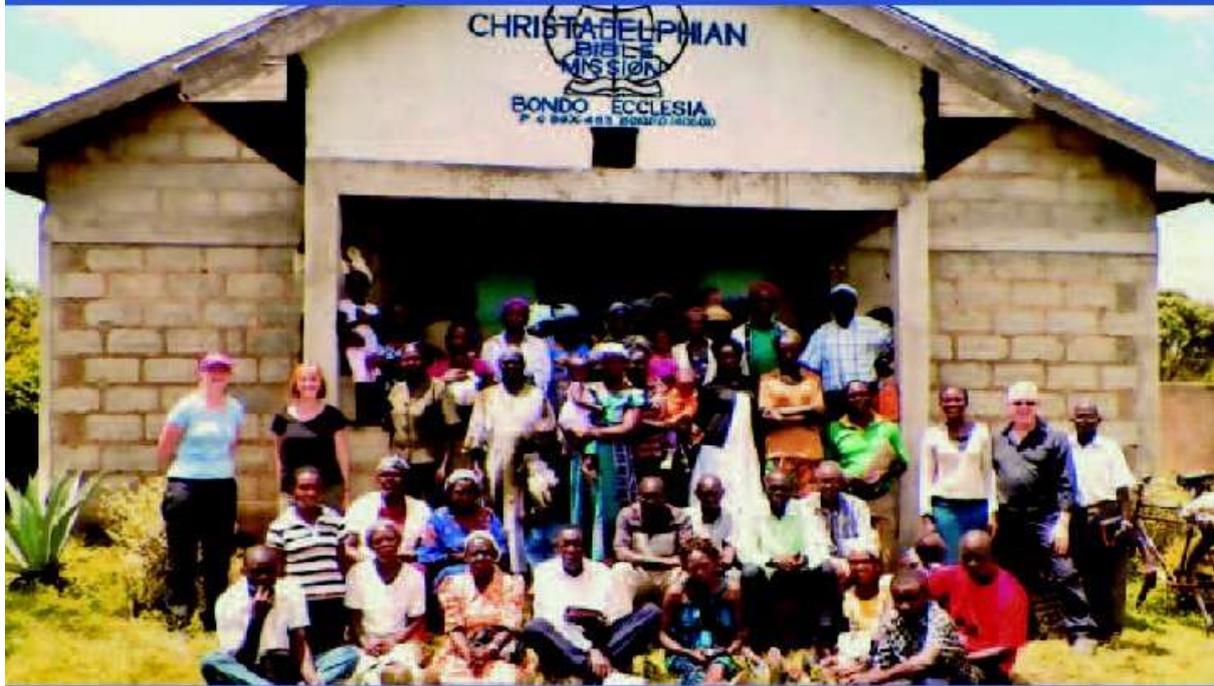


THE Gospel News

"To all nations"



News from Africa

NEWS FROM KENYA



BONDO | Bro Alfred Ochieng



Recent baptisms at Bondo: Sisan, Ferdinand, Ruth, Margaret and Oyango



Bre Aimo, Gordon, Clive Martin, Sister Miriam and Sister Shoe Peddle

I wish to confirm to you that I am still an ardent reader of *Gospel News* magazine and would be very disappointed if you were to stop mailing me such an edifying magazine.

We are all waiting for the glorious return of Christ. Meanwhile we continue to preach the Gospel.

CHWELE | Bro David and Sis Jackyline Wanjala

Thank you very much for *The Testimony* magazine and a Public Debate on Jesus Christ's return to the earth. The *Gospel News* magazine has really transformed the lives of African brothers and sisters in growing strong spiritually.

KAPCHENO | Bro Richard Lagat

Thank you for the spiritual food you have sent us, which we have shared with the Nandi Brethren and Sisters. They were delighted with the NEV Bibles and especially with the commentary which helps us to understand the Bible's meaning and teaching, enabling us to be encouraged more by God's word. We would particularly like, if possible *The Real Devil* book.



Right: Bro Richard Lagat and Bro Chepkwony with Richard's three year old son studying the Bible together

KIBERA | Bro Samuel Mariita

This is one of the oldest ecclesias in Kenya. It is situated within Kibera slums in Nairobi city. I welcome all the people to visit us when you are on your visit to the city.

Follow Paul's example who travelled to so many places to preach the gospel. Remember Christ's great commission to his disciples. He told them to preach the Word of God to all people. Thank you CAT for the good works you are doing. God bless you.

LURAMBI |



Sisters Lurambi Bible Class



Baptism at Lurambi

MADIANY | Bro Gordon Ochieng



Baptism of Bro Ferdinand

The ecclesia has recently been a beehive of activity with six baptisms as the result of my instructing them with the aid of Bible Basics. Five were in Bondo and one in Miwani. The dramatic events in Far and Middle East seem to be heralding Jesus' imminent return.

We have had problems here and there as our farms were flooded and so we have no harvest this season, we only plant once a year. It is our prayer that the God of Israel will somehow provide for our daily bread and we will not starve.

MAKHONGE | Bro Daniel Wakhabin



Sicklecell children with Brethren and Sisters outside the Hall

We pray that the Lord will enable us to do our part in spreading the Gospel. One of the aspects of the work, is a school of four classes we hold in the church's compound. Most of the children have sickle cell anaemia. The lack of water in their bodies means they get dehydrated and sometimes need blood transfusions and they are more prone to Malaria. Since starting the school with a friend the caring atmospheres has reduced the cases of those having to go to hospital, the school is growing but resources are also growing thinner. Our main expenditure is Paldrine, Folic Acid and providing balance meals and if anyone could help with these daily needs it would be a tremendous help.



Children at meal time

MIGWENA |



The photo shows Brethren and Sisters at the baptism of Sister Consolate, second from right. In the background are their farm fields which were deeply flooded and the waters swept away this season's plantings and so they are now facing a severe famine and lack of income from their crops. However, their preaching of the Gospel has been very fruitful in Sister Consolate's baptism. Pictured below, Sister Consolate receiving the right hand of fellowship by Bro James Mijwanda.



MIWANI | Baptism of Sharon of Miwani Ecclesia



NAIROBI | Bro Samuel Marita

NAKURU | Bro Samuel Wanga

I am worried because you don't write to me more frequently as you used to, getting letters from you gives us much joy. And senior students without Bibles, in our Ecclesia we have recent baptisms without Bibles. I travel around quite a bit to Tanzania and Kenya and find there are other areas where Bibles are needed. **(See photo page 37)**



Front row: Brian, Bonnie, Ian, Maxwell, Shirleen Back row: Chris, Douglas, Eric, Cynthia, Dennis, Bro Samuel Wanga

Comment | As the work continues to expand and with increased postal charges it has not been possible to write more often or send out as much literature. We are spending more than the donations received and so some cutbacks have been necessary.

NYANGE | Bro Nasongo Harron

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those in Nyange Ecclesia are doing well. I am happy to write to you to inform you of our proceedings. The brethren are very appreciative of your steadfast and tireless support in the spreading of the gospel. If you have a Bible Dictionary, even an old one, please send one to me. We shall be very grateful to use it at Nyange.

NYANGE | Bro Simiyu Revin

Warmest greetings from all brothers and sisters here in Kenya, particularly Nyange Ecclesia. I am now in form III and I thank God for that. I am in the Truth and am privileged to introduce to you Brother Daniel Nasongo and Sister Irine Juma who were baptized recently after a long time of patience.

I appreciate the work CAT are doing of ensuring that we enter the Kingdom of God as a family. May the Almighty God strengthen you and give you good health so that you do even more work of saving others.

To all brothers in Christ worldwide I would like to encourage you about your life.

The race of your life

The life of an athlete is a combination of commitment, routine and diet – sacrifices must be made – a great athlete needs to focus upon a goal – the finish line, the victory, the prize! In the mind of any athlete the prize justifies the sacrifices.

So, too, the follower of Christ. In the Bible the apostle Paul, a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, draws parallels between the life of an athlete and the life of a Christian. He says, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one wins or receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.” 1Corinthians 9:24-25.

SHIMO LA TEWA | Bro Anthony Wafula

We are all strong in the hope that our Master is coming soon to establish His Kingdom to ultimately bring to an end terrorism and all the wickedness and problems that are going on today throughout the world. It will be wonderful when we are changed into immortal creatures and all crying and pain will be done away with.

We have recently had three baptisms and the NEV Bibles and Bible Basics have been a great help in our instruction of them.

Last month we were gathered together around the Scriptures to celebrate and to give thanks to the Lord for the birth of Vivian Wafula, being Bro Anthony Wafula’s third child.



Pictured above: A prayer and praise meeting for the birth of baby Vivian Wafula, the third child of Bro Anthony Wafula



Pictured right: Sis Rhoda Wafula, Shimo Le Tewa Sunday School Teacher

SINDO | Bro John Owalo Onani

I received the book entitled *Introducing Bible Basics* and the *Gospel News* magazine full of coloured pictures, exhortation, new baptisms and of the wonderful desire of the Gospel message. I am a keen lover, contributor and reader of the *Gospel News* and pray and appreciate the support from all brothers /sisters who witness for the Truth and looking for the coming of God's Kingdom on earth.

I would like to talk about the wonderful example of a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, John 3:1-21, John 7:50,51, John 19:39. He went to see Jesus by night and received Divine teachings.

Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews, was moved by the spiritual things versus the carnal mind. "How can a man be born when he is old? Except one be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God". Jesus referred him to three steps that must be followed to get eternal life: belief, baptism and obedience. We must accept we have all sinned and all fall short of the glory of God.

Nicodemus believed and supported Jesus Christ while our Saviour preached the gospel when people rebuked and never listened. John 7:50-51. Nicodemus believed and witnessed the death of our Saviour on the cross, gave support to Joseph of Arimathea being a disciple of Jesus. John 19:39. The Bible says in Romans 15:4, "For whatever things were written previously were written for our education that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope." Which hope? Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before times eternal." Let us today preach the gospel and witness for the truth.

WATUMU | Bro Walter Wanyama Wasike

Many greetings in the hope of Israel of which we all share; it has been a long time since we communicated to each other but I hope you are doing well in the Lord's vineyard.

I kindly introduce to you a friend, John Amolo, who wishes to learn more about the Bible and would like you to allocate him to a tutor to guide him through the Bible and also I request that if possible you send him a Bible.

I hope and believe that if Jesus remains away for a short period that I will hear from you soon and if He comes, happily we will meet in the Kingdom and I believe that you will do more than I request and also send us magazines.

Comment | I have sent you a Bible and also *Bible Basics* for your contact. For the CBM course you need to contact the Linkman for your area.

NEWS FROM MALAWI



BALAKA | Bro Edson Makcecha

Greetings in the Name of our Master, Jesus Christ. Please continue sending me *Gospel News* and do not delete my name from your mailing list.

I would like to report that for about a year I was ill, but by the grace of God the Almighty I am feeling better. I am seeing the hand of God touching me.

Please may you pray for us. We have started a group in our ecclesia of a few members (10 people) to preach the Gospel and we use the books you sent – *Bible Basics* and *Where there is no doctor*.

It helps us very much to reach the community through preaching. We teach the gospel, the Word and also help with the physical needs of the people in addition to that. Could you please help us to get more teaching material?

SALIMA| Bro Austin Nyirenda

Thanks for the compliment and encouragement you give me all the time. End of last year we had a very long ride with the two Brothers from New Zealand, Brother Greg and Maurice.

