

Clifton News

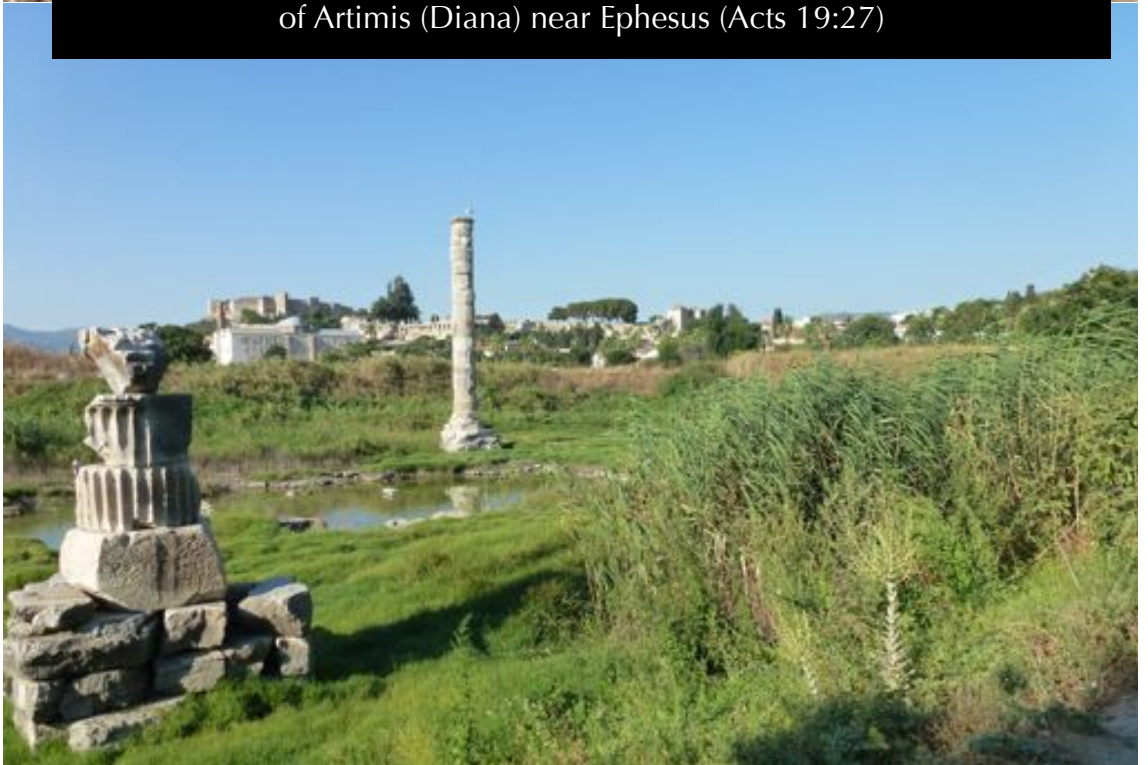
No 263 October - December 2013

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Above, the ruins of the main harbour (now silted up) in Miletus. Here Paul met with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:15-38). Below the ruins of the temple of Artemis (Diana) near Ephesus (Acts 19:27)



News

GOSPEL CAMPAIGN - SEPTEMBER

Unlike last year there was almost no response to the 3500 leaflets given out in the area. However, the Sunday meetings were fairly well attended with children and some parents. During the week unsaved family members and one or two others were present to listen to the gospel. We continue to pray for this area and encourage ourselves in the LORD as David did (1 Samuel 30:6).

The young people's clubs have restarted after the summer break and many continue to come for which we praise God. We are going through the Acts in Friday club and the interest from the young people is good with many questions asked.

Do pray for Judith Catchpole who will be undergoing heart surgery in the next few weeks.

