peculiar people, these Rechabites. Everyone in Jerusalem knew them. They were known for living a separate life somewhat isolated from the general population. We cannot rule out that they may have been laughed at, either openly or behind their back, when they walked about the streets of Jerusalem. They were a small group. Their name was taken from a certain Rechab. This Rechab belonged to the family of the Kenites, who in turn, as is well known, were descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Long ago they entered the land of Canaan with the Israelites and made their home there. They accepted Israel's religion, but for the rest they lived as strangers in the midst of God's people. There were different groups of such Kenites in Israel. For example, a group lived in Naphtali to whom belonged Heber whose courageous wife killed Captain Sisera. There was also a group who lived in Judah. Among this latest group there were writers and notary public officials. We can read about them in 1 Chronicles 2:55. It is to this group that the Rechabites belonged. Their father, or forefather's name was Rechab. This man had a son whose name was Jehonadab, or Jonadab for short.

In 2 Kings 10, Jonadab gave his hand in friendship to Jehu who asked him, “Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?” Jonadab became Jehu's companion in the extermination of the prophets of Baal. Old translators of the *Statenvertaling* have in their marginal notes expressed their opinion that this Jonadab was a very God-fearing, respectable, wealthy person. In any event, Jonadab was an exceptionally strong person. He was likely also a person with a very serious outlook on life. This is known from the commandments which he left behind for his children.

When did man fall?

We are not told when this Fall took place. In any case Adam was more than one day in the state of rectitude. On the seventh day the Lord rejoiced in His works, so on that day the Fall did not take place. Eve also was created in the state of rectitude, but how long the first couple lived in Paradise Scripture does not tell us. In that matter there are only human speculations. Rather than make all kinds of guesses about the time, we should be concerned about the misery in which we in and with Adam are fallen, and we should seek our redemption in Christ. ◻

There were five particular commands Jonadab gave his posterity. They could not drink any wine; they were not allowed to build houses; they were not allowed to sow seed; they were not allowed to plant a vineyard; and they had to live in tents all of their days.

What must be thought of these things? Someone may well say that Jonadab has not been such an easy man for his children. What *could* they do? There are two more remarkable items to note about these five commandments of Jonadab. In the first place, these matters which Jonadab had forbidden his children to do are nowhere forbidden or commanded to be obeyed in God's Word.

Scripture, for example, does not forbid humans to build houses, nor to drink wine, and nowhere does it require everyone to live in tents all their life. In the second place, it must especially attract attention that Jonadab's children had continued to obey these commands of their father throughout the generations with a special faithfulness. It is a faithfulness which was revealed in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 35, Jeremiah was commanded by the Lord to call these Rechabites and bring them into one of the chambers of the temple. The Rechabites were present within the walls of Jerusalem in those days because of the approaching armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Now the Lord charged Jeremiah to place before the Rechabites beakers and basins full of wine and command them to drink the wine—a command that clearly went against the order given them by their forefather Jonadab. It is as if the Lord would say, “Come on, Jeremiah, put them to the test. Let us see if these people, in a strange environment and in different circumstances from what they are

accustomed to, will remain faithful to the command of their forefather.”

The outcome is known. The Rechabites refused, resolutely, without hesitation. Even though they had the deepest respect for the prophet, they still refused him. Then the Lord placed this example of the Rechabites who obeyed the command of their earthly father who died a long time ago, and who could not do anything for them anymore, before the inhabitants of Jerusalem who never obeyed the name of their heavenly Sovereign, one who lives and can help them. That is what the message in the history of Jeremiah 35 is about.

Perhaps, reader, you may ask why this history has been brought to your attention once again. Because of a certain concern. In the history of the Rechabites there is among other things a history of the worth of tradition. From time to time it is asked whether the value of tradition is still appreciated among our people. To say it even more succinctly, the Rechabites were characterized by a completely personal lifestyle whereby they were not only discernibly differentiated from the world around them but also from the greatest portion of religious persons in Jerusalem. It was not the Lord’s intention to have Jeremiah say in this portion of Scripture that all of Jerusalem could not build houses or could drink no wine. Yet it is clear that God attaches His visible approval to their following the underlying principles handed down as commanded by their father.

In church life there are also traditions and a characteristic lifestyle. At times, this lifestyle can be directly related to God’s Word; at other times, it cannot. Some people hold on to traditions which are in strife with God’s Word, people who come to church only once on Sunday because they are accustomed to that from their youth, and it is impossible to get them to change their position. For such traditions, of course, there is nothing good to say. The characteristic lifestyle of our congregations is visible in a great deal of simplicity and an aversion to all world conformity. Several concrete examples are the reading of God’s Word at set times; the singing of psalters with the organ; and together bowing the knees with the entire family on God’s Day. The modern media is avoided as far as it serves for entertainment. Women generally wear their hair long, the girls do not dress in pants, culottes, or whatever item of clothes would appear on the market as emancipation clothing. In short, church membership is recognized by holding fast to external characteristics, even though they cannot always be related directly back to God’s Word.

How is it now? Understand, although related from days gone by, it does not imply that it is no longer that way among us. However, if not mistaken, this lifestyle is coming under more and more pressure—pressure from the side of the world. That has always been the case, but it is becoming

worse. The world has never understood the Rechabites, and therefore does not want anything to do with them because the world does not understand the basic reason for their separate lifestyle. The world mocks them as Pharisaical hypocrites and speaks laughingly about them as the “Staphorst variant” (Staphorst is a conservative village in the Netherlands), and only shows interest when they can report on a scandal in the circle of the Rechabites. Unfortunately, our lifestyle is also coming under pressure from a side where we would not expect it. When Dr. C.S.L. Janse in his dissertation of “Bewaar het Pand” (the name of a conservative group within the Dutch Reformed Church which literally means, ‘keep the truth’) typified the “experiential Reformed” and marked some of their visible characteristics, he was met with a stream of criticism.

An important representative of the “Gereformeerde Bond” (a conservative branch of the Dutch Reformed Church) stated that such outward experiences have nothing to do with such characteristics. Not to mention, many (even ministers) do not become tired in declaring that we should stop talking about such outward things, that today’s youth can easily “see through them,” that it concerns the inward life and not the form; emphasis should not be placed upon such a group’s characteristics, etc. There is even a new term used for matters which concern the lifestyle, namely “the small tradition.” What must we think of these things? Is there not a realistic danger that we can become obsessed with such outward matters without having an eye for the necessity of heart-renewing grace? I would be the last one to deny that there is. Is not the need of our times, rather, that there is so little seen of the life of grace? I fully agree. Was there not, by holding fast to the outward form, much maintaining of a dead form service in former years? Certainly! Must we not be afraid of the danger of legalism? Certainly.

