

Clifton News

294 October - December 2021

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News

We thank God for improving covid situation in the country and the doors opening again for gospel outreach. We were able to have two stalls one at the South Norwood Festival in June and another at the Grange Wood Picnic in the Park in September. Unfortunately, there was no Thornton Heath Festival held this year. Much literature was given out and a number of conversations held.

Our children's clubs have restarted after the summer holidays but as expected numbers are not as many as before the pandemic. We hope to produce a banner outside to attract new children and value prayer for a response.

Peter Trump has settled into his new ground floor flat in Waddon. He values prayer as he is still awaiting a date for his hip replacement surgery.

We thank all who prayed for Ellen's mother who has made a good recovery from her heart problems and cancer operation for which we give God abundant thanks. Her brother Timothy will be getting married to Aadi on January 8th in Mumbai and prayer valued for that occasion and for journeying mercies as we travel as a family to India.

We look forward to our Christmas outreach and give a warm welcome to all if you can come along.

Carol Service

Sunday 19th December at 6:30 pm

Followed by tea and mince pies

Watch night Gospel Meeting

Friday 31st December at 11.00 pm



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Meetings

Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread 11.00 am
(During outreach at local community events it is earlier so please check our website before coming)

Young people's Bible class 12.00 pm
Family Service 4.00 pm

Monday

Prayer and Bible Teaching 7.45 pm

Wednesday

Seekers 6.30 pm
(Term time only for under 10s)

Friday

Friday Club 7.30 pm
(Term time only for those over 10)

SUNDAY AFTERNOON FAMILY SERVICE

October

3 Nitish Patel
10 Jonathan Docksey
17 Richard Catchpole
24 John Aston
31 Alastair Rodger

November

7 Richard Catchpole
14 Ferranti Wong
21 Alastair Rodger
28 John Aston

December

- 5 Andrew Hall
- 12 Thomas Taylor
- 19 Christmas Carol Service
- 26 No meeting (Boxing Day)

MONDAY PRAYER AND BIBLE TEACHING

October

- 4 Timothy Miller
- 11 Timothy Miller
- 18 Alastair Rodger
- 25 Colin Roberts

November

- 1 Nitish Patel
- 8 Nitish Patel
- 15 Robert Bennett
- 22 Richard Catchpole
- 29 Richard Catchpole

December

- 6 Alastair Rodger
- 13 Richard Catchpole
- 20 Richard Catchpole
- 27 No meeting (Christmas Bank Holiday)

Our Monday night ministry meeting and Family Service is broadcast on Zoom. If any of you would like to listen to listen to God's Word, please enter the following on the Zoom website to join Clifton Hall.

Meeting ID: 756 5533 4423

Passcode: 186868

Question Box

How can we know Christianity is true?

There are many religions across the world, for example Islam, Hinduism or Mormonism. How then can we know that Christianity is true? If we were to ask a Muslim or a Hindu or a Mormon, they would all say that their faith was true.

Jesus Himself stated that He was the only way to the Father, so He claimed that faith in Him was the only way to God.

Now, instead on getting into a discussion on this and risk upsetting people, we could take an easy way out and say that maybe all the different religions are true. Some people picture this as faiths being different paths going up the same mountain. However, that's not possible since parts of different religions contradict each other. For instance, Hinduism says there are many Gods, while Christianity, Islam and Judaism all say there is one God. Christianity says that Jesus is God, whereas Islam and Judaism would deny this. It's not possible for all of them to be true.

So, if it's not possible for all religions to be true, how do we establish which one is?

Clearly, there's not enough space in this magazine to answer this question fully, so I want to just focus on one question we can ask when looking at a faith or religion – where did it come from?

Followers of many religions would point to a man or woman who heard from god or gods and then delivered that message to other people, this person would be called a prophet.

What about Christians? We can point to Jesus as the founder of our faith. And while He did tell people the message of God, He was more than just a human messenger – He was God Himself. He made this clear in many ways, through the miracles He performed, claiming the power to forgive sins, receiving worship as God and applying Old Testament verses about God to Himself.

