

Clifton News

300 April - June 2023

Published since 1948

A photograph of Clifton Hall, a stone building with a red door and large arched windows. A sign in the foreground reads 'Clifton Hall' and lists various services. The building is situated on a street with a white van parked nearby.

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News

We mourn the loss of two dear believers who went to be with the Lord recently, our brother Norman Gibbons (27th January 2023) and our sister Catherine Alcide (24th December 2022). Both will be much missed by the assembly. Both funerals went well with good numbers of family members present to heard the gospel. Prayer valued for the Lord's comfort for Mary and for the Alcide family.

On a happier note, Will and Sylvia celebrated their first wedding anniversary with a cake for everyone. A long delayed reception for friends and family here will take place at Clifton Hall, God willing, on Saturday 15th April at 4pm.

We received into fellowship our brother Clement from India who joined his Priya who came earlier.

We have applied for a place again at the South Norwood festival on 2nd July and awaiting news. We will be having another Easter Holiday Club April and prayers valued for God's blessing on the children and parents.

The midweeks clubs are seeing better numbers especially the Friday Club for which we thank God.

EASTER HOLIDAY CLUB



10 am to 12 noon
Monday 3rd to
Thursday 6th April 2023
Free admission
FOR AGE 4 AND OVER
PRIZE GIVING THURSDAY AT 6.30 PM

Editor: Nitish Patel.

Clifton Hall, 45 Whitehorse Lane, South Norwood, London SE25 6RD.

Website: www.cliftongospelhall.com. Email: cliftongospelhall@googlemail.com

Meetings

Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread	11.00 am
Young People's Bible class	12.15 pm
Family Service	4.00 pm

Monday

Prayer and Bible Teaching	7.45 pm
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Wednesday

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

Friday

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

(Please check our website before coming for any changes to time or cancellations)

SUNDAY AFTERNOON FAMILY SERVICE

April

2	Clifton young people
9	Nitish Patel (Easter Sunday)
16	Alastair Rodger
23	Nitish Patel
30	Ferranti Wong

May

7	Clifton young people
14	Mike Surry
21	John Aston
28	Richard Catchpole

June

4	Clifton young people
11	Andrew Hall
18	Thomas Taylor
25	Thomas Taylor

MONDAY PRAYER AND MINISTRY

April

3-6	No meeting (Easter Holiday Club)
10	No meeting (Easter Monday)
17	Robert Bennett
24	Robert Bennett

May

1	No meeting (Bank Holiday)
8	No meeting (Bank Holiday)
15	Roy Aitkin
22	Roy Aitkin
29	No meeting (Bank Holiday)

June

5	Alastair Rodger
12	Colin Roberts
19	Colin Roberts
26	Alastair Rodger

There are four Bank Holidays in this quarter and we don't have a prayer and Ministry Meeting on those days. Instead on the Sunday of those four weekends Nitish Patel will give ministry following the Lord's Supper on the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25)

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

Meeting ID: 756 5533 4423

Passcode: 186868

Question Box

Why did God want to destroy the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:1-3)?

In 1 Samuel chapter 15, God instructs King Saul to “go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, infants and nursing babies, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys.” Saul did attack them, however he spared the Amalekite King, Agag, and the best of their animals.

On the face of it, this instruction sounds shocking, God was ordering the King of Israel and his army to wipe out a nation. Doing something like today would be considered ethnic cleansing. What are we to make of this?

Firstly, who were the Amalekites? They were a people group descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (Genesis 36:12). The first time we read of them as a collective, is when they attacked the children of Israel on their journey away from Egypt (Exodus 17). This was the first battle that the Israelites fought on their way to the promised land. From Deuteronomy 25:18, we see that they first attacked the stragglers, those who couldn't keep up with the main group of the people, such as the old, ill or those travelling with young children. This gives us an idea of the character of the Amalekites, that they were willing to attack the weak.

Later on, in 1 Samuel 30, we see the Amalekites attacking Ziklag (where David, his men and their families had been living) while David and the men were away. They took away the women and children, again focusing their attack on the weak. And even later, in the book of Esther, a descendent of Agag, Haman, plots to wipe out the entire Jewish people.