Yet, the question written above this article keeps coming back. Are there still Rechabites? Perhaps even among the Rechabites there were legalistic people. It will also not all have been gold that glittered. Take a moment to read Jeremiah 35 and note how the Lord commends their lifestyle. Study the marginal notes associated with this chapter which delve deeper into the motives which Jonadab must have had to prescribe such not so light commandments. Let our young people especially learn from the Rechabites that in addition to senseless traditions there are also very worthy traditions. In addition, it is not always necessary that God’s Word specifically demands or forbids certain matters, parents can also have sound reasons when they request or demand something of their children. Finally, ask that the Lord Himself would powerfully take up the cause for many of those despised and non-conformed Rechabites. ◻

God is not greater if you reverence Him, but you are greater if you serve Him.

—Augustine



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Beckwith, Grand Rapids, MI

Why do we have four weeks of Advent and seven weeks of Passion?

There are two—somewhat related—elements implied in this question. The first one refers to why the Reformed tradition observes what is commonly called the “ecclesiastical year.” The second part specifically treats the observance of four weeks of Advent and seven weeks of Passion. On both matters there is a wealth of historical data with respect to how, where, when and why; all are rooted in centuries and centuries of church history. It would obviously go beyond the limits of a one-page article to elaborate all these details. For this reason I will try to give a short impression.

With the ecclesiastical year is meant the annual cycle in which the Christian church observes the redemptive acts of God in Christ, which commences with the four Sundays before Christmas and ends with Pentecost. We do not find in the Bible the command to commemorate the redemptive acts of Christ in a specially set aside day, other than the first day of the week. Therefore, strictly speaking, what was celebrated in the Old Dispensation is all fulfilled in Christ; hence, only the first day of the week was left to be observed. Many theologians of the Reformation, especially only Calvin and Luther initially, but also Knox, Zwingli, Bullinger and the Puritans were therefore opposed to adding additional days to commemorate. This was partly out of fear for Romish superstition and partly because such days often led to sinful festivities and practices in towns and villages.

Still, when we study the observation of Christian feast days in the early church, we do notice that several of them were indeed commemorated. The early church apparently felt that observing such days—though not necessary for salvation—was nevertheless conducive to “order and well-being of the congregation.” I think this is an important reason for observing both Advent and Passion weeks. Moreover, as we sing in Psalter 304, “His saints delight to search and trace His mighty works and wondrous ways.” How profitable is an orderly, annual tracing of the redemptive acts of God in Christ! Nevertheless, it is true, as stated in the authoritative Dutch commentary on Church Order by Dr. H. Bouwman, that the observing of four weeks of Advent dates back to the 11th century and was officially approved by Rome. The attentive reader perhaps will hear in the term Christmas(s) a reference to Rome...The Reformation maintained four Advent Sundays. However, in Holland—under the influence of Calvin—some wanted

to abolish the commemoration of all the Christian feast days. Only Sunday should be observed. However, the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) decided to include Christmas as well, and it wasn't until several centuries later that the Advent became observed. From the abovementioned it is clear that the observation of Christian feast days has a long record of development, which reaches all the way to the early church.

Regarding the seven Passion Sundays a very similar pattern can be detected, again reaching all the way to the early church. It would be very interesting to write about all the details as to what and how things were developed and afterwards abolished or again reinstated, but that would lead to a lengthy article. Regarding Easter we will only mention that from this oldest feast the whole tradition of the ecclesiastical year developed, albeit with many changes and not without strife. Regarding Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, I found a striking quote of John Chrysostom, who wrote this about the week prior to Easter that all work ought to be laid down, because all levels of society should prepare for the celebration of the holy days of Easter: “In this week the lengthy fight ended, death was destroyed, the curse lifted, the tyranny of Satan broken and the reconciliation of God with man procured, and heaven opened for men.”

In closing, both the ecclesiastical year as well as the four and seven weeks of Advent and Passion truly belong to a long-held tradition, even though these traditions were not always void from stains and influences of Roman Catholicism. God's Church here below is a church militant, a church in the midst of strife and trouble. At best we can say that observing weeks and these days allow the church in an orderly way to commemorate what God has done in Christ for His Church. I am convinced that many servants of the Lord and people of God will agree that often the Lord has given His divine approval upon the commemoration of Christ's redemptive acts, also on days when it is not Sunday! How true is what we read in Exodus 20:24b: “*In all places where I record (that is, cause to be remembered—HH) My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.*” ◻

Please note the new address for Rev. Hofman:

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Reflections

The Song of a New Heart (3)

Rev. J. den Hoed, Lynden, WA

“And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted” (Isaiah 12:4).

“And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD.” There is no doubt that this refers to all that has gone before. There the prophet said, “I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away...Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song.” Now with joy I may pull water out of the wells of salvation. Therefore, because the Lord has been so good to me, I shall now praise and thank Him.

I know they are often missing, but there are many reasons to thank the Lord. Think of the days of life the Lord continues to bestow upon us. It is the hand of the Lord that provides all our daily needs. It is the hand of the Lord that provides all those means that have to do with our spiritual life. Do you think it is by chance that we have the ordinances of the Lord; that He so faithfully comes with His blessed Word and continues to lay it in our hearts? In that day, I will thank the LORD. He continues to call, “Turn ye unto me.” He continues to lay before us the only Way, descended from heaven, in His dearly beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In that day I will thank the LORD.

Today, and every day, the Lord has a people who want to thank Him for that precious one-sided work when He came to a sinner who had never known before what it is to be a lost sinner. He came to open his eyes for a mountain of sin and for an angry God. Then we do not know where to go. It was the Holy Spirit who crushed the unbroken heart, who opened an avenue of prayer, and awakened in that sorrowing heart the desire to cast that anchor of hope that it may sink deep in the mediatorial ground of a suffering and dying Saviour. What a wonder it becomes when the Lord gives a ray of hope in the heart and when that heart may cast it as an anchor unto Jesus Christ. In that day, I want to thank the LORD.

As you read this, do you know the Song of a New Heart? This song may, at times, be known by a heart which expe-

riences no more than a missing—a seeking and burdened heart. Often you stand outside of any communion for your soul. Then you cannot find this song in your heart. What you find in your heart is a cry the same as David’s in Psalm 130, “Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”

The wonder of this is that a gracious God in His beloved Son will not despise that cry. When the eye of faith may now rest upon the beloved One; when these eyes may now see how He came from the right hand of the Father to heal the breach between me and a holy, righteous God; when now I may see that there is an Ark wherein the doors are open and above that door is written, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden”; when the Lord grants me to come upon the way opened in His blood, then there are times I may hear the melody of the Song of a New Heart. I long to have that song in my heart; I pray that the song may be to Christ’s honor and glory. Then such a sinner may begin to sing, “In that day, I will thank Thee.”

