

the **Banner** *of Truth*

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The Official Periodical
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In this issue...

Weepers in the Way

That Is Risen Again

**Are You Praying for the Peace
of Jerusalem?**

For our young readers...

David Hides from Saul

Questions



*"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus...
And they talked together of all these things which had happened." LUKE 24:13a&14*



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Cover: The Road to Emmaus | © Henri Gourinard

(A section of the new Emmaus Trail, which allows hikers to walk from the outskirts of Jerusalem through the picturesque Judean foothills to one of the possible sites of Emmaus Nicopolis.)

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Meditation

Weepers in the Way

Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Rock Valley, IA

“But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children” (Luke 23:28).

Weep not for Me

What a distressing scene! A great procession is walking through the streets of Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth has been condemned to die the most painful and shameful death the heathen Romans could invent. Bloodied and weak, He crumbles under the weight of the cross He is forced to carry. Who would not be moved with compassion? In a certain sense it is no surprise that we read, *“And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.”* Yet, is not the reaction of Jesus a surprise? *“But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”*

Would the Lord not welcome such pity and compassion? Was that not His desire in the woeful hours of the evening past when He crawled as a worm and no man? Did He not ask His beloved and devoted disciples, *“What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?”* Is it not said by Him prophetically in Psalm 69:20b, *“I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none”*? They had by now all forsaken Him and fled. Thomas’ willingness to die with Him, and Peter drawing his sword was not deemed too great for them then, but where are they now? At least these women were following and weeping. So, who would not commend these women? The Lord did not.

The Lord sees it entirely differently, and how blind we remain unless we are made to see! He did not desire those tears. Yea, rather they were a hindrance, a snare for His soul as He trod the way to do the will of His Father and to deliver His Church. Those deeply affected daughters of Jerusalem not only stood in His way but stood in the way of their own salvation. They were, perhaps unknowingly, instruments under the influence of the devil. Here, while unleashing all the torrents of his hellish scorn from the mouths and actions of the devilish mob, he, as an angel of light, also influences these sobbing women. Oh, who can fathom the temptations that entered into the human soul of the Mediator? On the way toward His deepest suffering, what an indescribable and unseen onslaught of attacks was unleashed by the entire kingdom of darkness on the Son of Man. How much the devil knew of the way of reconciliation cannot fully be known, but he knows much, and did the devil think that he would be the victor if Christ only died a natural death? Oh, no! He knows sin causes eternal death.

The devil is the murderer from the beginning, and his aim is always to provoke to sin—to practice and incite to what he delights in, rebellion. That was what he so subtly succeeded in with the first Adam. Therefore, upon all men has death, and the just sentence of death, been passed. Dear reader, have we learned what that really is? What our personal wages are? Now, certainly, the devil’s endeavors would be the same and even more subtle toward the Second Adam to ruin the way of salvation. The devil knows that the way of dying is so against human nature. “Ye shall not surely die.” In other words, “God is not just,” was his lying strategy with Adam and Eve and be sure, also for Christ, the devil assailed Him in this point. To invoke the sins of self-pity and counting God as the unjust One is the devil’s way.

Christ had been condemned to die by Pontius Pilate, an earthly judge, but a type of vice-regent of the heavenly Judge. Every sin of the entire Church had really been laid upon Jesus. He truly stood as a debtor to the whole law and was subject to the unmitigated wrath of the eternal God. This was known by Him and felt by Him. Though He could have presently prayed for twelve legions of heavenly deliverers, He, for the joy set before Him, yea, to do the will of His Father and to save His inheritance, was willing to endure the shame, the curse, and the wrath of God against sin on the cross. He was willing to creep in Gethsemane, stumble to Golgotha, and die on the cross as the Repairer of the breach. This was the only way—the Just for the unjust. Oh, how all the power of hell sought to thwart this. All throughout Christ’s unspeakable way, in the midst of the most severe temptations, He refused to be turned aside. He not only desired to be unhindered and not pitied; He pointed out the real reason to weep.

Weep for yourselves and for your children

Notwithstanding their wrong motives, Jesus was still moved for these women even as He was moved for Jerusalem when He wept over the city six days before. Jerusalem would be filled with the slain; the crosses would be set up and the stakes would burn day and night. The Romans would annihilate the city and its inhabitants. A terrible judgment was coming. There would then be weeping as there had never been before. Oh, what retribution waited for rejecting and denying the holy One and the Just and desiring a murderer. Let us learn what this means personally and spiritually.

Perhaps, earlier, these same women had tears of joy when they saw Jesus’ miracles, when He blessed their children, when they cried out, “Blessed is the womb that bare Thee...” Now they had tears of emotion over His lamentable state,

but did they ever have tears of sorrow over *their* lamentable state? It is to be feared that many in our day make a ground of their salvation by being moved for Christ but have no need that Christ be moved for them. Superficial tears are dried up by thoughts of a mighty, willing, loving God that is in control. That is a false comfort for many. How few need a crucified Saviour, a Mediator, not a martyr. Man is offended at a dying Saviour unless he is taught the necessity for His atoning work. This is learned by the regenerating and convicting work of the Spirit. Then true tears begin to fall where no one can see them.

Friends, what weeping has taken place in the past year in the families in many of our congregations. Oh, that we may learn to weep for ourselves and for our children before the judgment falls upon us. What tears are pleasing to Him?

Those that flow from a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Oh, that we and our children may learn such mourning in this Passion season—to mourn because of our sin and our backsliding—to mourn because we stand outside of everything and it is our own fault. What bitter tears of lamentation when we see what our iniquity cost Him. Are you such a weeper? Then may your mourning at the cross become glorying in the cross (Galatians 6:14).

The payment has been made. Salvation has been wrought. The way has been opened, not by tears but by righteous blood. No devil, no man, no woman, no sinner can close it, but we must be in it. Pray that you may be a weeper in this Way of salvation and no longer a weeper in your own way of salvation. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). □



Bible Study

The Names of the Mediator (3)

Rev. C. Neele (1962-2022) & Rev. A. Schot, Nunspeet, the Netherlands
(Translated from the 2010 issues of *De Saambinder*)

Beloved

“Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen; My **Beloved**, in whom My soul is well pleased” (Matthew 12:18a).

In Scripture we find many names for the Mediator recorded from the mouths of God’s children. Those names teach us who Christ is for true believers. Our text, however, contains a name by which God the Father names the Mediator. Such names teach us who the Mediator is in the sight of His Father. Later, we will see that in naming Him the Beloved, the Father and the Church are in complete agreement. Here the evangelist quotes Isaiah 42:1: “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” Christ is the Beloved, the Beloved of His Father. In Him the Father is well pleased. This resounded openly from heaven at Christ’s baptism in Jordan, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The Servant is also the Son, and the Son is also the Servant. There lies the depth of the Father’s love for the Servant. That love cannot be explained. The Servant was the Beloved of His Father from eternity. He did not become so when He assumed the form of a servant. He was the Beloved when the Father elected Him to His mediatorial work, and He remained the Beloved.

He also remained the Beloved throughout the entire time of His sojourn on earth; however, that did not always appear to be the case. If He is the Father’s Beloved, why did the Father forsake Him on Golgotha? He seemed to be an outcast. The wrath of the Father was directed at the sins that His Beloved bore as Substitute. Therefore, the Father

could no longer comfort His Beloved. Justice had to take its course. The good pleasure could only prosper in this manner. That He remained the Beloved is again shown so clearly in His exaltation.

God’s children are also called beloved in Scripture. That they are also beloved is evident in the electing love of God the Father, the purchasing love of God the Son, and the gathering love of the Holy Spirit. The Father so loved them that He did not spare even His own Son, and the Son so loved them that He was willing to give His life for them. Is it any wonder then that the Mediator also becomes the Beloved of His Church? Isaiah wrote, “Now will I sing to my Wellbeloved a song of my Beloved.” Oh, we love Him because He first loved us. Has He also become your Beloved? I even hear Peter say, “Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

—February 4, 2010, Rev. A. Schot

Bishop

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and **Bishop** of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

In the last verse of this chapter, Peter contrasts the past and present of his readers. First, they were like straying sheep without a Shepherd. They were without guidance, without care, and without protection. This is the sad picture of an unconverted sinner. It is the existence of all of us, by nature. Isaiah wrote, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” At some point in the lives of these scattered strangers and elect according

to the foreknowledge of God the Father, a reversal took place. Christ joined them to His flock through true conversion and placed them under His loving care.

The Mediator is not only the Shepherd, a name in this verse which we will dwell on later, but He is also the Bishop. That means that He has oversight and supervision over His sheep. The guidance comes from Him. This guidance concerns not only their bodies but also their souls. The writer of the marginal notes wrote of this Bishop: “Greek **episcopon**; that is, Superintendent or Overseer, that is, who takes care for the salvation of your souls, although your bodies are oftentimes ill-treated here.”

Ah, if this Bishop’s sheep had to take care of their souls themselves, nothing would come of it, but this Bishop takes care of those souls whom He bought with such a high price. His soul has been exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He knows how to deal with souls. Souls are in good hands with this Bishop. He does not lose sight of one, for they are precious in His sight. No, the guidance of this Bishop

is by no means always understood, but the sheep may safely leave it in His hands.

By nature, we miss the comfort of this Bishop. Straying sheep without guidance—what will become of them? We do not even realize that we have a soul. Without this Bishop we will soon fall into eternal destruction. We are so often concerned for our bodies. Rather, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” He also admonishes His disciples themselves to take heed of their souls, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26a).

Can you also no longer do without this Bishop? The poet of Psalm 142 says, “Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.” He no longer trusted himself. Then this Bishop takes on such value. God’s children begin to seek Him in all their soul’s sorrow. Take courage. “Your heart shall live that seek God.”

