

Clifton News

302 October - December 2023

Published since 1948





News

Our outing to Littlehampton was well attended by assembly members as well as children and parents who come to the Wednesday Seekers. God granted good weather and all enjoyed a very good day out with hymn singing on the coach on the way home.

We give God thanks for enabling the assembly to reach out at three local festivals in past three months. Despite restrictions placed on tracting at the South Norwood Festival, plenty of parents and children came to our stall. The Thornton Heath Festival organisers suddenly announced they will be organising a festival the same day as the Grange Picnic in the Park. Thankfully, because of increased numbers in fellowship we were able to have two teams organised at both places. We had a good location at Thornton Heath which is the busiest and a lot of literature was distributed. As with much gospel work these days, results are not immediate but we pray for the Word sown.

We had the joy of welcoming into fellowship a number of new additions, Shilu Matthew, Linta Jerry, Ledia Susan, Jini Ann Varghese and also Jonathan and Sabra Docksey. God willing, Jini's husband Bovas and two boys will join her from India in due time. We said goodbye to Jerome who returned back to Bournemouth to continue his studies nearer home.

Carol Service

Sunday 24th December at 6:30 pm
(followed by tea and mince pies)

Watchnight Meeting

31st December at 11.00 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
---------------------------	---------

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

October

1	Daniel Girard
8	Jonathan Docksey
15	Alastair Rodger
22	John Aston
29	Kiran Patel

November

5	Nitish Patel
12	Andrew Hall
19	William Girard
26	Mike Surry

December

- 3 Richard Catchpole
- 10 Thomas Taylor
- 17 Alastair Rodger
- 24 John Aston CAROL SERVICE at 6.30 pm
- 31 Nitish Patel 4 pm & also WATCH NIGHT 11 pm

MONDAY PRAYER AND MINISTRY

October

- 2 Timothy Miller
- 9 Timothy Miller
- 16 Paul Miller
- 23 Paul Miller
- 30 Paul Miller

November

- 6 Roy Aitkin
- 13 Roy Aitkin
- 20 Robert Bennett
- 27 Kiran Patel

December

- 4 Jonathan Docksey
- 11 Alastair Rodger
- 18 Richard Catchpole
- 25 Christmas Day

SATURDAY NIGHT MINISTRY

- 11th November Justin Ramsey
- 9th December Richard Catchpole
- 13th January 2024 Joe Wyatt (report of the work in Tottenham)

If the speaker is happy with it, our Monday and Saturday ministry meetings and the Family Service are usually broadcast on Zoom and also available afterwards on our website. Our Zoom login is:

Meeting ID: 756 5533 4423

Passcode: 186868

Question Box

What does it mean to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus?

As believers in the Lord Jesus, there are lots of names we can use to refer to ourselves (believers being one of them). We could call ourselves Christians, saints, brothers and sisters in Christ amongst other names. Another name is disciple.

When we hear the word disciple, we probably think first of the twelve followers of Jesus that we read about in the gospels, Peter, James and John etc. However, after Jesus rose from the dead, and before He ascended, He gave the following instruction to His followers: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). So, the 12 were disciples and those who subsequently believe in Jesus because of their preaching are described as disciples.

Then what does disciple means? At its most basic level, it means a pupil or a learner. But more specifically, a disciple is one who follows the teachings of another. After all, it's possible for someone to be a pupil but not learn anything...

So, when Jesus spoke of His disciples, He was speaking of people who would learn from Him and follow His teachings. We can see that's what the twelve did. For instance, He taught them to pray (Luke 11:1) and in John 13-16 He taught them many things on the night before His crucifixion. We see that they in turn would go and teach others, firstly Jesus sent them out on short preaching tours (Mark 6:7) and then, as we've read, they were commissioned to go out into all the world, make disciples, baptise and teach. Effectively, the rest of the New Testament from Acts onwards covers the disciple making, baptising and teaching they did.