Dear reader, do you belong to those who may thank the Lord, saying, “Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me”? How is that possible? It is possible in Him who came from His Father’s right hand and who healed the breach so that for a wretch who is lost a way may be opened. Now the deeper you may look into your wretched pit of sin, the higher you may look to above, so high that you may see *a complete Saviour for a complete wretch*. In that day you will with praise want to thank the LORD for His salvation.

Today, lift your empty hands unto this triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and say, “Thou art great in the wonder of free and sovereign grace.” Sinners, who may sing the Song of a New Heart, long to do so to the honor and glory of Him who came and sought them when they did not seek a Saviour, a Saviour who came to lift them out of the mire they have chosen. They learn that He came to pay the price so that the breach between them and a holy God may be healed. Such will thank and praise the LORD forever. □

(To be continued)

Our love to the Lord is not worth speaking of, but His to us never can be spoken of enough.

—Matthew Henry



Current Events

How Are the Churches in Ukraine and Russia Responding to the War?

75% of Russians and 60% of Ukrainians profess to be Orthodox Christians. The war is driving a wedge into the Orthodox Church. The patriarch, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has been silent about the war for a long time, but he has now justified the war. It has been condemned in the Ukrainian Orthodox churches and even by some priests in Russia. In his sermons the patriarch presents the war as a legitimate resistance to Western values. Two Orthodox churches exist in Ukraine. One is the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OKU), the other is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOK), which is an autonomous church within the Russian Orthodox Church. Both churches condemned the war emphatically. The UOK even called on the patriarch in Moscow to use his influence on Putin and work for peace.

—DW.com

Christians in and near Ukraine

Christians who escaped westward as Russia launched attacks on Ukraine expressed a mix of grief and survivor's guilt as they viewed horrific images from the communities surrounding their besieged capital, Kyiv. Escape feels selfish because so many did not make it out. Ukrainian officials said that the bodies of at least four hundred ten civilians have been found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured in recent days. As Russian forces withdraw from the capital and western Ukraine, officials are concerned attacks will intensify in the cities of the east, including Dnipro and Mariupol. In Mariupol thirty-three Christians who took refuge in a church are hopefully still alive. There has been no contact with them in over a month. Continued evacuations and relief missions are organized by Christian churches in Ukraine and near its borders.

—ChristianChronicle.org

Finnish Ruling: District Court Not to Interpret Biblical Concepts

A Finnish court has upheld the right to free speech by dismissing all charges against a Finnish Member of Parliament (MP) and a church bishop. In a unanimous ruling the court concluded that "it is not for the district court to interpret biblical concepts." The MP had been charged with "hate speech" for sharing her faith-based views on marriage and sexual ethics. The bishop faced charges for publishing a pamphlet made by the MP to his congregation. The prosecution attacked core Christian teachings and cross-examined the bishop and the MP on their theology. The Court concluded there was no overriding social reason for interfering with and restricting freedom of expression.

—ADFInternational.org

Florida Parental Rights in Education Bill

The Florida Governor signed a Parental Rights in Education bill into law. The new law ensures parents are not kept in the dark about what is happening with their children in schools and protects kids in kindergarten through third grade from sexualized classroom instruction. In the words of the Florida Family Policy Council, "The Florida parents' rights law is necessary because schools have become places more concerned with indoctrination than they are with education." The Walt Disney Company pressured Governor DeSantis to veto the bill—and some LGBT activists both outside and within Disney pressured the huge company to go further. Still, polling indicates that the law is strongly supported by Floridians—including by Democrat primary voters—and by Americans generally. President Biden put out a tweet clearly targeting the new Florida law. Both sides of this issue have committed themselves to a continued activist agenda across the nation.

—FamilyPolicyAlliance.com

Churches in Some India Districts Have Been Shut

Pastor Kailash Dudwe from Madhya Pradesh state, India, is still recovering from injuries received when a mob beat him unconscious in January. He is now facing death threats, eviction, and false charges of forcible conversion. He was brutally assaulted, almost killed, paraded on the street with grievous injuries, hospitalized, and sent to jail. Since then, extremists have twice threatened to kill him and threatened his landlord to evict him. He remains in the house with his wife and their two small children but is searching for somewhere else to rent. Other property owners have refused him though, after also receiving threats. His wife filed a police complaint requesting police protection, but none has been provided. His services at church have stopped since the attack, and local officials have given orders for other churches in the area to stop meeting, too. Authorities said the atmosphere is not conducive; therefore, all churches nearby must be shut. The majority of churches in surrounding districts have been shut.

—ChurchInChains.ie

Massive Sweep Against Underground Christians in North Korea

Security guards broke into a place where several dozen Christians were gathered for a secret worship meeting. The guards arrested all of them and then executed every secret believer in the room. Information suggests that the time and place of the worship meeting was leaked to authorities. As is often the case, families of the North Korean believers will suffer as well. A contact says that their families—exceeding one hundred people—were also arrested and have been sent to political prison—where inmates are treated as animals, tortured, and forced to do harsh labor with little food. In North Korea it is illegal to worship Jesus or have a Bible. Anything that gives people an alternative allegiance to the ruling Kim dynasty is illegal. Christians must hide their faith, even from their own children. Yet, secret Christians are risking their lives to be part of a church or to own a Bible. A North Korean believer and ex-prisoner encourages us to pray with these families recently imprisoned as well as for all secret believers in North Korea. They are facing death to worship Jesus, knowing that their only hope is in Him.

—OpenDoorsUSA.org

COAH Update from Ukraine

Come Over & Help (COAH) has partnered with Pastor Sasha Pavljuk in Ukraine for many years. He is a great big bear of a man with an even bigger heart. Besides being a Presbyterian pastor in Western Ukraine, he is also a military chaplain. His son Mark is currently in the military and on the front lines. Pastor Pavljuk's 22-year-old nephew was just killed in the fighting and left behind a new wife and a 10-month-old child. The Russian invasion has cost Ukraine thousands of lives. Through funds from the Ukraine Relief Fund, Pastor Pavljuk has been working with churches throughout Western Ukraine. He sends this update:

"We have arranged for refugees the possibility of both long-term and temporary residence. For long-term refugees, we find apartments, houses; there are also many families who are ready to accept these people. For the transit refugees, we constantly have hundreds of places located in church buildings. More than two hundred people pass through our community every day on the way to the borders of Romania, Moldova, Poland, and Hungary. Because of the martial law and curfew, people can travel only during the day. Therefore, in the evening, they settle with us for the night and then continue on their way. We coordinate the routes and the number of people with the pastors who remain in their cities. The people we host

(continued on page 114)



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (29) **Article XXIX: Of the Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs from the False Church**

Rev. A.M. den Boer (1929-2004)

In Article 28 it is written that every one is bound to join himself to the true church. The church is the holy congregation of true Christian believers, but which is the true church? This important question is answered in the article which we now consider. It begins: "We believe that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the church." This article is especially of great importance in our days since there are so many new groups who often claim to be the true church. However, if we examine them in the light of God's Word, we find the opposite.