We travelled and taught in following places; Lilongwe District, Dzaleka Refugee camp, two places in Kasungu District up North, Nkhotakota District, Salima District and finally Mtakataka in Dedza in the Central region of Malawi. More branches have been established where I will be visiting regularly to deepen the knowledge of new members.

May I also report the sad news that we are experiencing a prolonged drought due to the influence of elnino winds which is bringing a very cold dry wind from the south east coast resulting in the wilting of crops. Hence, this will subsequently bring about hunger to some families within our community. It is very unfortunate to learn that food relief is usually selectively only to those people who support the party in government.

All signs of the second coming of our Lord Jesus are at hand confirming to us that the Gog will soon invade the Holy Land of Israel to fulfil the prophecy.



Distribution of NEV Bibles at Jonas ecclesia Kasungu

NEWS FROM MAURITIUS



| Bro Guy Jhureea

I am holding fast to the Truth in our small Ecclesia of seven at Poste-de-Flacq. We are much encouraged by the frequent visits of Bro Harold and Sis La France who come to Break Bread with us at least once a month, they are great fighters for the Truth. Bro Lilkan Ancharaz has poor eyes and health problems and so is not now always able to get to the meeting. I am, as you know, partially sighted and need frequent medication for my eyes to help me in my reading the Scriptures.

NEWS FROM NIGERIA



ENUGU | Bro Goddy Nwusu

With much sadness we report the falling asleep in Christ of our beloved Bro Golden Onmoha. We thank the Eastern Ecclesias who contributed a lot for his burial and we look forward to meeting him with full health and vigour in the Kingdom.

The world seems devoted to materialism and pleasure, which can be enticing to us all, in various forms which detract from our whole hearted service to the Truth. As we see the day of Jesus coming soon we need the more to struggle to conquer self and whole heartedly devote ourselves to the things of the Kingdom.



CYC Gathering at Enugu some years ago

MBAISE | Bro Adolphe Effiong

Thank CAT for the wonderful love and spending of time and money in sharing the Word of God to many people / Nations. May the Lord strengthen and guide your work. We are increasing in the number of newcomers. They embrace the teaching and I am preparing them for baptism soon. We therefore need seven copies of the Holy Bible and some important literature and *Bible Basics* for more understanding of the teachings.

OHAFIA | Bro Gaius U Egwu

My gratitude I cannot explain. In fact I am happy with a mind full of joy. Thank you, you have given me all I needed to build up people for His Kingdom in this part of the earth. We have received the Holy Bibles and two copies of the Igbo *Bible Basics* but the other literature has not yet come.

The Book of James and other studies you sent were very good and uplifting and highly needed in our Christadelphian homes / libraries. Reading these books will help to put many back to focus point.

I thank God so much who, by His mercy, made me to be part of His great family Christadelphians, may we continue to encourage and motivate each other for the great prize, for Christ has paved the way for us to follow.

NEWS FROM SOUTH AFRICA



GRASKOP (Isolation) |

It was a joyful occasion when we witnessed the baptism here in Graskop on Sunday 1st November of Bro Francois Le Grange, a tall 21 year old, who was introduced to the Truth by Bro Simon Shrosbree. After the baptism in the pool of The Log Cabin,(a local holiday resort in Graskop), the Memorial Service was held on the veranda of Bro Greg and Sis Nan's Lodge, when Bro Dave Hopkins gave the exhortation and our new brother received the Right Hand of Fellowship. Present to witness this happy event were Bro Simon, Sis Angelique Olwage, Bro John and Sis Carol Shrosbree and Sis Elizabeth Pletschke.

SOWETO |

"To God be the Glory." We are happy to welcome another brother into our family of Soweto Ecclesia and worldwide. Bro Joseph Mooi was baptised on the 10/11/2015.

He saw an advertisement in the Meadowlands News and he came to the seminars. He has been attending for the past year he even came to our Sunday meetings, it felt as if he is one of us. We are rejoicing that he took this life changing decision. We pray that God be with him as he walks in the newness of life.

We had an exciting 4 week seminar which came to an end last week and we would like to thank all the brethren who were presenting especially Bro Bongani Carter who came all the way from Kroonstad. The seminars were thought provoking, insightful and a bit scary. The focus was on Judgment, Resurrection, the Middle East, the role of the Arabs and ISIS. Although the seminars are principally an outreach preaching effort for the community, there is always excellent support from the brothers and sisters who also benefit from the studies and who are able to help in preaching by building up a good relationship with the visitors.

NEWS FROM TANZANIA



MUSOMA | Sis Monica Achieng

Tanzania is a wide country divided into five regions, (over three times bigger than England) and we thank God for caring for us on the long 18-hours bus journey to the joint Fraternal. There were five of us from Musoma and my two boys Cherlingstne and Kelvin.

I had to go on ahead of them two days earlier as I was one of the organizers. I spent the night sleeping in the coach as we arrived in the morning at 3am. The number of attendees was fantastic and all were accommodated in the 200 plus single beds and were provided with three big meals each day. There were our own youths plus others from Kenya and the UK, in all 75 youths and 56 elders. The youths had lots of things to participate in, whilst we elders had our general meetings in another hall.

One of the youths was satisfactorily examined and later baptized at Musoma. T-Shirts were provided with an attractive burning lamp design, printed by a UK Sister for the event.

We had a wonderful exhortation by Bro Macdonald (UK). The camp general theme was The Kingdom Of God On Earth. All were thrilled and upbuilt by this most encouraging spiritual gathering.

NEWS FROM UGANDA



JINJA | Sis Anne Lunyolo

Sorry for taking a long time to reply but it is due to the fact that it takes long for me to get access to a computer.

I am already in the truth having been baptised in 1998, but lost my Bible when someone took it, so I keep on borrowing one from time to time, it would be much appreciated if you could send me one.

NEWS FROM ZAMBIA



KAPIRI MPOSHI | Bro Austen Mwaka

I still request, if it is possible, for you to send me two more New Testament Swahili Bibles. Many people are getting interested in Christianity. Kapiri Mposhi is the transit route to East Africa, where Islam is their religious belief and many have come to stay close to us. My wife, Mwangala, is a Sister. We grow maize as a staple food. The cattle I had were swept away by Corridor disease. We pray for you always, though in isolation.

Comment to **Bro Austen Mwaka** | I did not realise that you are 56 miles away from your post box and it takes you 3 and a half hours each way to receive a letter. You are constantly in isolation and a faithful lightstand in this remote part of Zambia. MH

PEMBA | Bro Joseph Mlawo

I greet you in the wonderful Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I was very happy indeed to receive your boxes containing some assorted reading material including Gospel News magazines, which contained my photo, of which I have given some to my brothers and sisters to read.

NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE



BANKET | Bro David and Eneres Yelulani

Members of Banket Ecclesia are sending their sincere gratitude to you and your family for your kindness in sending us the books for our library. Therefore we are very grateful to you. We are very blessed to be in a little ecclesia strong in faith. We are able to meet more frequently, although life is very difficult - for us with political problems, but we pray God will keep us safe, and above all soon end man's corrupt rule of His beautiful world.

We immensely enjoyed the visit of our three overseas visitors by which we were spiritually uplifted, encouraged and strengthened. Sharing fellowship is such a wonderful way to grow in

the Lord. It is essential to meet regularly to break bread and drink wine; reading the Bible with others is such a good way to encourage each other.

My wife Eneres and I read together each morning before we get up, to help us focus our day on important matters. I know that it is not the best time for everyone. We are retired so do not have to leave early for work so we can choose to start this way, but whenever we read it is important to remind ourselves that Jesus is with us every day and every part of our lives, “Lo, I will be with you always”, he promises. And how much we long for that day to come, the day when we are all, in God’s grace, united in love in that wonderful kingdom of peace and plenty, when all suffering and death will be over. May it be soon.

CHIPINGE | Bro Farai Makande

Here in Chipinge preaching is underway. We had students doing Shona lessons and some are under English correspondence.

Thanks to God we have another daughter “Vesper”, who was born on 11th November. We are experiencing the heat of the weather. So far we have left planting since there is no rain. Chipinge is known for its plentiful rain but this year is another year. The Almighty is showing us powers that all shall believe that He is the ruler of everything.

CHIPINGE | Bro Moses Dhlakama

Sorry for not writing. My wife Evelyn is not well. She has high blood pressure and her weight is going down and I am very worried about it.

GURUVE | Bro Fanuel Mawdzeka

I would like to thank Carelinks and Cat for their distributing Gospel Literature worldwide, with the purpose of preaching to all nations. (Mark16:15). This work is undertaken by ecclesias and individuals all over the world.

In this race to preach the Gospel Mushumbi Pools Ecclesia has carried out two book fares, displaying the Truth’s literature at our stand at the agricultural exhibitions, where many showed much interest and we had a good time answering questions and discussing Scriptural topics, as a result we had ten visitors to the meeting and others requested further literature and the correspondence course.

Encouragement

We should seize every opportunity to give encouragement. Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.

“A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good it is.”
Proverbs 15:23

News from the Americas

NEWS FROM ST LUCIA



| **Sis Julie Gonzagill**

How are you? As for me I am well. Seasons Greetings wishing you all the joy and cheer at this magical special time of year. Thinking of you many times, I hope you and your family are keeping well. It is good to be writing to you. I keep faithful and keep the Word of God in the forefront of my mind in my daily life. I am not working and go to the meeting every Sunday, reading my Bible every day and hoping God will be good to me. There are so many terrible things happening in the world and I know that the time of Christ's return is very close. We really need Jesus to come back and may the Word of God fill our lives with many blessings.

NEWS FROM TRINIDAD



| **Bro George Constantine**

I am fine, thanks to God, and trying to be a better person in His sight as we look forward to our Lord's return, which from the state of things looks very close. I am thankful that in here I am occupied six days weekly teaching at the prison school instead of just hanging around the yard all day.

Our country recently had a general election and a change of government, whom we hope will do something positive for those of us who have spent a long time in prison. I have been here 24 years. The "older lifers" case should be heard before the Privy Council this year God Willing and I am hoping that it is God's will for we "junior lifers" to benefit from whatever decision the Law Lords give in that case.

Keep up the good work.

A Man Born Blind!

The Apostle John has a different agenda in his writings to those records of Matthew, Mark and Luke. He is primarily concerned that "men might believe". Each of John's "eight signs" focus on faith! Ensuring that faith motivates (and not tradition) is as valid a message today, as it was then.

A man "born blind" is the sign John chapter 9 gives us. It has a wonderful lesson and one that is vital to our own salvation. This account has a message for those who believe and those who may not!

"I am the Light of the world" is the claim of the Lord and I suggest that both the disciples and "the man born blind", heard these few words. We can learn much from the detail of this account, but let's focus on two points only:

- What Jesus said and did!

- What the man said and did!

If we do this we will see a wonderful 'picture' of the true relationship we can enjoy with our Lord.

What Jesus said to him was, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam" He did NOT say, "that you may see". Wiping mud and spit on a blind man's face might be seen as a gross indignity! We wonder at that! However, the man responded in total faith ...went and washed as instructed, and returned "seeing!"

His very first objective was to "find Jesus". The next was thrust upon him, to publically declare that Jesus IS a prophet! He did that well.

John's message to us is clear. We must first

"find Jesus" for ourselves, seek Him out amongst the crowd – then be willing to defend and declare His true status as Messiah, "Lord", Saviour, Healer, Teacher and Friend.