—August 26, 2010, Rev. A. Schot

(To be continued)

Curatorium Announcement

The Lord willing, the Curatorium hopes to convene on Wednesday, June 5, in Grand Rapids at the Beckwith NRC church. A prayer service is scheduled for the evening prior to this meeting on Tuesday, June 4, at 7:30 P.M., also at the Beckwith church. Rev. E. Hakvoort hopes to officiate at this service.

The purpose of this meeting is to hear men who may have received an attest from their consistory pertaining to a calling to the sacred ministry of Word and sacrament. We commend this meeting to the prayers of the congregations, supplicating the Lord that it might please Him to give clarity and the leading of the Lord’s indispensable Spirit in these weighty matters. May the Lord give opening and freedom to admit what the Lord of the harvest Himself thrusts forth and refrain from admitting what is not ripe, remains unclear, or is of man himself. Without the clear leading, light, and guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, the task entrusted to the Curatorium remains impossible. However, what is impossible with men is possible with God.

At the moment our theological school is empty. May this great need, which is especially felt in the vacant congregations, be continually bound upon our heart. We do not deserve the least token of the Lord’s attention and favor, but it is the Lord Himself who commanded to pray for laborers in the harvest. Therefore, because it is His cause, we —albeit with many shortcomings and much trembling—have liberty to proceed with another Curatorium meeting.

With respect to the procedure to be heard, we ask that the following be taken into account:

1. Any male member who feels himself called to the ministry must contact his local consistory to be heard for an attest to be given him from his consistory;
2. Vacant congregations must seek the advice of their moderator, and his opinion is to be included in the attest and sent directly to the clerk of the Curatorium. Please note that clerkship has changed.
3. Consistories who receive freedom to grant an attest must notify the clerk of the Curatorium who will, in turn, forward a form to be filled out as soon and as detailed as possible. The Curatorium requests that a separate vote tally of the elders’ and deacons’ vote is listed.
4. The clerk of the Curatorium will inform the applicant of the date and time he will be heard.
5. The deadline for an attest to be submitted is May 7, 2024, D.V.

May the Lord graciously provide and be in our midst.

On behalf of the Curatorium,

Rev. J. den Hoed, *Chairman*

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From Our Inheritance

That Is Risen Again

Rev. A.F. Honkoop (1921-2008)

(Translated from *Kom en zie—52 meditaties* [Come and See—52 Meditations])

“It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again...”
(Romans 8:34b).

In this text we hear part of the Apostle Paul’s well-known victory song found in Romans 8 verses 31 through 39. The apostle, by faith completely relying on the accomplished work of the Mediator, could glory in the peace that had been brought about by Christ. He exclaimed, “*It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again...*” He did not boast in himself or in his own merits or righteousness, but, excluding all else, he boasted in the Person and work of Christ only. A sinner who is savingly wrought upon by God’s Spirit is being discovered to the fact that all our righteousnesses—that is, the best we produce—are as filthy rags. Our Heidelberg Catechism teaches so clearly in question and answer 62, “that the righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.” The way from our side, a way of our own merits and through a broken covenant of works, is forever walled in.

“*It is Christ...*” In principle, something of this may be understood when the sinner, condemning himself and falling under God, may look outside himself and upon Christ by means of the gospel, when he may look upon Him who suffered and died, standing in the place of a people who are worthy of death and damnation. The more we experience our being lost in self and our guilt and sins, the more precious a suffering Christ—who humbled Himself—will become to us. Then we will see more and more glory in the Man of sorrows, the dying Lamb of God. How our hearts may then go out to Him, with a desire to know more of Him.

Yet, all these outgoings of love, all our experiences, all that we have seen and experienced of Him, cannot be our righteousness before God. God will have His justice satisfied, and then the ground falls out of everything. Oh, how afraid the soul can be before the curse of the law; how one must be silent under the accusations of Satan and the accusations of one’s own conscience. Paul’s boasting in our text rested on a divine acquittal in his soul. He wrote about this in the

preceding verse, “*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*” Christ acquits us of sin and the punishment of sin, by grace alone, because of Christ’s merits. *That* was the apostle’s *only ground* on which he could exist before God, but that is also the only ground for us! Therefore, we must die; we must enter into death with all that is of us so that we may find the ground of our salvation in Christ alone.

“*It is Christ that died*”—who, dying on the cross, fully satisfied the demands of God’s justice, who disarmed the law of its curse and bruised Satan’s head. “*Yea rather, that is risen again,*” the apostle exclaimed. Christ lives to apply and distribute the acquired righteousness. The Dutch marginal notes tell us, “...to perform righteousness unto us...” Christ was *raised* by the Father, who was fully satisfied with the sacrifice of the Mediator. The fact that the Father, in the divine judgment, acquits a sinner who is guilty of death, is based upon *that sacrifice*. What meaningful matters we commemorate on Good Friday and Easter. but in order to experience the comfort of these matters, it is necessary to learn to know them *experientially!*

We may weep at the cross with the women; we may seek the Living among the dead, but Christ Himself, as the great Prince of Life, needs to reveal Himself to our souls. *Then* we may find the life of our souls in Him, in His sacrifice and resurrection. Oh, that wonder of embracing Him, given to us by God.

Yes, then it will become true: it is Christ, and Him only. *Then* we may find peace through His blessed wounds and be satisfied with God. Then it will be Easter for the soul and we may sing:

*As the heav’ns are high above us,
Great His love to us has proved;
Far as east from west is distant,
He has all our sins removed.
As a father loves his children,
Feeling pity for their woes,
So the Lord to those who fear Him
Mercy and compassion shows.*

—Psalter 280:4 □

Let us consider this settled, that no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection.

—John Calvin



A Word in Season

The Contrasts of the Resurrection Morning

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

(Taken from the April 1982 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre” (Matthew 28:1).

Dear readers,

It is impossible to give a full account of the things which happened on that memorable Easter when the Lord arose. We must confess, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

In the gospel of Matthew, we find the time mentioned when the Lord arose, namely, as it began to dawn. It was already the third day that the Lord was in the sepulchre as a proof that He was really dead, and not just apparently dead. He will no longer try His disciples. He has promised that for a short time they would not see Him, and He has said that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so the Son of man would be three days in the belly of the earth.

When Matthew speaks of the end of the sabbath, he does not disagree with the other gospels, although they do seem to contradict each other in regard to the time. The differences are as to when the women started on their way, when they were travelling along the way, and when they came near to the garden. They each speak of different moments of the journey to the garden.

Soon the sun will rise. We meet these women outside of Jerusalem; we will follow them on their way. Coming near to them, we notice that they are very sad. They are on their way to the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, where last Friday they had buried their Master in haste. We call it Good Friday, but they could not comprehend this at all. For them it was not Good Friday but as the worst day there ever had been on earth. The way of Christ’s humiliation is a great mystery for them.

They carry spices with them with which to embalm their Master—an indication of their ardent love. Stronger than the smell of the spices is the sweet smell of their love. They are bound to the Lord with so many bonds. Only God’s command had held them back from doing the work of mercy on the Sabbath. However, as soon as it is passed, they prepared spices and ointments. They did not think about rest for their bodies. How could they sleep when their beloved Master was in the grave and his body not completely embalmed? That is the reason they go on their way so early in the morning.

Although it is no longer completely dark in nature, in their hearts it is as dark as it can be, as dark as night. They have lost Jesus and, thus, the end of all their expectations. It had been such a blessed time when they might sit at His

feet and listen to His instructions, but this is all gone since He had died on Golgotha. There is no longer a future for them. They did not know and did not believe in His resurrection as can be seen by the spices which they carry. Nothing can make these women happy now. Are there people amongst us who understand this? Do you also miss the Lord? In the beginning, but also further in the way, it is many times a missing people who cannot be filled with anything of this world—if only the Lord would come, but this seems so unlikely to them.

Suddenly, the silence is broken. One of them remembers the heavy stone which was placed before the sepulchre. This is an insurmountable hindrance! Would it not be better to return for help from their husbands or friends? No, they continue on because the love draws them, but who will roll away the stone? This is the question of all those who have experienced something of that which is written in Lord’s Day 5 and 6. When the need is born for deliverance, they do not know the way. They still have so much to learn and to lose. They experience the hatred of the devil, for Satan comes with all his power to keep them away from the Mediator in His humiliation or exaltation.

Why is there such a hatred by Satan? In Paradise Satan tried to destroy God’s work, and he lost. In the fulness of time he tried to hinder the coming of Christ, and he lost. During the life of Christ, Satan tried to make Him a sinner, and he lost. Although it was according to God’s will, yet Satan instigated the death of Christ on the cross, hoping that Christ would give up in His extremely heavy suffering in body and soul, in the agony of hell and the mocking of men, but Satan lost again and then for good. Now Christ is in the sepulchre and Satan will try to keep Him there by mobilizing all his troops, namely, the world, the government, and the church. These work together under the leading of Satan to make life difficult for the Church.

Thus, the ardent love of the Church is opposed by the hatred of the devil. The stone, the seal, and the keepers form a power which cannot be underestimated. The stone is heavy, the government gave their seal, and the soldiers are there, trained men of war. Who will overcome all this? This continues even today—Jesus must stay in the grave; He is dead. This is declared by governments, who take care that a well-paid guard of unbelieving teachers and professors surround the grave. In schools and universities, we find those guards, critics of Scripture, who often rudely or mockingly deal with the young people who believe in God’s precious Word. Scientifically, it might sound very good, but the main thing is missing.

Jesus was dead, but the outcome is and will be different. Every time, the keepers become as dead men when the heavenly powers are felt and seen, just as it was on the morning of the resurrection. God's people may be despised and persecuted, but they will persevere and overcome. Do you know why? It is because Christ is risen; He lives and gives life to them. So often the Lord has rolled the stone away, even while they are still sighing as to how it shall be rolled away. The problem is not the heaviness of the stone; decisive is the great strength of Him who is behind the stone.