Ever since we left the Lord, there has always been a false church upon earth. From the time of the apostles until now, many people believed they have been saved, but they have never been lost. Millions of Satan's subjects live in great wickedness, but there are millions of others in false religions, which for Satan is no different. Of many of these false churches we must say that they are synagogues of Satan. How do we dare to say this? Because it is taught us by God's Word which speaks the Truth. Therefore, to find out which is the true church, we have to examine God's Word carefully.

It is understandable that all churches claim to be a true church, for otherwise people would not attend. Therefore, it is not sufficient to make such a claim but rather to see what the Bible says. Jeremiah warns, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these."

This article first mentions "sects." Already in the days of the apostles, this name was used. It is a group of people in or against the church, who falsify the doctrine or try to disturb the unity. Thus, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were sects. In Church history, we find the Donatists who tried to have a

pure church of converted people only, and these were later followed by the Anabaptists. Actually, we must make a difference between schismatics, heretics, and sects. Schismatics do not change the foundation of the doctrine, but for an unimportant reason of church government or for a difference about a subordinate doctrinal question, they break with the church and leave it. An example of such a question is whether baptism is to be done by immersion or by sprinkling. Such minor things are made to be major issues, with all the sad consequences of it.

Heretics do not maintain the fundamental truths, such as the many churches who do not believe in the Trinity, the eternal Godhead of Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In the beginning there were only minor differences, but they gradually became major ones. They then went out of the church or were cut off from the church because they departed from the pure doctrine according to God's Word. Sect is derived from the word "sequor," which means to follow; in other words, they follow a certain person. Often you will find among the sects that subordinate parts of doctrine are made principal matters or certain matters are over-emphasized so that it seems that this is the only subject of the Bible. They are well prepared in this matter and, with the power of persuasion, they can have a strong influence on others, especially with those who have little knowledge of the Truth. In these ways many groups, parties, and sects have come into existence, but it is also true that the Protestant churches have had many divisions.

Here we are not speaking of different churches in different countries. The Lord calls His Church out of all nations and languages, which already makes a difference. However, here we are speaking of the multiplying of churches for human reasons. Then it becomes a question which is the true church and which is a false church; where do they preach the

Truth and where is half-truth preached, or even a lie.

Rev. Kersten says of this, “The false church makes itself known; it continues in its unrighteousness and idolatry, and not only rejects all efforts to reform, but even with violence and device tries to choke the true church.” The confession gives an answer as to which is the true church and later which is the false church. We will follow the marks given here in this article. “The marks by which the true church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein.” This is only the first mark, for there are three marks given. These marks are standards by which each church is to judge itself but also standards in regard to other churches. They are also standards by which each believer may know the church he is to join. Persons who desire to make confession of faith must also use these standards.

The first mark is—if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein. No gospel may be preached other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Christ merited salvation and out of free grace, with the exclusion of all our works, we become partakers of His grace by the administration of the Holy Spirit, who uses the Word as a means. In John 16:13a we read, “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.” The Spirit shall glorify Christ. When Christ is taken out of the preach-

ing and the gospel in the meriting and applying of salvation, then the gospel is no gospel and the church no longer a church. Then it is a dead body without spirit and life, and is only form—a false church. The pure preaching of God’s Word is of the greatest importance, and we must continually pray to the Lord for it.

Closely related to the preaching of the gospel is the administration of the sacraments. It is the second mark of the true church given us; “If she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ.” Both the gospel and the sacraments point to Christ; the first is audible, the second visible. It was especially the sacraments which caused many differences between the churches of Rome, of Luther, and of the Protestants.

Regarding the third mark given us, namely, church discipline, we hope to say something the next time, D.V.

Have we ever been interested in the truth which is brought in our midst? It is a great privilege that we have the truth, but it is also a great responsibility whereof we will have to give an account before the Lord. He has said that His Word is not brought in vain. May it become the desire of the heart under the administration of the Spirit to belong to the true Church, which the Lord gathers by Word and Spirit.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

God Uses Two Women to Save Israel

(Based on Judges 4)

Again, the country of Israel had been invaded by enemies!

Ehud had saved the Israelites from the Moabites, and then a man named Shamgar had saved them from the Philistines, but it was not long before the Israelites again had forgotten the God of their fathers. So once more God sent enemies into their country. This time the wicked king of Canaan, Jabin, was ruling them. Jabin was also a mean king. For many years he ruled the Israelites harshly and cruelly until they didn’t know where to turn.

Then, after twenty long years, they remembered the only true God, the One who had saved them in the past. As in the past, God helped them. God spoke

to a woman named Deborah, a prophetess—a woman prophet—who gave the people God’s messages. Deborah often prayed to God about her people, but she also talked to her people about the God of heaven. How Deborah wished they would worship Him at all times, not just in times of trouble! God gave her a message for a man named Barak, so she called him to her.

“God wants you to gather an army together to fight the Canaanites,” she told him. “God will be with you and deliver them into your hand.”

Barak thought about this. Then he said, “If you go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, then I will not go.”

Was Barak thinking about the huge Canaanite army, and was he afraid that the small Israelite army could never conquer them? Or, did he know that he needed God's presence to conquer the enemies, and if Deborah came with them, then surely that was a sign of God's presence. The Bible does not tell us.

When Barak asked her to go with him, Deborah told him, "Yes, I will go with you, but because you have asked for my help, a woman will get the honor for winning the battle, not you."

Then Deborah and Barak went to gather their army. The captain of the Canaanite army heard about the Israelite army, and he also began to gather his men together. His name was Sisera. He was very sure he was going to win the battle against these Israelites. He had many chariots and horses, and how few they had.

Something happened during the battle. The sky grew dark, thunder rolled, lightning flashed, and rain spilled from the clouds. The battle did not go as Sisera had expected because the Lord fought for Israel.

Perhaps Sisera's chariot became stuck in the mud, for we are told that he jumped from his chariot and ran off as fast as he could. He knew that since he was the captain, he would certainly be killed if he were caught. Many of his soldiers were already being killed or captured by the Israelites. Away he ran until he came to some tents. Maybe he would be safe there. These tents belonged to people called the Kenites who were at peace with the Canaanites. As Sisera came to the tents, a woman named Jael came out.