Carol Service

Sunday 22nd December at 4 pm

Watch Night Gospel Meeting

Tuesday 31st December

11 pm - 12 Midnight

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Meetings

THE WEEK AT CLIFTON

Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread 11.00 am

Family Service 4:00 pm

Monday

Prayer & Ministry 7:45 pm

Tuesday

First Tuesday of month - Bible Reading 8.00 pm

Wednesday

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

Friday

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

SUNDAY AFTERNOON FAMILY SERVICE

October

6 Alastair Rodger

13 Jonathan Black

20 Nitish Patel

27 Richard Catchpole

November

3 Jonathan black

10 John Aston

17 Norman Gibbons

24 Alastair Rodger

December

- 1 Phil Briercliffe
- 8 Norman Gibbons
- 15 Richard Catchpole
- 22 Carol Service
- 29 Richard Catchpole

MONDAY PRAYER & MINISTRY

October

- Thursday 3 Nitish Patel (Church history part 7)
- 7 Nitish Patel (Church history part 8)
- 14 Craig Spence
- 21 Mike Surry
- 28 Mike Surry

November

- 4 Tom Ledger
- 11 Tom Ledger
- 18 Jonathan Black
- 25 Timothy Miller

December

- 2 Jonathan Black
- 9 Colin Roberts
- 16 Richard Catchpole
- 23 Colin Roberts
- 30 Colin Roberts

TUESDAY BIBLE READING

- | | | |
|----------|-----|----------------|
| October | 1st | Romans 6:15-23 |
| November | 5th | Romans 7:1-13 |
| December | 3rd | Romans 7:14-25 |

Question Box

At the Friday Club, we have a question box into which the young people put questions they want answered. We re-print here the answers from the Bible we have given them.

When is Jesus birthday?

Most Christians around the world celebrate 25th December as Jesus birthday and those in the Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate it on the 7th of January as they follow a different calendar. Whether a Christian decides to celebrate it or not, we do all rejoice that the Father sent His Son as the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14).

However, the Bible does not tell us the exact month or day the Lord Jesus was born. This is because the Bible stresses more importance to the exact day of the Lord's death rather than His birth. He died on the day the Passover lambs were being killed for He is the Lamb of God who died to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The timing of His death was given hundreds of years before to Daniel (Daniel 9:24-26). Though His birth is important, it is His death and resurrection that saves us from sin.

Though the Bible does not say about the time of the birth, it still has much to say about His birth ...

It was prophesied exactly where He could be born. There were two Bethlehems in the land of Israel, one in the north and one in the south near Jerusalem. 500 years before Micah prophesied He would be born in Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:1)

He would be the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) and so would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). The Lord Jesus was the only Man to be born without sin.

King Herod would kill children in Bethlehem (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16-18)

Jesus would be taken to Egypt as a child to escape king Herod (Hosea 11:1)

Jesus was brought to the Temple (Malachi 3:1, Luke 2:22-39)

He would be descended from king David (Jeremiah 23:5)
He would be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Matthew 2:1)

Was Adam and Eve saved?

After Adam and Eve sinned and were condemned by God for their sin (Genesis 3:1-14), God spoke to the Devil and gave the promise of a Saviour, who will come through the woman ... "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

God showed how His Son would do this. God clothed them in the skin of one animal (Genesis 3:21). An animal had to die in their place, its blood was shed, and its skin clothed them both. It was God's provision and a type of the work of Christ when He died on the cross to provide a garment of salvation and robe of righteousness for us (Isaiah 61:10). God did everything. They did nothing. It was all of grace. That's how they were saved and how we can be saved..

Their response afterwards showed that they had faith in the LORD
Adam named Eve the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20)

Eve spoke of her faith in the LORD ... "Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD." (Genesis 4:1)

Abel had no doubt learned from his parents to approach God with a sacrifice of a lamb (Genesis 4:4).

When Abel was killed Eve gave birth to Seth said that God had given her another seed instead of Abel (Genesis 4:25-26)
It is clear that Eve had believed in the promise God had given in Genesis 3:15.

In conclusion people who have rejected God do not look forward to the coming of the Redeemer as Adam and Eve did.

Bible Teaching

Elisha Prophet of Water - Part 2 *By the late Charles Wigg (Tasmania)*



ELISHA'S DISCERNMENT AND DETERMINATION

When Elijah found Elisha he threw his mantle upon him. Though this was no great thing, yet Elisha discerned in that action the call of God. It would seem that Elisha knew Elijah, as we have mentioned earlier, because though Elijah did not stop, yet Elisha ran after him, and requested permission to say goodbye to his parents. Elijah answered him in a gruff way, and it seems tried to discourage him from responding to the call of God. He said "Go back again, for what have I done to thee?" Elijah was just testing the sharpness of the young man's discernment, and the depth of his commitment. However Elisha was equal to the test, he would not be put off from answering the call of God. Elijah knew that if he was to be his successor, that there would be many times during his ministry when he would have to discern what the will of God was. There would be many times when he would have to make decisions, and abide by those decisions, come

what may. It was no job for the ordinary wishy-washy type of person. Elisha then unyoked his bullocks, loaded his wooden implements on to the cart, and returned to his village.