Jesus waited. Time passed and the challenges for "he who was blind" were intense. Yet he longed to meet His Saviour! Finally, the Lord appeared, but more than that. The record John gives us in Verse 34-35 is again very clear. "They cast him out" then, "Jesus FOUND him." Many of Jesus' friends have and do experience similar rejection by others- family, society, ruling powers, but counter-balanced by the Lord's presence and His timely coming. "They be blind leaders of the blind" say the Lord of the Pharisees, but he who was "born blind" simply saw, believed and worshipped the Lord Jesus, his Messiah. Verse 37 states these facts.

We are all as Adam's family, "born blind" and it is ONLY because Jesus was 'sent' (Siloam) by Our Heavenly Father that we "now see" and may come, seeking the Lord and speaking of His Messiahship, to an unwilling and unbelieving world. Baptism brought us into God's special family.

We now live in the sure belief that our Lord will soon appear, find us in the crowd, that we may "see Him" as He really is- the Son of the Living God with power to save and to heal.

"Even so come, Lord Jesus!"

Bro Neil Todd (New Zealand)

Be Careful, Be Discerning (Galatians 1:7)

Centuries ago, the Lord Jesus Christ warned his followers, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). That warning is as relevant in this day and age as it was all those years ago; there are still those who manipulate the scriptures or present a 'watered down' version of the gospel. They may succeed in making this very attractive to the unsuspecting and, in fact, are doing much to undermine the true church of Christ. There is no easy road to salvation and anything that detracts from our Lord's commands must be viewed with the greatest suspicion.

In calling upon you to take up your cross and to follow him, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that his is the only Christian way. That, as you know, is the way of unreserved commitment to Christ. Anything other than that, however attractive or appealing it may appear to be, is not of God. To assist you in recognising these false prophets Jesus warns, "Not everyone who says to me,

‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Bro David Banda Yelulani (Banket, Zimbabwe)

How Well Do You Know Your Bible?

Can you name the order of Creation?

1)

Genesis 1

Who was the father of those that

2)

“handled the harp and organ”? Genesis 4:21

In what way were Elijah and Enoch different from other men? Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11

3)

Who was Noah’s father, and how long before the flood did he die? Genesis 5:28-32

4)

Where did Abraham’s brother Nahor live?

5)

Genesis 24:10

How many wives did Abraham have? Can you name them? Genesis 16:1-15; 25:1

6)

What was the name of Joseph’s wife?

7)

Genesis 41:45

Who said: “I do remember my faults this day”? Genesis 41:9

8)

How old was Joseph when he died?

9)

Genesis 50:24-26

The Bible is Absolutely Right

The holy Bible is the most read book in the world, and perhaps the oldest. Written by God's prophets inspired by the holy spirit, it took forty of God's prophets over a span of more than a thousand years to be completed. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a book worth reading.

When we were in High School, those in Christian Union Clubs had a tradition of going to the homes of members during weekends, for fellowship. We found that in one house where we gathered and there was no Bible, we used to say together in a loud voice, "What a house without a Bible!"

Righteousness is a gift of God and is found in Psalms 24:5 and Philippians 3:9. God is a loving Father, which is why He gave us a second chance of living, after sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. God wants us to repent (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ shared our nature (Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4). Although he had no human father, he died to ensure forgiveness for our sins. He will return to establish God's kingdom on earth and to rule assisted by the righteous after judgement.



Right Bro Samuel Wanga, Cynthia Akoth, Brian Otieno and Douglas Ochieng at Samuel's residence.



Bro Samuel preaching to the public.

The Word of God

The Bible is at once the simplest and yet most profound book ever written. This is true of the Inspired Original itself, and in some respect also of its manifold translations. Its great fundamental truths are so apparent on the surface that the worst MS in existence does not alter materially one article of faith, or one moral precept.

Robert Young, compiler of the Analytical Concordance

Bro Samuel Wanga Watako (Nakuru, Kenya)

“I Am That I Am”

“I am that I am” is to be found in Exodus 3:14 and represents the words spoken out of the burning bush to Moses by an angel. The angel was manifesting God but was not the Creator Himself. When Moses was given his commission to lead Israel out of Egypt, he asked to be told the name of the angel who was speaking to him, but the angel was not speaking for himself but for God. This request for a name led on to a deeper understanding: since there is only one God, it is unnecessary for the One God to have a name to distinguish Him from other, non-existent gods. When we speak of the one true God, we do not use a name: instead we use a title. Therefore when asked for a name, the angel speaking as the mouthpiece of God said, “I am that I am”. The Hebrew for this expression is “EYAH ASHER EYAH”, which can also be interpreted as “I was that I was” and “I will be that I will be”. God thus has a purpose. And that purpose is explained by the other name that the angel revealed: YAHWEH ELOHIM. This can be translated as “I will be manifested in a multitude”. Instead of giving a name, the angel replied with a title which manifests the divine plan and purpose. The divine plan is what God intends to do, and the divine purpose represents the manner in which God intends to do it. The plan is that “God will be manifested in His glory” and this glory we learn from Numbers 14:21 will cover the earth. The manner of manifestation is that the glory of God will be manifested in a multitude of saints populating the whole earth. All this is condensed in the short title of “I will be what I will be.”

Bro Moses Dhlakama (Chipinge, Zimbabwe)

I Will Make You (Mark 1:17)



There is something fascinating about a teacher taking a group of students and training them up to be an effective team, work force or unit. A team of raw beginners in sport is assembled and put under an experienced coach. Soon they acquire new skills, learn how to work with each other, build up their fitness and start winning matches. As they do so, they grow in confidence and competence.

This is what Jesus did with his disciples. They were a motley group of ordinary working men. Jesus called them, taught them, lived with them, discussed things with them, prayed with them, chided them, demanded sacrifice of them. Over a three-year period he moulded them. Then he sent them out to the task of mission for which he had schooled them. They fulfilled that mission.

When he calls you, Jesus says to you, “I will make you.” He does not make all people “fishers of men”. But however raw in religious terms you may be, however lacking in knowledge, however

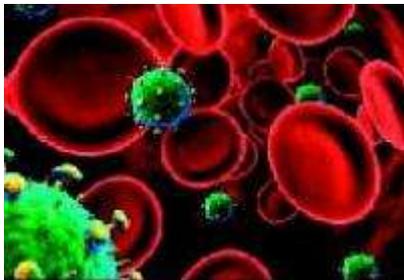
deficient in self-confidence, however unprepared in personal development, however sparse your talents might be, Jesus still promises to make you what you are not yet. He sees the potential in you which you cannot see in yourself. He knows the finished product he will make of you. However young and inexperienced you may be, or however old and 'past it', Jesus can make something of you. Are you willing to hear his call and to be crafted by him?

Bro David Banda Yelulani (Banket, Zimbabwe)

The Virus in the Blood

Death is a basic fact in the world, a great and awful and universal fact. It ravages night and day round the globe. It is the main thing that most men and women fear and dread. They know that it usually approaches silently and stealthily. They must leave family and friends, businesses and comforts and wealth. Being shut up in the coffin and consigned to the tomb, people dread the thought. Many have wished death to wait a while. But death will not wait a while, not even for philosophers to finish their deliberations.

Paul says, "The sting of death is sin" (1Corinthians 15:56). It is sin that stings unto death. We are all stung by what can be called 'The virus in the blood'. We cannot arrest the law of sin and death in our bodies. It is only a question of time until the end comes. David, at the close of his life, said, "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers" (1Chronicles 29:15). The Bible tells us, "We all do fade as a leaf" (Isaiah 64:6). "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" (Zechariah 1:5).



We find the wages of sin in Genesis 3:17. There, at that time, the virus entered the human blood of the first creation- Adam. Let us forget all that has happened since, such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola and all the other literal viruses, this universal virus has been in the human blood since Edenic condemnation. It is a sentence to return to dust. The apostle Paul stresses that by one man's offence, the virus has spread to all. Never mind the test results for literal viruses such as AIDS, this virus is in the blood of every human being, and all must die.

What a blank it makes in loving hearts. It closes the loving eye, stops the benevolent heart, silences earnest and eloquent tongues, paralyses active limbs and shuts down the thoughtful brain. It robs us of life, it robs us of those we love. Dust to dust- this is death, this is how sin stings. Everybody tests positive in the divine laboratory for this virus.

Medically, people often discriminate against those perceived to be HIV/AIDS positive. There is a stigma, with travel and movement restrictions in many places. But the Bible says that the problem with humanity is not HIV or Ebola, but the sinful nature we possess. We inherited it

from Eden. Whether king or queen, president or prime minister, rich or poor, we all test positive for sin. In the divine laboratories, we are all infected.

Advanced research in the medical field and, especially, human reproductive health has seen tremendous discoveries like vaccines to sustain life and postpone death. But the Edenic virus is too deep for doctors' skills: it is in the constitution. It is the blood: it is deeply engrained and incurable. All the doctors can do is- nothing. In contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only spiritual physician with the cure of this virus in our bodies. He has promised to fashion us like unto his own glorious body.

Life, life: that is what humanity wants endless, painless, joyful life. That is what is promised (1 John 5:11-12). Death by Adam: endless life through Christ Jesus. Jesus is the saviour (Acts 4:12). We must be united to that all-saving name. We cannot save ourselves, however hard we try. We are saved entirely by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8). There is no other way of escape from the sting of sin. Only through the blood of Jesus Christ shall the virus be wiped out from our blood.

“He will swallow up death in victory”. This is a promise partly fulfilled “For he hath swallowed up death in victory” in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for the completion of the work that we wait. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.” Meanwhile, death reigns and tears flow.

Bro Gordon Ochieng (Madiany, Kenya)

The Choice of a Christian

We live in a very competitive world, a world that has many opportunities and challenges, full of fear and sorrow; a world where most people are worried about themselves and their families; a world where we can choose to follow God or do the opposite. So the world is all about choice between two options: to do what is right or to do what is wrong. If we cling to Almighty God, then we choose what is right and avoid what is wrong. For there is abundant evidence that a vibrant relationship with God impacts upon our total well-being. Therefore we should choose what is right.

Bro Nasong'o Haron

The greatest need in the world is for these men who have chosen correctly. Men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their innermost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its proper name, men whose conscience is true to their duty, men

Which are you? who will stand firm for the right. As Christians we should carry Christ in our hearts. There is nothing so good, so powerful and honourable as to practice the will of God. This is the right choice.

There is much for us to do personally. All our habits, tastes and inclinations must be educated in harmony with the needs of spiritual life and health. By these means we can secure joy and gladness instead of grief, a song of praise instead of sorrow. We can be like trees that the Lord has planted. We can do what is right and God will be praised for what He has done in us.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ who always made the right choice. Though there is war, he will bring peace. Where there are those who are oppressed, Jesus will turn grief into joy and gladness.

Therefore we pray for his return, that we may all meet and reign in his kingdom and that all this may be soon.



Nasong'o Haron

Bro Nasong'o Haron

Which are you?

Some members keep a group so strong,
While others join just to belong.

Some dig right in; serve with pride,
Some go along just for the ride.

Some volunteer to do their share,
While some lie back and just don't care.

Some do their best, some help, some make:
Some do nothing, only take.

Some greet new members with a smile,
And make their coming so worthwhile,

While some go on their merry way,
No greeting or kind word to say.

Some help the group to grow and grow,
When asked to help they don't say "No".

Some drag, some pull, some don't some do:
Consider, which of these are you?

