

Clifton News

No 259 October - December 2012

Published since 1948



CLIFTON GOSPEL HALL
SUN 10AM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
11AM: WORSHIP & PRAYER
11.30AM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
1.30PM: SUNDAY LUNCHEON
7.30PM: SUNDAY EVENING
WED 8PM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
THU 8PM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
FRI 8PM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
SAT 8PM: SUNDAY SCHOOL
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News

OLYMPIC TORCH OUTREACH

The Olympic torch relay passed by Clifton Hall on the 23rd of July. The hall was opened for anyone wishing to come in to have a cup of tea and take literature. The children from the Clifton clubs were invited with parents watch from the higher vantage point of the hall. A number of visitors came in and it was a good opportunity for the gospel.

MARK & ANN MARIE'S WEDDING 14 SEPTEMBER

Mark and Ann Marie are now married and soon returning from a honeymoon in Mexico. The wedding took place at Loampit Gospel Hall and the reception was at the Bromley Court Hotel. It was a happy occasion for all present we pray for the Lord's blessing on their life together.

BIBLE EXHIBITION & GOSPEL CAMPAIGN

This year's exhibition and gospel campaign went well. Numbers were a little more than last time with around 470 people coming including 196 school children from St Chad's School and St. Mark's School. A number came in the evenings to listen to a Bible gospel talk based on the exhibits in the hall. (See photos on back page)

THORNTON HEATH FESTIVAL OUTREACH

At the start of the Bible exhibition there was a festival in Thornton Heath on Sunday which provided an excellent opportunity to distribute hundreds of invites to the exhibition.

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Meetings

THE WEEK AT CLIFTON

Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread 11.00 am

Sunday School (Term time only for ages 5+)

Gospel Meeting 6:30 pm

Tuesday

First Tuesday of month - Bible Reading 8.00 pm

Wednesday

Seekers Club 6:30 pm (Term time only for under 10s)

Thursday

Prayer & Ministry 7:45 pm

Friday

Friday Club (Term time only for 10+) 7:30 pm

SUNDAY EVENING GOSPEL MEETING

October

7 Andrew Hall (Family Service)

14 Alastair Rodger

21 Nitish Patel

28 Norman Gibbons

November

4 Phil Briercliffe (Family Service)

11 Alf Taylor

18 Richard Catchpole

25 Norman Gibbons

December

2 John Aston (Family Service)

9 Archie Carew

- 16 Norman Gibbons
- 23 Richard Catchpole (Carol Service)
- 30 Alastair Rodger

TUESDAY BIBLE READING

- 2 October Romans 3:1-20
- 6 November Romans 3:21-4:8
- 4 December Romans 4:9-25

THURSDAY PRAYER & MINISTRY

October

- 4 Craig Spence
- 11 John Lee
- 18 Phillip Briercliff
- 25 Norman Gibbons

November

- 1 Nitish Patel
- 8 Nitish Patel
- 15 Jonathan Black
- 22 Jonathan Black
- 29 Norman Gibbons

December

- 6 Colin Roberts
- 13 Colin Roberts
- 20 Colin Roberts
- 27 Richard Catchpole

Question Page

By Richard Catchpole

What is the doctrine of the incarnation? Is it another way of speaking of the virgin birth of Christ or is there a distinction between the two things?

Both things concern the uniqueness of the Person of the Lord Jesus but there is a distinction between them. The word 'incarnation' has in view the FACT that the Eternal Son of God became Man, while the virgin birth describes the MEANS by which that was accomplished.

Thinking of the incarnation the apostle John having opened his Gospel with the majestic statement 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was with God and the word was God' just a few verses later says 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us', John 1.1, 14.

The divine title given to Him, 'the Word' has in view His eternal glory and divine character as the Revealer of the Person, mind and will of the invisible God, similar to the way in which our invisible thoughts are revealed and expressed by the words we speak. The opening words of the Gospel, take our thoughts back beyond the opening statement of the Bible in Genesis 1.1 to the most remote moment that our minds are capable of thinking of in that moment of 'beginning' the Word 'was', He already existed, He did not begin then, so this statement has in view His eternal being and existence. John further says 'the Word was with God' asserting the distinct Personality of the Word, His distinctive place within the Godhead.

Then John says 'the Word was God' an assertion of the essential Deity of the Lord Jesus. How amazing that John could then say in verse 14 'The Word was made (The Greek readings is 'became') flesh and dwelt amongst us'. He was not 'made flesh' but 'became flesh' the change denoting that it was something He willingly submitted to by a voluntary act.