An artist once made a drawing of the stone before the sepulchre, showing the devil nearby, leering at the stone. In his eyes the expression was portrayed, "I, Satan, do not trust it." Satan had reasons to be afraid because Christ would fulfill everything; He had the power to take life again. The stone is rolled away by the messenger of the Lord Himself, giving the highest honor to the Son, who has shown Himself to be a perfect Saviour. This heavenly glory is opposed by the worldly powers. No doubt the soldiers were glad because the new day had come, but suddenly they became as dead men.

Why? These soldiers had seen so much of this world; they had fought in dangerous battles. Now they are frightened by the earthquake, by the light which shines around them, and by the heavenly figures which they see, whose countenance is as the lightning and their raiment white as snow. These do not concern themselves about the guard but open the sepulchre. The messengers of the living God do not ask if it is permissible to break the seal of the Roman Caesar but do so. When the soldiers come to themselves, they do not bow, but they flee.

Do not think that we can escape the wrath of God even though many may try it. The end will be indescribable—eternal death, without any change possible. This heavenly glory which filled the garden of Joseph when the angels descended and Christ arose from the dead frightens the enemy, but it is a comfort for the disciples when they might view it with an eye of faith. Thus, we have tried to explain the heavenly glory which is opposed by the worldly powers, but they cannot exist before the Lord. It was so in former days, and it is also the same today.

We left the women traveling on their way to the garden of Joseph. They do not know of the events which have taken place, and they are full of affliction and sorrow when they arrive at the entrance of the garden. To their astonishment the sepulchre is open and the stone is rolled away. However, they are so in the power of unbelief that they see no reason to rejoice. One of them, Mary Magdalene, returns to Jerusalem in haste to tell Peter and John that the body of the Lord has been stolen. The other women go farther, perhaps hesitatingly, and come to the grave, where an angel of the Lord speaks to them about the resurrection of the Lord.

At this moment the need is so great that they are nearly in despair, but now the Lord gives deliverance and will encourage them. The heavenly messenger enlightens the

sepulchre which was left by Christ and brings the good tidings for these deeply afflicted women. It is a heavenly message brought to them without any introduction.

The stone is rolled away, which, according to God's justice, is a declaration that Christ is lawfully released from the prison of death. It is also a public announcement of the justification of the Church. The open grave tells us that the Father is perfectly satisfied in the work of Christ. He died for the sin of His Church and is risen to our justification. Oh, concerned women, the open grave is the receipt that your debt is paid! Therefore, set your spices aside because all your works are excluded. He has fulfilled everything for your salvation.

We need faith and the exercise of faith to receive these gifts. Great is the privilege of which is spoken on Easter, but we need faith to have the profit of it. We must be converted, which the Lord works by Word and Spirit. Because Christ has overcome, it is now possible that sinners who are dead in sin and in trespasses can be called to life. This means there is still hope for the unconverted that the Lord will perform a miracle in their life. Ask the Lord to do it out of free and sovereign grace also in our midst.

When the Lord gives further instruction to His children and they may come to the sepulchre, they will understand the great surprise which awaited the women. Nothing is more surprising than that—being in holy despair about our spiritual life—we may hear of the living Christ. What are the needs of those people? The closer they may come to the end of their works and their life, the greater the hindrances become—so much sin, to have sinned so long, the failure of all the reformations, the promises are not fulfilled, the corruption is so great, the accuser of the brethren spits out his devilish poison, the curse of the law comes against them. In this way Satan tries to keep them away from the knowledge of Christ's victory.

What can I do? Nothing! because everything is done by the Lord. The stone is rolled away, the Lord is risen indeed. This the Lord will reveal at His time. We are, of course, bound to the means of grace which He has given, but He gives the benefits freely to His Church. Inexpressible is the sweetness when the Lord reveals in the heart of His Church that Christ is the Victor and when in Him, we may taste something of the victory over the three-headed enemy. He is made to them wisdom, justification, sanctification, and deliverance. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Who can describe the blessed change that came in their life? The Lord lives! The people who returned from Babylon said it was as if they dreamed, and thus it is with the Church. No, it is not a dream; it is reality. Christ is the Victor over hell, death, and sin. He has risen in His own strength; He is raised by the Father and separated from destruction by the Holy Spirit. It is the work of a Triune God. May the Lord give that this good tidings be applied in our midst for an afflicted people. "And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." □



Commentary

Paul's Instruction to the Gentile Church for the Conversion of the Jews

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Brant County, ON

Often in church we hear the prayer for the work among the Jews and the conversion of the Jews. The nation of Israel is a privileged nation. The Messiah came from them as we read in Hebrews 2:16, "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." The human nature of Christ was of Jewish descent, but the Jews' unbelief that He was the Messiah you can clearly read in the Bible. They have rejected Him, but the Bible is clear that it is not a complete rejection. The apostle says that the Lord will not reject but remember His covenant; He will be their God, and they shall be His people. To think that God has rejected His people Israel, the Apostle Paul clearly refutes by stating in Romans 11:11, "God forbid."

Are we to pray for their conversion? Perhaps, we secretly harbor resistance to it. The reasoning of this is because we often hear, "The last turn will be for the Jews and then the end shall be there." If we pray for the conversion of the Jews, are we then not asking the Lord to leave us? How can I pray for this in truth if I am yet unconverted? Yet, the Bible is clear—it will not be the end of the Church; it will be a new era in the Church. Paul clearly describes this in Romans 11:12, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness." Did you hear that? If the conversion of the Jews takes place, that will be something that will also influence the entire Church. Also, we read in Romans 11:15, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Our marginal notes describe this to be a major thing. The Jews will be converted by multitudes, but it will influence the whole Church. Paul is not writing this to have the Gentile Romans pray for the Jews conversion so that it would be the end of the power of the gospel among them—rather he spurs them on to pray for the Jews for the benefit of the whole Church. Paul, the apostle of the heathens, was laboring under the heathens to have an expectation of remarkable things for the whole Church when the Lord will fulfill that He has not rejected Israel but that Israel shall be saved.

He also labors in Romans 11 that the Gentiles "be not high minded, but fear." The Gentiles are the wild branches

but the Jews the natural branches. The natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, and according to God's sovereign counsel, the wild branches were engrafted to bear fruit from the root and fatness of the olive tree by faith. By faith the Gentile Church may stand, but be careful, "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." Do not stand above the Jews. Their unbelief became your time of salvation. Therefore, the apostle is also clear that "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"—that the wild and cut off branches may together be engrafted as a whole Church to be "partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

Some will read further and say that Romans 11:25 states the reason for their secret resistance to pray for the Jewish conversion—"Until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." How must we understand this? Is it then true that Gentiles will be first converted and then the Jews? Well, the fullness here clearly points to a period of time. The fulness of the Gentiles will go before the conversion of the Jews. Do not

think that after the conversion of the Jews the Gentiles will receive another fullness, a fullness meaning where the gospel will be preached over the entire world again. Rather, the end of time will be upon the world, but there will also be a Church! The Church will rejoice in the fulfillment of God's Word. The fulfillment will also bear fruit among the Gentile Church. Brakel writes: "When God will fill this blind nation with His

Spirit and grace, resulting in the acknowledging and receiving of the Messiah (David, their King), then a wondrous love, joy, and holiness in believing will manifest itself in them. It will be a more eminent time than the age of the apostles. The church of the Gentiles will be so quickened and revived by the conversion of Israel that her former state will appear to be such as the difference between a dead and a living person. The unconverted will be converted in great numbers and the converted will become partakers of a wondrous increase in the measure of grace. Oh, what a glorious time this will be! Who will be then alive?"

The Lord Jesus has said of the end times, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Is that not something that the church of today should worry about—the wild branches that are grafted in? Do they have faith in

Brakel writes: "...The church of the Gentiles will be so quickened and revived by the conversion of Israel that her former state will appear to be such as the difference between a dead and a living person. The unconverted will be converted in great numbers and the converted will become partakers of a wondrous increase in the measure of grace. Oh, what a glorious time this will be! Who will be then alive?"

the promise of the fulfillment of the Jews, and how the conversion of the Jews will lead to fruits among the Gentile Church? Is there then not a duty for the “wild branches” toward the “natural branches”? The Bible book of Revelation is clear that the end times will be times of great tribulation. However, before those times of great tribulation come, the Lord will give a revival among the Gentile Church by fulfilling the promise of the conversion of the Jews, who according as the apostle says, “touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” The days of the great tribulation will be shortened for the elect’s sake. The Lord will preserve and knows how to preserve His Church during the greatest tribulation on earth.

The revival will not be by careless Gentiles, who have left the truth. It will be a revival among the Gentile Church who now mourn over their unholiness, their low state, those who must experience their powerless condition to convert themselves, let alone one Jew! Are there readers who are amazed that they still are a “church”? Are you also longing for the fruit of a great or greater boldness in faith? Knowing very well that faith is and remains a gift of the work of the Holy Spirit, the Lord knows how to revive His Church. The revival will be by fulfilling the promise of the conversion of the Jews. There is expectation for the Church in the end times! The Lord is surely not yet finished with gathering His Church. Truly with our forefather Brakel, “Who will be then alive?” Is this not a matter worth praying for? ☐



Among All Nations

Are You Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem?

Rev. M.L. Dekker, Nazareth, Israel

January 26, 2024

What a lot of confusion surrounds the war that Hamas has started against Israel. On October 7, Hamas wreaked such satanic havoc in the South that I cannot even tell you most of the things they did. It is too gruesome for words! There were so many terrible tortures, so many rapes, mutilations, even of children, young girls—unimaginable. People were beheaded, others burnt alive, children tortured and killed in front of parents or vice versa. All this was filmed by the terrorists themselves and proudly posted on the Internet, and Hamas is shouting loudly that they will repeat and repeat and repeat October 7 until Israel is no more.