Gauteng Newsletter

Excuses, Excuses, Excuses (Luke 14:16-24)



“...how strait is the gate, and compressed the way that is leading to the life, and few are those finding it!” (Matt 7:14 YLT)

In this parable of our Lord Jesus Christ, a man made supper and invited guests. When things were ready, he sent his servants with the customary second summons. But those invited did not want to come. They claimed they were busy doing other things, things they clearly regarded as more important and worthwhile. The excuses were actually stupid and frivolous. One had bought a field and must see it. Do you find this excuse to ring true? Who can possibly buy land without inspecting it first? The next had bought oxen and must try them out. How can a farmer buy stock before he had seen and tested it? What a confession of incompetence! The third man had what seemed a better case, for the Law of Moses gave certain liberties for a year for the just married (Deuteronomy 24:5). These excuses were offered politely: no insults, no rudeness displayed. That is the frivolous attitude most people have towards God’s word and the gospel of Jesus Christ. So the host sent out into the lanes of the city for “the poor and maimed and cripple and blind”. When there was still room, he sent his servants out yet again, to the highways to gather in others, that the house might be filled. At the same time he declares, “None of these men who were invited shall taste my supper” (Luke 14:24).

That is the calamity we all face: to have the chance to be saved and yet to refuse the opportunity. The kingdom is like a feast (Isaiah 25:6). God had invited the Israelites / Jews as His guests, through the mouths of the prophets. The Israelites / Jews did not only show contempt to their Host, but also displayed a lack of good manners. The Host was not deviating from His purpose. The men were unworthy- so the streets and the lanes had to be searched for the poor and blind.

The rulers rejected God’s invitation. It is the publicans and sinners who responded to the second invitation. The highways are manifestly the offer of salvation to the Gentiles, as Paul declares to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:16).

Those who were invited but refused, will one day answer for their refusal. “Enter ye in at the straight gate.” It’s a call to make a choice, to separate from the crowd that drifts along the broad way. The broad way is easy and leads to destruction. So choosing the narrow road is an act of will. The thought of a destiny based on a choice made once and for all and adhered to continually occurs in Moses’ writings concerning the Messiah (Deuteronomy 30:11-13) and in Paul’s exposition (Romans 10). “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). The choice of the way now, determines the issues of life or death.

Bro Gordon Ochieng (Madiany, Kenya)

The Greatest

Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God? The saviour gathered his disciples about him, and said to them, "If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all." There was in these words a solemnity and impressiveness which the disciples were far from comprehending. That which Christ discerned, they could not see. They did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. Even after they had received the fullest knowledge, any question of precedence might have renewed the trouble. So disaster would have been brought to the ecclesia after Christ's departure. The strife for the highest place was the outworking of that same spirit in the churches and governments. Christ the exalted made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men and was found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:7-8).

The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect and wonderful research, men whose utterances have stimulated thought, and opened to view vast fields of knowledge, and these men have been honoured as guides and benefactors of their race. But there is one who is higher than they. As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him."

We can trace the line of the world's great teachers as far back as human records extend, but the light was before them. As the moons of the solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so as far as their teaching is true, do the world's great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gem of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the light of the world. In these days we hear much about higher education. The true education is that imparted by Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 'He that followeth me', said Jesus, 'shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'" (John 1:12,18; Colossians 2:3; John 1:4).

Among Christ's hearers, many were drawn to him in faith and to them he said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." These words offended the Pharisees. They disregarded the nation's long subjection to a foreign yoke and angrily exclaimed, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou, 'Ye shall be made free?'" Jesus looked upon these man, the slaves of malice whose thoughts were bent upon revenge, and sadly answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." They were in the worst kind of bondage, ruled by the spirit of evil. Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery.

Bro Melusi Nalovu (Kwekwe, Zimbabwe)

Making Your Ecclesia What It Should Be (Galatians 3:28)

The Christian ecclesia is a fellowship of believers who are united in a common belief and understanding of God's word. Love is the binding force of fellowship and the expression of all it believes. Without the dynamism of love, no organisation can exist that calls itself a church, and

it cannot fulfil its function as part of the body of Christ. An ecclesia that lacks love is easily recognisable. It may have trappings of feverish activity but it no longer cares for people.

While the ecclesia of Christ is a divinely appointed organisation, it is composed of very ordinary men and women. Yet these people are, according to the master, “The salt of the earth.” The living Christ inspects those who are, by his grace, living in him, living within this ecclesia. Their loyalty to him must exceed their allegiance to any other organisation yet, within boundaries, they manifest such love that those who come into contact with it may be drawn memorably to the Lord of the church. Through the love manifested by local ecclesias, many other men and women may wish to come to fellowship with Jesus.

Make your ecclesia a place where the warmth of Christ’s love is felt. This can only be possible when each ecclesia member radiates Christ’s care through all their actions.

I want to thank the Almighty who gave me this opportunity of sharing the word of love with you all. How are you, brothers and sisters, including your Sunday Schools?

“The Lord is near all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.” One day He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him. He will also hear their cry and save them, that is if we remain faithful to Him like Abraham, Noah, David and others in the Bible who remained humble before Him. These were His good faithful friends who feared Him. So let us be like them. Read Psalm 18:18-21.

We are naturally sinful, brothers and sisters. Why do we break God’s law? Breaking the law means we are living in sin. If we can shun sin, then we can keep God’s law of love and we will have grace and mercy so as to live as Jesus Christ did. Jesus was tempted and yet did not sin, so he kept God’s law. He then received grace and is now living in God’s presence. Why not us? Although we are of sinful nature, let us conquer it by keeping God’s law and praying for strength to do so, and for forgiveness when we fail.

May God guide us not into temptation. Amen.

Bro Farai Makandeni (Chipinge, Zimbabwe)

Christ: The Promised Seed of Abraham

In the beginning, when the first man had been formed in the image and likeness of God, and Eve had been taken out of the man’s side to be a helpmeet for him, God made the choice of habitation for them. No big houses, just a garden was provided, planted by the Lord eastward in Eden. “Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food: The tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden” (Genesis 2:8-10). This, then, was God’s choice of a suitable home and occupation for the man whom he had made to have dominion over the work of his hands. We greatly admire this beautiful handiwork of angels on behalf of the Lord God.

And God saw that all His work was “very good”. The sad story is of broken law and expulsion from this Garden of Eden. The hope of the promised redemption was made, and this leads us to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to whom the promises were given of the kingdom to come and a

righteous seed. "Come into a land which I shall show you" was a command to Abraham. He was obedient and departed, even though he did not know where he went (Hebrews 2:8). But under guidance he, with his wife Sarai and Lot his nephew, came into the land of Canaan entering it from the north. Passing southwards, he pitched his tent at a spot between Bethel and Ai, and there built an altar unto the Lord. Though compelled by famine to go to Egypt for a while, he soon returned to this place where his tent had been at the beginning, where the altar was first (Genesis 13:4). When Abraham turned round, he viewed the south where he would see hills around Jerusalem. Among these was Mount Moriah where afterwards his faith was so severely tested in the offering up of Isaac.

Now it came to pass that Lot decided to move down into the valley. After he had gone, the Lord said to Abraham, "Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which you see, I will give to you and your seed for ever." Abraham was also commanded to rise and to walk through the land in the length and breadth of it, for the Lord said, "I will give it unto thee" (Genesis 13:17).

We can, in imagination, stand with Abraham and view the landscape. Imagine then the impression created in the mind of the patriarch as he surveyed that vast land. He had left his native land, and here he was, a landless stranger and sojourner among lawless, hostile tribes—yet here was God's promise. But he staggered not because of unbelief. He believed and it was counted to him as righteousness. He believed and a seed would bring a blessing to all future nations. This would be the scene of the future kingdom.

The promise was confirmed by sacrifice when Abraham enquired of the Lord God. But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" (Genesis 15:8). By a great sacrifice, it has been confirmed and made sure to all the seed, even to all who are the children by faith in Christ Jesus (Romans 15:8).

The same promise came down the centuries as far as Moses and we can take our stand with him on Mount Nebo at the top of Pisgah, which is in the land of Moab over against Jericho. Here the Lord showed Moses all the land of Gilead, Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim, Manasseh and all the land of Judah. And the Lord said unto him, "This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob saying, 'I will give it unto your seed.' I have caused you to see it with your eyes" (Deuteronomy 34:1-4).

Moses described it thus, "The Lord thy God brings you into a good land; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey. A land where you shall eat bread without scarceness, a land which the Lord thy God cares for: the eyes of the Lord are always upon it from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 18: 79,12). Moses was permitted to view this good land from the top of Pisgah before he died in faith. Moses will come again and with many others will be with Christ in the kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew the joy set before him in the restitution of all things not only to that 'very good state' described at first, but actual perfection and the bringing of many sons to glory. When tempted in the wilderness he, like the prophet Moses, was taken up into a high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world. Christ would have seen the land promised to Abraham and his seed (then under the power of Rome). It was his by divine covenant, but the tempter said to him, "All these things will I give to you if you will fall down and worship me." But Jesus was proof against the trial: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan. For it is written, you shall

worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve” (Matthew 4:8-10). Jesus was mindful of the promise, “Wait on the Lord, and keep his way and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. The righteous shall inherit the land to dwell therein for ever” (Psalm 37:34).

Jesus waited for God and still awaits the appointed time, now at his Father’s right hand until his enemies be made his footstool. He told the Jews that their house would be left unto them desolate until they shall say, “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord” Matthew 8:38. He would then be seen again and acknowledged by all. Many centuries of desolation have since passed over the land of promise. During that long time large numbers of people have been taken out for Christ’s name from among the Gentiles.

God has prepared wonderful things for those who love him, yet the apostle says, “The Lord has revealed them by his spirit” (1Corinthians 2:10). The same treasures are hid for us in the prophetic writings. Let us drink at the stream of life flowing there from, and by the faith arising in our hearts thereby. May we stand and endure till the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts.

Bro David and Sis Jacklyne Wangala (Chwele, Kenya)

Let There Be Light

This is the Divine purpose which will be fully accomplished when “there shall be no night, and they shall need no candle, neither light of the sun”. In the meantime, for the most part, darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people.

Had it not been for the unremitting mercy of God, the darkness would have been complete, and the light would have gone out for ever. Although the merciful God had to destroy the wicked dark nation in Noah’s time, He set up a light for the nations in Abraham and in the unique nation of Israel.

We more than any, are the people of the land and the book. We glory in the promises to the fathers, and by baptism have become part of the promised seed and long for the time when all the families of the earth will see the light and be blessed.

We must not wait with folded hands for what the Lord will do in the Millennium. Our service begins right now in willing minds, bent on prayer, adding to our labours at home and in the towns of our homelands and the needs of the world beyond. God can still use weak things to confound the mighty, that the glory might be His.

It has been the dream of Bro Emmanuel Maugeite for many years to establish a meeting in the heart of the City of Tete. With the help of the CBM and so many others the dream has materialised, as you see from the above picture together with the ecclesia there.



Pictured above: Samuel Sabao, Hazvinei Tekchua, Francisca Sozinho, Bro Emmanuel Maugente, Sis Felisberta Jose and Sunday School.

Bro Emmanuel Maugente (Tete, Mozambique)

Training the Temper

Temper itself is not an evil power, a demoniacal possession, in anyone. Temper may make irreparable mischief if allowed to run untamed, but when brought under the sway of a sanctified will it becomes an element of great power. A strong temper held in perfect leash gives majesty to the life. And there is no temper which cannot be brought under control through God's help. Let none of us despair, therefore, if we have a strong temper which oftentimes leads us to sinful outbursts. We can tame our temper until the most impatient of us shall become and shall remain calm and quiet under the sorest provocation. Yet we shall never get past the need of watchfulness, for a conquered lion is a lion still if the old spirit is aroused.