From this we can see that the Amalekites were not innocent, peaceful people, they too were ready and willing to attack the Israelites. Furthermore, we also learn in Deuteronomy 12:29-32, as the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, about some of the religious practices of nations (including the Amalekites) who were currently living in the land. They committed detestable acts, including sacrificing their own children to their gods. Sadly, though warned

against it, the Israelites would frequently follow the religious practices of those nations, turning to idols from the living God.

We should also note that the Israelites too would be judged by God when they turned away from Him, later being taken into captivity in because of their sin. God would judge them for their actions too. God in His love desired to bless His people, both by protecting them from the attacks of the nations around them and from their evil influence.

So, if the Amalekites deserved judgement for the wicked things they did, would there be any way of escape for them? Yes, we can see examples of individuals from the other nations living in the land who escaped God's judgement. For instance, in Joshua 2, Rahab, and everyone else in Jericho had heard about all God had done, but only she believed God and then was saved. Similarly, Ruth turned to God and would be brought into the children of Israel. So, there was the opportunity for those who trusted in God to be saved, regardless of what nation they were from. The Amalekites would have had opportunity to hear about what God had done and seek Him themselves.

Deuteronomy 20:10-11 also tells us that the Israelites were to first offer peace terms to the cities in the land. So those willing to accept that offer and become the Israelites servants would not be destroyed. Clearly the Amalekites sought neither peace nor God.

Of course, we recognise that the instruction God gave to Saul was specifically for that day and time and wasn't to be repeated whenever he or another king felt like it. But it provides lessons for us now. Firstly, it reminds us of the seriousness of sin, each one of us stands guilty before God because of our sins. As sinners, each one of us faces God's judgement, a judgement that we deserve.

But we are also reminded that God has provided the way that we can be saved from the judgement we deserve. He gave His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, so that all who believe in Him will be saved. And like Rahab, regardless of our background or nationality, God will receive all who believe in Him.

Alastair Rodger



Bible Teaching

FOUR LOVES AT THE CROSS

By the late John Wallace (Hartlepool)

(1) The love of God for the world; (2) the love of the Father for the Son; (3) The love of the Son for the Father; (4) The love of the Son for his own.

1. THE LOVE OF GOD FOR THE WORLD (JOHN 3:16)

a) A special kind of love. All scripture is given by the inspiration of God. However we must keep in mind that the Bible was not written in English, it is the original text that was inspired. If we would understand the meaning of a word we must understand the meaning of the word in the original text. There are two words for love in the New Testament phileo and agape. Phileo corresponds to our fondness and affection; agape is perhaps best defined as the love of God, God is love. Many words have been used by poets and hymn writers to express the love of God; vast, immense, immeasurable, amazing, and matchless are just a few, All come short of the actual thing. The love of God is without condition – we don't have to do anything and without reserve – we don't have to be anything.

b) A special kind of person. His only begotten Son. His one and only Son. There are two things here (1) Uniqueness. His ONLY begotten Son. God has only one Son. (2) Reality. His only BEGOTTEN Son. Much has been said and written about the word begotten. Perhaps the basic thought is that the Son who is begotten is the true son. A boy may be regarded as a son in a number of ways but the son who is begotten is the true son. The Lord Jesus is the true Son of God, God had said to him

what he hasn't said even to the highest of angelic beings "Thou art my Son".

c) A special kind of giving. God gave His only begotten Son. The word "give" has a number of different associations. A comparison of one or two other verses will help us here. In Romans 8, Paul writes these well-known words "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all." The word delivered is the same basic word as the word "gave" in John 3v16; some translations have "he gave him up for us all". The idea in John 3v16 is not so much that God gave Him to us but God gave Him up for us. We must bear in mind at all times that it was as a man that the Lord Jesus died for man. God gave up His Son to become man so that He might accomplish, on our behalf, the work of salvation.

d) A special kind of promise. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The promise of eternal life is the oldest in the Bible. Paul writes in Titus 1v2, "In hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the world began". That promise is now made to all who will believe.

2. THE LOVE OF THE FATHER FOR THE SON

The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17v24, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". The emphasis in that statement is on the word 'me'. Before there was anything or anyone else for the Father to love, the Father loved the Son. There are two statements in the gospel according to John. a) The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hands John 3v35, b) The Father loveth the Son and showeth him all that he doeth John 6v20. The significance of these verses is not seen in the Authorised Version. We have seen that there are two words in the original text for love; both of these words are used in these two statements. John 3v35 the word is agape, John 5v20 the word is phileo. All the fullness of the love and affection and fondness and approval of the Father's heart rests upon the Son of His love.

