

Clifton News

303 January - March 2024

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We would like to wish all our readers a very happy new year. During Christmas, a custom made calendar and invitations were printed and distributed in the area. We thank God for the good response to the Carol Service with well over 60 present. This is the most we have seen for many years. Some of the Seekers club performed "Little Donkey" and Sarah Jim played the violin and sang "O holy night". Scriptures were read by Noah, Ayna, Sarah and Tim. John Aston preached a clear gospel message with a door he made with the label "no room" and "room" on the reverse side. Steve Buckeridge brought his Christmas exhibition is he uses in schools.

We also welcomed another new addition to the assembly, Nissy Ancil who is a nurse from Madurai Gospel Hall, India. As the assembly continues to grow with many believer's children it was decided to commence a Sunday school in addition to the weekly children's clubs. The Family Service time has been changed to 4.30 pm to accommodate this.

Prayers valued for Judith Catchpole who is recovering from a heart attack and Peter Trump who is bed ridden and suffers from a number of ailments. Pray also for Jerry who has been moved to Swindon while he awaits his immigration application.

Meetings

Lord's Day

Breaking of Bread	11.00 am
Sunday school and Bible class	12:15 pm
Family Service	4.30 pm (note new time)

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

January

7	Nitish Patel
14	Mike Surry
21	Dan Girard
28	Will Girard

February

4	Mike Surry
11	Ferranti Wong
18	Alastair Rodger
25	Kiran Patel

March

3	Andrew Hall
10	Thomas Taylor
17	Jonathan Docksey
24	Richard Catchpole
31	Jonathan Varghese

MONDAY PRAYER AND MINISTRY

January

8	Alastair Rodger
15	John Aston
22	Richard Catchpole
29	Timothy Miller

February

5	Timothy Miller
12	Kiran Patel
19	John Aston
26	Jonathan Docksey

March

4	Daniel Rudge
11	Daniel Rudge
18	Roy Aitkin
25	Roy Aitkin

SATURDAY NIGHT MINISTRY

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 Sunday Family Service are usually broadcast on Zoom. Our Zoom login is: Meeting ID: 756 5533 4423 Passcode: 186868

Question Box

Why does the New Testament describe the church as a body?

In the New Testament, several pictures are used to refer to the church, for instance it's described as a flock (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2) or a building (1 Corinthians 3:9). Sometimes these pictures apply to the universal church – that is all true believers in Christ – and sometimes to the local church – that is a congregation of believers gathering with one another in a particular place.

There will be overlaps between the two groups, every believer in Christ ought to be part of a local church – but clearly not the same local church, as that would be impractical!

These pictures illustrate something about the church. One of the illustrations for the church, used on several occasions in the New Testament, is a body. We've looked at three of these passages in recent weeks at Clifton Hall, so this question is a good chance to recap and reflect on what we can learn.

The three passages are Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1-16. Each of these passages deal with gifts that God has given to the church. The first two passages refer primarily to the local church and the last passage primarily to the universal church.

Taking the last passage first, in Ephesians Paul writes how that God has taken both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) and how that through Christ, God has brought both people groups together into one body. Now both have the same access to God and share the same promises in Jesus Christ.

The metaphor of a body illustrates all believers are one together. Just as the parts of our human bodies function altogether (we can't detach different parts!) so all believers are one in Christ.

In chapter 4, Paul develops this point and shows how that Christ cares for His body by giving gifts to equip and build it up. These gifts being men able to teach and lead God's people (v. 11-13). As a healthy body grows and develops, so Christ would have His body grow and develop to maturity.

In Romans 12, Paul again uses the picture of a body, this time illustrating that the body is made up of many different parts which have different functions. We know that from our own bodies, our lungs breathe in oxygen, our hands grip objects and so on. Each part of the body has a different task (or tasks) given to it to do. So it is with the church, God the Father has given different gifts to each member to serve with. We then ought to use our gifts to the best of our abilities.

Finally in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul makes a similar but slightly different point to the previous passage. Firstly, he states how the Spirit of God has given gifts to each believer, we see then from our three passages that the Father, Son and Spirit are all at work gifting the church for service. Paul makes the point that the Spirit has given these gifts as He wills (v. 11). Therefore, we ought not to look down on or envy one another's gifts, because we haven't selected them, the Spirit has given them. Just as every part of the human body is necessary for good health and fitness, so every believer in the local church is necessary for its healthy functioning. More than that, as Paul shows, the different parts of the body suffer together and rejoice together. We see this with our own bodies, if you stub your toe, though it's a small part of the body the pain spreads throughout. If a toothache is treated, the whole body feels better!