The doctrine of the 'incarnation' embraces within it fundamental truth concerning the glory of Christ's Person, both His essential Deity and the reality of His Manhood. It thus embraces within it His prior existence as the Eternal One of God and his stepping into time to take the 'form of a servant' and becoming 'in the likeness of men', Philippians 2.7 Well might Paul say 'without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh ...', 1 Timothy 3.16.

The Virgin birth describes the means by which the Son of God became truly man but without any trace of sin. We can only imagine the surprise that must have filled the heart of Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared to her saying 'Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shall call His name JESUS' Luke 1.30-35. The late Albert McShane succinctly wrote 'In a few sentences he (Gabriel) greets her, tells her she is favoured, that the Lord is with her, that she is blessed, that she is favoured of God and that she should bear a son.

Likewise his statements concerning the Child that would be born are concise, "JESUS" His name'; "great" His fame; "Son of the Highest" His Divinity; "the throne of David" His kingship'; "to reign over the house of Jacob forever", His kingdom.

Mary's response 'how shall this be, seeing I know not a man' bear testimony to her pure conscience, an affirmation that the child was indeed born of a virgin, but how? The angel replied the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee' through the power of the Holy Spirit Mary would conceive and the Child in the womb would be protected so that the Holy One born of her 'shall be called the Son of God'. We should just mention that the conception was miraculous the subsequent birth was in the normal way so in Luke 2.6 we are told 'the days were accomplished that she should be delivered'.

We cannot leave the question without reminding ourselves of some of the reasons for the incarnation. In John 18.37 the Lord Himself

said 'to this end was I born and for this cause came, I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth'. The writer to the Hebrews says 'made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death' Hebrews 2.9. Then in Hebrews 2.14 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death that is the devil'. The apostle Paul says in Romans 8.3 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (margin 'a sacrifice for sin') condemned 'passed sentence on) sin in the flesh'; and 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law' Galatians 4.4-5

Bible Teaching

Thoughts and suggestions about worship

By the late Charles Wigg (Tasmania)

(c) PRAISE

It is said that praise is comely for the upright, Psalm 33:1. God also says that "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me", Psalm 50:23. But again, praise is a little less than worship. I may praise my child for their success in studies, I may praise my wife for her cooking, but I am never to worship them. We thank and praise God for what He gives and does, but we worship Him for what He is.

(d) WORSHIP

Worship is the highest form of address to God
There are two Greek words used by the Lord Jesus in Luke 4:8. The first word is "PROSKUNEO", which means to bow down, to fall on

the knees, to kiss the hand that is held out to us, as a token of affection and reverence.

This denotes a sense of awe and wonder, an appreciation of the One in whose presence we are. It suggests a sense of deep adoration, of affection, of wonder. It is more than a physical posture, though it may involve that, it is the posture of my heart. It is the deepest and the richest spiritual emotion and response that the redeemed spirit and soul of man are capable of. True worship is prompted by the indwelling Holy Spirit and can only be offered in His power.

An illustration may be taken from John chapter nine. Once the blind man had received his sight he was full of thanks for what Christ had done for him, but he knew only that He was a "Man called Jesus". After he had been cast out for his testimony, the Lord Jesus found him and asked whether he believed on the Son of God. When Jesus had revealed to the man that He was the Son of God, he exclaimed "Lord I believe!" and he worshiped Him. He now knew that Jesus was more than a man, and now that the greatness of Jesus was revealed to him, he was overcome with awe and wonder. His heart was filled with both gratitude and adoration, and he fell on his knees, he prostrated himself in reverence and worship.

The second word used in Luke 4:8, is the Greek word "LATREUO", which means to serve, to minister to, to perform sacred services.

This shows us that worship is not only by lip, but by life. The deep sense of awe and adoration that I feel affects the whole of my life. My service for God is then a continuation of worship. I not only offer the deep adoration of my heart, but I also offer myself, my body, as a living sacrifice, this is my reasonable service. Rom.12:2.

Worship then, is what I offer to God. It is my deep inner appreciation of the worth and glory of the Person whom I am addressing. It is something more than the appreciation of the work or the gifts that the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit have done, or given, for They are personally greater than all the wondrous works that They have done, and the gifts that They have given. The gifts that the Father has given

are unspeakable, but He is personally greater than the gifts He has given.