J. R. Miller, D.D.

Carelinks | Australia

Replies are coming in pretty thick from the ad we placed in The Senior, circulating amongst seniors in Australia. You can see one response below, from about 300 received. It just again shows that there is interest in Western society; and that a lot of folk are doing it tough in the West and turning to God:

G'day and thanks for the email about my request for the Bible. I recently moved into this nursing home and some how my old King James Bible got thrown out with other things by the movers. Being 73 and having 85% of my aged pension taken away each pension payment to pay to live here, I have no other funds, means I just could not afford to buy one of those Bibles in modern English. I thank you for your kind offer and the work you do, I will be looking at your website. I saw your advert in the January 2016 issue of The Senior News, South Australia.

From Roger, South Australia

Carelinks | Germany

Thanks to the efforts of brother Vahid in Liverpool, UK, a kind of conference was arranged in Germany for the Iranian contacts who wished to be baptized. About 10 Iranians spent an intensive and wonderful time with us and we're pleased to say that the following solemnly dedicated themselves to the Lord: Sisters Saida, Parvaneh, Masah and Mona; and brothers Yasser, Hadi, Mehdi and Reza. They had been underground Christians in Iran, and are all related to each other. They are nervous of appearing on public video on YouTube, which is understandable but a shame because their testimony was very gripping.

Reza described how they crossed from Turkey to the Greek island of Mitylene in a tiny dinghy, with 62 people onboard- including Reza and his wife and two little children. They were told the crossing would take 30 minutes they left at 1 a.m., nearly overturned several times, and were rescued by Greek coastguards, finally arriving on the shores of Mitylene at dawn around 6a.m. This was in December, just a few months ago, and they felt they nearly died of the cold and wet that night. Reza says he still has nightmares about the dinghy and his children gripping on to him all that night. Then they had to walk, bus and train 12 days with the two little children across Eastern Europe, with temperatures well below freezing, until they arrived in Germany. We naturally enquired if they remembered the border halt on the Macedonian border, where we had distributed so many soups and welfare packages to refugees before they had to walk off down the railway tracks- and they did! They don't recall seeing us there when they crossed, but it must've been around the same time. It is a small world when we are all working in response to the Lord's promptings. They recounted the terrible persecution they endured from the Syrian Muslims on the journey.

And even now in one of the camps where they are currently staying, they felt fearful to be baptized there because other Muslims know they are Christian and are bullying them and warned them to bring no Christians into the camp. The situation is really awful and corresponds to similar testimony and observations we have made in these reports before. So please pray for them. Brother Vahid from the UK was present with us by phone and Skype. thank God for Skype and WiFi.

Carelinks | Riga Winter Feeding Scheme | Latvia



Our brothers, sisters and friends thawing out with hot coffee and tea

We have continued the Winter feeding project throughout the Winter thanks to a stream of brethren and sisters from the UK, France and Canada. We have provided meals and Bible teaching at least 5 days / week, along with an hour's Bible teaching each day. Most of those who attend are baptized. Heavy snowfall and very low temperatures have been experienced, and we continue to distribute walking sticks, firewood, clothing, medicines and other assistance.

Pictured right you can see brother Maxim giving a walking stick to sister Medina ['Aunty Masha']. Walking the icy streets and pavements, which are often not cleared, is a nightmare for elderly folks and those unsteady on their feet.



Our elderly Sister tucked up in Cindy's fur coat

Pictured above you can see Cindy giving her heavy fur Winter overcoat to a sister. It weighs really very heavy, and brings back memories of when dear Cindy first bravely came out to Siberia, Russia in 2001 dressed in a blue jacket which was thought by loving friends and family in Australia to be 'very warm' and 'just what you'll need out there in the cold'. Russians wouldn't even have used that for an anorak in Winter! Cindy experienced temperatures down to -51 C that Winter in Siberia, and Duncan bought her that coat second hand from an old woman out in Yakutsk. It remained as a kind of keepsake, but a rather heavy and cumbersome one, and Cindy never uses it. But it's a testament to 15 years of dedicated service to the Lord by Cindy in this hard land.

Temperatures here have been very low, with significant winds and humidity, meaning that the -20 C temperatures 'feel like' far lower than that. With the night shelters open only at 8 p.m. and throwing people out by 8 a.m., our brethren and sisters have to be out all day, or take shelter in places like waiting rooms which are open to the public. Most of our number are middle aged or elderly, having worked during the previous regime but now given no or very little pension because of their ethnicity. Or others simply who cannot afford to rent or heat property, who are therefore driven to the night shelter existence. This really is a genuinely needy segment of society which the Lord has led us to. Jim and Ann Barton continue to assist greatly with the work. But we are all worked off our feet. Our folk arrive ever earlier in these temperatures and take about half an hour to thaw out on entry to the hall. Please remember that our heating costs at the hall can come to nearly 1000 Euros / month in extreme temperatures. The on costs are high, but the work done is absolutely necessary and relevant, and the welfare aspect dovetails seamlessly with the preaching of the Gospel and further teaching of the many who are baptized.

On New Year's Eve, about 110-120 came, Cindy's welfare packages were wonderful, plus we gave them a special seasonal meal... (pictured below). Sincere thanks to all who contributed to

enable this. We read Revelation 21 and 22 according to the Bible Companion and reflected for an hour on the awesome, breathtaking reality that is ahead, eternally, for we weak, cold, tired, aging, handicapped, frail and weak mortals. Please do take a view of the video and enter into the spirit of these dear believers and the work here (see page 18 for video link). And really, do consider coming over and assisting or otherwise supporting the work.



You will notice in some of the pictures that several of our number have walking sticks. Quite a few others are in need of them- many have suffered strokes, or with lack of medical care have been unable to fix breakages or sprains, resulting in mobility and balance problems. Such problems of basic stability when walking are made many times worse by the fact that many pavements aren't free of ice, and at these very low temperatures the ice is like glass and very slippery. We are providing walking sticks and related aids, health care is not free and so when you have no pension, it's hard to get such things. So you are welcome to donate towards the provision of such assistance.



Pictured above: Entering the hall frozen; brother Vyacheslav [pictured with his bag of possessions] was once a guard on the Berlin Wall in Germany, and he gave a lovely reading of Revelation 21 at our New Year's gathering.



Taking free clothing; note the brothers with walking sticks [and they must carry what they possess in bags as they can't leave bags at the night shelters].

We're so grateful to all who enable this effort, and especially to Bro & Sis Jim and Anne Barton from Canada who worked for two months at the Centre. The strong winds and moisture in the air mean that temperatures such as -26 feel like far worse than that. Mucus freezes in the nose and breathing is difficult for many of our folk; they have to be out on the streets much of the day as the night shelters work from 8 p.m. up to 8 a.m. only.

We've also been buying and delivering firewood, grateful for Brother Maxim's assistance. Some of our brothers and sisters live in property which they are effectively squatting in, and electric bills haven't been paid so there is no electricity. There are not many hours of daylight at this time; it's hard to capture the darkness, lit at best by a candle; and the dampness and general cold. Using flash photography makes everything seem different; note in the photo below our sister wears full outdoor clothing indoors all the time.



Bro Maxim with Sis Brigita in her 'home'. Sis Brigita was found squatting by the owner but as she had gone to such efforts to make it homely and tidy, for now the owner has allowed her to stay as a caretaker. God's providence in action.



There have been baptisms most weeks

Here then are Jim and Anne's reports: This year's mission began as my wife Anne and I arrived in Riga in mid-November and is winding up now in early January. Once again it's been a very rich experience as we provided a hot meal to the poor, the homeless and indigent of Riga, through the Carelinks Winter Welfare Program. While these people are in dire need of respite from the cold (-21 today) and some physical nourishment for their souls, they are also provided with a daily Bible Study to nourish their Spirit. Best of all there's been several baptisms while we've

been here, praise God. Our responsibilities have mainly been to provide the meals each day from Sunday to Thursday. A typical day starts with a trip to the local market to acquire the ingredients of that day's menu, most of the afternoon to prepare it, serve it at 6pm and then clean up. We are tired at the end of the day but it's a good kind of "tired" that comes from feeling your time and energy have been well spent. How often while serving the food we hear appreciative comments that truly lifts up our hearts. So often I can only think that "there by the grace of God, go I". It's hard to receive the abundant blessings we've enjoyed in our prosperous lives without feeling a need to give back in a meaningful way, that reflects positively upon the Lord.



Bro Jim presents Bro Igor with a stick and explains how to alter the height of it

It's not all work either. While here we've been able to enjoy the rich Latvian culture. It's a uniquely European experience that has further enriched our lives and enhanced our stay. If you're able to free up some time, please do consider participating in this wonderful project. The program could be extended further into the year with additional manpower. We are so pleased to be a part of this mission and would recommend it to anyone. You will never forget the time spent here, we know we never will. To learn more contact 'Carelinks' at info@carelinks.net . Bro Jim Barton

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

This is our second trip to Riga to support the Bible Centre and we stayed for 8 weeks this time rather than the 4 weeks on our first trip. We serve soup on Sunday for lunch after the Memorial Service and on Monday through Thursday for supper, after an hour of social time with coffee and an hour of Bible talks. We try to offer both spiritual and physical food as well as a warm place to be for a couple of hours each day. A longer stay gives us the benefit of getting to know many of our guests a little better.

One of my most memorable experiences was when we were trying to find a way to better serve the soup, bread and dessert item to streamline the process. Jim and I figured out that we could use a longer table to serve and a smaller table a short distance away to collect dirty dishes and spoons. We then had to convey this idea to the Russians that help set up for us. We found ourselves explaining this change to our Latvian sister Anna who speaks English as well. She spoke Latvian to sister Sondra who speaks Latvian and Russian and Sondra translated into Russian for the other helpers. Once all the Russians heard, then they all had opinions and started chattering in Russian. Meanwhile Jim and I just stood there stunned while all this went on. It reminded us of an old game called 'Telephone' where you are all in a circle and someone starts a message around the circle. Each person hears the message then repeats it to the person on the other side and when the last person gets the message they repeat it out loud. Usually there is much laughter since the message often sounds nothing like the original. It all

worked out and the new set-up has been very functional but I will never forget that night. Since one of my concerns before we came the first time was how to manage when we knew nothing of Latvian or Russian, it was quite a relief to find there was almost always a way to communicate - one of my favorites is to find a young person and ask if they speak English - many learn it in school and enjoy the opportunity to practice.

I have to confess that most of my concerns about coming here have never been a problem and the rewards are overwhelming. I had no idea that this trip would change my outlook in so many ways. I thank God continually for the experience and the spiritual growth he has brought into my life.

Sis Anne Barton - Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Enter into the spirit of Riga Bible Centre ~ watch our New Year's video: <https://youtu.be/s72HjjFHR-A>

Carelinks | Ukraine



The economic situation in Ukraine continues to go downwards, and the war in Eastern Ukraine is claiming many lives and limbs despite the Western media going quiet about it. Infrastructure is breaking down, and the nation faces a real risk of descending from the 'second world' to effectively a third world country in Europe. Pensioners are especially hard hit. Inflation is rampant but pensions remain the same. So perhaps it is not surprising that we had a bumper attendance of over 70 brothers and sisters at the Winter Bible School this year, where we enjoyed the company of Bro John and Sis Margaret Greenwood from the UK. There were visitors attending from throughout Ukraine as well as Russia, Belarus, Moldova and Poland; one sister came in from Eastern Ukraine, making a huge journey from Eastern Ukraine into Russia and thence back into Ukraine proper to avoid the block posts which both sides have erected along the front line. We also enjoyed the company of two brothers and a sister from Nigeria. It was a wonderful atmosphere to be with believers both new and old, packed into a meeting room all eagerly listening with Bibles open [or the younger ones reading Bibles from their phones] and taking notes- and freely talking about the ideas presented in the evening chats amongst themselves.