"Come into my tent," she called to him. "Hide in here! Do not be afraid." So Sisera ran in.

"Oh, I am so thirsty!" Sisera gasped. "Please give me some water to drink."

Jael did even more than that. She treated him like a special person—she brought him milk to drink and butter in a dish. Sisera swallowed the food quickly, and then he told her to stand watch at the door of the tent.

"If anyone comes and asks if I am here, tell them No," he said. Sisera was so tired that he then went to sleep.

Jael kept watch from the door of the tent, but she also kept an eye on Sisera. As soon as she saw he was asleep, she took a nail that was usually used to hold down the tent, found a hammer and nailed his head to the ground. We do not read why she did this to him, but she certainly knew that Sisera was an enemy of the people of the Lord. Soon Jael saw Barak running past the tents and looking for Sisera. "Come into my tent, and I will show you where he is," she said. And there lay the strong, mighty captain—feared by everyone—killed by a woman.

Again, God had delivered the Israelites from cruel enemies, and He used Jael to kill their captain. Just as Deborah had said to Barak, he would not get the honor for the victory, but a woman would. How happy Deborah and Barak were. They sang their praises to God in a beautiful song you can find in Judges 5.

The children of Israel could serve their God again as they wished. They were free again. But what do you think would happen? Yes, if you know what you and I are like, you know what the children of Israel were like. They would worship God for forty years, but then they would forget Him and worship other gods again. Then their enemies would invade the land and rule over them. Would God still remember them, or would He leave them to their own hearts' wishes?

Current Events

COAH Update from Ukraine *(continued from page 111)*

have the opportunity to shower, wash their clothes, eat, and sleep. Our volunteers work with children to somehow distract them from the horror that they have had to endure. For those who have lost everything, we provide clothes and money for the journey. For those who do not have their own transportation, transport is organized to the borders of neighboring states. Most often it is the Polish and Romanian borders. We do it for people for free.

In addition, there are territorial defense battalions in Dunaevtsy and Khmelnytsky. These are ordinary people who voluntarily agreed to defend their land. Their actions are coordinated by the military, but since they are volunteers, they also need support. Checkpoints and round-the-clock patrols are organized at the entrances and exits. Russian sabotage groups have already been detained. There are many brothers from different churches in these battalions. Yura Lukovoi,

our presbyter, is one of them. We provide them with thermal underwear because we have snow, and it is quite cold; we give a lot of food and hygiene items as well.

The situation in our region is better than in other cities; only a small town near Khmelnytskyi is being bombed because there is a military airfield, but often rockets fly over our heads. Please continue to pray. It is highly likely that I, with the help of another chaplain, will go to Nikolaev (near Odesa). There is a friend of mine there who is a pastor with forty church members left. These are older people. They practically live in the basement. They need help. We are discouraged from doing this, but we are studying this issue and consulting with the military."

—Taken from the NRC Waupun church bulletin, March 20, 2022



Bible Quiz

Take Heed

Dear Boys and Girls,

My son came skidding down the snowy hill, gaining momentum quickly. I ran to intercept him. “You’re going to end up off the rocks and into the woods!”

My little boy only giggled.

“You have to roll off the sled before you get that far,” I explained.

Away he ran up the hill to try again. “Look, Mommy! I made a path!” He pointed down the hill at the hard-packed snow. “Now I will go even faster!” With a little push of his mittened hands, the sled began to glide, but it did not need much encouragement. The little sled had plenty of speed of its own, and as it coursed down the hill, it slid faster and faster.

There was no stopping it on the slippery slope, and I shouted, “Roll off! Roll off!” as the sled headed straight for the swing set.

My five-year-old’s face glowed. He saw no danger. His red cheeks and sparkling eyes flashed by, and a moment later, I heard a loud thump. I was glad I heard only another giggle, indicating that he had not been injured, as I turned to look.

Sin is sometimes called a slippery slope. It can begin with just a small thought, just a little temptation, or just a quick look. Giving in to or following that thought soon leads to more sin. When someone lies, he often quickly has to lie a few more times to cover up the first lie—one lie becomes several lies. When someone steals or gambles once, he often cannot stop—one time leads to more and more times.

There are also bad “habits.” If you are feeling grumpy and sneer rudely at your sister, you might find that you keep saying mean things the remainder of the day. If you ignore your mom when she calls you, you will most likely begin to do so more and more. Perhaps it has become a habit to daydream in church or during Bible reading at meals. You cannot even remember when this began. Sin is such a slippery slope.

Eve listened to the serpent. From there, she shared her fruit with Adam, causing him to sin too. After that, she hid from the Lord and tried to shift the blame from herself. The one thing led to the other. Sin is a slippery slope.

The Bible warns us to “take heed.” This means to watch out for something—to be careful of something

dangerous—to listen to warnings. What is dangerous? Sin is dangerous. Our heart is inclined to sin; our heart naturally follows after it like sliding downhill. “Take heed.” Take heed that you are not deceived by what you might hear, or read, or see. Perhaps your friend from the neighborhood tells you that she is a good Christian and will certainly go to heaven. She believes this because her parents have taught her this. She believes that as long as she tries to be a good girl, God will not judge her. Another person, a boy with whom you work on the farm, says that he has accepted Jesus into his life, and now he is saved. You hear a woman in the doctor’s waiting room speaking to her husband about her church life, and she talks about faith as if it just means being a member of a church. A little voice of doubt begins to whisper in your heart. “Could they be right? Could that be the way a person is saved?” Take heed that your heart be not deceived...

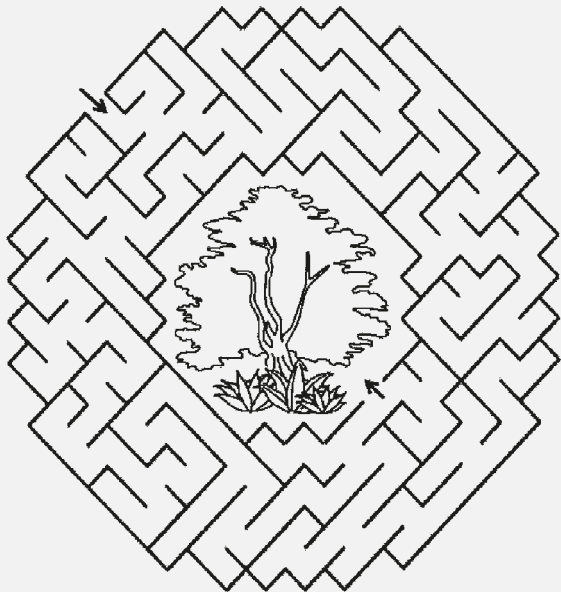
Sin is a slippery slope. There are so many warnings in the Bible. Do we take heed? Do we take notice of them? “I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.” “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.” “Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared.” “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived.” “Take heed lest any man deceive you.” “Take heed that ye be not deceived.” “Take ye heed, watch and pray.” “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged.”

