

February 2025 Afghanistan, Australia, Iran, Latvia, Morocco, UK

The *Bible Companion* app has been updated with more commentary and videos. If you have the app it should offer you the update, or download the app from www.freebible.info

AFGHANISTAN

This week we held a number of online meetings with our Farsi speaking contacts. Thanks to VPN, many continue to use and download the *Farsi Bible Companion* app behind the firewalls of the Islamic extremists in Iran and Afghanistan. FARISHTA a young woman from Afghanistan had devoted herself to the Lord Jesus and it was great to watch her baptize herself after a good confession of faith:

AUSTRALIA

Here's a long but truly rivetting testimony from newly baptized brother Nigel in Adelaide:

The Most Recent Chapter of My Journey with God and His Son Jesus.

Brief Background (FYI - I've never been brief in my life)

Most of my adult life I, in one sense, have felt alone because with all of the 'churches' I have been involved with, I did not understand what I was being told to believe.

My understanding of the Bible was different to the half a dozen 'denominations' of Christianity.

I Couldn't work out the idea of a trinity, 'that somehow God, the Father was the same as his only begotten Son Jesus and a spirit'.

I couldn't understand that somehow a new prophet came to us with a new book; New Testament 2.0??

Mostly though I couldn't work out why I was told I had to believe in these things to be baptised into Jesus, when none of this was to be found in the scriptures.

Consistent arguments were that they had the 'Truth' and I had to believe it because they had the key required for me to be baptised into Jesus... push hard 3 copies and repeat after me.

Hmmm... no sorry, I can't do that, but 'I love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind'. Doesn't that count for something... everything? No sorry, hey you're not a bad guy, we quite like you in fact, but you are not one of us. You are not a true believer.

Now at some point you have to say that if you don't think the same as 'everyone else' you are either absolutely wrong, or absolutely right.

I was sitting up in bed one morning, getting a bit (OK quite a lot) bent out of shape, wishing I could find people that thought more like me with regards to how the Bible was to be understood, so I could be baptised, but also so I could talk to 'other like-minded people'.

While talking with God, I got to the point of being frustrated and yeah angry.

(Yeah, a little embarrassed about the nature of that discussion, so I'll keep what was said to myself)

But basically, I wanted to find a way to be baptised without a group/organisation/committee standing in my way with the carrot of salvation but the stick of you must believe what we tell you to, even if you don't believe it yourself.

(I am currently working as a software programmer, 20+ years)

After calming down, and straightening myself out, I had a thought 'Use the internet, go online and search'.

Hmmm... Why didn't I think of that before???

So, while having a shower I was thinking of what search terms to use.

Once in my office, I started my searches... Ok boring myself here, so I'll just say I came across Christadelphians and a website that talked about a Bible version I had not come across before 'New European Version' (NEV).

I had some correspondence with a guy by the name of Duncan, living in England and he said he'd get in touch with a friend of his in Australia by the name of Mark, living in Perth who may be able to send me a hard copy of the NEV Bible; it would be quicker and postage from England would be a lot more expensive than from within Australia.

Mark called me and since we've have had a number of great conversations. In one, he spoke of Luke and Leah, who also lived in South Australia.

Not long after that, I received a call from Luke and Leah, who were very welcoming to me and said they'd like to come down to Adelaide and meet me.

I admit I was taken back a bit because they lived past the 'Black Stump'.

This, however, was no barrier to Luke and Leah, who were more than happy to make the over 2-hour journey. We made a time and place to meet, so that was that.

Next, I received a call from a Mark in Adelaide, who said "South Adelaide Ecclesia would welcome me with open arms". He also said he knew Luke and Leah and asked if I wanted to come down Sunday with them; to which I said yes; rather quickly if memory serves. The service started at 10am and Mark gave me the address.

After another discussion with Luke and Leah, who were again only too happy to drive me down to Plympton, to support and introduce me to the people there; many they knew, it was left they would pick me up at 9am.

Brief background over (Yeah, I know)

Things Get 'Spooky Weird'

Sunday morning comes, and I walk down my driveway to meet Luke and Leah, who greet me with big smiles and open arms.

Luke explains that he had ordered a 'part' and that someone was going to meet us here so he could collect it.

So, we chatted for a while before he turned up, then set off to South Adelaide Ecclesia.

(Recap so far: Long journey, with a delay)

Luke is driving, I'm navigator of sorts and Leah is in the back; who really should have been the navigator; all over it with Google Maps.

So after, not the most direct route, we're almost there and instead of turning right at the lights, we turn left (Yep, my bad). Leah to the rescue and Luke does a U-turn and we arrive.