The illustration of church as a body reminds us of the care that God has for us, He wants us to grow and develop to spiritual maturity. Both in terms of us as individuals and collectively as the universal church and as local churches.

To support this growth, each one of us has been gifted of God to serve and help one another. Each part of our body doesn't just work for itself but works together to support the rest. Therefore, we as believers ought to be ready and willing to use our gifts to serve one another, so that we all might continue to grow and function in a healthy way. Each one of us is necessary, no one is more or less important and there is a task for each of us to do.

Alastair Rodger



Bible Teaching

THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST

By the late John Wallace (Hartlepool)

One of the greatest problems for the Jews with regard to the Lord Jesus was and is the idea of a suffering Messiah. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1 that the preaching of the cross is to the Jews a stumbling block. The word preaching is not so much the act of preaching but the message that is preached. The message of the cross was an offence to them they could not accept the idea of a crucified Christ. This was not only true of the Jews but at first was a problem to those who were actually his followers. On one occasion when the Lord spoke about his suffering Peter began to rebuke him and said to him “Be it far from thee” and the Lord had to say to him “Get thee behind me Satan” (Matthew 16:21-23). The ultimate example of this is the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). They had had great hopes of the Lord but the cross shattered it all and they were on their way back home. They said “We thought He would be the one to redeem Israel” and we can almost imagine them thinking in their minds, but ...

1. THUS IT IS WRITTEN (LUKE 24:46)

There was so much manoeuvring and scheming going on, the Jews constantly trying to find reason to accuse Him, Judas seeking opportunity to make money by betraying Him, the Jewish leaders desperately looking for something to condemn Him, Pilate searching for a way to release Him, the crowd crying out for His crucifixion, the Roman soldiers cruelly putting Him to death with two malefactors and yet it was all working out according to a perfect plan – it is written.

They did only those things which God had determined before should be done Acts 4:28 and when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him they took Him down Acts 13:29 Thus it is written and thus it behoved (was necessary) Christ to suffer. It would take some time to look at all that was written concerning the sufferings of the Lord Jesus but we have the assurance that all was perfectly fulfilled to the letter.

2. SUFFER MANY THINGS OF THE PRIESTS AND BE REJECTED (LUKE 9:22)

The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be slain. He was despised and rejected by his own people, He was unknown and unwanted by the world but from the moment of His appearing on the scene the Jewish hierarchy saw Him as a threat to their position. As His popularity seemed to increase with the people so the Jewish leaders became more and more opposed to Him and His teaching. Everything He did and said was criticised and found fault with by them. Gradually their attitude towards Him hardened until they saw Him as nothing more than a malefactor and they cried out for Him to be crucified.

3. WHEN HE SUFFERED HE THREATENED NOT (1 PETER 2:23)

When He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not. The word revile is to heap abuse upon, He was verbally abused during His ministry but in the end He was physically abused. He reviled not again, the Lord Jesus was a different kind of man to them, He didn't have it in Him to think and say what they thought and said. He was oppressed and He was afflicted yet He opened not his mouth (Isaiah 53:7). The high priest was infuriated, "Answerest thou nothing" (Matthew 26:62); Pilate marvelled; He answered never a word insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly (Matthew 27:14). How was He able to endure all this, the reproach, the ridicule?. He committed His cause to Him the judges righteously. The apostle Paul endured similar things to the Saviour and he writes about "the Lord righteous judge" (2 Timothy 4:8). He rested in the assurance that in spite of all the injustice he endured at the hands of men there is a righteous Judge. The Lord Jesus committed His cause into the hands of the righteous Judge, He put himself in God's hands and with that He was content. What a contrast with His suffering at the hand of God (Psalm 22:1). On the cross He cried, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me, why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring". When we think of His life of perfect meekness and submissiveness what pain and anguish must have wrung from His lips on the cross that awesome word WHY?

4. HIS SUFFERING BECAUSE OF HIS OBEDIENCE (HEBREWS 5:8)

He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. We need to read the scripture carefully and correctly; it doesn't say He learned to be obedient.