Our heart is so easily overtaken. It can become impossible to stop. We let all the cares or excitement or plans of every day take over every small space in our heart and mind so that there is no room for anything else. Is there a way to turn around on this slippery downward path? Our heart naturally follows after sin, adding sin to sin. We live how it pleases us instead of how the Lord wants us to live. Even when we do good things, we have ourselves in mind, and perhaps others, but we do not have the love to God above all in our heart. Can this ever change?

Yes, there is a way. The Lord must make a new beginning in our life. This beginning is a love to God and a sorrow about sin. Then we become sad about sin. We begin to ask for and seek after other things, more to be desired than every slippery path we have followed before. Such a person is glad when there is

another church service, and he becomes afraid of sin. When one falls into sin and begins to slide far away from God, it makes him very sad, and he begs the Lord to draw him back. What kind of person are you? There are only two kinds of people—those who are unconcerned and content in the world, without a God for their soul, and those whose eyes have been opened to see that they were traveling on a slippery path to destruction.

“She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”



Find your way through the maze which represents the forbidden tree. Use the phrases below to fill in the blanks. Look back at the introduction you just read for hints.

1. Take heed to yourselves, _____, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;
2. Take heed to thyself _____ by following them,
3. I will take heed to my ways, _____
4. Take heed, beware _____
5. Take heed lest any man _____
6. Take ye heed, _____
7. Take heed that ye _____: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ.
8. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time _____ with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.

- *That thou be not snared (Deuteronomy)*
- *Deceive you (Mark)*
- *Watch and pray (Mark)*
- *That your heart be not deceived (Deuteronomy)*
- *Of the leaven of the Pharisees (Mark)*
- *Be not deceived (Luke)*

- *Your hearts be overcharged (Luke)*
- *That I sin not with my tongue (Psalm)*

For the Older Children

Unscramble.

9. Wherefore let him that thinketh he _____ (dahsntet) take heed lest he fall.

10. But if ye bite and _____ (odrevu) one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

11. Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my _____ (ssofoettp) slip not.

12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and _____ (flal) therein:

13. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest _____ (hdee) to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them _____ (pisl).

14. Even as I have seen, they that _____ (wplo) iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

15. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness _____ (lwlde) in thy tabernacles.

16. When the _____ (kwecdi) spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.

17. O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast _____ (leflan) by thine iniquity.

18. Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the _____ (rpoew) of their hand.

19. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the _____ (tgeonu) among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

20. But we are all as an unclean _____ (ghitn) and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

For the Younger Children

21. Look up each verse and fill in the blank what each verse tells us to take heed of.

Psalm 73:18 ____ Psalm 94:18 ____
1 Corinthians 10:14 ____ Isaiah 59:7 ____

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| A. Slipping feet | C. Running to evil |
| B. Slippery places | D. Idolatry |

22. What is meant by slippery places and slipping feet? _____



Letters to My Young Readers

Answers to April's "A Sceptre" quiz:

1. Called, sceptre, thirty, people, court, top
2. Esther 8:4
3. Royal, stand, justice, hand
Psalter 124 verse 6
4. Throne, ever, kingdom, right
Psalm 45:6
5. Rulers
Isaiah 14:5
6. Branches
Ezekiel 19:14
7. House
Amos 1:5
8. Perish
Amos 1:8
9. Depart
Zechariah 10:11
10. Kingdom
Hebrews 1:8
11. Lawgiver
Genesis 49:10
12. Smite
Numbers 24:17

Answers to previous quizzes were received in January from:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ashlynn Bakker 2 | Nevaeh Rozeboom (2) 5 |
| Clay Bakker 12 | Rueben Rozeboom (2) 5 |
| Kalli Bakker 2 | Jordan Rus 2 |
| Britni Blom (2) 30 | Kenzi Rus 2 |
| GaryJon Blom 13 | Teighton Rus 2 |
| Marissa Blom (2) 28 | Wilson Spaans 19 |
| Riley Blom 11 | Colin Ten Hove 23 |
| Tiffany Blom (2) 4 | Hannah-Jo Ten Hove 10 |
| Jaron DeJager 1 | Hunter Timmer 23 |
| Amara Dekker 1 | Kadin Timmer 23 |
| Jaxon DeKorne 4 | Laurencia Timmer 16 |
| Juliette DeKorne 5 | Sierra Timmer 21 |
| Sarina Den Bok 22 | Wyatt Timmer 22 |
| Lindsey Driesse 15 | Jaxten Van Beek 2 |
| Allison Ekema 1 | Gerard Van Deuveren 1 |
| Kaylynn Ekema 31 | Maurice Van Garderen 27 |
| Weston Ekema 20 | Emmalyn Van Garderen 28 |
| Geralyn Engelen 18 | Lydia Van Manen 32 |
| Trevor Engelen 19 | Rosalee Van Manen 29 |
| Maddie Fluit 2 | Kaiven Van Middendorp 30 |
| Jason Groenendyk 8 | Konner Van Middendorp 30 |
| Linda Groenendyk 10 | Blake Van Veldhuizen 9 |
| Ruben Groenendyk 24 | Kason Van Velthuisen 12 |
| Adriel Groeneweg 1 | Kinzie Van Veldhuizen 1 |
| Lane Harris 1 | Taya Van Voorst 10 |
| Charity Hup 8 | Ellie Van't Zelfde 13 |
| Derek Hup 17 | Adalyn VAnde Waerdt 1 |
| Justin Hup 17 | Sophia VAnde Waerdt 1 |
| Serena Hup 3 | Wyatt Vande Waerdt 16 |
| Heather Kattenberg 2 | Esther Vanden Broek 15 |
| Alia Kelderman 13 | Ian Vanden Broek 14 |
| Trig Kelderman 1 | Melissa VanDerWeerd 1 |
| Anthony Knibbe (2) 11 | Helen Verhoef 15 |
| Ashley Knibbe (2) 24 | Shara Verhoef 16 |
| Lindsey Knibbe (2) 24 | Jayden Weeda 17 |
| Whitney Knibbe (2) 24 | John Wynia 1 |
| Joey Koenen 3 | Paxton Ymker 20 |
| Lydia Koenen 5 | Quentin Ymker 20 |
| Abby Maassen 7 | Ryan Ymker 2 |
| Cody Maassen (2) 10 | Whitney Ymker 5 |
| Kari Mans (2) 13 | |
| Madeline Mol 16 | |
| Olivia Mol 20 | |
| Blake Pannekoek 13 | |
| Lauren Pannekoek 24 | |
| Jillian Rozeboom 2 | |

12 Bibles were sent to Bolivia this month. The total is now 527—thank you, boys and girls!

Key to numbers following names:

- Numbers in parentheses represent how many quizzes person answered in the month being reported.
- Numbers without parentheses indicate how many quizzes person has completed toward earning Bibles for Bolivia.
- Solid box indicates person has earned a Bible in the month being reported. Each time six quizzes are completed, another Bible is sent to Bolivia.