After a 'where to park discussion', Luke spots a park very close to the entrance.

We get out and walk to the gate entrance where we meet Mark, the very person who invited me/us down. After the normal awkwardness of 'please after you', 'no, you first', because we all couldn't walk through together for it was a 'narrow gate', we all walk inside.

A flood of people come to say hi to Luke and Leah, big smiles and lots of hugs. They do the same to me; very welcoming... feeling really good.

(Time for another recap, in case the symbolism is lost on you, or perhaps got lost in my ramblings)

After a long journey, with delays, making some mistakes along the way I arrive at the narrow gate to meet the very man that welcomed me down to South Adelaide at the exact same moment in time.

You could not have orchestrated that if you tried. Even if we had agreed on a time and place to meet.

Firsts Are Memorable

The first times for events in our lives, regardless of the event become memorable.

The 'Chairperson' was Richard. He immediately put a smile on my face because after standing up at the microphone, even tapping at it a few times, people were still talking amongst themselves. He lifted one eyebrow but had a smile on his face as he asked for everyone's attention. He wanted to get started, but was smiling at everyone quietly enjoying each other's company, catching up.

The reason why this resonated with me is I often think that God sometimes looks at me like that.

Like a loving father looks down at his child, with the same mannerism and thinking perhaps not the best execution, but I acknowledge the attempt, and I love you for that.

Once the riffraff (yeah, you know who you were) had stopped talking (yeah that's probably going to be me in the future) Richard started. He then said something else that really, really resonated with me. It went something like this: (Paraphrasing – think I'm pretty close Richard)

'Our numbers are a bit light this week because of the holiday period and many families are also away (an event at a caravan park?) But they'll soon be back, and we'll have young children running around here again, which we love.'

I've been in churches (suit and black tie only, if you would like to enter) where I have felt uncomfortable from the glares after clearing my throat or sneezing. Where parents are spoken to if their young child makes a sound.

Thank you, Richard, for making me feel comfortable and putting a smile on my face.

Jordan's Exhortation Was Meaningful

Jordan said a number of things that I loved to hear. We are all unique, we all bring something to the table and we are here for a purpose, even though we may not know it yet.

The other point he discussed was what can we do in our everyday lives to show our faith as Christians. (Again paraphrasing, but hopefully close to the mark Jordan).

I think about this, and often it's the sin of omission. With everyone so focused and busy it's easy to not notice the short person struggling to reach a jar on the top shelf in a supermarket, somebody struggling with a full trolley, trying to put the bags in the back of their SUV while holding a baby. Allowing somebody behind you, in front of you when they have a small number of items, and you have many.

Yeah, small, however sometimes the 'trickle down' effect of spending but a moment to help someone without asking and smiling while you do it can make a big difference to that person's day. Imagine the power of everyone doing that to each other all the time, every day.

Thank you, Jordan, for hearing what I heard from my first 'Exhortation'.

Afterwards, and I should apologise to Luke at this point, who was standing next to me, bearing the full brunt of my singing voice. (Not remotely close to being in my wheelhouse) I spoke to Mark, who asked if I wanted to get baptised next Sunday.

I immediately jumped at the opportunity, then asked whether it would be OK to be baptised in the sea. Mark said sure, then pointed to a man behind me (Joseph – more about him later) who was recently baptised in the sea. We spoke about what was going to be spoken, and I asked whether I could choose my own scriptures. Mark smiled and said it's all about you, it's your baptism, sure you can.

Next, a lady introduced herself (Melanie) and asked whether I had any plans for the afternoon because she had spoken to Luke and Leah, with her husband (Simon) and invited us home for lunch.

I had a great time, barista Poppy kindly made me an awesome coffee and we talked about, among other things, Michael Jordan, slam dunking and the super beneficial properties of cabbage (Sorry Violet, yep, I can be cheeky boy). Oh, and I can't not mention Toffee.

Thank you all.

During the week Mark and I had a few more chats, Mark H from Western Australia and Duncan reached out, excited for me. Luke and Leah were in contact.

It was humbling to have people I barely knew, pausing their day to think of me and be so genuinely happy and excited for me.

Scriptures Chosen & How & Why I Came To The Decision

So, I had given it some thought, and said to Mark some verses in Romans 3 and some from Romans 6. Bit of a problem trying to cull the verses in Romans 6, because I felt it was all relevant. He advised me to think about it and send an email with my decision.

So I was thinking, Romans 3 and 6 are pretty relevant to baptism, right.