Being called disciples then tells us that our relationship with Christ is deeper and more significant than we perhaps sometimes treat it. Its not like a National Trust or gym membership where there are no demands on us, we can do as we please – we can visit historic houses or lift weights or we choose not to, no one will mind. With Christ, if we've believed in Him, we also need to follow His teachings, not do as we please.

Jesus explains this further in Luke 14:25-35, three times He describes conditions by which someone can't be his disciple. Paraphrasing, these conditions are:

1. If we prioritise families and friends over Christ
2. If we're unwilling to take up our cross and follow Christ (prioritising the world over Christ)
3. If we prioritise our possessions over Christ

We can see from this that Jesus wants His disciples to have a radical devotion to Him, that He takes priority in all things. When we think about all that He has done for us, coming into this world, suffering for our sins and laying His own life down for us on the cross, we have to conclude that having done all this for us, our devotion to Him is our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

So then, how should being a disciple affect our lives? Firstly, if we've believed in the Lord Jesus, have we been baptised? The Lord's commission was that all who believe in Him were to be baptised, so have we done that? It's the first step in following Jesus' teaching, if we're not willing to take that step, how can we take other steps?

Having been baptised, are we following His teachings? Are we listening to His word being taught and applying it in our lives or do we let the world guide our decisions?

Do Jesus and His word take priority for us, or do family, work, education, money, possessions take up all our time and energy and the little that's left over we give to Him?

If we call ourselves disciples, do we live like disciples? Let's remember all that Jesus has done for us, and enjoy the privilege of being able to learn from Him, live for Him.

Alastair Rodger

Bible Teaching

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST

*(Hebrews 7v26 to 8v12)
By the late John Wallace*



The epistle to the Hebrews differs from the other epistles in at least two ways. First, there is no reference in the letter to the name of the writer. An elderly sister commented, “It says in my Bible the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews that’s good enough for me”. There is no mention of who the epistle is written to which in most epistles is clearly stated. It is evident that those to whom it is written had a very clear understanding of Old Testament things but they were now Christians. Putting these two things together we seem to be right in thinking that the recipients of the letter had once been Jews but now they had left all that to follow the Lord Jesus.

The believers to whom the letter was written had suffered a great deal of persecution at the first. It is interesting to think that if the epistle was written by Paul he was the one who as Saul of Tarsus had been the cause of their pain and distress. The epistle is written to show these believers that what they had obtained in Christ is far more than they had lost in turning from Judaism. The superiority of the Lord Jesus is the key feature of the opening chapters and the word greater appears a number of times in the letter.

Such an high priest. In the portion before us the expression “such an high priest” occurs twice, referring to the Lord Jesus.

1. In ch 8v1 the expression is “we have such an high priest”.
2. In ch 7v26 the word is “such a high priest became us”.

1. Chapter 8v1. Looking at the opening chapters of Hebrews it would seem that one of the themes the writer is pursuing is the qualifications for the perfect high priest. He must have no sin of his own so that he doesn’t have to cope with his own sins as well as the sins of the people.

Second, he must have no infirmity so that he is always available.

Thirdly, that he should not be subject to death so that his ministry would be a continuing ministry.

Fourthly, he must be able to look upon the weaknesses of the people sympathetically.

Now the question arises where would we find such a person?

Humanly speaking nowhere, but the answer is given we have such an high priest. We have seen that the Lord Jesus is our great high priest.

The Lord Jesus is without sin. Heb 7v27 He needeth not daily to offer for his own sins. This is another precious expression of the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. He didn't ever need to do what the High priest of old had to do every day. Peter says who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet 2v24) It was His own self, it was His own body, but it wasn't His own sins.