Some present were baptized in the early 90s, and we have no greater joy than to hear that our children continue to walk in truth. There were three baptisms, from teenager through middle age to elderly: Darina, teenage daughter of brother Igor and sister Irina; Nikolay, a middle aged man who found us online whilst searching for a new Bible, and who fitted in most naturally with the group as if he had always been with us; and Josip, an elderly man with failing sight who lives in the same village as two of our sisters. Darina is pictured above right with her happy parents just before her baptism.

The final evening was a talent night, with Bible questions, skits of scenes like Joseph blessing Manasseh and Ephraim, and Joseph meeting Jacob in Egypt (pictured above). It was wonderful to see Jacob's sons played by believers of various nationalities, ages and colours- all gathered by the Lord's hand in freezing, broken down Ukraine.



We really do deeply thank you all for making these Bible Schools possible, by prayer and donation. We have to pay the fares of most of the local attendees; but without these schools they just would not have much sense of community and fellowship in Christ. So thank you all so much for enabling these happy and truly spiritual events. Do come along yourselves- the next Ukrainian School is planned for the Summer (God willing) and we wonder if any out there would like to come and give some talks? Do contact us at info@carelinks.net.

Here's a brief summary from sister Margaret Greenwood: "This was my first visit to the Ukraine Bible School and John had not been since 1999. He was delighted to meet some brothers and sisters who were present at that time. It was a particular pleasure to meet Veronica because John has spoken about her after his previous visit. She and others who spoke English introduced themselves and helped us to get to know many others. Although we could not follow the discussions in Russian it was obvious that the brothers and sisters were passionate as they discussed and debated about the Word of God.

John gave talks including a series on Romans, and others on the prophecy of Habakkuk, an introduction to John's Gospel and the difficult subject of Repentance, Forgiveness and Reconciliation. The temperature outside has been well below freezing earlier in January and there was thick snow on the ground when we arrived, but it was a little warmer whilst we were there and the snow had begun to melt. The accommodation was comfortable and the food was adequate (although we did get tired of grated beetroot at almost every meal!). Our abiding

memory will be of brothers and sisters – many of whom live in difficult circumstances – sharing a love of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”.

Carelinks | United Kingdom



Brother Graham, whose baptism we reported in July, fell asleep in the Lord recently. Our brother was wheelchair bound and was baptized with great difficulty- a testament of his sincerity. Thank you to all who sent him cards, he loved them, and now sleeps waiting for the fulfillment of his various dreams of what he would do in the Kingdom of God on earth.

There is an explosion of interest in the Iranian community within the United Kingdom. In various parts of the UK, with assistance from various local brothers and sisters and ecclesias, we're pleased to report the baptisms of Seyed, Mohammad M, Reza, Motchtaba, Mohammad J, Ezzatallah, Farhad, Hossen, Mojtaba K, Rebar, Sako, Omid, Hassan, Hawsar, Farnoush, Amin and Alireza.

We pay tribute to the great work of brother Vahid of Liverpool for coordinating things throughout the United Kingdom, from Wales to Scotland. Vahid's brother in Iran was executed for his Christian activities, and Vahid shared with us photos published by the state of his head and torso after the execution. Vahid faces possible deportation back to Hungary, where he first entered the European Union, so we are praying this doesn't happen. He is sorely needed in the expanding group in the UK.

As we travelled around the inner cities of the UK, in the areas where most of our new brethren live, the process of Islamization and decline of traditional British culture was evident everywhere. It is not much apparent outside of the inner cities, but there it is clear enough. Even in the one time bastions of Protestantism in South Wales, church after church has been turned into a mosque, with the crosses replaced by crescent moons, the stained glass with prayer turrets directed towards Mecca:



Yet here, around the corner from that mosque, is a newly baptized ecclesia of Iranians and Iraqis.



A group of the newly baptized in Glasgow

Nine of the baptisms were in Glasgow, Scotland. Brother Andy Taylor brought brother Vahid there by car, and Andy also gave an appropriate exhortation for the breaking of bread, commenting upon how Abraham left Iraq and journeyed to Israel, just as these brethren are likewise on a journey which has providentially taken them from Persia to Scotland. Clearly, without doubt, God is in each and every life of these dear people, and we are playing a providentially intended part in that journey.

Andy reports: “In Glasgow on Thursday, we had the privilege to assist in the baptisms of nine Iranians, most of whom are asylum seekers. Brother Vahid, himself a recently baptised asylum seeker played a key role in translating Duncan’s concise and clear presentation of the Gospel message and all the doctrines of our faith, and the question and answer session. Vahid is a wonderful brother whose zealousness for the Lord Jesus is amazing, and his determination to share his faith is truly inspirational. Ghasem, one of the nine soon to be baptised, also gave invaluable help with translation. It was great to have the support of local brothers and sisters. We benefited from the ministrations of Bro Bob and Sis Adele Watt, and it was also good to have the help of Bro James Dean who spent his work lunch-time supporting us in the hotel. It was a privilege to break bread together with our new brothers, who it was a joy to share with.



Vahid translating Andy at the breaking of bread

The trip back to Liverpool with Vahid was interesting, but the deepening snow on the M74 just added to the excitement of a wonderful day! My feeling about what we did in Glasgow is that it is the start of something that I've been praying for for years. That is that Muslims, who will clearly have a problem with the doctrine of the trinity and other wrong doctrines, start to turn to the true Gospel in large numbers. Vahid seems so determined to expand the Truth. He seems so accepting of what may be going to happen to him, and if he is made to go back to Hungary, I have promised that I will go and track him down there. This work must not be undermined by infighting and the dead hand of ecclesial bureaucracy. I am so pleased that Glasgow South have accepted our new brothers and we must do all we can to support them in this”.

We urge all ecclesias to accept these new brethren, and appeal for individuals to come forward who are willing to baptize our further Iranian contacts into Christ. Language is a barrier, but they

have Persian Bible Basics, as hard copy and PDF, and usually one is available to translate. We need to walk in step with Spirit, and follow where clearly we are being led. We totally understand the fear which there is in British society, as well as in the brotherhood, concerning Muslims, Middle Eastern folks, young men with beards called Mohammed and so forth... but we remind you that the extremists are a tiny minority of immigrants.

The core of our preaching work is through Bible Basics- and we do now need to reprint the Farsi/Persian edition of that book in hard copy. You can see it on the tables in the photos. Please donate if you can to keep our literature freely available. There are also some welfare issues with the new brethren especially those in Germany. We are open to your donations.

See our video about this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-Ua64IU_Q it was shot as we stood on the platform in Macedonia having fed and met hundreds of migrants.

Carelinks | South Sudan

With all the media focus on Syria, don't forget that some of the worst atrocities in the world have been going on in South Sudan in recent times. A couple of years ago we went to Malakal, the second city in South Sudan, and baptized a number of young brethren in the river Nile there. As you will see from the BBC report (link below), Malakal is now a ghost town, the loss of life and destruction has been gruesome beyond words, we leave you to read the BBC report rather than attempt to describe it. Those brethren are all presumed dead now, so they were baptized just in time; a reminder that we must respond immediately to the Gospel, and to those desiring to respond to the Lord Jesus, who truly was their only Hope.

BBC Report: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-34571435>

The Human Problem of Suffering -- An Article for Discussion



The reason for suffering is sometimes difficult to comprehend and this article is an attempt to provoke thoughts to help more deeply understand it. Your comments will be most welcome.

The problem of suffering has no easy answer. Let me say that at the start. And the answers which the Bible gives are not, at the first impression, what secular man would like to hear. But at the outset, let's observe that some of the problems associated with the question arise from false theologies and interpretations. Not least is the idea that God gives only good, wants us to have a fantastic life free of suffering, and therefore all the negative stuff must be blamed upon a supernatural being known as the Devil or Satan. This is not what the Bible teaches. This is a simplistic theology which has its roots in paganism and not in the one true God. It creates more problems and more mental suffering than it ever solves. I've written extensively about the issue in *The Real Devil*, which you can freely access at www.realdevil.info. For now, let's allow the words of Isaiah 45:5-7 their full weight: "I am Yahweh, and there is none else. Besides Me, there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not known Me... I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create calamity. I am Yahweh, who does all these things". This was written in the context of Judah in captivity starting to be influenced by the pagan ideas that there was a good God and a bad one. But there is not; struggle with it as we may, the one true God is all powerful, and all things, positive and negative, have their source in Him.

Men with our Questions

The Bible has a wonderful way of correctly anticipating our questions and doubts - and addressing them. The questions are taken right out of our minds, and placed in the mouths or

on the pens of Bible characters. The prophet Habakkuk takes the thoughts, doubts and struggles out of our minds when he begins his short prophecy with a list of questions about the justice and morality of God. Reading his opening questions, we are immediately attracted to him. For the questions of this ancient Israelite man in Habakkuk chapter 1 are our questions in this age: Why do the wicked prosper? Why does God tolerate them? Why is there so much injustice? Why do the innocent suffer so terribly? He stubbornly stands upon his watchtower and awaits the answers from God (Hab. 2:1). With baited breath, we await smart, profound responses from God in chapter 2, brief, pithy answers that are going to leave us feeling with relief 'Ah! OK, now I see... yes, I never thought of that, never saw it that way'. But there is nothing. The silence is deafening. In Habakkuk 2 we have veiled references to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, and the final establishment of His Kingdom on earth. But no specific answers to the questions which grabbed our attention as we first began reading the book in chapter 1. Habakkuk concludes his prophecy with a Psalm of praise, eagerly awaiting the coming of God's Kingdom on earth and the realization of the Hope of Israel. The Bible teaches the good news of the Kingdom of God as the ultimate answer to all our struggles of understanding and experience- the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth after the resurrection of the body at Christ's return. Then, "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126:5); then shall come true Mt. 5:4: "Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be comforted".

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. - Job 38:4

Under the old covenant, God had promised that the flocks, fig trees and vines of His faithful people would be blessed (Lev. 26; Dt. 28). But Habakkuk concludes: "For though the fig tree doesn't flourish, nor fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive fails, the fields yield no food; the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in Yahweh. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! Yahweh, the Lord, is my strength. He makes my feet like deer's feet, and enables me to go in high places" (Hab. 3:17-19). He knows that he shall be saved, finally, even though he received no answers to his questions, and despite the lack of present blessing as he thought it ought to be. That's the point- we have our ideas and expectations of what life ought to be, of what blessing should look like in my life. And we don't get it. As with any dashed expectation, we tend to get angry and resentful when things don't work out. But this is where faith and hope come in, and the perspective of God's Kingdom. And at this point, let's just define faith and hope. The Bible was written mostly in Hebrew and Greek. The original words translated "faith" mean effectively 'trust'. Trust means we do not have all the answers, nor do we have a clear picture of our immediate path in this world. "Hope" doesn't mean 'a hope for the best', an unfounded positive feeling that things will work out nicely. The Greek "elpis" refers to a solid, firm expectation. The "blessed hope" which the Bible speaks of is not something which might be, hopefully, for me, or at least for someone (Tit. 2:13). It refers to a concrete knowledge and expectation of a future event.