Once he reached there, he slew the two fattest of his oxen, broke up the implements and used them for firewood. He boiled the flesh of the oxen on that fire, and made a feast for the whole village. He regarded the call of God to be the successor to the great Elijah, as a great honour, and he accepted God's call with joy. He did not like many today, go around begging for support. He sacrificed the only means of support that he had. He literally burned his business, and made a feast for the whole village. From now on he would depend entirely upon the God who had called him. He would trust Jehovah, (as Elijah did); to supply his needs each day, and he found that Jehovah never failed him. This is a clear lesson to all who would serve God. The path of obedience is the path of daily trust in God. Let us never look to men for support, but to him alone that has called us.

When we beg from men, we dishonour God, and infer that he is unfaithful, and unable to supply our needs. I recall being in the U.S.A. in 1994. I had a small radio, and could listen to many 'Christian' radio programmes. Some were far away from the truth, some were a mixture of truth and error, and some were quite sound in doctrine. But they all had one thing in common, they all ended in a begging session. Even if the speaker had extolled the value of faith, and the faithfulness of God, yet they ended up telling the listeners, that they depended on them and their financial support to keep the programme on the air. Correspondents of Churches and Assemblies, are inundated with junk mail, from organizations and individuals begging for money for this or that enterprise. It is a great shame that this should be so.

Though Elisha fed many others on some recorded occasions, yet he never asked anyone for anything for himself or his needs. We presume that he then kissed his parents good bye, and followed Elijah. As far as the record goes, we are never told that he ever returned to his home or village again. He could truly sing, "No turning back, No turning back".

ELISHA'S PROBATION

However he did not become a prophet all at once. There was twenty two years between the beginning of Ahab's reign, and the death of Ahaziah, and Elisha never came into the public view until after that event. This means that Elisha carried out a menial service for all those years. (It could have been anything from 10-14 years). During this time, he did the old prophet's washing, probably cooked his food, and attended to his personal needs. This would be no easy task, as it is quite possible that Elijah who was subject to like passions with us, could have been a hard person to please. There must have been times when he was irritable and perhaps angry. All was a good preparation for the young prophet's future service. During this time he must have learned many things from the man of God. Though he was not perfect, yet the younger man learned to love him, and regarded him as his Master.

How different things are today? Some young people want to teach others when they have never learned themselves. They want to occupy the pulpit, and to demonstrate their imagined abilities. It is the custom for such to go to some Bible school, or 'training course', they graduate with a head full of knowledge but no maturity, little heart experience. May God give us young men like Elisha! It seems from the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, that preparation for the Lord's service is more on the principle of apprenticeship, than the academic exercise that it has become.

THE LAST GREAT TEST

When the probationary period was ended, it seems that God had communicated to Elisha the knowledge that He was about to take His faithful servant Elijah home to glory. But before this happened, there was one last journey to be undertaken, one final test. The success of Elisha's future ministry depended on whether he would be able to pass this test. The significance of the journey, is to be found in the places visited, and their meaning.

GILGAL

Gilgal is the starting place for this last journey. It was the site of Israel's first encampment after they had crossed the Jordan. It was there that Joshua was commanded to make swords of stone, and to circumcise the males amongst the children of Israel (Joshua 5:2-9). Thus we are always to associate Gilgal with circumcision. By this act, Jehovah rolled away the reproach of Egypt from His people. Circumcision was the mark, or seal of God's covenant with Abraham, and was the one thing that was to forever mark out his descendants from those of other nations or religions. It was the cutting off of the filth of the flesh. The reproach of Egypt, was the spirit of independence of God, the spirit of self-confidence. Ezekiel tells us that Egypt boasted in their river, as if they had made it. The Nile with its huge volumes of fresh water, and the vast quantities of fertile silt that it carries down in its journey through several nations, from the very heart of Africa. It makes the nation to be independent from God, as they do not have to rely on the rain from heaven (Ezekiel 29:9).