Openly rejecting the two-state solution, Hamas leaders want the land back “from the river to the sea.” They ignore the fact that God Himself made the borders known to Joshua in Joshua 1:4, indeed, from the “river to the Great Sea.”

The Hamas Charter, written in 1988, quotes a terrible hadith (authoritative Islamic tradition): “The Prophet... says: “The day of Judgment will not come about until the Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them; in consequence of which the Jews will hide behind stones and trees. And every tree and [every] stone will [then] say, ‘O Muslim, O slave of Allah, behind me is a Jew; come here and kill him!’ except the gharkad tree because that is a Jewish tree.”

How blind many people are to the spiritual battle behind this. It is the age-old battle between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Satan wants the total destruction of the Jews. He knows the Bible better than many Christians. He knows that the Lord will one day reveal Himself to the

Jewish people and then a great blessing will follow for all the world—the “adoption” of Israel, their conversion, will be like “life from the dead” for the world (Romans 11:15). What a prospect! With all his might, Satan resists this; he is doing his utmost to stop it. Those who do not recognize the promises of the Lord for the people of Israel in the Old Testament and in the New Testament do not have a clear view of the spiritual battle that is going on. Such a person does not see that this is not a revenge of Israel but a battle for existence.

There are also voices among us saying Israel should stop the war, but what would be the consequence of that? At the time of writing this to you, there are still 136 hostages in Gaza, dead or alive or, perhaps, more dead than alive. Are female soldiers being raped? Elderly people dying? Or that young man whose arm was chopped off and who is in the dark tunnels of Gaza, is he still alive? They will not be released if Israel stops now.

What about all the Arab countries and also the West that will donate billions of dollars for Gaza? Where will that money end up? All these years all the money has gone to the leaders of Hamas, who first enriched themselves with it and then built an entire city under Gaza. Not much money has reached the ordinary people. Gaza will then continue to sigh under the Hamas regime, which exercises a reign of terror on its own citizens. A further consequence will be another October 7 soon—and then another—and another! Is that the solution?

Of course, it is terrible that civilians are unintentionally killed in Gaza. However, Israel is doing an awful lot to

prevent it. There is no army in the world that puts so much effort into this. Flyers are strewn from the air around buildings that are going to be bombed so that civilians can get to safety. People are being contacted to warn residents in apartment buildings. Certain neighborhoods are urged to evacuate. Did the Allies do that in Germany? Israel is portrayed as the aggressor everywhere, but that is unfounded. Do we realize that the fighting is against an unscrupulous and merciless terrorist organization that claims to be out to destroy Israel?

Is there an alternative? There are those who say, “Don’t fight, only pray!” David had to fight, too. He prayed, that’s for sure, but that did not relieve him of the duty to protect his people. Pray and work—but maybe we should turn it around just for those people. Let us not talk about what Israel does because, of course, Israel also makes mistakes. We do not stand blindly behind Israel, but let us talk about what *we* are doing.

Where is *our* prayer for Israel—the prayer for Israel’s conversion, for release of the hostages, for healing of all the terrible traumas—the prayer for the Lord to confuse Hamas, to remove it from power but also whether He will bring the Gazans to repentance?

Where is our prayer for Israel—the prayer for Israel’s conversion, for release of the hostages, for healing of all the terrible traumas—the prayer for the Lord to confuse Hamas, to remove it from power but also whether He will bring the Gazans to repentance?



Israeli IDF soldiers in Gaza

Has that already become a matter of prayer for you who criticize Israel’s actions? It is not so difficult to state from an easy chair in safe Canada or the safe U.S. what is good and what is not, but I would like to hold up a mirror for you. Are you praying for the peace of Jerusalem? Does it not still apply, “They shall prosper that love thee”? Fortunately, we may know that there are many among us who *do* sigh for the peace of Jerusalem in the inner room and on the pulpit, for whom it is a daily plea before the throne of God’s grace. That is what the Lord demands of us. Therefore, the question is: Are *you* praying for the peace of Jerusalem?



Reflections

Evening Twilight (3)

Rev. P. Blok (1920-2019)

(Translated from the book *Avondschemering* [*Evening Twilight*])

Conversation after a Church Service

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).

A new day has a beginning and an end. The morning twilight of a new day displays the rising of the sun. Then the shadows become short. The sun displays its brilliance at the horizon. Nature awakens and shows the glory of its Creator. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork.”

Natural life has its origin in God. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Man has his origin in God also. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”

The purpose of man’s creation is clearly defined. “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the

air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

With the image of God, man was immortal; his serving of God was bound to the perfection of the image of God. Its fruit was loving God. The innate law was the standard. The promise of immortal, eternal, and permanent life was tied to obedience. The fulfillment of the law was according to the commandment of love. The active communion with God yielded the true fulfillment of life. “God created man good, and after His own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him” (*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 3, Q.6*).

Life in the perfect state of rectitude was but short. Of this time in Paradise and the active communion with God and the glory can be said: it was perfect. Thus, the glorified and triumphant Church will experience perfect communion with the triune God.

*The path of life Thou showest me;
Of joy a boundless store
Is ever found at Thy right hand,
And pleasures evermore.*

—Psalter 28:5

Without God the darkness of the eternal night will come. Sin committed against the most high Majesty of God will also be punished with the highest, that is, with eternal punishment to body and soul. “For the wages of sin is death.” The fruit of spiritual death drives toward the inescapable temporal death. The valley of the shadow of death each person will have to enter. It will lead to eternal death. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Blessed is the man who, in accepting his state of death as a condemned person, has learned to beg his Judge for mercy. Then he experiences the evening twilight of his life. His life, with all his expectation of it, ended in death. His life was no more than a bubble, like a castle in the air. The colored life with all its pomp and circumstance burst apart. The castle in the air collapsed to rubble. In his make-believe world he stood alone over against a holy and just God. This God will not, nor can, let sin go unpunished. Then the eternal night is expected. On the cursed tree, the eternal night came for the thief who was not humiliated. In self-preservation he blasphemed God. The renewed and humiliated thief “answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” He was given to experience, “They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

In the standing of grace, a person can live in the evening twilight of his life. After a church service we had gathered in a hall of the church. An old elder, one who was exercised by God, related the miracle of grace, how at the end of his life, in accepting himself being worthy of punishment, he expected his sentence. He experienced being damnable

before God, together with the whole world. In the acceptance of his death sentence, he was allowed to accept the execution of his punishment. The Lord revealed the secret of the holy settlement between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit led him into the act of justice. He was led into the Son’s taking-over his guilt and punishment. He was also led into God as Judge accepting this satisfaction. His debt was satisfied. His sentence was taken over. He was taken over for time and eternity. The fragrance of the unction filled the hall.

An old deacon had quietly listened. He had come into a way of death and could no longer explain himself. Yet, his life was not hidden. This was evident in what followed. He spoke to the elder, “Your life is clear, but where am I encamped?”

“Your encampment, esteemed brother, is this. You are like the man who fell into the hands of thieves. They have taken everything from you. You are dying, and no one can solve that. Now you have heard the sound of the approaching Samaritan. You have seen Him from afar. You have seen everything in Him. He is your only hope, but you cannot bridge the distance. It all must come from the other side.”

The old deacon had come in the evening twilight of his conversion also. He has not been ashamed. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

*Turn Thou unto me in mercy;
Have compassion on my soul.
I am sore distressed and lonely;
Waves of trouble o'er me roll.
Myriad woes beset my heart,
Myriad doubts and bitternesses;
Thou who my Deliverer art,
Bring me out of my distresses.*

—Psalter 41:8 □

(To be continued)

The Sword of the Spirit

Can we go against sin and Satan with a better weapon than the one with which Christ used to vanquish the tempter? Certainly Christ did it to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them, for Christ could with one beam shot from His deity (if He had pleased to exert it) have as easily laid the bold fiend prostrate at His foot as afterward He did them that came to attack Him. He chose, rather, to conceal the majesty of His divinity and let Satan come up closer to Him so that He might confound him with the Word and thereby give a proof of that sword of His saints which He was to leave them for their defense against the same enemy.

—William Gurnall
(Taken from *Christian in Complete Armour*)



For Young and Old

The Salt of the Earth in North Korea

Open Doors U.S. (<https://www.opendoorsus.org>)

(Article reprinted with permission and adapted for our publication)

Open Doors US Editor's note: Ji Ho's story is based on several true accounts of life in North Korea. While details have been created or combined to protect any specific person or place from identification, this story is a look at what life is actually like for North Korean Christians. The name Ji Ho used for the story is a symbolic name which means wisdom or knowledge.

They came for my father while I was at school. When I opened the gate to our house that day, I heard shouting and saw men with shovels, digging in the garden. There were more men in our home, screaming at my father. I couldn't help myself. I yelled "Appa!" (Korean for "daddy!") and rushed into the room. I saw my dad huddled in the corner, and I ran to him, hugging him.

As the state security agents—for that's what they were—hurled questions and accusations at my father, it became obvious what they were looking for. They wanted to know if he had a radio, and they wanted to know about his secret book. They ransacked the house, looking for both items. They never found the radio—probably because they were too afraid to touch the portraits of the Dear Leaders. My father had always found it a little bit funny that the radio, his illegal link to the outside world, was tucked behind the image of Kim Jong Il hanging on the wall. He also knew the police wouldn't dare to touch it.

As they dug outside in our small garden, they found the book, wrapped in plastic. One of the policemen came inside holding the book, looking triumphant. He kicked over our small table as we cowered in the corner, flinging dishes everywhere, and threw the book down at my father's feet.

My father and I both sobbed. In that moment we knew we'd never see each other again.

The men pushed my father outside. I staggered after them, too stunned to do more than quietly cry. My last glimpse of my father was through our gate as the police took him away.

The gate slammed shut, and I was left all alone.