The Father's confidence in the Son. In these verses, we see the Father's confidence in the Son. He has the confidence to show to Him all His mind and His purpose. He has the confidence to commit all things into His hands. As Abraham and Isaac walked together towards Moriah's

summit Isaac suddenly stops; looking into his father's face he says "Where is the lamb? what a question. Abraham is aware that only God knows the answer, what will he say to his son? The only words that he can find in his heart to say are "My son, God will provide the lamb". The question remains and they walk silently on together. I feel that on mount Moriah Abraham was closer to the heart of God, who one day would give up his Son than any other man has ever been. The Lord Jesus was perfectly acquainted with his Father's mind and purpose, he knew the immense responsibility that his Father was placing on him in sending him to bring to its fulfilment his Father's plan and desire. He knew from before the foundation of the world that he was foreordained from before the foundation of the world to be the lamb (1Pet 2.20).

Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again (John 10v17). The next verse (v. 18) tells us that this is the ultimate of his Father's commandment, this commandment have I received of my Father. The love, therefore, is not conditional. The Father's love didn't depend on him laying down his life. It is rather an expression of the satisfaction and delight of the Father's heart.

*Blessed Lord our hearts would treasure
All the Father's thoughts of thee
All his rest, his joy, his pleasure,
All His deep delight in thee,
Lord thy heart alone can measure
All the Father found in thee.
(Douglas Russell)*

3. THE LOVE OF THE SON FOR THE FATHER

"That the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14v31). In the record of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 God speaks of Abraham's love for Isaac; "Thine only Isaac whom thou lovest" but there is no mention of Isaac's love for Abraham. Did Isaac love his father? See him bound to the altar ready to give up his life in the fulfilment of his father's purpose and desire; could there be any question as to his love for his father? See the Son of God hanging on a cross in shame and agony in the fulfilment of his Father's will; is he not saying in that very act "I love

the Father"? The cross is the supreme telling out of the love and devotion of his heart for his Father.

4. THE LOVE OF THE SON FOR HIS OWN

Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5v25). The Son of God loved me. Galatians (2v20). He loves his own collectively - the church. He loves his own individually - me.

John tells us that, "having loved his own which were in the world he loved them to the end". (John 13v1). The Lord Jesus told a parable about a shepherd who lost a sheep and he went after it until he found it." Until", how far was that? How long was the road, how hard was the road, the answer is bound up in that little word until. However far, however hard, he went all the way. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, John says, "unto the end". The margin of the Authorised Version has to the uttermost, a longer word but it still leaves us to ponder the question, how far did he go? Like the shepherd we can say of him he went all the way. The words of the little chorus are simple yet profound, all the way to Calvary he went for me. As the Father hath loved me even so have I loved you, continue in my love. (John 15v9). It would appear as if the Lord Jesus suddenly moves on to another line of truth A careful examination of the text will show that this is not exactly the case. He has spoken about the need of the disciples to abide in him and for his word to abide in them (v. 7). He now speaks about them abiding (continue is the same word as the word abide) in his love. Abiding in him is productive – the believer who abides in him will bear fruit. Abiding in his love is conditional – if ye keep my commandments.

The Lord Jesus is our great example. As the Father hath loved me – that is absolute. I keep my Father's commandments and abide in his love – that is perfect. The Lord Jesus says if ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love. There is no "If" here, he kept his Father's commandments. It is one thing knowing that the sun is shining, and another thing to be in the sunshine. The Lord Jesus loves us with a love as great and as precious as the Father's love for him; what do we know about abiding in his love?

Good News



“Humans will achieve immortality in EIGHT YEARS”

So said a scientist recently. His name is Ray Kurzweil (born 1948) and the recipient of 20 honorary doctorates. He is the inventor of the first CCD flat-bed scanner (1975) and the first machine that can read books for blind people (1976). He is known as a futurist because many of his predictions have come true with 86% accuracy according to the Daily Mirror newspaper (28 March 2023). In 1990, he predicted that a computer will beat the world's best chess player by the year 2000 and this happened in 1997 when Gary Kasparov was beaten by the IBM Deep Blue computer. He predicted handheld computers (smartphones) and the rise of Artificial Intelligence. He predicted how humans will communicate via the Internet by 2010.