We may ask, "What is the distinguishing mark of true Christianity? The answer is given in Philippians 3:3, where we are told that we are the circumcision "who worship God in the spirit", (or worship by the Spirit of God). "Who rejoice (boast), in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh". To boast or have confidence in the flesh is the very root of filthy spiritual pride. The servant of God must continually judge, cut off, the filthy flesh. All human religion is based on the principle of independence of God. The very idea that I can save myself, or can get to heaven on the basis of my own good works, is offensive to God, as salvation is His work, and without that work, none can be saved or enter heaven. It is the worst aspect of human pride, (spiritual pride), and is filthy in the sight of God.

A servant of God who was much used in the 19th century, gave seven tips to young preachers. Several I can recall. 'Glorify God', 'Preach the Word', 'Aim at the conscience', 'Reach the heart', but the last was, 'Use a sharp knife on yourself'. God has decreed that no flesh shall glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29). If it pleases God to use

such a worthless person as I am, as the channel through which He accomplishes His work, and I take the credit, or glory to myself as if I had done it, then this is filthy pride.

It is from Gilgal that the servant of God must go out to service, or to warfare, and it is to Gilgal that we must return, to remind ourselves of what God has done in “The circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11). Elijah suggested that Elisha remain at Gilgal, telling that God had sent him further, as if to encourage him to settle down there, but Elisha refused, saying “As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul lives I will not leave thee” This firm resolve must have brought joy to his master. At the same time we are introduced to a group of young men, called ‘the sons of the prophets’. We find them in different places during the ministry of Elisha.

.... to be continued

Good News

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE?

by Robert E. Surgenor (Evangelist)

BORN in 1874, Ehrich Weiss was the son of a poor Hungarian rabbi who soon emigrated to the United States with his family to live in Appleton, Wisconsin. In a short time, the family moved to New York City to occupy a humble dwelling on East 69th Street. When Ehrich was twelve, he became interested in performing “sleight of hand tricks,” so much so, that at the age of seventeen he quit his job as a lining cutter in a necktie factory to become the most famous escape artist and mystery man of the twentieth century.

Houdini’s road to fame was paved with bitterness, discouragement and failure. Inspired by the memoirs of Robert Houdin, France’s

greatest magician. Weiss changed his name to Houdin, and added the letter "i" which, in French, means "like." Hence. Houdini means "like Houdin." Later, he changed his first name to "Harry" as he felt it sounded better with "Houdini."

Practice makes perfect and Houdini practiced. He was healthy, intelligent and determined, never sleeping more than five hours a day. He had a mind for the spectacular, an eye for publicity, and a heart that craved an audience's praise. For twenty-five years his name appeared in headlines all over the world.



THE WARDEN'S CHALLENGE IN D.C.

On one occasion in Washington, D.C., the warden of the federal prison there challenged him. Houdini accepted, requesting that he be locked in the very cell which had held President Garfield's assassin. It was an ultra-security cell with an intricate five-tumbler-lock. Stripped, searched, and locked in the cell, he was free almost immediately! As he walked into the warden's office, he calmly announced, 'I let all your prisoners out.' As the warden and several guards leaped to their feet, Houdini assured them, 'Don't worry, I locked them all in again, in different cells.' As the story made headlines, Americans laughed with Houdini at the expense of the Federal penal system.

BOSTON'S CITY JAIL

In Boston's city jail, he was heavily manacled, then securely locked in a cell. In the warden's office, his judges awaited the outcome. Twenty minutes passed, and the Bostonians began to congratulate themselves

that they had succeeded in holding Houdini where all others had failed. Three minutes later, the phone rang. Houdini was calling to tell them he was at the Keith theater, a seven-minute drive away. In twenty-three minutes, he had freed himself, unlocked another cell to recover his clothes, was beyond the jail wall and halfway across the city. Law enforcement men agreed that it was a mercy Houdini wasn't a criminal. He would be a difficult man to apprehend and an impossible man to hold! Bound in a straight jacket, handcuffed, tied with chains and ropes. then sealed in a packing case and lowered under water, he always escaped to the astonishment of his spectators!

THE BANK VAULT—LONDON

On a theater's stage in London, Houdini was locked in a massive new bank vault believed to be utterly impenetrable. The audience waited. When forty minutes had passed, most of the women, saying he would suffocate, were pleading for his liberation. At the end of forty-five minutes, Houdini walked calmly out from behind the screen. The astonished vault manufacturer's representative opened the heavy door with the only key and announced in a shaken voice that neither the door nor lock had been tampered with. Houdini had done the seemingly impossible!