There are examples in the New Testament of worship being ascribed to the Father, Eph.1;3. There are examples of worship being offered to the Son, Rev.5;9. There are examples given of worship being offered the Triune God in His absoluteness, Majesty and Glory, 1,Tim.6;15 & 16, but no examples are given of worship being offered to the Holy Spirit personally. This is not because He is inferior personally to the Father, or the Son, but is because of the position He has taken in wondrous grace, in which He serves and glorifies both the Father and the Son. He finds His pleasure and satisfaction in seeing and hearing those in whom He dwells- Those to whom He moves or prompts, worshiping God, the Father and the Son. In fact, He Himself within us and through us, cries and causes us to cry, "Abba Father"! Galatians 4:6, & Romans 8:15.

Worship involves the whole person, the spirit, the soul, the body. Mary said in Luke 1:47,"My SOUL doth magnify the Lord, and my SPIRIT doth rejoice in God my Savior. But her body was also involved, because her mind, her mouth, her tongue and her voice were used in the worship of God.

THE PERSONS OF THE GOD-HEAD

To worship intelligently we need to be able to distinguish between the Persons of the God-head. We can never separate them, because God is One, but we may distinguish between the Divine Persons, the glory, the work and the offices each person fills. If we fail to distinguish, there will be some confusion in our minds and in our worship. For example: I often hear believers thanking the Father for dying for their sins and for shedding His blood for them on the cross. I would say with reverence, that the Father never died, nor did He shed His blood for anyone, because the Father never became man. That glory belongs to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me point out here, that though we may say these things in

ignorance, yet God knows our hearts, and He knows what we mean. So we must not be discouraged, but we should seek to learn so that we may worship more intelligently. We worship the Father through the Son, and in His name, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He serves us as our Great High Priest. He removes from what we offer, that which is unsuitable and offers to God, from what we present, that which is acceptable to Him and will bring joy to His heart.

It is not my intention in this short paper, to try to bring out from the scriptures the particular glories, work and offices of each of the Persons of the Trinity. But I would suggest to my brothers and sisters, to carefully and prayerfully study the New Testament, to learn what are the glories, the work, the offices of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

PREACHING IS NOT PRAISE OR WORSHIP

For many years I have moved amongst assemblies in Kerala, and assemblies in other countries that have been established by dear brethren who have come from Kerala. Assemblies in which the language of Malayalam is used. In these assemblies I have found a practice that I have found no-where else in the World. That is, that so much time, which should be devoted to worship, is instead given to preaching or exhortation.

I have seen as many as six brothers stand and read a passage from the Bible, draw some thoughts from it, and exhort the believers to worship. I believe that they may think in doing so that they are worshipping the Lord, whereas they are not worshipping at all. They are not speaking to God, or offering worship to Him, but speaking to the saints, exhorting them to worship, when they themselves are not doing so.

I often feel that it would bring much more glory to God, if they were to read a verse or a short passage, then use the thoughts that they draw from it, in offering to God the worship of their hearts.

I am told that at a missionary conference held in Kerala in 1992, a

brother in ministry said, “The Lord is not wanting to hear your preaching, He wants to hear your praise”. I believe he was correct.

If these dear brothers were to do as we have suggested, they would do more to stimulate others to worship, than by exhortation. Because when true worship, that comes from the heart is offered, it will usually touch and move the hearts of other believers.

... to be continued

Good News

THE MOST UNFORTUNATE NAMES IN BRITAIN

In 2009, a baby names web site’s researchers studied all the names in Britain registered with phone numbers and came up with an amusing list of silly names. The people thus named were not amused with their parent’s choice which caused them to endure a lifetime of mockery and jest.

Here are a few humorous examples they found along with some from America ...

Justin Case, Barb Dwyer, Stan Still, Chris Cross, Sonny day, Mary Christmas, Paige Turner, Anna Sasin, Doug Hole, Hazel Nutt, Ima Hogg, Pearl Button, Jo King, Lee King, Ray Gunn, Barry Cade, Carrie Oakey, Priti Manek, Tim Burr, Jerry Ettrick ...

Of all the names given to babies, there was one name that stands out above all others. Joseph was told by the angel Gabriel ...

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS:

for he shall save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21)

The Bible tells us that the name of Jesus is so great, every knee will bow before it in the entire universe and every tongue confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:9-10). What makes this name so special?

It is a short name comprised of just six letters in the Greek but describes who He is and what He came to do. Jesus is the same as the Old testament name “Joshua” and means “Jehovah the Saviour”.