Secret lessons from my father

I didn't know where they'd taken my father and, probably, never will. I knew these kinds of disappearances happened, and I knew I was fortunate they didn't take me away as well.

What I didn't understand was why they'd taken him away. I knew the radio was dangerous—my father had somehow gotten the tiny radio to try to find news from outside North Korea. He wanted to know if there was anywhere that had food; he thought maybe China had some to offer and that maybe he could sneak over the border. He also wasn't sure if what our state radio told us about

our country's harvest was true. So he often stayed up late at night listening to foreign radio broadcasts for new information to help us survive. He said it was worth the risk, even though we both knew he'd be arrested if he was ever caught with it.

I didn't see what was so bad about my father's secret book. He loved to read me stories and sayings out of the book. "A wise man sat on a mountain and began to teach," my father told me one night. "He said: 'When salt loses its taste, what good is it?' People are like salt. If we lose our kindness for others, we lose our humanity. Always keep your saltiness, Ji Ho."

I didn't know what that story or his words entirely meant, but they stuck with me. Why would a lesson about kindness be so dangerous in North Korea?

A surprising message

As I grew up, the pain of losing my father grew dimmer. It never went away, but I had more pressing concerns—like finding food and surviving.

I, too, began to listen to a radio for news about the outside world, just like my father used to. Maybe there was food outside of North Korea—I didn't know how I'd get there, but if I could figure that out, perhaps I wouldn't starve like some of my neighbors.

I also planted a few vegetables in our garden. Technically, I knew this wasn't allowed, but no one seemed to care very much since we hadn't received our normal food rations from work in months.

As I entered my twenties, my nightly routine revolved around the radio and the garden. I'd come home from my job on the farm outside our village, check on my garden, harvest a few potatoes or a cabbage, and eat my meager dinner while I listened to the radio. I never heard about any food I could get to, but there was something comforting about listening to the radio like I'd seen my father do so many times.

One night, I was tuning the radio, looking for stations I hadn't heard before. I found a station in Korean—but what the man was saying was unlike any state program I'd ever heard.

"...You are the salt of the earth," the man on the radio said. "If salt loses its taste, what good is it?" These are the words of Jesus."

I nearly dropped my tea. This was what my father had told me, almost word for word, so many years ago, but the radio said someone named Jesus had said this...who was Jesus? Was He the "teacher" my dad had told me about?

(continued on page 69)



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

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

If everybody has an innate knowledge of God, how do people have the insanity to blaspheme God openly?

Regarding the innate knowledge of God in man, we need to turn to Romans, chapter 1:18-32. Particularly Romans 1:19 and 20 speak of a certain knowledge of God with which man is born. This knowledge can be described as a certain consciousness of the existence of a higher Being: “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.” This knowledge belongs to man as a rational being, as distinguished from irrational creatures such as the animals and is a fruit of a divine manifestation, particularly that of divine power and the divine essence (see Romans 1:20). The question asked is how it is possible that with such a manifestation and knowledge of God it is still possible to blaspheme God. The answer to this question is actually explained in the verses that follow.

Man, indeed, is subject to a divine manifestation of divine power and the Godhead, but what does man do with this manifestation? Does it drive man out to God? Does it make him desirous to know God? Alas, we read in verse 21: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Dr. J.H. Bavinck in his book *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof*. (*Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith*) describes this terrible ability of fallen man as outlined in the text by means of two key words: “verdringen” (suppress) and “vervangen” (replace)—two verbs which reveal what takes place almost simultaneously; what God reveals of Himself is suppressed and replaced with something of man’s own liking! So, Paul continues: “And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

I recommend that you read this portion of Romans 1 again and, particularly, what then follows. It will show you that the innate knowledge of God is pure, but what man does with it is vile and abominable. This fact underlines and reveals the depth of our fall in Paradise. There is even a

curse of God pronounced over this process of suppression and replacing: “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness...” etc. So, the innate knowledge of God is no guarantee for *piety* but, on the contrary, proves and increases our *guilt* before God, even if we have never heard of God! Paul uses this truth to prove the guilt of the Gentiles who never have heard of God. Considering all of the above, I agree with the statement that atheists are not born but made. I would even go a step farther and state with Rev. Hellenbroek’s *Specimen of Divine Truths*, that I believe atheists do not even exist: their “beliefs” that there is no God are a desire rather than an actual belief. (Chapter I, Q. 4) Of course an atheist will never admit this.

It is a fearful thought to consider what man is capable of thinking and doing as Romans 1 states. This is the answer to your question. At the same time, I may say that it is a wonder of God’s condescending goodness that the Bible yet speaks of an *acquired knowledge* of God. This knowledge is revealed to us by nature and by the Holy Scriptures, the latter of which can make us wise unto salvation. Without such a manifestation man would be forever lost in his suppressing and replacing! Now there is a way revealed whereby sinners can be restored in that communion with God, reconciled by the blood of Christ who is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost to be “our Chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God, concerning our redemption” (Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 12, Q. 31).

Considering all this, what a great need there is to appreciate and be diligent in making this acquired knowledge our own. It is for this reason that we have our own schools, catechism classes in church, and the prophetic office of Christ in church through the preaching. Let us beg the Lord to bless it to our hearts so that the complaint of the Lord by the mouth of Hosea be not applicable to us: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee” (Hosea 4:6). □

Send your questions to: Rev. H. Hofman, 2339 Deer Trail Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505, or hofman@premieronline.net.

The Use of God’s Name

No oath is in itself simply good and voluntarily to be used but only as medicines are in case of necessity. To use it ordinarily and indifferently without being constrained by any cogent necessity or called to it by any lawful authority, is such a sin as wears off all reverence and dread of the great God. We have very great cause to suspect that where His name is so much upon the tongue, there His fear is but little in the heart.

—Ezekiel Hopkins



Current Events

A Journey from Christianity to Islam and Back

A man in Uganda was originally a Christian man who married a Muslim woman. They coexisted for years until he decided to convert to Islam. As time passed, a group of church congregants visited him and expressed their love to him and told him about Christ and how Jesus is a peaceful Messiah. He then decided to go back to Christianity and testified in church. He was then traumatized by the radical Muslim members of his community. He was left defenseless, his small business was confiscated, and his children kept from him. They attacked him and left him helpless. He does not go in public for fear of being attacked, and he is under the care of his church. He was helped with funds to start his own small business, pay for his children's education and other necessities like food and home supplies. "Glory be to the Almighty God for the support I have received...I take this opportunity to thank everyone who took part in this project, as far as the prosperity of this project is concerned...I am out of words because this is not only a blessing, but a surprise," he said.

—Persecution.org

Christian Jailed for Prayer Meetings in His Home

A religious freedom activist in Vietnam has been sentenced to four and a half years in prison for crimes he was alleged to have committed while holding prayer meetings in his home. He was accused of using the meetings to "gather forces, divide the national unity bloc, incite secession, self-rule, and establish a separate state for ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands." He was also accused of "providing false information about freedom of religious belief, slander, distorting religious policies, and violating the interests of the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." His family boycotted the trial because no defense lawyer was present. For several years he had hosted prayer gatherings at his home. The founder of an evangelical church in Vietnam said the charges against him were all fabricated, and that the trial was a farce. Supporters said he is being punished for his association with this church. He has had several previous convictions for similar "offenses."

—ChurchInChains.ie

Israel's Conflict Not Only on Israel-Gaza Border

On the Israel-Lebanon border pupils attend school in a bomb shelter. It has been this way in Jish—an Israeli village with a majority Christian population a stone's throw from the Lebanon border—since the October 7 attack by Hamas on Israel. Israel's retaliatory strikes and ground invasion of Gaza prompted Lebanese Hezbollah to fire repeatedly at Israel. School buildings are shut, and teaching is now in public shelters. "Studying in the shelter is terribly difficult for the children," said a seventy-five-year-old picking up her grandson. She has lived in Jish all her life and said she cannot remember a time like this. In northern Israel, nine soldiers and six civilians have been killed, according to Israeli authorities. The military action is not nearly as intense as in Gaza, but this is of little comfort to Jish residents. Life in the village has been grounded to a halt, with large gatherings and events banned because of the risks. Over Christmas, a rocket hit a church just a few kilometers away. Services are now held in a meeting room below the main building. Community programs and activities for children have stopped. "We saw what Hamas did and they're a proxy of Iran," like Hezbollah, one resident said. "Here on the border the fear is of an incursion by elite units of Hezbollah, who will do atrocities against us just as was done in the south to the Jewish people," he added.

—Al-Monitor.com

The Religion of Christianity Is Growing

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity recently reported that Asia has one of the fastest growing Christian populations, with more than 415 million Christians now living in Asia. (Only 335 million people live in all of the U.S.) Christianity in Asia has grown at a rate of 2.11 percent since 2020. This is very encouraging despite the increasing hardships and persecution Christians face across Asia. Other key trends include 734 million Christians live in Africa, growing at a rate of over 2.6%. Globally, atheism has slightly declined. In 2020, there were 147 million professing atheists. This decreased to 146 million by 2024. Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations are the fastest growing groups in Christianity. In 2020, 420,000 missionaries were sent out to different countries. It is estimated that about 28% of the global population does not have access to the gospel. This is a major decline from over 54% of the world not having access to the gospel in 1900.

—Persecution.org

Genes Are Not the Blueprint for Life

In a book that does not mention Creation but cast doubts on current worldly theories, scientists are asked to admit they do not understand biology as well as they claim. The reality of life "is far more interesting and wonderful," the book's author writes in his "must-read user's guide for biologists and non-biologists alike." When the human genome was sequenced in 2001, many thought that it would prove to be an "instruction manual" for life. The genome turned out to be no blueprint. In fact, most genes do not have a preset function that can be determined from their DNA sequence. Instead, genes' activity—whether they are expressed or not, for instance, or the length of protein that they encode—depends on myriad external factors. It is therefore a huge oversimplification, notes the book's author, to say that genes cause this trait or that disease. The reality is that organisms are extremely robust, and a particular function can often be performed even when key genes are removed. Classic views of "evolution" should also be questioned.