DEATH IN DETROIT

But finally, the day came. In Detroit, he collapsed from an advanced case of appendicitis, the result of a boxer's unexpected blow a few days earlier. Dying, as his brother gripped his hand, he muttered, "Dash, I'm tired of fighting. Guess this thing is... going to get me." On Halloween, October 31, 1926, his eyes closed and his soul departed, never to return.

On the tenth anniversary of Houdini's death, a final seance was held by his wife, in an effort to contact her departed husband. Nothing happened—nor could it. "Houdini hasn't come," she said sadly. "I don't believe he will come." She turned off the light by his portrait.

HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE?

Is it not true, we all have a time when we, too, shall depart from this world? “it is appointed unto men once to die (Hebrews 9:27). Not only is death unavoidable, it is also uncompromising. ‘There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death” (Ecclesiastes 8:8). For those who die in their sins, death holds the body, but hell holds the soul. Hell is God’s prison for lost souls a prison which no soul can escape. The great gulf is fixed (Luke 16:26)! There, conscious souls await the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29) to be reunited with their bodies. God will then judge them according to their deeds to determine the intensity of their inescapable and eternal sufferings in the lake of fire. Read Revelation 20:11—15. These are sobering thoughts!

BUT!! — God has provided a way of escape in this life! “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:8,9). The question is asked, “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33). The answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:3 1).

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”
(Hebrews 2:3).

THE SOLEMN ANSWER IS YOU WON’T

Church History

The Persecution of the Early Church by the Romans: Martyrs of the Early Church

By Mark Beardall

It is well known that Christians suffered terrible persecution by the Romans. This persecution began in the reign of Emperor Nero Domitius (54-68AD). Nero hated Christians and sought occasion to persecute them. In 64 AD Nero ordered his soldiers to set the City of Rome on fire. While the city was burning he played a song on his harp called, "The Burning of Troy." This fire lasted nine days.



Nero blamed the Christians for this wicked deed and used it as an opportunity to persecute them. Some Christians were crucified, others were sewn up in animal skins and eaten by dogs and some were set on fire and used for street lighting. This persecution was not only carried out in Rome but in the whole Roman Empire.

During the reign of Domitian a law was passed, "That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."

Christians had about a year of relief from persecution during the reign of Nerva who reigned for only 13 months. His successor Emperor Trajan continued the persecution but did not want Christians to be sought for but if any one was arrested they should be punished. A notable martyr during his reign was Ignatius. Ignatius was one of the

many bishops in the Church at Antioch. When Ignatius heard that Trajan was visiting Antioch, he sought out the emperor in order to persuade him to stop persecuting the Christians. Trajan called him, "a wicked devil and deceiver of men". Ignatius replied, "Not an evil spirit but I have Jesus Christ in my heart." Trajan said, "Jesus Christ within you?"

Do you mean him who was crucified by Pontius Pilate?" Ignatius boldly replied, "Yes, he was crucified for my sins." Ignatius was sent to Rome where he suffered cruel torture before being put to death. He was whipped and forced to hold burning papers in his hands, his sides were set on fire and his flesh was torn with red hot pincers. After this he was sown up in an animal skin and eaten by wild beasts before thousands of people in Rome.



Another man who suffered under the Romans was Polycarp. Polycarp was born around 69AD. He was a bishop in the Church at Smyrna, which is one of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation. He was a disciple of the apostle John. He also sought to teach the church by his writing and his letters can be read today.

Around the year 155AD there were fierce persecutions of Christians in Smyrna. Polycarp fled the city and hid himself but was betrayed by a child. When Polycarp was arrested he prepared a meal for his captors and prayed for them. He also prayed for himself and the Church at Smyrna. Polycarp was tried before the Roman consul, and was required to call Caesar Lord. Polycarp refused and the Consul threatened to throw him to the wild beasts. Polycarp told him to send for them. This angered the consul more and he threatened to burn him instead. Polycarp said, "You threaten the fire that burns for an hour; but you know not of the fire of the judgement to come and the fire of the eternal punishment. Bring what you will." Polycarp was burned to death. As the flames surrounded him he thanked God that he had been deemed worthy to receive the crown of martyrdom.