Job was another Bible character who had our questions about suffering, fairness, 'where is God in all this?' and so forth (Job 9 is full of these questions). And, like Habakkuk, he received no specific answers. God simply affirmed His greatness, and Job is convicted of his sinfulness and repents. And is saved, and the curtain goes down on his life with Job a happy man with his God.

Answers We Don't Want to Hear

All this isn't what we really would like to hear. We want to have the answers. We don't want our questions about suffering ignored and left without specific answers. Rom. 9:18-20 raise the

issues of God's fairness, with the inspired author correctly second guessing our questions. And the answer is not what we quite want to hear: "So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens whom He wishes. Then you will say to me: Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will? No, O man; who are you to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it: Why did you make me thus?". The answer is that it is not for us to so reason with God, but to accept His work; for we are the clay and He is the potter. Job learned the same, finally. He had a mass of questions for God, and God replied by asking him questions. And Job feels his case against God has totally collapsed, and begs for forgiveness. But my point is, that no answers are given by God to Job's mass of questions about suffering, Divine justice, fairness etc.: "Then Job answered Yahweh, I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be restrained. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I didn't know. You said, 'Listen, now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer Me'. I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:1-6). The American constitution guarantees all citizens the right to the "pursuit of happiness"; and this reflects the presumption of every man in whatever time and culture. But the Bible speaks of only one right- and that is to death. Any experience of blessings and salvation from death is not by right, but will be experienced by grace alone- for those who can humble themselves to believe in that grace. Nor should we think that by good works can we expect a life of blessing and absence from suffering. "How could that happen to such a good person?" is a question we frequently hear and ourselves ask. But the Bible again gives us an answer that makes us wince, and shuffle our feet uncomfortably: "There is none good, not one" (Rom. 3:23). All are serious sinners. And the more so because the sinful world for which we alone are responsible means that little children also must die at times, in this order of things. Others suffer the consequences of our sins or those which we would have committed had we had the chance and place in time or space; and that includes Adam's sin.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth greatly" - Psalm 139:14

Again and again - we don't like these responses. 'It's not for you to ask these questions about justice and suffering... you can't understand... you are a sinner and need salvation yourself, focus on that... suffering is ultimately for the spiritual maturing and perfection of those who trust in Him'. But these are in fact God's answers to the questions about suffering. But because we don't like the answers, we think God is totally silent about it. Job fell into this trap- he had stacks of questions for God about suffering and Divine justice. But Elihu, speaking on God's behalf, wisely comments: "Why do you accuse God of never answering our complaints? Although God speaks again and again, no one pays attention to what he says" (Job 33:13,14 GNB). The fact the answer isn't what we want to hear doesn't mean that He has made no answer. Elihu also perceptively notes that Job's anger with God over the questions of suffering arises from a false sense that he is totally innocent: "Job claims that he is innocent, that God refuses to give him justice" (Job 34:5 GNB). Job kept on about his own innocence. And the answer was that he was not innocent; and he realized this and broke down in confession of sin. So one important perspective on these questions is that we are sinners, and the wages of sin is death.

The Lord Jesus brought this out so clearly when commenting on the fall of the Siloam tower which had killed a number of people beneath it. We can imagine the questions: 'Why those people? Where was God in that! Innocent people died!'. And we so often hear this complaint-

that innocent people suffer. The Lord's comment was: "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you No, but unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:4,5). Those 18 were not innocent; and neither are any of us. So the question of 'Why them?' was declared inappropriate. Suffering, the suffering of death, is coming to our door- right up to each and every one of us. The form of death, whether in a building collapse or from simple old age, is in that sense not relevant. The tragedy of the human position elicits the question: 'What can I do to get out of it? Or to help others avoid it?'. And the answer is clearly given: Repent, so that you do not perish. This was the thrust of Peter's appeal in Acts chapter 2; and thousands of people saw the point, and were baptized immediately.

Sin and Suffering

The wider problem of suffering and Divine justice is well addressed in the book of Job. He was a wealthy man, who earnestly served the Lord. But he suffered terribly, lost everything, wealth, family and health. His friends held the view that obedience leads to blessing, and disobedience nets suffering straight away, in this life. They start speculating as to what sins of Job would've merited this suffering. Was it a woman? Abuse of workers? Idolatry? Job searches himself and finds himself innocent of such sins, and becomes increasingly worked up and distressed. He really is innocent, so he feels; and that God is unfair. And as the book progresses, the friends become increasingly convinced that they are right and Job is wrong; he needs to just admit

and confess

what he has done wrong, and his blessings will return. The book ends with all of them being demonstrated as seriously wrong. Yet until that point, our sympathies are actually with all the characters and all the arguments; they all seem fair enough, from a human viewpoint. The Divine answer is not what we at first impression would like to hear. We are all sinners, Job included. And God simply doesn't pay out immediately. He is working according to a far bigger program, which wishes only our eternal good at our latter end. And Job becomes a prototype of the future sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the parade example of the righteous suffering unfairly. It is the issue of human sin which is one of the keys in all this. We are sinners, and we need to take that more seriously. We have no right to life, for the wages of sin is death. It's no good blaming Adam; for if we were in his shoes, we would have done the same. That is how I understand Rom. 5:12 "For as by one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned".

"...that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" - Ephesians 2:7

If we have no right to life, how much less do we have a right to a life free from suffering and full only of what we perceive as blessings. Here again the Bible has a case study to help us. Solomon had all that men would regard as blessings. Health, wealth, women, reputation, ability and freedom to pursue whatever path of interest took his fancy. And the book of Ecclesiastes shows us that without God as the central factor in human life, all those blessings do not bring happiness. Happiness, in the sense of freedom from suffering, therefore doesn't exist in ultimate terms- without God.

Our calling as believers is to walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8). Happiness is often only perceived in retrospect- we look back at a period in our lives as happy, but that's only because memory is selective. We simply have to ditch the idea that life now must and can be just great.

The life without suffering is not for now; believers shall eternally live it, in God's Kingdom. But for now, we must live in a suffering world, and suffer ourselves, prepare ourselves for that eternity. Human history is not even a millimetre along the eternal line of God's infinite life which He wishes to share with us. And yet some miserably object having to suffer briefly now. Throughout infinite future time, God will lavish His grace upon us in the ages of eternity. So says Eph. 2:7.

Suffering for Believers

As believers, we cannot immediately attach meaning to an event. We don't pass through life with the smug impression that everything makes perfect sense. But we do have the strong impression that we are on a journey, and that life experience is not a sequence of random events. Our baptism into Jesus was like Israel passing through the waters of the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Our life afterwards is like their wilderness journey towards the promised land of God's Kingdom on earth. We have a destination. Every step of the path is towards a definite, clearly defined point of destination. The New Testament speaks of how the Lord is working with us towards our perfection, a point of final maturity. The human lifespan is not even a millimetre long, compared to the life eternal which awaits us. God, as it were, has to pack a lot in to a short space to prepare us. As cotton wool clouds pass lazily across the sky, we can easily lose this sense of the urgency and intensity of His work in our lives. But all things are in fact moving at breakneck speed towards the achievement of God's final, saving purpose with this earth. There is a climax to human history, which shall be in the return of the Lord Jesus. My point is simply that life for the believer is not a random event. Nothing is chance. All has an intention, even if we miss the point or waste the potential. But inexorably, through it all, God is seeking to move us forward on the path towards our final salvation. Take Joseph as an example. As a teenager, he had dreams from God, that one day his brothers would bow to him. They unreasonably hated him, and at 17 years old faked his death and sold him into slavery in Egypt. There, again, he was falsely accused and imprisoned. Whilst there, he offered to interpret the dreams of two men, confident that God's dreams would come true. And they did. As a result of that, Pharaoh called for him to interpret his dreams and again, Joseph believed that dreams given by God come true. As a result, he was promoted from prison to be prince of Egypt. And about 10 years later, his brothers came bowing to him, begging for food during the famine. His dreams were fulfilled. But for decades of hard experience up until then, Joseph lived in a situation where it seemed those dreams could never come true for him. He saw the dreams of others coming true; but his never did. But still he held on to his basic faith that they would. And that faith was rewarded. He summed up the situation in Gen. 50:20: "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good... to save many people alive". Through the long-drawn out process of unfair suffering, God worked. Ultimately, to save people. Looking at his life at any one point during those earlier years, all the questions of why the innocent suffer, the wicked prosper... would have remained apparently unanswered. But the lesson is that God's saving purpose will eventually come true for us- if we remain within that purpose in faith / trust. And it is through the decades of unanswered questions that it all works out in the wonderful way it does. In Joseph's case, he must have wondered about one stubborn detail in his first dream which didn't, apparently, come true. It was that his mother along with his father and brothers would bow down to him. He was taught through his sufferings in prison and in the trauma of the famine that God's dreams do come true. And his brothers did bow to him as predicted. But... his mother? She was dead when God gave him that first prophetic dream as a teenager. And so she never bowed to him when his brothers did. And yet he believed that God's dreams come true; he had been taught to believe this by experience. So he would have been driven to the same hope and resolution that we are-

that at the last day, God's people will be resurrected and all that has been promised us shall come gloriously true. In God's own time and way which we may not understand.

“Yahweh reigns! He is clothed with majesty! Yahweh is armed with strength. The world also is established to stand firm, so that it can't be moved. -- Psalm 93:1

Through all his sufferings and unanswered questions and struggles about suffering and God's rightness in allowing it all... Job was driven to a firm hope in the resurrection of the dead and final, ultimate justice being done when he would see God face to face. This would be when “at the last day he will stand upon the earth”, in the second coming of Christ (Job 19:25-27). This is the final key which shall turn the stiff lock created by all our struggles about suffering. Then we shall understand and see things perfectly; “for now we see in a glass, darkly; but then, face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12). After all, we are only human. No more, but no less. Our insistence that we must, right now, this moment, understand completely... shall then be seen for the petulance of a child, who doesn't have the apparatus to understand the answers even if they are given. Now that, of course, is humbling; for we wish to see ourselves as mature and capable of understanding. ‘No! Tell me, I know I can ‘get it’, I'm old enough to know, and I will understand if you tell me’. This is effectively what many of our struggles amount to. But a child's struggles and frustrations at not being able to understand are real enough, and we would never seek to mock them nor say that they are not legitimate. They are legitimate and real enough... and painful enough. So in saying that the full mystery has not yet been revealed (for we see through a glass, darkly), I am in no way brushing off the legitimacy of our pain and struggles over these matters. But “through a glass, darkly” we do see an outline form of understanding. Even if it emerges from the glaze of years of our own tears and head shaking.

There must be a cross before that eternal crown; God's Son is the parade example. Paul reflected that “Our slight momentary affliction accomplishes for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison; whilst meantime we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17,18). Heb. 12:7-12 and so many other Bible passages speak of suffering as being for the eternal good of the sufferer: “Endure your sufferings as a father's chastening; it shows how God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not chastise? But if you are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then aren't you illegitimate children and not real sons? Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them respect; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness. All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yields peaceable fruit to those that have been exercised thereby- the fruit of righteousness. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees”. Part of that suffering is that we must live in an imperfect world, full of suffering and imperfection. Suffering has meaning for believers in that it trains us for eternity. Short of creating us as robots, this environment is necessary. We learn by the experience of opposites. A child learns ‘up’ and ‘down’ at the same time; not ‘up’ one week and then ‘down’ a month later. Thus both light and darkness, good and evil [in the sense of calamity] ultimately come from God (Is. 45:5-7).