Infirmities. The Old Testament priests were men just like every other man; they had their weaknesses and infirmities both natural and spiritual. We have the ultimate example of this in Eli; an old man, partially blind, the only priest in the Old Testament who is found sitting down; we see the consequences of that. Also a man became a priest simply by natural succession, by birth. What a contrast to all this we find in the Lord Jesus. He is not just a man, He is more than a man, He is the Son of God. He is not a priest by birth because by birth He belonged to the kingly tribe, He was set apart by God; God has said to Him, "thou art a priest for ever" (Heb 5v6). This fact is attested to three times in the epistle to Hebrews. His ministry is not restricted or limited in any way because of personal infirmity.

Subject to death. The Old Testament priests were subject to death. A man may be an excellent high priest, carrying out his ministry on behalf of the people of God. Sadly it couldn't go on for ever and the day would come when his ministry would come to an end. But this man (Heb 7v24), our great high priest, "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them". The Lord Jesus will have no successor. It is a great comfort to our hearts to know that whatever the future may bring the Lord Jesus always be there. A brother felt he was getting to the end of his tether and didn't know how he would manage when the thought came to him that if he did come to the end of his tether the Lord would be there to help him.

Sympathetic. A man may be strong but that may mean he has little appreciation of the weakness of others. On the other hand a man may

be void of any understanding of other people's problems.. Another man may have little experience of the problems of life and so has no idea of the difficulties of others.

There is a lovely expression in Heb 5v9 in regard to the Lord Jesus, it says, being made perfect. We might ask isn't the Lord Jesus perfect? We have seen that He is perfect as to His person and character; what we have here is He has been made perfect as to His experience. He has learned the cost of obedience by experience He has been tested in every point like we are apart from sin. He knows what pain is, He knows what weariness is, He knows what loneliness is, He knows what disappointment is. So He has a perfect sympathy for those who are in these situations. He is a merciful and faithful high priest. He is faithful to us and he is merciful towards our needs (Heb 2v17).

2. "Such a high priest became us" (Hebrews 7v26)

We have seen that the Lord Jesus is perfectly qualified, personally, to be our high priest. We now come to see that He is perfectly suited to us and our needs. He is such a high priest as fully and truly meets our needs. A person might at some time require someone to represent them in some matter. Two questions would need to be answered, first is he qualified to represent them in this particular matter and second is he the kind of person they would want to represent them. The Lord Jesus meets both requirements as He represents us before God. In v26 we are told five things about our high priest. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens. Whilst five things are mentioned here the original text would indicate that they are divided into three. (1) Holy, harmless and undefiled; (2) separate from sinners; (3) made higher than the heavens.

(1) His holiness. He is holy God-ward, He is harmless man-ward, He is undefiled self-ward. He is perfectly at ease with God, with man and with Himself.

(2) Separated from sinners. The word separate is actually "separated" (R.V.) . In life He companied with sinners, He was the friend of publicans and sinners. Sinners in derision crowned Him, mocking thus the Saviour's claims but in resurrection He has been separated from sinners. Never again shall cruel sinners set at nought our glorious Lord. The next time the world sees the Lord Jesus will be when He comes, not in lowliness and meekness but in power and glory and majesty. He is coming, not to die but to exercise authority

and to administer blessing. He will be seen then as the true Melchisedec priest, (Heb 5v6) the King Priest.

(3) Made higher than the heavens. This refers to his exaltation. God has set Him at His right hand far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1v21). He has ascended up far above all heavens Eph. 4v10. The Lord Jesus has passed into (through) the heavens (Heb 4v14) and entered into heaven itself (Heb 9v24). When the high priest went into the sanctuary he passed through the court (picture of earthly things), through the holy place (picture of heavenly things), through the veil and into the very presence of God. The Lord Jesus has entered into the very immediate presence of God.