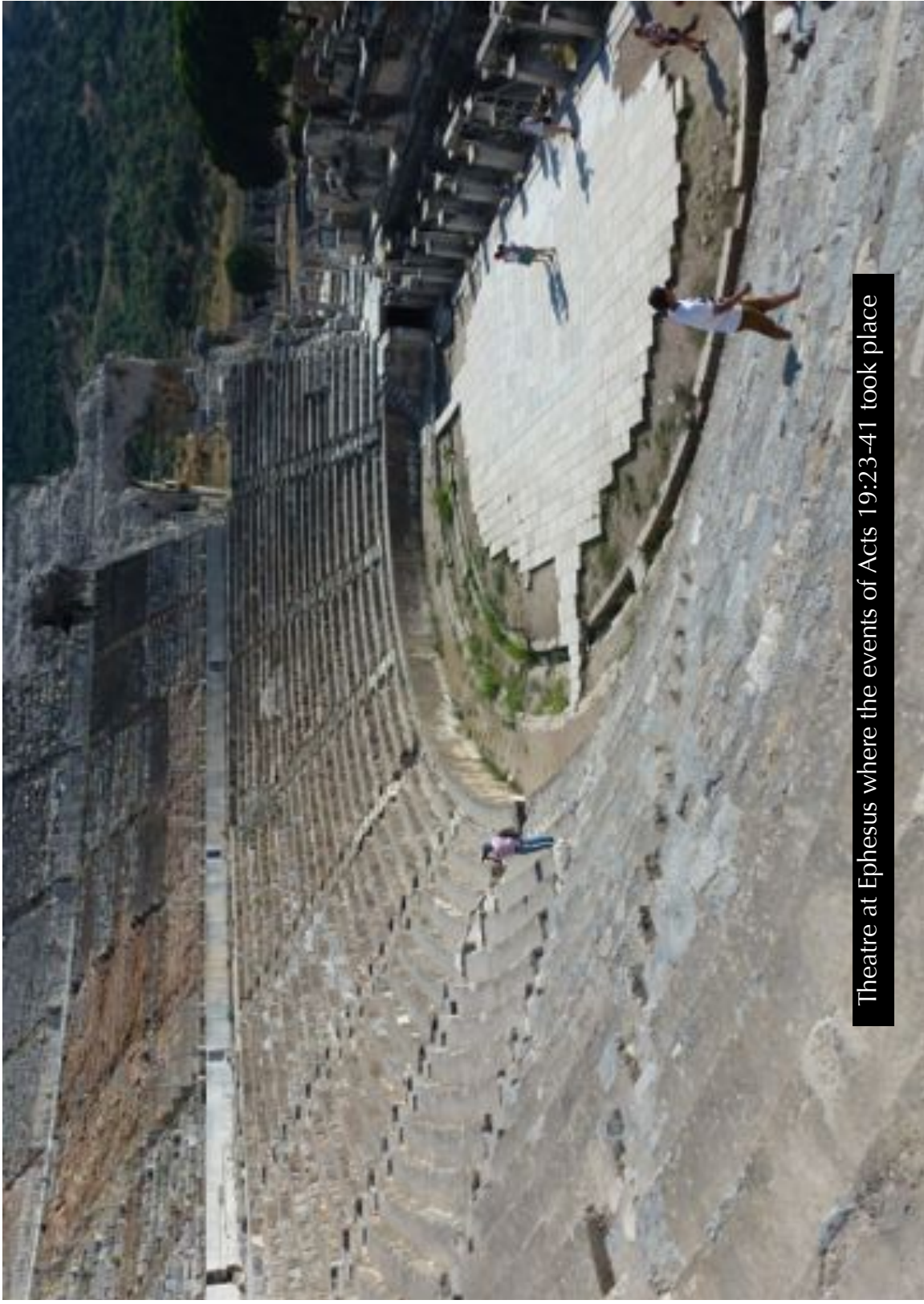
Justin Martyr was born around 100AD. He studied many different philosophies and ideas but he they all seemed empty to him. There was nothing that satisfied him until a Christian spoke to him while he was walking by the seaside and told him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Justin was convinced of the truth and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote a famous book called Apologies in which he defended the gospel and the doctrines of the faith. Justin was beheaded in 165AD because he refused to sacrifice to idols. Not every Emperor persecuted Christians but it was not until the reign of Constantine the Great, who professed to be a Christian that the Roman persecution ended.





Curetes street leading from the Hercules Gate at entrance of Ephesus to the Celsus library (below)





Theatre at Ephesus where the events of Acts 19:23-41 took place