Thinking about it some more, perhaps I should include my favourites instead. Got to love Genesis "In the beginning..." As a former physicist I always love to hear and am amused with

people's interpretation of those first 6 days. The whole creation v evolution, big bangs, dinosaurs, and so on.

(OK a tangent, but thought provoking – the very nature of our existence is worth a few sentences don't you think?)

So after a few days (I had 6 days to make up my mind – You know I can hear you laughing at me) I had an epiphany.

What could be more relevant than what baptism is actually about, instead of looking at it from the process of the act.

The most important; greatest commandment spoke to me in a number of ways that made sense.

(Ok so it took changing my mind 3 times and a few more days than I expected)

What is the TRUTH that everyone keeps saying I don't grasp, and why do all the denominations have a different version of it; that's so unique to them, that I must agree to?

Secondly, why is it that even though I had/have no problem with what they thought; their interpretation was different to mine, it wasn't reciprocal?

I've heard what many different men have said to me about their truth's...

What does Jesus say on the matter?

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

(Lots of stuff for me in John 8, such as Jesus saying “I am the light of the world”. Flash back to Genesis and the beginning... day 1. Hmmm. Then they said to Him, “Who are You?” And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. Even the reference to Jesus's age ‘You are not yet fifty years old...’, has meaning to day 1 for me; a saying or phrase that does not mean exactly what is spoken.)

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Further down (John 11), with Jesus talking with Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Further down again (John 14) Jesus said to Philip, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

(Still need some help – Given a Helper)

Jesus says “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also...”

He also says “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

And again, "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Jesus talking to Judas... "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

So unpacking that, it seems to me that THE TRUTH is belief, trust and love in God through Jesus.

And that by having that; I will be freed of sin and have an everlasting life.

So (If you abide in My word , If you love Me, keep My commandments,) I chose to paraphrase "the first and great commandment" as I came up out of the water; after being down in it, having my sins washed away. (Matthew 22:37)

'I love you Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind'.

I would also like to share something that only Mark would have been able to notice, out there in the water with me, and although we haven't spoken about it directly, I feel he did, and that was, as I started speaking, I started to choke up a bit.

It was a truly humbling experience.

Walking Out and Being Greeted By My Brothers & Sisters

After a big hug with Mark in the sea, and after walking out from the sea, much like my first experience meeting everyone for the first time, I was greeted with a genuine outpouring of love and hugs from so many.

This was also a humbling experience. That so many had turned up early in the morning, to support and witness my baptism.

To all those wonderful people – Thank you. It means so much to me you were there.

Back at South Adelaide Ecclesia

After talking with many of the people on the beach, we headed back for the service.

On entering I was greeted by more people, with big smiles and hugs. One lovely woman (Kay) introduced herself and welcomed me as her Brother and then asked if I was a 'hugger' because she was. I said I am too, so we shared a big hug.

Thank you, Kay, for, well, being you.

Another person (Peter) came up to me and introduced himself, meeting me for the first time, he commented that I was being baptised and he up until a week ago had never heard my name.

Yes, it all happened quickly, once all the pieces were in place, and due in no small part to some very supportive people.

I had met Sue and Trevor before, they were also on the beach. While reading the announcements, welcoming visitors etc. she spoke about me; again welcoming me, saying kind words, then explained I was the 'Prayer Person'.

This again, was a very humbling experience. Thank you Sue and Trevor.

The next 'wow' moment came from Joseph. He had already explained to me that he was baptised only 500 metres away from where I was, and that it brought back memories of his baptism.

The 'wow' moment was that at the end, when he played a 'Baptism Hymn' that he had written himself, for his baptism, and wanted to share it with me. It was awesome, a lovely gift.

Thank you, Joseph, and if it's not too bold to suggest, an inclusion for all upcoming baptisms. The liveliness and joy in it is awesome.

Summary (Finally I Got There)

I have been asked a number of 'obvious' questions, all with loving intent and curiosity, and some several times. I recall being distracted once, so didn't get the chance to answer one. My apologies, but I will now.

Why did you choose the sea?

To me, a 'Public Baptism' is about sharing what I already knew with everyone as witnesses. The sea was the perfect metaphor to me for that. The sea connects all people of all nations across the world.

How Did You Feel Afterwards?

It's something that is hard to put into a word, even a few words, but to be as brief and succinct as possible (and to prove to you all, I can be).

Humbled!

It was from every perspective a truly humbling experience.

Further Thoughts & Thanks

Many people have been instrumental in making my Baptism a reality.