Please send your answers to the address shown below:
 Aunt LenaBeth
 180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
 E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. For consistency, size is limited. Please send your request to the managing editor, James Okken, whose address is shown inside the front cover. Requests for placement should be made by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles appearing in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3s are produced by a committee in Norwich, with the support of the Norwich consistory, who makes the MP3s available to your consistory. Consistories distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost. You may contact Mrs. Tillie Lamain at 616-242-0291 or blamain@netscape.net to arrange for a free subscription or to discontinue receiving *The Banner of Truth* on CD.

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. A.T. Huijser of Sliedrecht, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

To Rev M.T. Al-Chalabi of Brakel, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Lethbridge, Alberta.

To Rev. A.H. Verhoef of St. Catharines, Ontario, by the congregation of Rotterdam, Thabor Church (Ijsselmonde), the Netherlands.

Declined:

By Rev M.T. Al-Chalabi of Brakel, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Lethbridge, Alberta.

By Rev. A.T. Huijser of Sliedrecht, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

■ Obituaries

KOEDAM, Josephine (Josie, nee Vanden Brink) – Age 89, March 10, 2022; Rock Valley, Iowa; Husband – Everett (deceased); Children – Howard & Wanita, Paul & Jackie, Denise & Tim Koenen; 10 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, 2 great-great-grandchildren; In-laws – Henrietta Vanden Brink, Trudy, Gerrit & Carol; predeceased by grandson Ryan Koenen, siblings and several in-laws. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Revelation 3:20.)

OUWERKERK, Petronella (Nell, nee van Waardhuizen) – Age 89, March 20, 2022; Picture Butte, Alberta; Husband – Bill (deceased); Children – Hetty Jo Schultz, Joanne Grace, Sharon, Pete & Melanie, Richard, daughter-in-law Karen; 6 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Bill van Waardhuizen, Dan & Helen van Waardhuizen, Corry Aleman, Mary DeMooy; In-laws – Jack deKoning, Joan van Waardhuizen, Tony, Irene Hollander, Cor, Alice; predeceased by son Brian, sister, brother and in-laws. (Rev. H.D. den Hollander, Acts 20:38a.)

DEN HOED, Lane Matthew – Age 33, March 29, 2022; Blaine, Washington; Parents – Arthur & Ruth; Siblings – John, Jenna, Annelise; Girlfriend – Emily Swanson; Grandparents – Rev. John & Johanna; predeceased by grandparents Gerrit & Jennie Vonk and uncle Tim Vonk. (Rev. J. den Hoed, Psalm 90:12.)

DEN BOER, Anneke (nee Sterkenburg) – Age 88, April 5, 2022; Chilliwack, British Columbia; Husband – Gary (deceased); Children – Bill & Jeanette, Joanne, Elsa, Anita & Steve; 12 grandchildren, 21 great-

grandchildren; Siblings – Theo Sterkenburg, Corrie Van Mersbergen; In-laws – Connie MacDonald, Mary Sterkenburg, Hillie, Elizabeth, Nell Visscher, Elsa & Frank Torfs; predeceased by brothers, sister and several in-laws. (Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg, Psalm 13:4.)

KOOYMAN, Jacob (Jake) – Age 81, April 3, 2022; Chilliwack, British Columbia; Wife – Sanderina; Children – Willemina & Marvin Heyboer, Jannette & Albert Oostenbrink, Karen & Nathan Schouten, Ken & Ineke; 20 grandchildren; Sibling – Coba Van Klei; predeceased by sister, brothers and brother-in-law. (Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg, Psalm 130:7.)

ENGELEN, John – Age 78, March 31, 2022; Norwich, Ontario; Wife – Geraldine (deceased, nee Veldjesgraaf); Children – John, Bob & Jacqueline, Connie & Andrew Boon; 5 grandchildren; Sisters – Riet van de Bosch, Hennie & Arie Van Ommeren, Bep Speksnijder; In-laws – Wilma & Bill Van Egdom and Bertha Stubbe; predeceased by grandson Elbert, brother, sisters and in-laws. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Luke 23:42.)

■ New from Bible Truth Books

Great is Thy Faithfulness—The History of the Lansing, IL Congregation—Many histories of congregations are in print today. A congregation may have been preserved for fifty, or one hundred fifty years, but the value of a church is not the size of the building, the number of members, or past consistory members. It is in whether the truth may be still preached there and also experienced in the souls of hearers. The congregation of South Holland/Lansing, albeit small, has been faithfully preserved—not by man, but by the Lord who watches over the cause of His Church. Hardcover, 247 pages, \$27.00.

Occupations in the Bible—by Rev. B.J. van Boven—It is quite common for young people to think about possible future occupations. In God's Word, we also read of many occupations: a seller of purple, physicians, midwives, builders, fishermen, sowers, and even tent-makers. Rev. van Boven gently leads his readers into twelve of these occupations, but especially considers the spiritual instruction that can be gleaned from each one. Young people, understandably, will find this of interest, but we know that their parents and grandparents will also enjoy these portions. Hardcover, 111 pages, \$20.00.

Hidden Treasures in Parables by M. Quist—Fifteen parables of the Lord Jesus are explained

in this book written for children ages 8-14. Each parable is introduced and told to children with an explanation of the parable's meaning. Hardcover, 135 pages, \$18.50.

Hope in God by M. van Steenis—A collection of ten true, simply-told stories about the wonders of the Lord. In this book we hear the story of Rev. Toes's cows, how a family was spared when their house collapsed, a boy named Joseph who was converted by the Lord in London, but also about Richard, a boy of eight years who believed that the Lord could provide food just like the ravens brought food to Elijah. For children ages 5-10. Hardcover, respectfully illustrated, 55 pages, \$20.50.

The Glorious Return by C. Temple—The Waldensians (also known as the Vaudois) were followers of Peter Waldo, a forerunner of the Reformation and can trace their roots to the year 1173 A.D. For hundreds of years they were persecuted, oppressed, and pursued by the Roman Catholic Church in a futile effort to annihilate them. They were driven from the homes and valleys that they once occupied, but in 1689 they were able to return to their beloved valleys in what was known as "The Glorious Return." Hardcover, for ages 14 and older, 108 pages, \$18.50.