“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you? - Job 38:34

Suffering for Unbelievers

But this all begs the obvious observation- that is all very well for the believer, who has the perspective of God's Kingdom ahead to help him or her contextualize all present sufferings. But what of those who do not believe? Why do they suffer? And that is indeed the question that torments us all. In God's wisdom, it could be that this state of affairs is permitted, and even enabled, by Him- in order to bring the unbelieving world to the Hope of His Kingdom. For the hope of the future Kingdom of God on earth is indeed the only Biblical explanation and context for suffering.

But what of those who have not heard the good news of that Kingdom? Why should they suffer? And the Bible is pretty much silent about that- apart from to observe that all are sinners, all would have done what Adam did were they there in Eden faced with his choices (Rom. 5:12). The fallen world we live in is as it is because of the result of Adam's sin. The nature of sin is such that it affects other people; people suffer because of other's sin. That is one of the reasons why babies and children die. There is little point in wriggling and protesting about this- it is quite obviously how it is. And that fact does not in the slightest take away from the actual existence of God. You may not like it, or be bold enough to even say you don't agree with it. But that is how things are, and your dislike of God's larger plan and way of working doesn't in the slightest take away from His existence. We must come to terms with it; and in practice, that means humbling ourselves before Him, recognizing we see only "through a glass, darkly", accepting the Hope of the Kingdom for ourselves- and then doing all we can to extend that hope to as many others as is within our power. For the call to evangelize the good news of the Kingdom is inextricably and naturally connected with personally having that blessed Hope ourselves.

Atheism and the Problem of Suffering

Wanting answers to all our 'why suffering?' questions seems to me rather like demanding concrete reasons to believe; searching science for hard visible evidence that God exists. But this is not the nature of faith. I'm aware that many calling themselves atheists will say 'If there's a God, then where is He when...' various tragedies happen. But I am not convinced there are any really solid, hard to the core atheists out there. In their heart of hearts. Because we can never disprove the existence of God. There is no experiment to be done which declares 'He's not there'. And so each and every atheist has to live with that niggling doubt. Many who have come to faith admit the nigggle of the doubt they felt. And the louder and more dogmatically and publically they declare His non-existence... the more desperate they are to drown out that little niggling voice within. The question of suffering is difficult for us all, of whatever religious persuasion [or not]. Atheism also is no real answer to it. In fact, to take God out of the equation leaves us at the mercy of the winds of fortune to such an extent that life becomes a hideous running of gauntlets, defying statistics, fearing the strokes of bad luck and misadventure. Ending all the same in death, and the loss of all we once held dear in this world. And that final suffering-death itself- is left with no deeper meaning, nor is it removed, by atheism. So I cannot accept that the problem of suffering is a very valid excuse for atheism. There is no sensible reason why suffering means there is no higher power. That simply does not follow. At best it might be a reason to disagree with certain interpretations of that higher power, but not to doubt its existence. Atheism doesn't take it away. The atheist [if such really exist] is left with the problem of suffering. Any attempts to philosophize it away do not take it away in reality.

"The wicked, in the pride of his face, has no room for thoughts for God." - Psalm 10:4

The Nature of Humanity

Another window onto all this is to accept the Biblical picture of the nature of humanity. We are sinners, and by nature are no more than animals. We live, breathe and exhale our last breath, returning to the dust as they do (Ecc. 3:18-20; 9:5; Ps. 146:4; Is. 38:18,19). "Dying you shall die... you shall return to the dust from which you were made" was God's judgment upon Adam and his children. Everything within us cries out that by nature we are so much more than animals, and our human suffering and death is of a much higher order than theirs. But that is not the Biblical picture. There are many human theories and fantasies about the nature of man, not least the pagan idea that we are 'immortal souls'. But the Bible teaches time and again that the 'soul' is mortal; we die, totally. The only hope of immortality is in Christ (2 Tim. 1:10), granted at the resurrection from the dead at His return (1 Cor. 15:53,54), through whom alone immortality has been revealed to those in Him, by baptism and abiding in Him. He is the only way, truth and life. This is all so hard for man to accept. But without this backdrop to the Gospel, the Gospel of the Kingdom, of bodily resurrection to eternal life through Christ, is all really such vital good news. But once we humble ourselves to accept our humanity, that we are no more and no less than human- then actually, the hope of resurrection and eternal life is exactly the good news which we need. It is a perfect fit for that hole in our hearts, that desperate need, however unspoken or vaguely articulated.

For those who consider that man is somehow more than human and higher than the beasts who perish- the problem of human suffering becomes the more deeply painful. And more so, because there is no human way out of it. No medicine to take which makes us live for ever, no clever cures for broken legs or divorces or fires that burn houses down or the war next door. Those with no place for God in their thinking become deeply frustrated with human suffering- because there is no human way out of it. Only cosmetic amelioration of it, a touch here and a bit there, but all the same ending in death and eternal demise. Only allowing God into the hopeless equation gives a chance of solving it. And once we accept God's existence- then all changes. We trust / believe that God is love. That He has a purpose. And we give up seeking to argue or resist His will. For we are just men, dust and ashes, water and complex chemicals. And in that humility is great peace and freedom. 'Walk humbly before your God' is the appeal of the book of Micah. We are to accept God as He reveals Himself in His word- and bow before Him: "Yahweh! Yahweh! A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation. Moses hurried and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped" (Ex. 34:58). It is not for us to tell God how we think He should be, nor for us to create God after our own image and imaginations as to how He should be. It is for us to humble ourselves to accept Him as he is.

"... God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." - 1 John 4:16

Without God and the perspective of His Kingdom coming on earth, a hope that runs like a golden thread throughout the Bible, the equation is not solvable. And so what can we do but conclude that God has allowed the present situation on this earth in order to bring every humble person towards a faith in Him and His Kingdom. It is only those who refuse Him who will find the situation an unbearable riddle which cannot be solved. Accept Him and His plan in Christ- and whilst the suffering doesn't disappear, nor do all the hard questions evaporate, we have at least a personal framework for understanding our place in this world. And the trust that finally, all shall make the most perfect sense, and we shall one day reflect that it could not have been any better way. The problem of those who have not heard remains a difficult one but that of itself

does not in the slightest take away from the existence of God. Perhaps one reason for that difficult question is that it ought to provoke each believer to do all they can to fulfil the Lord's parting commission to us all- to take the Gospel to every person on this earth. The problem of those who have not heard may partly be explicable by accepting that the problem largely exists because the believers have not taken the message to all. All have not heard because they were not told. God always works through mechanisms, not that He needs to, but He clearly chooses to. He has delegated this work to us, the church; or 'entrusted' us with the Gospel, as the New Testament puts it. We have freewill. And the church has not done its job as it was intended. And so others have suffered ignorance because of our dysfunction. Just as any human failure or dysfunction results in the suffering of others. Any other way would mean that God has not given us freewill and the consequences which come along with the gift of genuine freewill.

Suffering and the Love of God

What is so endlessly fascinating about God is that despite all the suffering on earth, there is a gentleness and love that also runs through all His ways. After all, according to the Bible, He is the God who gave His only begotten Son for human salvation- when He surely could have thought up all manner of ways to achieve that same end result. The gift of His Son was to demonstrate His love for us, publicly displayed for all time. And there is a beauty in His creation which becomes the more exquisite the closer we look. He is the God who gave Israel the law of Moses, which reflects His intense awareness and sensitivity towards His people. The oxen were allowed to eat some of the grain they were treading out. There was deep sensitivity to every human situation. And supremely, the manifestation of God in His Son reveals just how much He does in fact care.

The Answer of the Cross

The cross puts a perspective on why God allows human suffering. It certainly isn't because He is mean or nasty. A God like that would not have given His Son, let alone in the way that He did. There is in secular man a search for love; 'Can I find love in this world?' is the haunting question, repeated in music and every art form, and finding expression both verbalized and subconsciously in every human life. And the cross of Christ is the answer. The fact this supreme expression of Divine love was made within such extreme suffering, both physical and mental, is surely God's way of saying that He is no stranger to suffering and has fully participated in our pain. We are called to not simply accept that 2000 years ago, on a hill outside Jerusalem, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon... this actually happened. But to further participate in Him there. We are invited to know and have the mind of Christ there (Phil. 2:5). To be baptized into Him, to abide in Him, to go through the same stages of His progressive humiliation, that we might share in His eternal glorification (Phil. 2:5-8). He there is God beckoning to us, we in this world of suffering, we who alone know the pain of our own hearts... to find love, love to be experienced and lived out within our suffering world, within the suffering of our own minds and bodies. He there... re-phrases the question of 'Why me?' to 'Why Him?'. Why would the only sinless, guiltless man, who only ever did good... have to die, and to die that death? He there was and is our representative; not a substitute for our suffering [for why then should we now suffer?], but our representative.

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." - Psalm 91:1

He had our nature, knew our pain, our hunger, to the end. It was love for us, the love that seeks to identify and empathize with the beloved, that held Him there to that stake of wood- and not the nails. Someone, somewhere, knows all about your sufferings, and the suffering of this world. Maybe you are right in feeling that there is nobody on this earth who can understand what you have passed through; even if they sat and listened to you telling your story for a month, paid attention and agreed and sympathized... you would still feel they could not quite feel it all for you. And... there were bits you forgot, aspects you didn't express well, parts you misremembered. But there is someone, now, who does completely understand the Lord Jesus, the Man who suffered and died as He did for you. Whatever our questions about suffering and why God permits it, the gift of God's Son overarches those struggles with the fact that God is love. And He has demonstrated that. It's not that on one hand He loves us, but on another hand He doesn't, and we are to come to some synthesis of the positions. No. God is love. Somehow, all the suffering works together for the final good of His purpose, which is centred around love. We do not now understand the how; but that is our limitation. To expect to understand it all is, frankly, immature; and carries the deep inappropriacy which at times goes with immaturity. Such a demand assumes we are more than human when we are not. In the cross of Christ, God was with us; Emmanuel. Man is not alone; you are not alone, I am not alone. God is with us. Because His Son knew exactly our human condition, and identified with all its pain through being nailed to a cross, naked, despised, rejected, forsaken by all; He who there 'learned obedience through what He suffered' (Heb. 5:8). That is for all time a statement of His humanity, how He was not God, not part of a Trinity or other mistaken human philosophy. He was one of us; and again, He there for all time showed that suffering has a purpose. Once we bring into view God Himself, human sin and mortality, Divine grace, salvation and the things of God's Kingdom.

What Should I Do Now?

"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Have the faith which is trust. Humble yourself to realize your own desperation, accept God's love and identify yourself with Christ. Rejoice in the sure Hope of God's Kingdom; give your life to sharing that hope with others. And walk humbly with your God.

We would be so happy to help you study the Bible further and to be baptized into Christ. There is more information about baptism at www.baptizo.info. And we can offer you free hard or soft copies of the following books:

- **New European Version Bible with commentary:** <http://www.n-e-v.info>
- **Bible Basics**, a study manual going through all the doctrines of the Gospel: <http://www.biblebasicsonline.com>
- **The Real Devil**, a study of satan, the devil and demons in the Bible: <http://www.realdevil.info>
- **The Real Christ**, a study of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, deconstructing the false doctrine of the Trinity and presenting the Biblical Jesus as God's Son, of our nature: <http://www.realchrist.info>

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