The name reveals two tremendous truths. It tells us that the little baby held by Mary was God and that He had become Man so that He could die to save us (Luke 1:32). To become our Saviour, God’s Son was born of a virgin. He was thus born perfect and sinless, able and willing to die the death we deserve for sin on the cross thirty three and a half years later. He paid the penalty in full and God His Father raised Him from the dead. That is why the angels proclaimed glad tidings at His birth. Reader, we hope you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour.

*Christ by highest heav’n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin’s womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King!”*

(Charles Wesley)



(We will let Mark enjoy his honeymoon and hopefully when he returns he will be able to continue his excellent series on Church history - ed)

Epaphroditus Philippians 2.25-30; 4.18

By Richard Catchpole

These are the only verses in the Bible that make mention of this man Epaphroditus and indicate at least four things in connection with him. Very little is known of his background, His name was common in the

1) His responsibility - The work entrusted to him by the saints at Philippi. In 2.25, addressing the saints at Philippi, Paul describes him as 'your messenger' (Greek *apostolos*) denoting not simply one who acted as a messenger but one who had been formally sent forth on a special service and as such Epaphroditus was an apostle of the church at Philippi, such 'apostles' being mentioned elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 12.28 and 2 Corinthians 9.18. Two things are indicated as to what that service involved, first to carry an offering to Paul from the assembly and spoken of in 4.18 and secondly having arrived in Rome, to remain there, to minister to Paul's needs, 2.25. Summarising his ministry Paul says in 2.30 'to supply your lack of service to me' the idea is 'what was lacking in your service to me'. Now this is not to be read as a word of rebuke as though Paul had expected more from them than he had hitherto received. Neither does it denote any lack of exercise on the saint's part. The apostle's words are actually complementary and affectionate, to the effect that hitherto the only thing lacking in their service to him, was a ministration in person, something now 'supplied' or 'fulfilled' through the presence and ministry of Epaphroditus. When the question arose as to who should carry the gift to Rome and then remain with the apostle, did Epaphroditus volunteer or did the believers initially approach him? Whatever the answer it is evident that the saints at Philippi had such confidence in him, they formerly appointed him to act as their representative in this ministry. Would it challenge us as to whether our own integrity and consistency in the things of God is such as to

inspire the saints to have similar confidence in us?

2) His reputation - In 2.25 Paul describes him in a four-fold way.

(i) 'My brother' – a fellow-member of the family of God, and it is significant that this comes first, this being the basis of every relationship between believers, members of the same family by divine grace.

(ii) 'Companion in labour' – a fellow-worker in the service of God.

(iii) 'Fellow soldier' – in light of the teaching of 2 Timothy 2.3 one who endured hardship in the cause of Christ.

(iv) 'Your messenger' – moving in fellowship with the assembly at Philippi.

What a lovely description, but is it one equally applicable to us? By divine grace and faith in Christ we are all members of the one family of God but one fears it cannot be said of all believers, that they are fellow-workers; fellow-soldiers; working in fellowship with and in the interests of the local assembly, could such terms be used of us?

3) His return - Although it had been intended that Epaphroditus should remain at Rome in 2.25 Paul says 'I supposed it necessary to send Epaphroditus to you' the word 'supposed' has the sense of 'chief importance', in context, even before he sent Timothy verse 19 or came himself verse 24, before any of these Paul considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them for reasons indicated in verses 26-28. Epaphroditus had been sick, verse 26, the nature of the sickness is not indicated but the cause of it is stated in verse 30 'the work of Christ'. Whether it was an effect of the long journey or whether the consequences of his work on Paul's behalf while at Rome we do not know. Whatever the nature of the sickness it had the potential to be fatal for Paul says in verse 27 'he was sick nigh unto death' something he repeats in verse 30. Using modern terminology we would perhaps say 'his life lay in the balance'. But with a grateful heart Paul says in verse 27 'God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow'. How often can believers be found in similar situations when because their own resources are inadequate they are cast totally upon the mercy and help of God?

In light of his sickness Paul deemed it essential to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi and that for three reasons:-

(i) For the benefit of Epaphroditus himself – verse 27 ‘for he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick’. The fact that news of his sickness had spread to Philippi was a cause of distress to Epaphroditus, as he did not wish to give them any undue concern and the fact that he was their ‘messenger’ would no doubt have given to the saints a sense of responsibility for him. Think of what that conveys regarding the tender thoughts of this man for the saints at Philippi he ‘longed after ye all’ the Greek word translated ‘longed after’ denoting ‘an intense longing’ and we should notice it was for them ‘all’. Such was his concern for the saints Paul says ‘he was full of heaviness’ the word ‘heaviness’ is used just twice more in the New Testament, in Matthew 26.37 and Mark 14.33 and in both verses in reference to the distress of the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane. Epaphroditus was distressed not out of concern for himself but out of concern for the saints at Philippi. Because of the anxiety Epaphroditus displayed Paul says ‘I sent him therefore the more carefully’ or ‘more speedily’, sooner than he would otherwise have done, verse 28.