What is He doing there? He appears in the presence of God for us (Heb 9v24). There is a Man in the presence of God at this moment of time that is looking after our interests. Heb 7v25 He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let me try some strong meat. This statement can be divided into three, (1) He; (2) ever liveth; (3) to make intercession for us. Now we can put (1) and (2) together, He ever liveth. That tells us something about the person of the Lord Jesus; He is alive for evermore, death has no more claim on him. But now we can put (2) and (3) together, ever liveth to make intercession for us. This tells us about the purpose of the Lord Jesus. The whole purpose of the Lord Jesus being alive in heaven today is to make intercession for us, He appears in the presence of God on our behalf. The Man who died for us on the cross now lives for us in glory. We are represented in the highest place by the perfect Man. This should be a comfort and encouragement to our hearts when we are passing through difficulty and trials. The high priest in olden days bore the names of the children of Israel on his heart and on his shoulders. The heart would remind us of affection and the shoulders would speak of support. There is a Man at God's right hand today: we are loved by Him and we are supported by Him. We have such a High Priest, one who is perfectly qualified in every way to carry out such a precious ministry. We have such a High Priest, one who is perfectly suited to our every need as Gods special people. All this is beautifully summed up by the hymn writer.

*Before the throne of God above,
I have a strong a perfect plea,
A great high priest whose name is love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.*

Good News



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE MOON

During the Apollo 8 mission, 21-27 December 1968, when man first orbited the moon, astronauts read from Genesis 1. Astronauts Frank Borman, James Lowell and William Anders became the first human beings to witness and photograph the far side of the moon and the earth rising over the lunar horizon. On the ninth orbit round the moon, each astronaut took turns to read from Genesis chapter 1. Borman finished by wishing a Merry Christmas all on earth. This first ever message from the moon for mankind was from the Word of God and reminded all that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1).

The following year, 20th July 1969 when man finally landed on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission, things had changed. The then notorious atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair who had campaigned to remove prayer and Bible reading from American schools, tried to sue the space agency, NASA, for allowing the Bible to be read from space. Before they walked on the moon for the first time, they were given an hour to rest. Buzz Aldrin the second man to walk on the moon was also an elder in his Presbyterian Church. He had received permission to hold communion for himself on the lunar surface. He

had taken some bread and wine with him. He read from John's gospel, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5). Then he took communion watched by Neil Armstrong. Buzz Aldrin wanted to broadcast this communion service and Scripture reading to the watching world but NASA fearful of O'Hair decided to keep it low key. Buzz Aldrin wanted to thank God for reaching them safely to the moon and remember what Christ did on the cross in the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood. So the first food consumed by a human being on the moon was the Lord's Supper! On the way back to earth Aldrin read to all from Psalm 8:3-4, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

The reading of God's Word from the moon reminded the world of who its Creator is and that He has an interest in all mankind. Though Adam's sin brought ruin to the human race and to God's Creation (Genesis 3:1-7), God foretold the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent, the Devil (Genesis 3:15). This took place when Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again triumphant the third day, a living Saviour.

Indeed as we approach Christmas we remember the words of another Apollo astronaut, Jim Irwin who was a Christian and walked on the moon during the Apollo 15 mission (26 July -7 August 1971). He said, "The entire space achievement is put in proper perspective when one realises that God walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon. I believe that God walked on the earth 2,000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ."

*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 th' incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel.*