He didn't need to do that, He was always the obedient son. He learned the cost of obedience by the things which He suffered. To be asked to do something pleasing is no problem, to be required to do something hard and difficult is not so easy. The obedience of the Lord Jesus was to bring Him at last to the cross, He became obedient unto death (to the extent of death), even the death of the cross. The path of obedience was for the Lord Jesus the path of suffering.

5 HIS SUFFERING FOR SIN (2 PETER 3:18)

Christ hath also once suffered for sins. The principle is clearly laid down in the Old Testament that without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins. Hence the reason the untold number of sacrifices that were brought to the altar. However whilst the animal had to die and its blood be shed it was not required to suffer. Sin brought death and so the sacrifice had to die but sin also brought suffering. Suffering is one of the major problems in the world today and it is the result of sin. The Lord Jesus suffered on account of sin. Isaiah uses the words in Isaiah 53, wounded, bruised, chastised, stricken. These are words that have to do with suffering. Isaiah uses the profound expression it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put him to grief. He suffered at the hands of a righteous, holy God. We must not get the idea from what Isaiah says that God found some pleasure in bruising Him. It isn't that God found some pleasure in the act of bruising him but His bruising was all part of Gods plan and purpose.

The outcome of His suffering. With His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). The word stripes calls for our thoughtful consideration; it brings together the wounding, bruising and chastisement in totality. We may think that the Lord Jesus suffered a little bit for one and a little bit for another and so His suffering was sufficient for all. This is not the case. It took the whole of the suffering of the Saviour to save one soul. The hymn writer has put it beautifully in writing, *"Teach me that if no other had sinned but I alone, thy precious blood Lord Jesus, thine only must atone"*.

That He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18). The word "bring" has two implications. (1) To make a way for someone. The Lord Jesus has made a way to God for us. We used to sing the chorus, "There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin". (2) To make the person who comes acceptable to God. There was nothing about us that was pleasing to or acceptable to God. We didn't only need a way back we needed to be made acceptable to God. We have a beautiful example of this in the story of the Prodigal son.

He needed to come back to his father but also he needed to be made fit for his father's presence, hence the ring, the robe and the shoes. Every trace and remembrance of the far country was completely removed. If we were to try to gain access to the presence of the Queen we would need an introduction and also we would need to be presentable to the Queen. The Lord Jesus has suffered for our sins that we might be introduced to and made presentable to God. He was made sin for us and we have been made the righteousness of God in Him.

6 HIS SUFFERING AND GLORY (1 PETER 1:11)

We have seen how that the sufferings of Christ were foretold by the prophets but they also spoke of the glory that should follow. Probably the most beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament was Joseph. Right at the beginning Joseph was given a vision of the glory that would be his but that glory was to be reached by the way of suffering. In announcing the birth of the Saviour the angel spoke to Mary of the glory; "He shall be great ... the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Israel forever ..." The way to glory for Him would be by the path of suffering. He has now entered into his glory. The glory is twofold.

(1) A return to the glory which He had with the Father.

"Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world began" (John 17:5). He has gone back to where He was before. It is lovely to think that He was going back home. One wonders if, at some time in His earthly sojourn, the Lord Jesus ever longed for home. This world was a cold hostile place for the Saviour a total contrast to where He had been. In John 17:13 He prays; "now come I to thee". He was going back home.

(2) God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory (1 Peter 1:21)

A new glory now crowns the brow of the Saviour today, the glory of the one who has finished the work He was given to do and has triumphed over all His foes. We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:9). God has made Him Lord, that same Jesus who men crucified. One day that glory will be revealed to a wondering universe of men and angels at His coming again. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. We sing of that day; that will be glory for me but really and truly that will be glory for Him.



The Arab and his rotten dates

An old story tells of an Arab in the desert who awakened hungry in the middle of the night. He lit a candle in his tent and began eating dates from a bowl beside his bed.

He took a bite from one and saw a worm in it; so he threw it out of the tent. He bit into the second date, found another worm, and threw it away also. Reasoning that he wouldn't have any dates left to eat if he continued, he blew out the candle and quickly ate the rest of the dates.

When it comes to the matter of our sins, we often behave like the Arab. When the light of the gospel shines into our hearts it reveals our rottenness inside, our sins and the judgment of God that we deserve in hell but it also reveals the love of God who gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us.

This makes many very uncomfortable. Many want to stop hearing the gospel and the voice of their conscience condemning them before God and reminding them that "... God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16). They enjoy their sins too much to want any Saviour.