(ii) The second reason Paul was sending him back was for the benefit of the saints themselves – verse 28 ‘that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice’. J.N.D. ‘that seeing him ye might again rejoice’. Knowing their own anxious feelings and that Epaphroditus was now sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey, Paul deemed it essential that he return in order that the saints might rejoice to have their messenger amongst them again.

(iii) The third reason has to do with Paul himself – verse v.28 ‘that I may be the less sorrowful’. The relief that he knew the saints at Philippi would have through the return of Epaphroditus with them, would equally give Paul a sense of relief that the saints were no longer anxious. It is interesting that Paul says of himself that he might be ‘less sorrowful’ we might have expected him to say ‘and that I may rejoice with you’, but instead his language is a reminder to them of his own

circumstances and the loss he would experience in losing the help of Epaphroditus. Why was Paul sending him back? because he was thinking of the concerns of others even though it be at expense to himself.

Do we have similar tender thoughts for one another as seen with the anxiety of Epaphroditus for the believers at Philippi? The care of the saints at Philippi for their messenger and Paul's own consideration for both, the saints at Philippi, and Epaphroditus?

4) His reception – Paul says 'Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation', 2.29, but why should Paul speak thus? Would they not be pleased to see Epaphroditus? Is Paul forestalling any possible criticism being leveled at Epaphroditus for returning if he was now fully recovered from his sickness? Was Paul anticipating there could be some disappointment on the part of the believers that their intention that Epaphroditus should remain at Rome had not been realized, a disappointment that might temper their reception of him? To allay all such possibilities Paul asserts that Epaphroditus had earned the right to be warmly welcomed amongst them and be highly esteemed by them, and he gives three reasons in verse 30 'Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me'. The late E.W. Rogers summarized it like this Epaphroditus had his eye upon the interests of Christ, 'the work of Christ,' he had his eye on the responsibility of the assembly, their 'lack of service', and he had his eye on the needs of God's servant, 'toward me'.

Epaphroditus had a commission to fulfill and was determined to do so whatever the cost to himself, Paul says 'not regarding his life'. The word translated 'not regarding' really means 'to throw aside', 'to hazard'. One commentator says 'it is a gamblers word denoting the taking of venturesome risks for the sake of possible gain.' Just as a gambler might take a risk with his wealth committing it all to the roulette wheel with the potential of losing it so this man risked his life in his commitment to the cause of Christ. How far are we prepared to go or what sacrifice are we prepared to make in the cause of Christ? Is there with us the commitment that we know there ought to be?

Report of work in Wembley

Nitish Patel

We had three months of outreach from June to August. This year's bad weather hindered us greatly but nevertheless a number came to hear the gospel and many hundreds of tracts and gospels of John were given out.

Four Moslems showed genuine interest in the gospel and came in to ask serious questions. Two were young lads from Afghanistan, and the other two were Shia Moslem men from Iraq and Pakistan fleeing from their Sunni Moslem brothers who are trying to kill them.

One admitted to his colleague that I had a point when I reminded them that they offer a sacrifice of a lamb at their Haj pilgrimage for their sins. They do not believe they need a sacrifice for sins and Allah can forgive without the need for a righteous basis. They could not explain this fact away and were in much thought.

All took literature and said they would like to meet again to discuss spiritual things. Usually Moslems are argumentative but these were polite and seemed genuine, often agreeing that we were right in what we were saying.

A group of Roman Catholic men from Daman in Gujarat stand every day on the opposite corner listening to the message on the loud speakers. They gladly took literature and one named Neville asked for a Bible and an Emmaus study course. He told us of a message I had preached last Christmas that he and his father had listened to outside and were much impressed. He went and told his children at home of the story I had told illustrating the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. They told us they often listen though we were unaware of it. Hearing this makes us realise how we should never become discouraged when few are inside the hall.

There were others, Hindus and RCs who came and we meet them again outside the hall from time to time. They all promise to come again but say they find life too busy. We know it is the Devil who keeps them too busy to care for their eternal souls, if only they would realise this. Pray for the Word sown.





Bible Exhibition