Design in Creation

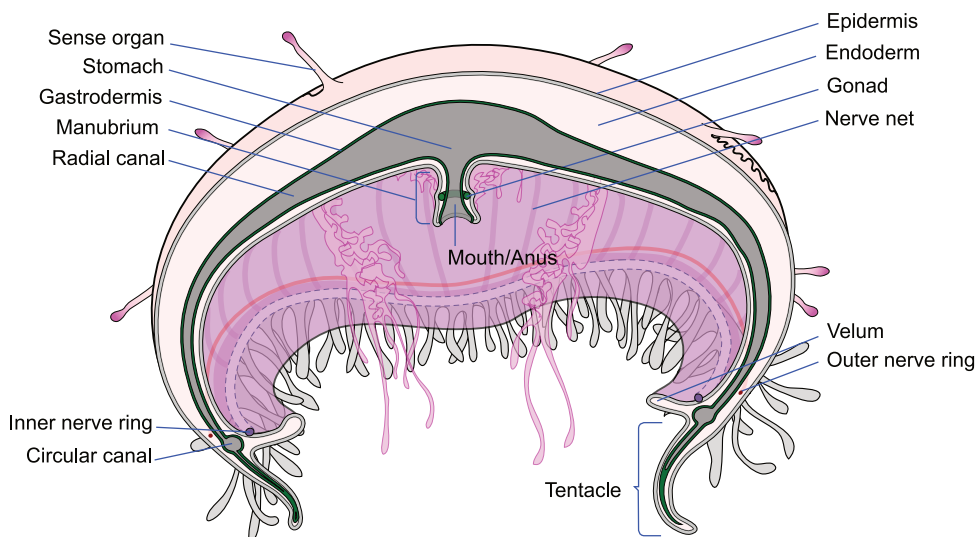
JELLYFISH

By Nitish Patel

Jellyfish are brainless, mainly eyeless, bloodless, boneless and heartless creatures made up of 95% water. They float about in the sea catching prey with their stinging tentacles. There are hundreds of different species. They breathe oxygen through their bodies and release carbon dioxide. Though it is called a fish, it is actually an invertebrate (meaning no backbone) from the Coelenterate phylum and related to coral. The bell part of the jelly fish is called the Medusa as it resembles the mythical Greek Gorgon who had snakes for hair.

JELLYFISH JET PROPULSION

A jellyfish has muscles called coronal muscles which are on the inside of the bell. They use jet propulsion to push water out of the bell and propel the jellyfish forwards. Nerves along the rim sense which way it is moving whether up or down. Some nerves sense food



nearby. Apart from the Box Jellyfish which has four simple eyes called rhopalia. Most jellyfish have no eyes but can sense their surroundings using their nerves. Special sacs on the rim of the bell stimulate nerve endings so that the jellyfish can reorient itself if it shifts in the wrong direction. They are not powerful enough to swim where they want and are at the mercy of the ocean currents which can sweep them around the sea. Most of their food consists of fish larvae, shrimp and also other jellyfish. Their mouth and anus are the same. They quickly digest whatever they suck in and expel out the remains.

The spotted jellyfish pictured right (*Mastigias papua*) have a special symbiotic relationship with algae which live in their soft tissues. The algae get a supply of carbon dioxide from the jellyfish and produce sugars from sunlight which the jellyfish feeds on.



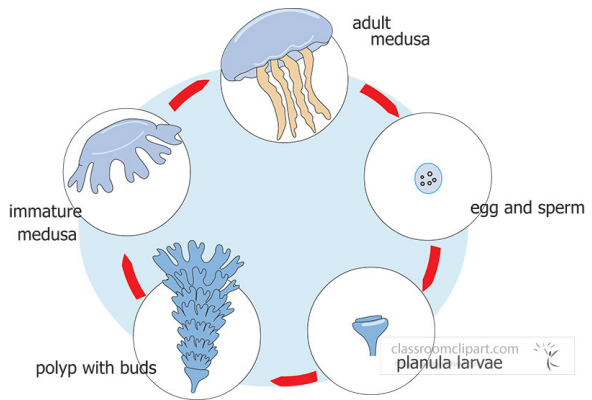
More than half of all jellyfish can also produce light usually by mixing two proteins called luciferin and luciferase. Others use an enzyme which creates flashes of light called photoprotein.