—Nature.com

"I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14).

"Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (Psalm 100:3). —Ed.

Conversion of the Jews

When preaching before the House of Commons in 1649, John Owen spoke of "the bringing home of God's ancient people to be one fold with the fullness of the Gentiles...in answer to millions of prayers put up at the throne of grace for this very glory, in all generations." Days of prayer and humiliation were kept in Scotland, one particular object being "that the promised conversion of His ancient people the Jews may be hastened."



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (51) **Article XXXVII: Of the Last Judgment** *(continued)*

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

This last article of our confession speaks of the last day of the world—the Day of Judgment. It means that death is not the end of man, and this was also shown as the expectation of Job when he said, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

In other places of God’s Word, we find that same expectation, but the Lord Jesus especially made this clear when He emphasized that His children should not fear them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. They must fear God, who can destroy both soul and body. After the judgment, soul and body will go to their eternal destination, “for all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies, in which they formerly lived.” The same body and the same spirit will be united. God’s justice requires that the same body which sinned against Him will also be punished; otherwise, God would not do justice to that man. It must also be the same body of God’s people since Christ merited salvation for His Church and it is personally applied. It is therefore necessary that the same body which He had purchased becomes partaker of His glory.

Some think that there will only be men then, and no women, and they base this upon Ephesians 4:13, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” We do not agree with this on the basis of what God’s Word says in Matthew 22:30, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.” The Lord does not say that women will not exist, but that they will not be given in marriage.

The bodies which are raised, or are still alive at that time, will not need food any longer. “As for those

who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible, become incorruptible.” Christ will judge the quick and the dead, which for God’s children will lead to eternal glory, but for the wicked will lead to eternal damnation. “Then the books shall be opened, that is to say the conscience.” When Christ shall come to judge, all the inhabitants of the world shall see Him. What an impressive moment that will be; it is the day of reckoning.

When Christ came in the fullness of time and assumed our human nature, He was rejected, mocked, condemned, and killed. God’s justice now requires that Christ be restored in glory before all mankind as the true Son of God. The unbelievers will experience the terrible sin they committed in rejecting the Son, who was the only way of salvation; outside of Jesus no deliverance is possible. He will also deliver His people who have sighed under the persecutions of the enemy, those who have often wept and suffered because of oppression for the name and sake of the Lord. God’s people should not be too depressed because the Lord promises that it is only for ten days, and then He, as the faithful Head of the covenant, will restore them before the eyes of the world. This is My people!

The books will be opened—this is our conscience. Some think it will take a very long time to judge all the inhabitants of the world, but when the Lord opens the conscience, they will in a moment see their whole life which was spent either in the service of Satan or, by the grace of God, in the service of the Lord. All men must give an account of their thoughts, words, and actions; therefore, the judgment will be dreadful to the wicked and ungodly. They shall become immortal but only in order to be tormented in everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels.

This judgment will be according to the law which has been given to us and which is read every Sunday

morning in church. The wicked and hypocrites will then pray to the mountains and to the hills to cover them before the Lord, but that will not be possible. With a curse in their heart, they will have to confess, “God is just. I am guilty and worthy of death. Now it is too late for ever.” Before they were mocking with God’s love and grace—but now salvation has become impossible. The words “too late” will be terrible for all those who have not served the Lord in truth and uprightness.

This judgment will be terrible for the wicked but most desirable and comfortable for the righteous and elect. They will receive the reward which the Lord has promised to the faithful servants, even though they have found themselves so unfaithful time and again. Are then the good works the ground of salvation? No, not at all; but as the fruit of faith, a good tree must bring forth good fruit. It is the fruit of God’s own work in the hearts of His children. They may enter into eternal glory out of free grace. They are also sinners, but the Lord does no injustice because Christ has given perfect satisfaction to God’s justice. He has been obedient to the law and has also suffered the punishment for the trespassing of the law for His Church, which He received from the Father as wages upon His labor.

“The faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God His Father and His elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes.”

At the end of this article, it can be seen so clearly that the confession was written in the days of persecution, in days when it was so difficult to confess the name of the Lord. How different it is today; we live in free countries. We do not hope that persecutions will return; generally, however, they are the most fruitful times for the church. We do not know what the future will bring us, but we hope, young people, that the Lord may prepare us to meet Him. We do not know whether Christ will come in this century, but many of us will die in this age, and then the world will come to an end for us. Ask the Lord that He give us an impression of the shortness of our lives and that we may learn to count our days.

We have now come to the end of this series of articles about our confession. It is an old confession, but not old-fashioned. We hope and pray that the Lord has used or will yet use these explanations to the glory of His name and that among our young people a desire may be born to serve Him as the highest good.

(This installment marks the end of this series.)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

David Hides from Saul

(Based on 1 Samuel 21&22)

David had to run for his life from Saul. Jonathan could not help him, but David knew of one place he could go—the tabernacle—and that was where he went. The high priest, Ahimelech, saw David coming, and he was afraid. “David, what happened?” he cried. “Why are you all alone?”

“Oh,” replied David, “I’m on a special errand for the king, and I’m not allowed to tell anyone about it, but I need something to eat for my trip. What do you have for me?”

David, that’s not true—that’s a lie. Yes, David had told a lie, but not too much later he was punished for it. God’s people are not perfect, and when they do sin, they later think back on it and wish they had not committed that sin. They ask for God’s forgiveness.

Ahimelech had no regular food; he had only shewbread in the tabernacle. “Shewbread” was holy bread. Every week twelve loaves of shewbread were set out. The following week this old bread was taken away and fresh bread put out. Only the priests were allowed to eat the old shewbread.

Normally it would have been wrong to give David this bread because the common people were not allowed to eat the shewbread. However, some of those who explain the Bible think that Ahimelech asked God what to do, and God allowed it. We do not know this for sure because the Bible does not tell us; however, later in the Bible, in Mark 2, Jesus Christ told this story about David, and He did not say anything about Ahimelech doing wrong.

“And what about a sword?” David asked Ahimelech. “I had to leave home so fast that I didn’t have time to take one.”

“I have one right here,” replied Ahimelech. “In fact, it’s the sword of Goliath, the Philistine you killed. If you want it, go ahead and take it because it’s the only one I have.”

As David was leaving, he saw someone standing in the tabernacle. It was a man named Doeg who was one of Saul’s servants! David hurried out the door. He decided the best place to hide was not in Israel but in the land of the enemy—in Gath, which was in the country of the Philistines. Saul would never think of looking for him there.

David went to Achish, the king of Gath whose servants said to him, “This is David. Isn’t he the king of the Israelites? Didn’t the Israelites sing to one another, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” They knew that David was a valiant warrior.

David heard what the servants said to Achish, and he was afraid. He had worried about being caught by Saul—now it appeared that the Philistines would kill him. Suddenly, David changed. He became like a wild animal in a cage. He clawed with his fingernails on the gate. He laughed and rolled his eyes. He drooled down his beard.

King Achish was disgusted when he saw this strange behavior. “Why did you bring him to me?” he cried. “He’s out of his mind. He can’t hurt us. For what do you think I need a man like him? Get him out of here.”

David was very glad to leave. It is said that Psalm 56 was written by him at that time, where we read his prayer, “Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up...What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.”

After Achish had let him go, David was full of praise to the Lord. He then wrote Psalm 34, in which he sang so humbly, “I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.... This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

Do you remember that David had seen someone in the shadows of the tabernacle? Yes, he had seen Doeg, one of Saul’s servants, and Doeg had seen David; Doeg did not forget about it.

One day Saul was talking with his servants. He wasn’t feeling very happy. “None of you are on my

side anymore,” he told them sadly. “You all like David, the son of Jesse, better than me. Do you think he is going to do all the things that I’ve done for you? Is he going to give each of you fields and vineyards, and make you captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?” Think about it. Why are you on his side? Even my own son Jonathan likes him better than me.”

None of the servants dared say a word, but then Doeg spoke, “O King,” he cried, “I have something to tell you that might help you catch David. A few days ago, I was in the tabernacle, and I saw the high priest Ahimelech helping him. He gave him loaves of the shewbread as if he were going on a long trip, and then he let him take Goliath’s sword with him.”

Saul’s face became red with anger. “Ahimelech was helping David?” he cried. “Send a message to him and all the priests of Nob that they are to come here!”

Before long, Ahimelech, with the other priests, stood before King Saul. “Why were you helping David to fight against me?” cried the king. “You gave him bread and a sword. You helped him because you want him to be king someday!”

“David is one of your best servants,” replied Ahimelech. “I didn’t know anything was wrong.”

Notice that he did not blame David, even though David had told him a lie, but Ahimelech’s words meant nothing to Saul. Angrily he ordered his servants to kill all the priests of the Lord. However, nothing happened. The servants dared not kill the priests. This did not stop Saul. “Doeg,” he cried, “I command you to kill them!”

Doeg did so, destroying Ahimelech and eighty-five of the priests of the Lord, but Doeg was so full of anger that he did not stop there. He went through the whole city of Nob, where many priests lived, and killed men, women, children, and animals. One of Ahimelech’s sons escaped and ran to tell David. Oh, how David mourned!

“It is all my fault. It is all because of me!” he wept. “I caused the death of all those people.”

After this David wrote another psalm, Psalm 52. In it he spoke of Doeg, saying, “Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?” Then he added, “God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place.” He ended this psalm by saying, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.”

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. (Proverbs 12:10)



Bible Quiz

Questions

Dear Boys and Girls,

“Mommy?” Chrissy’s elbows were propped up on the window sill, and her chin rested in her little dimpled hands. She gazed upwards. “Why is the sky blue?”