They shut their eyes and ears hoping they don't hear the likes again. They want to carry on in their sin and don't want their conscience troubled anymore but this foolishness will not remove the guilt before God or the wrath that is upon the head of everyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

The Bible says,

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36)

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

We urge you if you are not saved, to commence this new year with all your sins forgiven and eternal life from the risen living Saviour. You can be born again and fit for heaven by the precious blood of Christ shed on the cross for you!

Design in Creation



Dragonflies

By Nitish Patel

It is always nice to see visits by dragonflies to our fish pond. They come in some beautiful colours and there are some 3000 species of them in the world. It is their incredible aeronautic capabilities that makes them stand out in the insect world. They are the world's fastest insects and can fly up to 35 mph. Amazing ability for an insect weighing 800 mg! Its two sets of wings enable them to fly upside down, hover like a helicopter, fly backwards as well as forwards, navigate winds of 30 mph and tolerate 9g of acceleration.

The dragonfly's head is almost entirely covered by two huge eyes that enable it to see almost 360 degrees in all directions. This makes it an effectual predator of other insects which it catches with its legs. All their prey is caught while flying.

Scientists have found that they can capture around 90-95% of its prey. They fly in such a way so as their prey below cannot see them being stalked. It requires incredible precision and measurement to fly above the prey and shadow its movements so that the dragonfly appears stationary on the eyes of its prey until it is too late. This is an



incredible feat of vision, information processing and agility of movement that has drawn the attention of engineers and the military who want to design fighter jet and missiles to approach their enemy undetected.

An article in New Scientist in 2003 stated, “DRAGONFLIES shadow their enemies in complex manoeuvres that military fighter pilots can only dream of. Their tricks create the visual illusion that they’re not moving, says Akiko Mizutani at the Australian National University in Canberra.” Also in 2022, another New Scientist article stated that, “The way light reflects off morpho dragonflies’ bright blue wings helps the insects blend in with water when viewed from above, making them invisible to predators and prey”.

Engineers and military research teams dream of making robots and weapons that can fly like dragonflies.

All this image information processing ability cannot be explained away as having just happened over millions of years because

information requires the input of an intelligent Designer and cannot just happen, cannot be just be plucked out of thin air!

Fossil dragonflies are huge with wing spans of up to two feet. Most fossils are the result of the great flood of Noah which covered the entire earth. It shows that conditions in this world before Noah's flood were entirely different. Though scientists who believe in Evolution claim that dragonflies are 300 millions years old the fossils show they have not changed except in size, growing smaller. The wings, eyes and body have the same structure. If evolution were true there would be many in-between forms, missing links, over millions of years but these have never been found.



Dragon flies were exquisitely designed by God and created on Day 5 of the Creation week perfect in form and function.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"
(Romans 1:20)



REPORT OF VISIT TO INDIA DECEMBER 2023

By Nitish & Ellen Patel

Big cities like Mumbai are becoming very much like cities in the West with sprawling shopping malls complete with Christmas trees and decorations. The skyline changes with more and more skyscrapers and metro train lines being built. Traffic is becoming a nightmare with so many able to afford cars as India's economy booms. It was wedding season with over 400,000 weddings taking place around the country we were told.

However, persecution of Christians and hindrance of the gospel continues unrelenting with the Hindu nationalist government in power. In our home assembly in Borivali, brother Sitaram was arrested by police and detained at the station for a day for holding a Christian meeting in his home village in north India. Some six families have been saved there but have been persecuted and harassed. Though it is not against the law to have meetings and preach the gospel, local police with little knowledge of rights simply arrest preachers if a mob complains. He values prayer for this new work. Borivali assembly commenced a work amongst children some years ago which continues to do well but these days things have to be done very discretely to avoid trouble.

We flew to Gujarat to visit family and the saints in Anand who continue their witness but mainly restricted to nominal Christians. Though it is difficult to directly preach the gospel to Hindus, when these folks are saved they become a witness in their locality to friends and neighbours. After the morning meeting, they have a Bible question time where questions are put in a plastic tub and 2 mins given to quickly answer each one. This is followed by a meal and a time of fellowship.

There continues to be blessing in one of the slums in Mumbai we regularly visit where many have been saved and new ones continue to be added. The hall is too small for the believers now but making bigger places only attracts the wrong kind of attention.

The Lord Jesus continues to build His church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).



Pool of Bethesda, Jerusalem