JELLYFISH LIFE CYCLE

Jellyfish are impressive in their ability to transform themselves in their life cycle. Male and female come together and a fertilised egg is produced which turns into a swimming planula or larva. This then changes into a polyp that sinks down and attaches itself to the sea floor. When

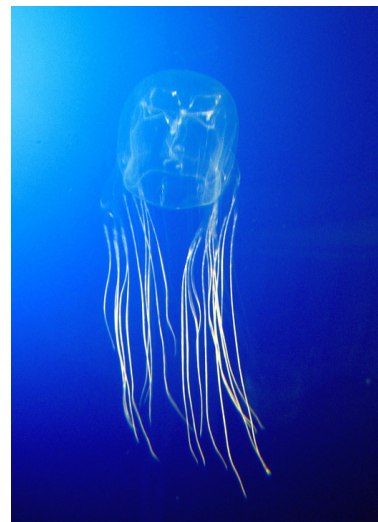
temperature and conditions are right, the polyp builds bud like discs, like a stack of pancakes, called ephyra which are released into the sea. Each of these turn into the bell shaped medusa which we all recognise as jellyfish. In the wild jellyfish live for a few months. Leatherback turtles and sunfish enjoy eating them and are immune to their poison. However, when the Immortal Jellyfish (*Turritopsis dohrnii*) dies, as its body sinks to the sea floor, its cells re-aggregate and form new polyps which turn into more jellyfish. It is able to start its life all over again without really dying as long as it doesn't get eaten first!



DEADLY JELLYFISH

Jellyfish can sting as many a swimmer has found out. They might look like harmless jelly but they have stinging cells (nematocysts) in their long tentacles which can stun and kill its prey. Each stinging cell contains a harpoon which when triggered by touch or movement shoots into the prey and delivers a toxin which causes paralysis and some can cause death.

Box jellyfish are deadly enough to instantly kill humans. Some have 15 tentacles around 3 m (10ft) long with 5000 stinging cells each, enough to kill 60 humans. Any swimmer who gets stung dies an excruciatingly painful death. Most victims go into shock and drown before they can be brought to shore and treated. It is estimated that 40 - 100 people die worldwide from box jellyfish stings.





JELLYFISH FOSSILS EVIDENCE FOR NOAH'S FLOOD

According to the theory of evolution, fossils are formed slowly as creatures died and become buried in sediment. However, a soft bodied creature like a jellyfish would decay quickly leaving nothing behind. Yet many fossils of jellyfish have been found supposedly millions of years old yet buried quickly enough so that they did not decay away with their forms still preserved in sedimentary rock (above). This shows evidence of a cataclysmic flood which rapidly buried billions of creatures. This flood is the worldwide flood the Bible tells us about in story of Noah that took place over 4000 years ago.

JELLYFISH INTELLIGENCE

Though jellyfish do not have a brain, they are nevertheless smart and adaptable. Recently in the news, research has shown they are far more advanced than scientists thought them to be. Experiments with jellyfish showed that they are able to learn. The Caribbean box jellyfish (*Tripedalia cystophora*) has shown the ability to learn and alter its behaviour based on past experiences. It has 24 simple eyes