Mommy smiled. How many questions had Chrissy already asked this morning? She wanted to know where the airplane was going, why birds twittered as they flew, how the robin had made its nest, if the sand in the sandbox came from the ocean, why spiders like to eat flies, how many leaves fall from each tree.... Mommy didn’t know all the answers, but this one she could answer.

“It’s because God made it that way, honey,” she said.

“Why?” the little girl persisted.

“Because God made everything perfect and just right,” Mommy answered patiently.

Chrissy frowned. “If you fly up in an airplane, can you touch the sky? Does it feel blue?”

Mommy hid another smile. She shook her head and reached out to hug Chrissy. “You ask so many questions that Mommy’s head is tired now,” she protested. “I think it’s time for you to go look at a book. Maybe you will find a blue sky in it!”

Chrissy slid from the bench by the window and trotted obediently off to find a book.

Mom returned to her vacuuming, but her tired mind didn’t stop whirling. She had so many questions of her own, questions no one on earth could answer. She knew where she had to go with those questions. How could someone like her ever be saved? Where was that only way? How could she ever find it? Would God ever look upon someone like her? Wasn’t it already too late because she had sinned for so long? Those were questions she needed to bring to the Lord. He alone could answer them. A quiet prayer rose up in her heart. Her heart was so hungry for answers, just like the Queen of Sheba.

That queen, long ago, had once traveled far to ask Solomon some very hard questions. She had a true hunger for answers, and she wanted to see if all that she had heard about Solomon was true. The queen had not been disappointed, not at all. She hardly knew what to say anymore and exclaimed that Solomon’s wisdom had been greater than she had heard or imagined.

So, it happens in the life of a seeker after God, too. When something is shown him of how good, great, merciful, holy, just, and longsuffering God is and how great the sacrifice of God’s Son when He gave His life for sinners is, they sometimes don’t have words for it. Even the small amount that they are shown is so much greater than they can ever put into words. The more they learn, the hungrier they become to learn more.

There were people in the Bible who came to Jesus with questions, too. The rich young ruler came. “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” he asked. However, when Jesus told him to give up everything and follow Him, the young man went away feeling sad. His question had been anxious, but the true desire was missing.

In Matthew 22, Pharisees came to Jesus with questions. However, they were not good questions. They were trying to trick Him into saying something which they could use against Him. They wanted to “entangle Him in His talk.” They did not come to Him with concern for their own soul; not at all.

In John 14, Thomas also asks Jesus a question. It is a sincere, true question. “Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?” Jesus gave a clear answer. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He points to Himself as the One able to answer all soul questions and heart riddles.

Also today, we can ask good questions or wrong questions, give good answers and wrong answers. It is wrong if we question the truth of God’s Word. It is wrong if we dare not give a clear answer to someone who asks us what we believe.

There are good questions too, but...if we have no questions at all for the Lord, is it because we are only busy with the things of the world?

* * * * *

Fill in the crossword puzzle on the next page.

Across

2. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one _____, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things (Mark 11)

4. And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea _____: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? (Mark 8)

6. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; _____, and it shall be opened unto you (Matthew 7)

7. And he called one of the _____, and asked what these things meant (Luke 15)

9. And when He came to his disciples, He saw a great _____ about them, and the scribes questioning with them (Mark 9)

10. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old _____, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls (Jeremiah 6)

11. And it came to pass, that after _____ days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions (Luke 2)

13. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a _____ of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1 Peter 3)

14. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that _____ ask Him any question (Mark 12)

18. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out _____ unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all (John 18)

19. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your _____ Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11)

20. And no man was able to _____ Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions (Matthew 22)

Down

1. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the _____ from the dead should mean (Mark 9)

3. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of Him a _____ from heaven, tempting Him (Mark 8)

5. Then He questioned with him in many _____; but He answered him nothing (Luke 23)

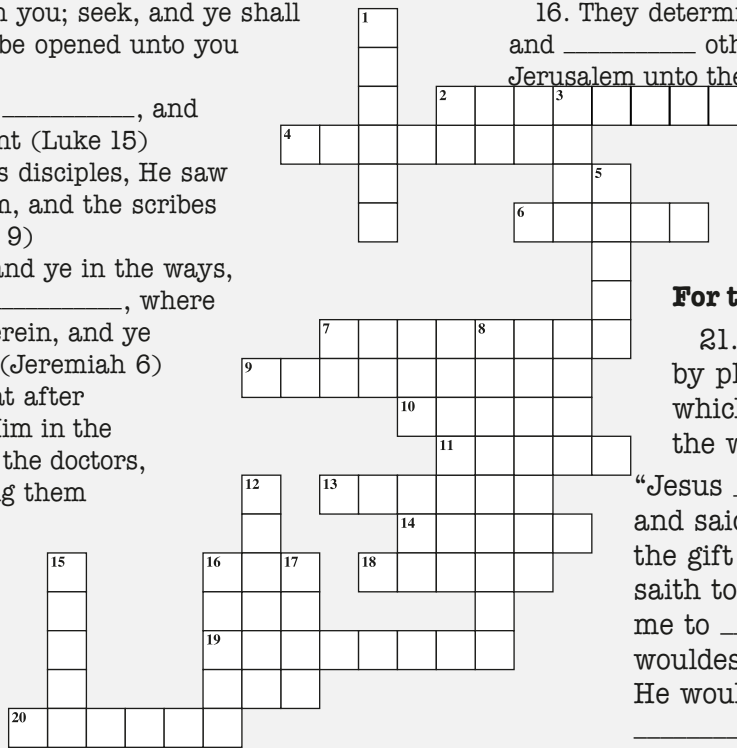
8. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with _____ commandment He even the unclean spirits (Mark 1)

12. Then one of them, which was a _____, asked Him a question, tempting Him (Matthew 22)

15. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be _____ him (James 1)

16. They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and _____ other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this

17. And after _____ they durst not ask Him any question at all (Luke 20)



For the Older Children

21. Correct the following verse by placing a word in each blank which is opposite in meaning to the word in parentheses.

“Jesus _____ (questioned) and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, _____ (take) me to _____ (eat); thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee _____ (dead) water.”

For the Younger Children

22. Fill in these missing words: all, hard

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with _____ questions.

“And Solomon told her _____ her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.”

* * * * *

Answers to February’s “Life” quiz:

- 1. Breath Genesis 2:7
- 2. Preserve Genesis 45:5
- 3. Blessing Deuteronomy 30:19
- 4. Knees 2 Kings 1:13
- 5. Spirit Job 33:4
- 6. They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. (Psalm 38:12)
- 7. Afraid 13. B.
- 8. House 14. C.
- 9. Joy 15. A.
- 10. Life 16. D.
- 11. Enemy 17. E.
- 12. Feet

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Answers to previous quizzes were received in January from:

Alaina Baum	Andrea Fluit	Anna Spaans
Jonathan Baum	Wallow Groeneweg	Asher Spaans
Eryn Bisschop	Josiah Greyn	Brogan Spaans
Sara Bisschop	Kyal Grisnich	Levi Spaans
Britni Blom	Logan Grisnich (2)	Micah Spaans
Christina Blom	Kendra Groen	Samuel Spaans
GaryJon Blom (2)	Tonia Harris	Tessa Spaans
Jairus Blom (3)	Kate Hoogendoorn (2)	Megan Taylor (2)
Jenina Blom	Jada Kelderman	Almonzo Timmer
Joseph Blom (2)	Jadon Kievit (4)	Hunter Timmer
Lawrence Blom	Micah Kievit (4)	Kadin Timmer
Martena Blom (3)	Abigail Klyn	Laurencia Timmer
Martha Blom	Anthony Knibbe	Sierra Timmer
Tiffany Blom	Whitney Knibbe	Grace Timmermans
Willem Blom (2)	Duncan Krygsman (2)	Greysen Van Beek
Mariah Breman	Paris Krygsman (2)	Cole Vander Waal
Andrew Breuer	Kelsey Maassen	Emmalyn Van Garderen
Carly Brouwer	Abraham Mol	Kaiven Van Middendorp (2)
Derek Brouwer	Madeline Mol	Konner Van Middendorp (2)
Thomas Brouwer	Olivia Mol	Asaph Van Ravenswaay
Jackson DeBruin (2)	Teddy Mol	Brett Van Velthuizen
Kennedy DeBruin (2)	John Murphy (2)	Janessa Van Wingerden (2)
Liberty DeBruin (2)	Andrew Murphy (2)	Taylina Van Wingerden (2)
Reagan DeBruin (2)	Blake Pannekoek	Jake Vande Stouwe
Jackson Dientekker	Lauren Pannekoek	Jonah Vande Stouwe
Cody Driesen	Kadri Post	Joelle Vande Waerdt
Ethan Driesen	Andrew Remijn (2)	Wyatt Vande Waerdt
Jordan Driesse (2)	Daniel Remijn (2)	Jayden Weeda
Kailyn Driesse (2)	Lauren Remijn (2)	Nathan Wesdyk
Lindsey Driesse (2)	Lincoln Rozeboom (2)	Rebekah Wesdyk
Allison Ekema	Kaela Rus (2)	Carli Ymker
Kaylynn Ekema	Lakia Rus (2)	



The Salt of the Earth in North Korea *(continued from page 61)*

Discovering the God of my father

From then on, I listened to the station every chance I got. I heard other things about Jesus: “Man shall not live by bread alone”; “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ”; and the most amazing thing of all, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The people on the radio said they were Christians. I’d grown up in school hearing about Western missionaries who kidnapped children and killed people, but the people on the radio didn’t seem like that at all.

As I listened, I became more and more convinced. This Jesus was the great teacher that my father had been trying to tell me about. Jesus was the true Christian’s Lord and Saviour.