Now the former Google engineer believes that humans will achieve immortality within eight years. He believes that nanobots, tiny microscopic robots will be developed that can be injected into the human body and will repair any damage caused by ageing and cure all diseases leading to the possibility of immortality by the year 2030.

Undoubtedly, Ray Kurzweil is a very clever man but this latest prediction has been met with a healthy dose of scepticism. Though technology has made a great impact on human longevity, this prediction cannot come true by human effort because of the reason why there is death in the first place in this world.

Death is not just a natural chemical reaction that can be stopped with technological innovation but a judicial sentence from God upon mankind. Death was the sentence passed by God on the whole human race when our first father, Adam, as head of the human race sinned. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12).

The good news is that God has promised immortality to all who trust in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to pay the death penalty we deserve so that we can be saved from sin and death. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

When Jesus returns for His own, the Bible promises that whether we have died or are alive at His coming we shall be changed. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:21)

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."
(1 Corinthians 15:54)

This is not a prediction but a certain promise from God who cannot lie. Reader, do you have this hope? If not, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ now as your Saviour.



Design in Creation

THE WOOD WIDE WEB

How trees secretly talk to each other

By Nitish Patel

“Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice” (Psalms 96:12)

“Praise the LORD from the earth Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:” (Psalms 148:7, 9)

We have seen talking trees in fairy tales and movies but can trees communicate with one another? Science has now proven it to be true. Not just trees but around 90% of all plants communicate with each other.

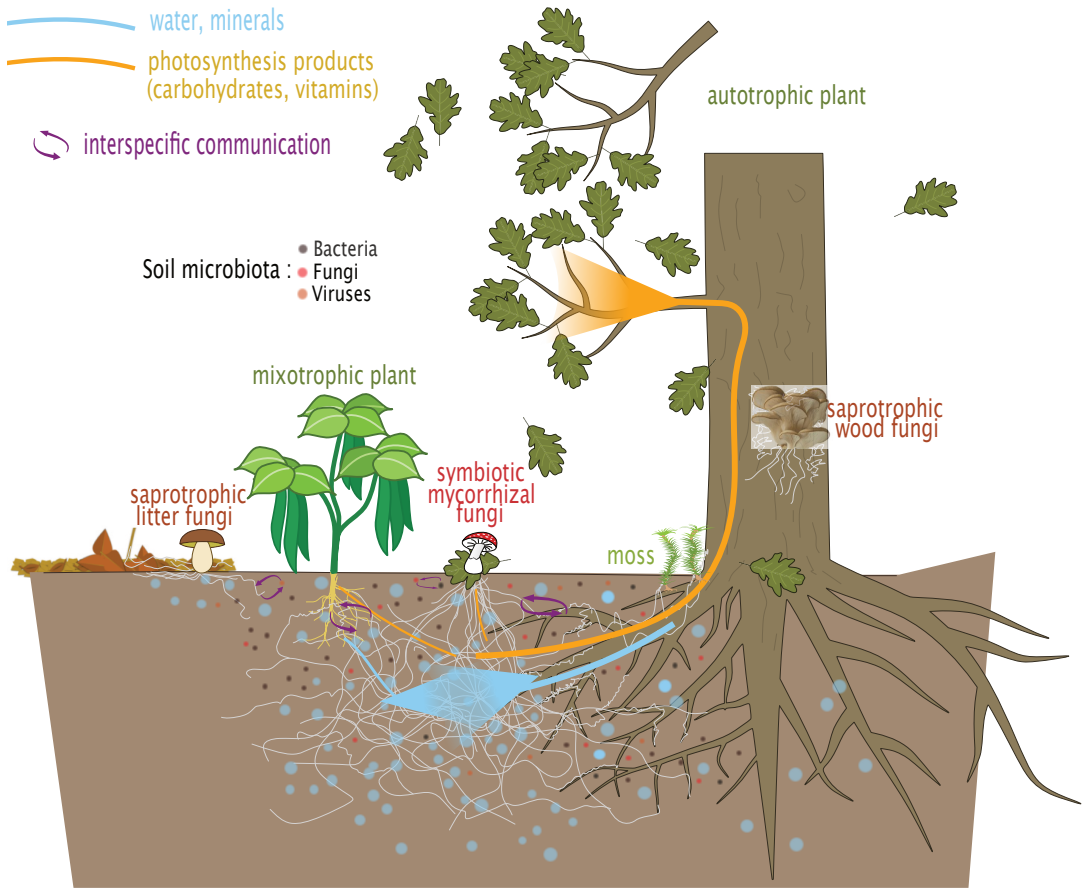
This extraordinary discovery was made by a Canadian forest ecologist