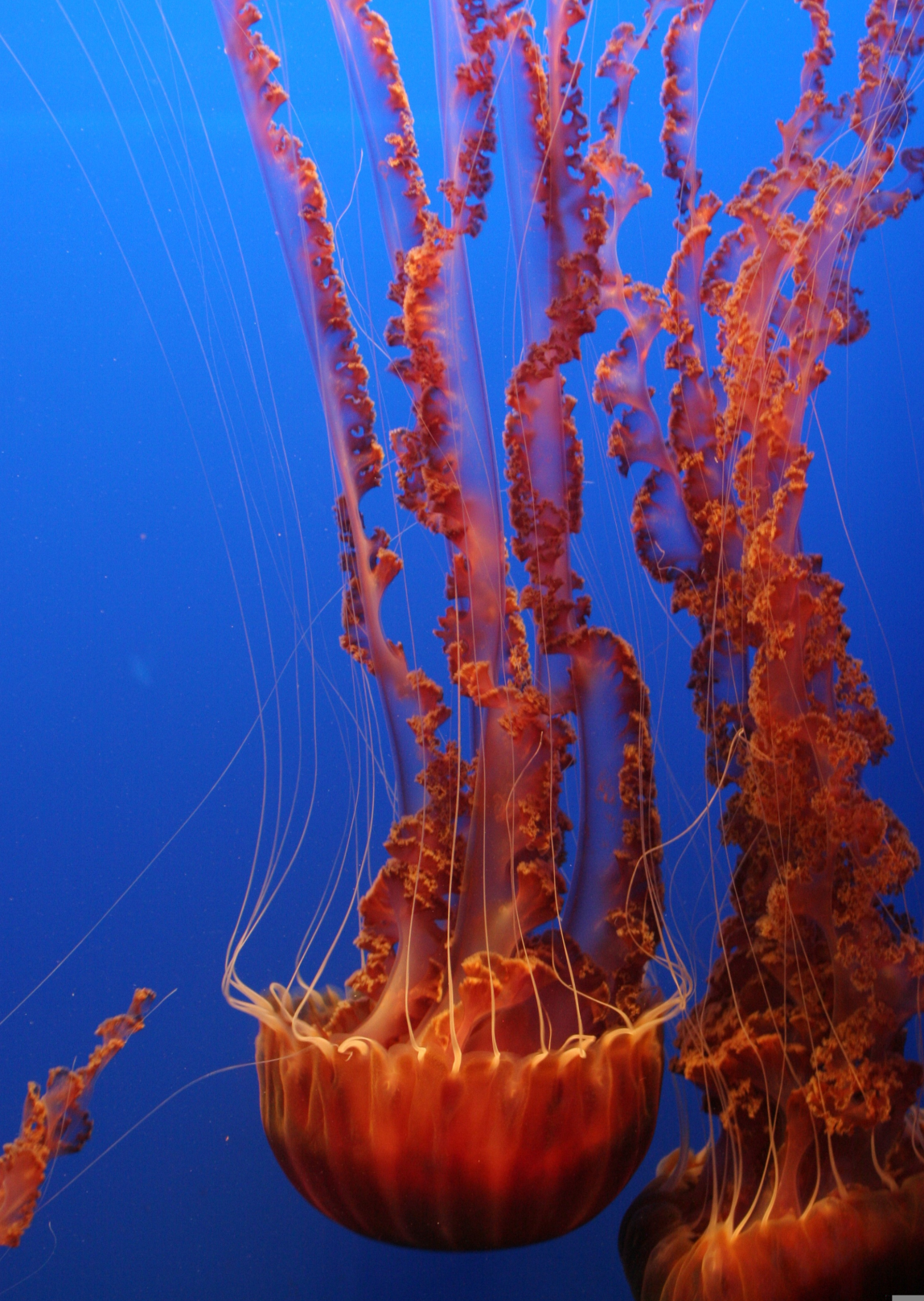
and about 1000 neurons. Yet despite having no central nervous system or brain, it is able to learn and change its behaviour based on past experience. It is able to navigate murky mangrove swamps and remembers.

In those conditions, the tide can make water murky and algae can make it hard to see the roots of the mangrove trees. Scientists put 12 Caribbean box jellyfish in a round tank with alternating grey and white stripes. At first, the jellyfish interpreted the stripes and in the distance and swam towards them colliding with the tank wall. The jellyfish learned that these grey stripes were not roots far away but interpreted them as roots in murky water which were nearer. They learned and avoided them. The camera recorded the amount of time decreasing that the jellyfish bumped into the tank walls. Proof was there that despite having no brain of any kind, the few neurons were capable of learning and memory.

When all this is considered, the jellyfish is not a mere blob of jelly, a primitive ancestor in an evolutionary tree but exhibits incredible design and function that mere chance over millions of years could never endow.

*These see the works of the Lord, and his
wonders in the deep.*

(Psalm 107:24)



Bethlehem and its fields