I began to think about these lessons every day. I’d see a neighbor who I knew was hungry, and I heard the words of Jesus: “As ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” I’d come home exhausted from the work in the fields, my heart still hurting at the loss of my father, and I’d think about the poem I’d heard on the radio: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

I started to try to pray like the person on the radio said—he said you can pray to God any time. Sometimes, it felt like God heard my prayers, and I was comforted.

As I continued to learn more, I also found that my life was changing in other ways. I was still hungry, but I started to share my food. I thought about what Jesus had said about being salt—and that my father had told me to never lose my saltiness. I knew I could give up some of my food to my neighbors who didn’t have a garden. I hoped this might show them in some way that Jesus cared for their needs.

I would like to tell others about Jesus, but I know it would be very dangerous. Our leaders don’t want us to worship anyone or anything besides them. I’ve realized that’s why my father was taken—they saw he had a Lord that was bigger than our country’s leaders.

I might be the only Christian in North Korea, but maybe other people hear the radio broadcasts, too. I hope that someday I can meet another follower of Jesus. It would be amazing to share my hopes and faith with another person.

For now, I will keep listening to the radio. It helps me not feel so alone. I hope to learn more about Jesus and that He teaches me to follow Him so that I can be salt to the people around me. Just like my father told me. □

Open Doors works through our secret networks in surrounding countries to provide North Korean Christians with basics like food, medicine and warm clothing. Open Doors also operates a radio broadcast each day to help strengthen the secret church in North Korea.

News & Announcements

Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Courtland, Alberta.

To Rev. J.J. Witvoet of Rock Valley, Iowa, by the congregation of Nobleford, Alberta.

Declined:

By Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Courtland, Alberta.

Obituaries

LES, Leentje Pieternella ("Leny," nee Hartman) – Age 93, January 15, 2024; Chilliwack, British Columbia; Husband – Christiaan (deceased); Children – John & Mattie, Don Ratelle, Corney & Janet, Jane & John Sterkenburg, Martin & Marcy, Chris & Denise, Rita Kloot, Tanny & Les Lindhout, Frank & Debbie, Larry & Sherrie, Ed & Sherri, Marlene Roseboom; 48 grandchildren, 89 great-grandchildren, 2 great-great-grandchildren; Sisters – Rina Knops, Janny Vander Sluijs, Ina Kievit, Henny Jordaan, Riet Grisnigt; predeceased by daughter Leeann (May) Ratelle and 2 brothers. (Rev. E.C. Adams, Matthew 7:13&14.)

VANDE HOEF, John – Age 82, January 26, 2024; Rock Valley, Iowa; Wife – Kathy (nee Driesen); Children – Jim & Tami, Tami & Perry Hoogendoorn, Kevin & Janice Driesen, Brian & Kris, Amy & Kenny Koedam, Jaron & Anne; 25 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren; Siblings – twin brother Jake, Helen Loeffler; In-laws – Kathy, Gert Hibma, Mary Driesen, Joann Driesen, Mary Koenen, Jim De Bruin, Elaine & Jerrold Van Roekel, Brad & Brenda De Bruin, Kathy & Marv Schelling; predeceased by first wife Betty (nee De Bruin), granddaughter Katie Hoogendoorn, great-grandson Connor Rozeboom, 1 brother and several in-laws. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Genesis 50:15-18.)

VAN DEN TOP, Gerrit John (John) – Age 90, January 8, 2024; Rock Valley, Iowa; Wife – Mable (deceased); Children – Sharon & Engel Knibbe, Steve & Lisa, Tricia, Karl & Ashley; 8 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Gilbert & Norma, Alice & Albert Brands; Sister-in-law – Janet Ter Meer; predeceased by son Mark, 2 sisters and several in-laws. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Isaiah 38:1&2.)

VAN RAVENSWAAY, Rijk (Richard) – Age 89, January 24, 2024; Norwich, Ontario; Wife – Maria (nee Ryksen); Children – Joanne McLellan, Chris & Hennie; 3 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Cornelia Couperus, Cor & Nellie Byl, Alice Kloot, John & Wypje Ryksen, John & Rika Jansen; predeceased by son-in-law Ken McLellan, 1 brother, 1 sister and several in-laws. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Psalm 51:1.)

Request Concerning Obituary Listings

Dear Readers,

The editorial team of *The Banner of Truth* attempts to list obituaries for each recently deceased member of our churches. We strive to ensure accurate and acceptable information especially with regard to the families mourning the loss. Though most obituaries are provided by the deceased's consistory or officiating minister, being certain of some details can prove to be difficult at times. Accordingly, we kindly encourage the appropriate family member(s) to email the managing editor the week after the funeral to assist in confirming these details.

—The Editors

Announcement from the North American General Mission

The North American General Mission regretfully announces that Rev. E. Maljaars has informed us he has no freedom to renew his contract. Therefore, he will be eligible for calls from the congregations after April 1, 2024, DV.

Seniors' Care Home Positions

The NRC of Chilliwack Sunset Manor Care Home is looking to enhance our health care team. Opportunities are available for health care professionals (RN, LPN, RPN) and care aides. If you would enjoy working with our elderly residents, please contact us. We are willing to assist with obtaining the required recognition of professional credentials in B.C. Please contact board chairman, Neil Stam, at castam71@outlook.com or vice-chairman, Jake Klaassen, at jklaassen@jakesconstruction.ca.

Hope Bay Bible Camp

The Chilliwack NRC hopes to host the annual young adults' retreat on Pender Island, British Columbia, on May 23-25, 2024, D.V. We welcome all post-secondary young adults to attend for a time of learning, fellowship, and exploration of the beauty of Pender Island. Mr. Arjan Arends, Mr. Kevin Romeyn, and Rev. H. de Leeuw will present topics and Bible studies.

Accommodations for the following weekend can be arranged for out-of-town guests. You can register from March 18 to April 30 at bnrcyouth.com. If you have any questions, contact us at bnrc.youthgroup@gmail.com.

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on March 30, 2024, our dear parents and grandparents, **Richard & Jolene Van Den Brink**

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

1177 Goldfinch Ave.
Rock Rapids, IA 51246

The Spirit and the Word

Those that care not for the Word are strangers to the Spirit, and they that care not for the Spirit never make a right use of the Word. The Word is nothing without the Spirit and only animated and quickened by Him. The Spirit and the Word are like the veins and arteries in the body that give life to the whole. Therefore, where the Word is most revealed, there is most of the Spirit.

—Richard Sibbes

We many times speak of spiritual things but are not spiritual in speaking of them.

—Ralph Venning

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

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill a full-time secondary teacher/administrator position for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about this position, please contact the principal, Mr. A. Vrugteveen at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecs.school.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9 or call 647-271-8984, or email gerry@ecs.school.ca.

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 Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrce_office@nrce.nj.org.

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 elementary or secondary teachers for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. Applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination and eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to 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 and resumé with references to office@ccschool.ca.

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill full-time elementary teacher positions for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about these positions, please contact the principal, Mr. A. Vrugteveen, at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecs.school.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Call 647-271-8984 or email gerry@ecs.school.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2024-25 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 rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON, is in need of a teacher for the 2024-2025 school year. We welcome applications for teachers at the elementary, middle, or high school level. To apply or request more information, please contact the administrator, Ms. Beth Bleeker, at bbleeker@nrclslynden.org or the school board president, Mr. Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901 or jdebruin3797@gmail.com.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is seeking to fill openings in grades 7-12: math, elementary, physical education, and secondary teaching. Some of these positions are part-time or full-time and can be combined depending upon qualifications and experience. For further information, please contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at 712-476-2821 or dan.breuer@nrcea.org.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, welcomes teaching applications for positions in elementary and secondary for the 2024-2025 school year. We particularly have a need in the high school. For more information or to request an application, please contact the school principal, Mr. Nate Bleeker, at 616-454-9481 or email nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, welcomes applications for teachers at the elementary and middle school levels. We are anticipating openings for the coming school year. For more information or to request an application, please contact the school administrator, Mr. Tom Kwekel, at 616-644-2661 or email at tkwekel@pcskzoo.com.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is welcoming applications for a grade 6 and a grade 7 teacher as well as for several high school teachers in various disciplines.

For more information about the elementary opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar, at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629.

For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit TenHove, at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-536-3689.

We continue to invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program. Cover letters and resumes should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed, and those applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

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 make the MP3s available to your consistory. Distribution of the MP3s and CDs are provided at no cost by your consistory. 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.

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. Please follow directions for check payment, shown in gray area at bottom of inside front cover. For consistency, copy size is limited. Send requests to James Okken, managing editor (see contact information at bottom of inside front cover.) Requests should be made by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.

A Solemn Eventide

It happen'd on a solemn eventide,
Soon after He that was our surety died,
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,
Sought their own village, busied as they went
In musings worthy of the great event:
They spake of Him they loved, of Him whose life,
Though blameless, had incurr'd perpetual strife,

Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,
A deep memorial graven on their hearts.
The recollection, like a vein of ore,
The farther traced enrich'd them still the more;
They thought Him, and they justly thought Him, one
Sent to do more than He appear'd to have done,
To exalt a people, and to place them high
Above all else, and wonder'd He should die.

Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,
A stranger join'd them, courteous as a friend,
And ask'd them with a kind engaging air
What their affliction was, and begg'd a share.
Inform'd, He gathered up the broken thread,
And truth and wisdom gracing all He said,
Explain'd, illustrated, and search'd so well
The tender theme on which they chose to dwell,

That, reaching home, the night, they said, is near,
We must not now be parted, sojourn here.
The new acquaintance soon became a guest,
And made so welcome at their simple feast,
He bless'd the bread, but vanish'd at the word,
And left them both exclaiming, 'Twas the Lord!
Did not our hearts feel all He deign'd to say,
Did they not burn within us by the way?

—William Cowper