New Organ/Piano Psalter Available—We also wish to announce that a soft-cover spiral-bound Psalter has been printed by the Rock Valley congregation. Traditional Psalter-size, \$20.25. The prices above do not include postage.

Bible Truth Books
P.O. Box 1290
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1290
Phone / Fax: 616-776-2593
BibleTruthBooks@igatweb.com

■ Young Adult/Post High School Youth Camp, Northern Michigan August 18-20, 2022

A three-day/two-night trip to northern Michigan is being planned, the Lord willing, by a Grand Rapids' committee under the oversight of the Beckwith consistory. We are planning to stay in a beautiful lodge located in Boyne Falls, Michigan. On Friday we plan to drive to Mackinaw City and take the ferry across to scenic Mackinac Island. A minister and elder hope to provide meaningful topics and discussions. For further information please call or text 616-329-0705 or email NRCMackinawTrip@gmail.com.

Dear reader, the need is great. If you have an education background, please take a moment to consider the many positions available across our congregations.

Administrators Needed

LYNDEN NRC, WASHINGTON—The Lynden congregation is seeking an administrator/teacher to come and help us with our small, multi-grade school. Applicants must be a member of the NRC. The ability to become a Washington State certified elementary teacher is preferred. For more information on this position as well as our newly formed school, please contact the committee president, Jeremy Neels, at 360-988-1884 / jeremyneels@gmail.com or the clerk, Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. The school administrator will strive to direct the school according to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, the Constitution of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School, the policies of the NRC School Board, and the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Education. The primary duty of the administrator is to maintain productive relations with the school board, students, faculty and staff, parents and community.

Relocation expenses and financial incentives will be discussed upon inquiry. For more information or to apply, please contact Tim Mol (education chairman) at 973-204-5677 or email timjmol@yahoo.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 email nrce_office@nrce.nj.org.

TRINITY REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON, welcomes applications for an administrator/teacher for our small school. We are an approved school for grades K-8 but currently have students in the lower grades. We have a four-day school week to allow for adequate preparation and administrative time for our multi-grade classroom. To apply or request more information, please contact the school board president, Mr. Arthur den Hoed, at 509-786-2354 or email artdenhoed@gmail.com, or Maaïke Van Wingerden at 509-840-0437 or email trinityrcs@embarqmail.com.

To All Candidates for Education Positions

Please visit advertising.nrcea.education for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools as well as links to the school websites for more information about the positions and the schools. When accessing the job bank on the NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

User Name:

advertising@nrcea.education

Password: **Schooljobs!**

Teachers Needed

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications from teachers of any grade or subject specialty to fill anticipated vacancies beginning September 2022, D.V. We would be thankful to hear from versatile and dedicated applicants to enable continued provision of Christian education to our youth. All applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination, and eligible for Alberta certification. For information about positions available, please contact the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or marc.slingerland@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter, resumé or C.V., and references to office@ccschool.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2022-23 school year. We have a very small, multigrade classroom school. Certification is not required for this position although it would be helpful. Currently, the school board acts as principal with further oversight by the consistory. May this position and our need be bound upon someone's heart to come over and help us. For any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail rdtunissen@yahoo.com.

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school year with multiple openings for teachers in elementary and secondary. Applicants must hold or be eligible for BC certification, and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCS Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America. Inquiries should be addressed to the principal, Mr. Jan Neels, at jneels@mccs.ca. Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels and to the board secretary, Mr. Toby de Rover, at tobyderover@gmail.com.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, is inviting inquiries from qualified teachers interested in teaching in our small Christian school. We presently have openings at the elementary level. For more information, please contact our principal, Tom Kwekel, at tkwekel@pskzoo.com or 616-644-2661.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, a K-12 NRC school, is accepting applications for a secondary language arts teaching position for the 2022-2023 school year. Interested applicants should contact the principal, Mr. Nathan Bleeker, at nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us or 616-454-9481 to request an application or to ask questions about the potential position.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. We have openings in both elementary and junior high grades for the 2022-23 school year. Qualified applicants require a teaching degree and an earnest interest in teaching in a Christian school and must be a member in good standing of one of Netherlands Reformed congregations or a denomination with similar teachings. To apply, please see our school's contact information in the Administrators section.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is welcoming applications for both elementary and secondary teaching positions for the 2022-23 school year. One particular area of need is a French teacher at the elementary and, potentially, high school, grade levels. We continue to invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program for those who hold a bachelor's degree. Please visit our website at www.rcsnorwich.com for more detailed information about available positions, or contact the interim director, Mr. Andy Stubbe, at director@rcsnorwich.com or 519-863-2403, ext. 223. Submit cover letters and resumé to hr@rcsnorwich.com.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is looking for teachers who are excited about teaching and have a particular love for the hearts of young people. We have an urgent need for primary teachers but would also consider/encourage secondary and intermediate grade-level applicants. If you are such a teacher, please apply to join our team. Applicants need to be certifiable to teach in British Columbia. For information and/or an application form, please contact either the principal, Mr. Doug Stam, at 604-794-7114 or dstam@timothychristian.ca, or the school board president, Mr. Wim Neels, at 604-858-8834 or wimneels@timothychristian.ca.

Copy Length of Announcements

Dear Reader,

The News & Announcement section of *The Banner of Truth* frequently overflows its customary two pages. Consequently, a good deal of effort is spent attempting to fit the contents. We kindly request that announcements, especially education ads, be restricted to one hundred words (approximately sixteen lines in print). If an announcement is too lengthy, we will reply with a request that it be shortened. You are at liberty to include a link to a webpage where more details can be found. Thank you for your consideration.

—The Editors

Thou Art Coming to a King

Come, my soul, thy suit prepare:
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore, will not say thee nay;
Therefore, will not say thee nay.

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much;
None can ever ask too much.

With my burden I begin:
Lord, remove this load of sin;
Let Thy blood, for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt;
Set my conscience free from guilt.

Lord, I come to Thee for rest,
Take possession of my breast;
There Thy blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign;
And without a rival reign.

As the image in the glass
Answers the beholder's face;
Thus, unto my heart appear,
Print Thine own resemblance there;
Print Thine own resemblance there.

While I am a pilgrim here,
Let Thy love my spirit cheer;
As my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,
Lead me to my journey's end;
Lead me to my journey's end.

Show me what I have to do,
Every hour my strength renew:
Let me live a life of faith,
Let me die Thy people's death;
Let me die Thy people's death.

—*John Newton*