Jesus' enemies realised what He was saying about Himself, they accused Him of blasphemy and claimed that His miracles were performed by the power of Satan. However, when asking whether what Jesus said was true the big challenge His enemies faced, and the crucial element I want us to think about is His resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus is key. On multiple occasions Jesus said that He was going to be killed and three days later rise again (Matt 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, John 2:19-22). If that didn't happen, we couldn't trust anything else Jesus said – if He claimed He would rise from the dead but didn't, why should we believe He is the only way to the Father? If it did happen, Jesus rising from the dead confirms what He said about Himself, what He taught and what He achieved by dying on the cross. Peter and Paul use forms of this argument in preaching recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 13:32-34, 16:30-32).

Jesus' resurrection was also foretold in the Old Testament (Psalm 16:10, 22:22-31, Isaiah 53:10-11), so His rising from the dead also confirms what God had said about His coming Saviour. As an aside, the consistency of the scriptures (the different books agree with each other and closely reference one another) is another reason for us to believe Christianity to be true.

Of course, if the resurrection is an important reason for us to know that Christianity is true, you might ask "how can I know that the resurrection happened?" There are many answers we can point to, here are just a few:

- We have eyewitness accounts from those who knew Jesus and who saw Him both before and after His resurrection.
- His disciples changed from running away in fear before Jesus' crucifixion to boldly preaching about Him in public and even suffering and dying for Him after His resurrection. Why would they do that if they knew Jesus had not risen?
- The stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty, the body was never found. If the religious authorities wanted to stamp out Christianity, and they did, showing that Jesus was still dead would have done this. Yet they couldn't.

When considering whether Christianity is true, there is much more we can say, but a simple answer we can keep in our minds is this: Our faith starts from a man sent from God, who is God, who said He would die and rise again and did just as He said. We can rely on what Jesus said and put our faith in Him knowing that just as He promised to rise again, so has He promised to raise all those who believe in Him (John 6:40).

Alastair Rodger

Bible Teaching



ISAIAH 6 (PART 3)

Bible notes by the late Tom Ledger

THE POWER OF THE VISION

Note six woes of chapter 5

“woe is me” Man brought consciously into the presence of God.

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:5-6)

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (Luke 5:8)

“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Revelation 1:17-18)

Isaiah’s cry is the cry of the leper; or ruin.

Lips the expression of character

He feels as if he had never really recognised his sin or corruption before.

He’s got a sense of sinfulness. Strong. Overpowering. A desperate sense of iniquity.

Our sense of and insight of sin is blurred, dulled by a lack of a sense of God in His glory by shallow separation, by materialism, by a lack of real prayer, meditation of Gods Word.

He felt full of sin, hemmed in by it, surrounded by it, breathing it, oh, the despair!

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SERAPHIM

"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." (Isaiah 6:6-7)

The Altar of Sacrifice: Judgment met, satisfied

Coal: It had fed upon the sacrifice. Judgment burned itself out upon the offering in the very presence of God so the means of meeting all contrary to His holiness. We are set at rest in His presence!

Oh, wonderful Saviour, Priest, Advocate!

Confession brings: Heaven instead of hell, blessing instead cursing, kiss instead of blow.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Philippians 3:10)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1John 1:9)

THE PLEA OF THE THRONE

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Not words of perplexity but sovereignty. Questions from divine persons are not for information but are to put us to the test! Our answers show where we stand, brings out our spiritual state, our ignorance, our hardness etc...

"Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?" (Matthew 17:24-25)

Pharisees ... What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?" (Matthew 22:42)

Disciples of John ... "Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being

interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?" (John 1:38)

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?" (John 13:12)

"Who will go for us?" Not addressed to Seraphim! They would have responded in a flash!

"Then said I, hear am I, send me"

Moses ... "And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." (Exodus 4:13)

Lit: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it". With Isaiah, oh the readiness, the desire to serve God.

THE PERMISSION OF THE THRONE

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." (Isaiah 6:9)

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:15)

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:38)

Sent - by the Lord! not mission, not boards, committees!

Pray - appeals made not to man but God!

When God sends a man, who dare stand in the way! When God has not sent a man, what's the point of his going?

THE PECULIARITY OF THE MESSAGE (vv. 9-13)

Importance of the message. Quoted more than any other Scripture: Matthew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27; Romans 11:8.

What a strange errand! to blind, deafen, harden!

What a message! Judgment upon the whole nation. Judicial blindness!

(v. 9) "this people ..." Note the disdain, distance, judgment, rejection!

(v. 10) "Make ..." That's what the preaching will do and God will allow it to go unchecked. He will not intervene.

Compare

Romans 1:24 "God also gave them up to uncleanness ..."

Romans 1:26 "God gave them up unto vile affections ..."

Romans 1:28 "God gave them over to a reprobate mind ..."

You cannot play about with God's Word !

They had rejected the prophets, the Lord Jesus, the Apostles (Matthew 12:22-24, 13:13-15)

"But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple."
(Matthew 12:6)

"a greater than Jonas is here." (Matthew 12:41)

"a greater than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:42)

In John 12:37, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him."

In John 12:38-41, John quotes Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6:10!

In Acts 13:46 at Antioch, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles"

In Acts 18:6 at Corinth, "I will go unto the Gentiles"

In Acts 22:18-21 at Jerusalem, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

In Acts 28, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10.

(v. 11) "How long?" He must pronounce judgment, but oh his heart goes out in intercession. He knew art could not be forever!

Conditionally promised ... "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again." (Romans 11:23)

Highly probable ... "how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?" (Romans 11:24)

Emphatically stated ... "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11:26)

*** *Concluded* ***

Good News



LEFT BEHIND!

These words were heard day after day as the world looked in horror at the speed at which the Taliban took over Afghanistan when the United States decided to pull out all its troops by 31st August 2021.

There was a frantic effort by various nations to evacuate their citizens and the many Afghans who worked for various foreign militaries there knowing that they will face reprisals at the hands of the brutal and merciless Taliban.

Every day thousands gathered outside Kabul airport hoping they will be accepted on a flight. Babies were handed over to soldiers and families separated. Then the so called Islamic state terrorists struck with a suicide bomber who killed 182 people. There were scenes of utter chaos and desperation as the deadline approached.

Despite all the efforts, sadly, tens of thousands were left behind to face possible persecution or death. Nothing more could be done for them.

These tragic scenes remind us of far more frightening ones that are to come upon this world when the great day of the wrath of the Lamb will come (Revelation 6:16-17). It will be a time unprecedented horror for Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21)

This will happen suddenly and without any warning, "... the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ... they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3)

There is a way of escape provided by God through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Those who put their trust in Him are delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

When Jesus returns as He promised to resurrect the dead in Christ and take home to heaven all believers upon earth, not one who is saved will be left behind!

Those left on earth will be those without Christ and there will be no hope.

Reader will you be caught up or caught out?

*It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking,
That Jesus will come in the fullness of glory,
To receive from the world "His own."*

(H. L. Turner)



Design in Creation

PLANT DEFENCE MECHANISMS

By Nitish Patel

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31). The sin of man (Romans 8:20) and the flood altered the world so that it was no longer the same. Thorns and thistles were brought forth by God as a judgment upon man’s sin and plant defences brought into being (Genesis 3:18). After the flood, the vegetarian plant diet was changed and mankind was given permission to eat meat (Genesis 9:3).

Though plants lack an immune system, they have been designed with an amazing array of defences. Plants defend themselves in various ways against bacteria, fungi, animals and man.

PHYSICAL AND MECHANICAL DEFENCES

The first line of defence is physical through the use of barriers and thorns to block a herbivore feeding on the leaves.



Plants have waxy cuticles covering the leaves and trees also have their thick barks which is dead tissue and is renewed as it grows.

Another defence in some plants are mechanical defences such as thorns and spines to stab their attackers. Thorns are modified branches and spines are modified leaves. Trichomes (plant hairs) are another defence where the plant has which irritate the mouth of any herbivore seeking to eat it. Most of us have experienced the power of the tiny trichome and its pain that did not go away for quite some time. We are speaking of course of the stinging nettle that we brushed past in a park or garden. The sharp trichome pierces us and then glands in the nettle inject poison into the wound. Some tropical nettles can cause permanent damage, even death.

Others are not painful but like the touch sensitive plant (mimosa pudica) closes up its leaves when touched to appear dead.

These are like soldiers with sharp swords, spears or bayonets but other plants have defences which are more like landmines. Once bitten into there is an explosion of chemicals.

CHEMICAL DEFENCES

Most plants have chemical defences which are either repellants or poisons. The wild vine put into the pot to eat when tasted resulted in the cry, "O man of God there is death in the pot." (2 Kings 4:40).



Poisonous Foxglove

Most plants have some kind of chemical defence though in the quantities that we normally eat will not harm us.

The dumb plant, a popular house plant, is so named for when its leaves are chewed they release sharp calcium oxalate crystals which cause paralysis of the mouth hence the name.

Some plants give off a noxious smell but even lavender, mint or sage which smell fragrant to humans use these smells to ward off insects. Cruciferous vegetables named after the cross shape of their petals includes mustard, brussel sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, kale and others. These produce glucosinolates which are pungent and ward off animal from eating them.

The nightshade family of plants (solanaceae) includes the potatoes, tomatoes, aubergines and also the deadly nightshade, atropa belladonna, whose foliage and berries are extremely toxic and if eaten can cause hallucination and death.

100 grams of apple seeds when crushed can yield about 70mg of hydrogen cyanide another deadly poison.

MIMICRY DEFENCES

Lithops is a plant native to Southern Africa that mimics the pebbles and stones around it and cannot be seen by predators. Its leaves are buried just under the soil with a translucent window to let the light in to achieve photosynthesis but the green leaves cannot be seen.

The *Lamium album* plant mimics the leaves of the stinging nettle though it causes not harm. Its appearance scares off would be predators that fear getting stung. It is known as the white dead nettle.



Lithops

HIRED MERCENARIES

The acacia trees of Central America (*acacia collinsii*) are home to an aggressive ants species called *pseudomyrmex ferrugineus*. These protect them from hungry animals such as goats by biting and stinging them on the head or insects like crickets whom they completely destroy. They also scout the ground in search of any other plants or their seeds that could invade their territory and destroy them.



The ants live in the hollow thorn like stipules of the plant. In exchange for this protection by the ant mob, the tree feeds the ants with a special sweet nectar. But it is not any nectar for the ants being ants can easily go foraging around and find other sources. The trees sugary snack is laced with an enzyme that prevents the ants from eating any other kind of sugar. The ants having eaten this nectar find themselves addicted and then have protect this food source.

This tree does this from the moment the ant is born. When the ants

emerge from the pupae as adults, their first sip of acacia nectar changes them. The tree has added an enzyme called chitinase which irreversibly blocks the ants own production of the enzyme invertase they need to digest sugar. The tree then adds invertase to its own nectar so that the ants get a ready meal pre-digested. They can only eat this and cannot go anywhere else for food thus they are trapped, effectively hired for life by this tree to protect it. The exact chemical processes are still a mystery.

Scientists from the German Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology found that the acacia tree inserts molecules called protease inhibitors into the nectar. These block enzymes that beetles that try to eat the nectar need in their bodies to digest protein. Any other insect except the ant gets indigestion!

When ants are deliberately removed, the trees die proving the importance of this symbiotic relationship.

SIGNALLING TO OTHER PLANTS AND INSECTS

Some plants when attacked signal to other plants so that they produce chemicals that ward off the attackers. It is believed they can even send signals through a network of fungi in the ground which live in a symbiotic relationship with the plant.

King Solomon in his God given wisdom had much to say about plants for they do indeed display the wisdom of their Designer and Creator.

“And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.” (1Kings 4:33)

“Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.” (1Chronicles 16:33)



The hollow thorn like stipules of the Acacia tree, (*vachellia collinsii*) provide shelter for its ant mercenaries

Bethlehem from the air (1931)