named Dr Suzanne Simard who published it in the August 1997 edition of the scientific journal, *Nature*, under the heading, “The wood wide web”. However, her research was initially trashed by many, with one reviewer even calling it a “dog’s breakfast!”. But she persisted and her research was confirmed by other scientists and is now recognised worldwide.

Prof Simard discovered that trees communicate with each other through a symbiotic relationship with fungi underground. This symbiosis was first noticed by a German scientist, Albert Bernhard Frank (1839-1900). Trees are not solitary as was supposed but research showed that in every forest and wood, they are interconnected to each other and plants by a complex network involving the tree roots, fungi and bacteria. This network enables the transfer of water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients and minerals between plants.

This network between trees and fungi is called the mycorrhizal fungi network from two Greek words meaning fungus and root. Mycorrhizae come in two types, those that just surround the tree roots



and those that penetrate inside the cell wall and have a closer connection with the tree. These have been described as the fibre optic cables of the wood wide web. As you walk in a wood or forest there are millions of these connections beneath the feet. The reproductive parts of these fungi are well known to us as mushrooms.

Electrical signals pass along this underground web from tree or plant root tip to root tip aided by the long threads or hyphae of the fungi. All kinds of information is broadcast from predator attacks, drought conditions or contamination by toxic heavy metals.

Research is still ongoing but it is believed that trees also communicate by sound as well as electricity and chemicals. It is said that without these fungi trees could not exist and this relationship is vital to all life on earth.

MUTUAL CARE

This relationship is mutually beneficial. The tree gives sugar to the fungus down in the roots which it needs and the fungus in turn possesses an enzyme the tree does not have and uses it to scavenge the phosphorus and nitrogen from the soil that the tree needs. Trees also share resources with other trees which are lacking in nutrients through this network. This was proved by experiments using two types of radioactive carbon which was introduced to a birch tree and a different one to a fir tree nearby. When the fir tree was deliberately deprived of sunlight it was supplied with more of the radioactively labelled sugars from the birch tree. The less the sunlight the more help was given. This experiment showed that trees were capable of helping other trees in distress.

This care is seen for saplings which don't have enough sunlight coming down to them because of the huge tree canopy above. Older trees share their nutrients with them. When a tree dies it releases its nutrients through the network for the other trees to use.

Unlike what evolutionists supposed that all trees compete with each other for sunlight and nutrients in a survival of the fittest. Trees have been created by God to cooperate and care for one another. Trees function as one organism supporting one another to survive.

DEFENCE SYSTEMS

Research done with giraffes in Africa showed that when they eat from acacia trees, the tree gives off a chemical warning to other acacia trees. Once the tree detects a giraffe or any other animal nibbling its leaves, it starts producing tannin which makes the leaves inedible to avoid being overeaten. The tree also emits ethylene gas which travels to other trees to warn of the danger. Other acacia trees pick up the ethylene gas and start producing tannin to make their leaves inedible too.

Giraffes understand this and research has shown that they only browse only one acacia tree in ten and also avoid eating from any which were downwind.

Oak trees do the same when attacked by caterpillars. They produce tannin and phenol in their leaves. When elms and pines come under attack by leaf eating caterpillars they detect the caterpillar saliva, and



release pheromones that attract parasitic wasps which attacks the caterpillar by laying eggs inside them and the larvae eat the caterpillar from inside out.

Tomato plants have been shown to warn others of predators. When caterpillars were introduced to one plant, it warned the nearby ones through the network so that they produced enzymes within six hours making their leaves less edible.

These communication and defence mechanisms could not have evolved by chance. Trees and plants have no intelligence to produce such an intelligently designed system. Blind chance and millions of years did not produce this wood wide web. It was created by an intelligent Creator God who will one day be praised by all Creation.

“For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” (Isaiah 55:12)





Eilat, Israel