It took Duncan, a man in England, who I have never laid eyes on yet; but wish to one day, who reached out to Mark, a man in Perth, who I have never laid eyes on, who I also wish to one day, who reached out to Luke and Leah, a couple living 'beyond the Black Stump' in South Australia, who I did have the great fortune to meet, who connected me to Mark, a man from *South Adelaide Ecclesia*, who said I would be welcomed with open arms and who baptised me.

Sincerely and truly, I thank you for what you have done for me.

My persistence, along with God fulfilling his promise to me if I ask, seek and knock paid off! It was always going to be so. (I have apologised for getting cranky with him too)

Last Thoughts (Promise)

Even though the latest chapter of my life walking with Jesus has been short, the overall journey has been long, but I now know the truth, for sure.

In my discussions, with a man much wiser than me on such matters, we have touched upon and discussed numerous topics.

There have been things we are one on. We share a passionate interest in Mary Magdelene but have discovered our thoughts are different to some others.

We have spoken about the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John needing to be read as one to get a better sense of what happened, and if we want to find the answers to our questions it's not as simple as reading one verse; we learn more from understanding, which means more reading and thinking, which we were also at one with.

We departed on one subject, to which my wise Brother said: (And I am paraphrasing)

Hey that's ok, maybe over time and more discussions you may look at it differently, I may also look at it differently, we'll work it out together.

This to me was as special a gift I have received.

Somebody did not judge me for my thoughts, or viewpoint, did not suggest I should take my bat and ball and go and play with another group, instead, and in stark contrast to previous experiences, suggested we walk together and work it out together.

I am truly grateful Mark.

IRAN

This week we were happy to witness the online baptisms of a married couple, DAVOOD and SARA, after long study and correspondence with us online.

This week we also baptized RASOUL who is brother in the flesh to brother MAHOMMAD baptized the same day in Sheffield. It was interesting to see the obvious similarities between them as they were baptized. We thank the Lord for His amazing effort in calling these two brothers to Himself, one in Iran the other seeking asylum in the UK:

LATVIA

We're planning a trip to distribute firewood in a couple of weeks and are open to any donations towards it and related Winter welfare issues. This is usually the coldest part of the year and so difficult for so many.

MOROCCO

Thanks to a real bargain day return flight from Gatwick, we were able to get to Morocco for an intense few hours to fellowship with our previously baptized brother Claudiu [ex-Romania] and then to baptize YOUNES a remarkable young man who has totally dedicated himself to the study of God's word and following the Lord Jesus, and is very much committed to all our teachings and has rejected the trinitarian baptism. So good to see Claudiu strong in the Lord still, eagerly watching our videos, promoted at work and blessed for his commitment to the Lord first. We were able also to take in a number of New Testaments, which are very hard to get hold of in this Islamic country. All glory to the Lord Jesus who works so tirelessly to bring men and women to Himself and His eternal Kingdom.



Immediately after his baptism, we noted that our brother Younes had changed his WhatsApp profile message to "I have found the Truth". This is so brave of him as he lives in such an Islamic

area.



UK

A reminder of our *Carelinks UK / Croydon Church in a Pub* retreat weekend planned Lord willing for March 21-23 Lord willing, at the Carrotty Wood Centre in Tonbridge, Kent. Many wanting to attend won't be able to contribute to the costs, which all up will leave a shortfall of around £ 2000. We're open to your kind donations to enable them to come and have a solid weekend of fellowship and Bible teaching.

What a day at *Croydon Church in a Pub* last Sunday, standing room only, and little David climbed up onto the window sill to eat his food afterwards as there was no space to eat otherwise. Beneath him you can see DANIEL, who's been attending our meetings for a while. A builder from Hammersmith who's now living in Croydon. It was a joy to have him back afterwards and baptize him in the much used bath tub... and to hear his interesting personal testimony, starting with how as a youngster he was smoking his dad's cigarettes in the loft and started a house fire that burnt the house down... Video of the service and Daniel's testimony at <https://youtu.be/2KLwnFUHgMA>

The Lord surely knows His people, and it's wonderful that Church in a Pub is such a "real" and safe environment for everyone to come, and come to the Lord Jesus as their Saviour with the sure Hope of His Kingdom before them. Sermon was on "To live is Christ, to die is gain", at <https://youtu.be/3sGMuuml5zY>



This week we baptized MAHOMMAD in Sheffield and then online baptized his brother Rasoul in Iran. This all came from the witness of one of our Iranian brethren baptized a while ago.

PRAYER POINTS

- For those recently baptized
- For those whose faith sharply divides them from their families and loved ones
- For our planned UK retreat
- For our planned Winter Welfare work in Latvia

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks