

# THE *December 15, 2009* STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 86 ◆ Number 6

# Genealogy of the King

*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

Matthew 1:1

**J**esus Christ is the promised King who saves His people from their sins. These words, and the genealogy that follows, point to the glorious truth of the gospel.

The words with which Matthew begins his Gospel account remind us of Genesis 5:1: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Just as Genesis reveals the generations of the first Adam, Matthew reveals to us the generations of the second Adam. Genesis records the first Adam's fall from glory; Matthew records the second Adam's rise to a far more glorious position. Genesis

records the first gospel promise; Matthew speaks of the fulfillment of that promise.

Something that Matthew stresses throughout his Gospel account is that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. The genealogy of Jesus is a significant example of prophecy fulfilled.

Matthew proves that Jesus Christ is the promised King who would come from the line of David and Abraham. In furnishing that proof, the Holy Spirit through Matthew also gives us to understand something about Jesus, the savior of sinners.



What could be so important about a long list of names? Why would the Holy Spirit put a genealogy at the very beginning of the first book in the New Testament? The reason is revealed in the introductory sentence of Matthew's Gospel: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The genealogy found in the first chapter of Matthew proves that Jesus

is truly the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Almost one thousand years earlier, God had promised David an offspring who would sit on his throne for ever: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Sam. 7:12-13). David's Seed would establish a kingdom for Himself. But, unlike David, this King would establish an everlasting kingdom. He would build a spiritual house and kingdom for His name where His people would dwell together in covenant fellowship with Him.

But in order to establish His kingdom, the King must have the right to sit on David's throne. That means that the King's father must also have the right to the throne. Just as the right of inheritance passed from father to son through the generations, so it was with the heir to the throne.

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That's why Matthew's Gospel traces Jesus' genealogy through Joseph. Even though Joseph was not Jesus' real father, Joseph was Jesus' legal father. At the end of Matthew's genealogy we read, "and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1:16). Because Joseph had the legal right to the throne of David, so did Jesus. Matthew's genealogy proves that Jesus had the proper credentials to sit on the throne of David.

Jesus Christ is the King who rightfully sits on the throne of David in fulfillment of God's covenant promise.



But God also gave His covenant promise to Abraham. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7-8). By tracing Jesus' genealogy back through Abraham, the Holy Spirit is telling us that Jesus is the One Seed of Abraham, who would inherit the land (cf. also Gal. 3:16). Jesus would obtain the everlasting possession.

The Seed of Abraham would obtain the land for a possession by exercising His kingly office. He would fight against Satan and sin and death and He would overcome. Having obtained the inheritance, the King will give that inheritance to His people. Jesus teaches that very thing: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Jesus, the Son of Abraham, inherits the land and

gives that inheritance to us, His people.

Essentially, then, the promise to Abraham and to David was the same promise. Matthew tells us that the promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus was the long-expected Seed, who would both inherit the land (i.e., kingdom) and rule over it as the rightful heir of the kingdom; He is the Son of Abraham and the Son of David.

Just as David ruled over Israel, Christ now rules. He has the right and the power to rule graciously over the church. He has the right and the power to rule over all creatures for our sakes. King Jesus will gain the victory over all His and our enemies.

What a beautiful truth! King Jesus cares for us, His subjects! He has obtained a glorious inheritance for us and preserves us in that inheritance.



When we think of such a glorious inheritance, we might ask, "How do I know that this inheritance is for a sinner such as I am?" But the inspired genealogy comforts us when we see in it a long list of sinners.

Look at the list of kings that Matthew records. Even though David was a child of God and was considered to be a good king, he was an adulterer and a murderer. Solomon multiplied wives to himself and ended up serving their idols. Under Rehoboam, Judah became even more wicked than before. Throughout the history of Judah, more often than not, the kings were wicked. Jehoram was a wicked king who married Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. Manasseh was so evil that he went so far as to sacrifice his son in the fire.

No doubt we could find faults in each of the kings. That's be-

cause they were all sinners, with their own besetting sins. Because of their sinfulness, not one of those kings deserved to rule over God's people. But Jesus was perfectly righteous. He deserves to be King over God's people. Not only that, after Jesus paid the debt for all our sins, God raised Him up and set Him at God's right hand in heaven.

None of the kings listed in Jesus' genealogy was completely faithful. They all failed as types. But Jesus was faithful even unto death, so that He could establish the kingdom for His people. By His blood He bought the citizenship rights of His people. Jesus does what no other king could do. Jesus alone establishes and maintains the kingdom that God promised from the beginning of time.

It is significant that the Holy Spirit also mentions a number of sinful women in the genealogy of Jesus. Tamar was the one who played the whore with her father-in-law and bore Pharez. Rahab was an undeserving harlot from Jericho, whom God brought to faith so that she helped the spies. Ruth, another Gentile, was a Moabitess, of the illegitimate offspring of Lot and his daughter. Bathsheba was guilty

of adultery.

What a lineage! What kind of background is this for the King of kings?

We might be tempted to think, "How unseemly! How unfitting that Jesus would have such people in His genealogy."


But the opposite is true. How fitting that the King who came to save sinners would come from a long line of sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15).

*Jesus Christ came  
to save sinners  
just like you  
and just like me.*

Some people think they have to make themselves good enough if Jesus would save them. But nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus Christ came to save sinners just like you and just like

me. He came to save the very sinners who were His ancestors too. How appropriate then that Matthew should introduce us to our King through His genealogy.

Jesus is the King able to save to the uttermost. He is the Son of

David and the Son of Abraham. He descended from sinners to save sinners. Let that truth sink into our hearts and minds as we consider the genealogy of the baby Jesus. 

Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

## The Coming of King Jesus

**T**he focal point of all of history is the coming of Jesus Christ. The whole Old Testament pointed ahead to His birth. The law and the types foreshadowed it, the prophets foretold it, and the people of God prayed for the coming of the Lord's Anointed, the Messiah.

The long-awaited Messiah came "in the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4), in the exact time and circumstances sovereignly determined by God. This was the Seed of the Woman that God promised to Adam and Eve so long before (Gen. 3:15). Born of Abraham's race He was, of Judah's tribe, of David's line, in the city of Bethlehem-Ephratah (Mic. 5:2). Not one word of God's promises failed.

O, it took faith even then to know that God was fulfilling His promises. What faith for Mary to believe Gabriel's astounding pronouncement that she would bear the child whose kingdom would have no end (Luke 1:30-39). It took much faith also for Joseph to accept the angel's assurance that the child in the womb of his espoused wife was of the Holy Spirit, and was "Jehovah salvation" (Matt. 1:21). Only by faith could the shepherds look at a baby wrapped in rags and leave rejoicing that they had seen their Savior, who is Christ, the Lord

(Luke 2: 12, 20). And then there is the steadfast faith of the wise men. Traveling hundreds of miles by faith, they were not discouraged by Jewish apathy and unbelief as they continued to insignificant Bethlehem to worship the one "born king of the Jews" (Matt. 2:1-12).

King He was and is, the eternally anointed King of God (Ps. 2).

Yet, as this Jesus of Nazareth began His public ministry, few agreed with Philip's faith-informed report to Nathaniel—"we have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (John 1:45). Fewer still concurred with Peter's God-given confession—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). And even the courage of the disciples' convictions failed in the face of the dreadful cross. The perplexed travelers to Emmaus summed it up for them all—"We thought that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21).

But these faithful had neglected to believe *all* that the prophets had written. They ignored the prophetic description of their King as meek and lowly (Zech. 9:9). The Servant of Jehovah would be as a lamb before the slaughter, despised and

reproached by men, smitten by God, and fatally so (Is. 53).

In fulfillment of God's word and will, this Messiah died the accursed death, with the mocking and yet accurate placard above His head declaring Him to be "The King of the Jews."

But this death, as ignominious as it was to the eyes of flesh, was not a defeat. And the proof is that Jesus arose in victory, and ascended to His heavenly throne in triumph, assuring His followers, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Since that day, with one heart and voice, the church confesses her faith in Jesus, the Son of God, who sat down at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him (I Pet. 3:22). The church affirms that nothing, absolutely nothing, is outside of Jesus' control.

By faith. Not by sight.

### The King Rules Today

The scoffers continue to mock as they have for centuries, "If Christ is king, why does He allow all the evils to continue—wars, murders, stealing, poverty, child abuse, and injustices of every sort?"

The Christian sometimes ponders similar questions, but



not in doubt of Jesus' lordship. Rather he wonders how long the righteous Lord can tolerate abounding iniquity and not come rushing in to destroy it.

The believer observes America in swift moral and spiritual decline. The America that has for centuries allowed the church of Christ freely to worship, train ministers, build Christian schools, and send out missionaries. The day comes when these freedoms will be restricted and denied, and the faithful will be persecuted. Is Christ ruling over this process that is leading inexorably to the closing of churches and seminaries and schools and missions?

The Christian observes the unraveling of morals in all institutions and at all levels. He sees on the one hand the deliberate smashing of the very foundations of society (not to mention the church), namely the home, marriage, and the family, and on the other hand, the approval of the sin labeled in Scripture as the most vile of sins. And the Holy Lord Jesus yet rules, right?

The believer observes the appalling, heartrending apostasy in churches that were once stalwart, Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Truth after truth is discarded with nary a protest. And he stands aghast as these same churches debate and then one by one approve of homosexuality. Over this, too, Jesus rules?

The worst is yet to come. The world united in one kingdom of men, with the Antichrist as head, the false church as the whore of the beast, and making war with the saints who will have no place at all to run and hide. And, yes, Jesus is in control also over the coming of this dreadful power.

Those who deny that Jesus is in control do not know the Scriptures. God has determined that, before Jesus comes in judgment, the wickedness of man will be made manifest as never before. This is the idea of the cup or mea-

sure of iniquity being filled (Gen. 15:16; Matt. 23:32; Rev. 17:4). God has determined that *the* "man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:3-4). There is the ultimate sin—man declaring that he, not Jehovah, is God. Jesus rules over the course of history so that this kingdom of man *will* arise, and will come at the time when the total depravity of man is blatantly exposed, his rebellion expressed to the highest degree possible. It cannot come prematurely, for then sin will not be manifest in its most hideous forms. This universal kingdom of man must come after the church has largely forsaken God and worships the beast, after all the powers of the creation are developed and pressed into the service of sin, and after the wound of Babel is healed so all the nations can communicate and contribute to the gross display of depravity. Indeed, Christ rules.

Therefore, let not your heart be troubled. The King is in control, and the King is coming.

### Coming in Judgment

The Old Testament prophets saw the Messiah coming in lowliness, but also in power and judgment. Jeremiah prophesied, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. 23:5). Daniel wrote, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the

Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14). These prophecies are representative of many. How is this contrast—lowly, yet powerful; suffering, yet judging—to be explained?

The first part of the explanation is that Jesus' first coming was all of that. He came in lowliness and poverty. Yet He came in judgment, as He told His disciples, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out"

(John 12:31). In the cross He powerfully conquered all His enemies as He saved His church.

The second part is that Jesus comes again to finish the work of salvation through judgment. And these two comings of Jesus are really one work. For that reason He will come the second time as the Lord who has conquered

(Rev. 19:12-16). He will come to destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist and all those who opposed Him and persecuted His people (Rev. 6:15-17; 11:15). He comes to burn the whole of this creation and form a new heaven and earth for His people (II Pet. 3:10-13).

To hold fast to these truths takes faith, just as much faith as was required of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, and the disciples when Jesus came the first time. The saints today need faith, a discerning faith.

God is good to His saints living in the last days. For, first,

*Those who know  
His word  
are not surprised  
by the dreadful  
apostasy,  
the abounding  
wickedness,  
or the  
threatening clouds  
of persecution.*

He has revealed those things that must shortly come to pass (Rev. 1:1). The events leading up to the end are clearly revealed. At His first coming, Jesus forewarned His disciples of His imminent death so that they would be prepared. Likewise, He informed His people of the events leading to His second coming so that they will not be caught off guard. Those who know His word are not surprised by the dreadful apostasy, the abounding wickedness, or the threatening clouds of persecution. And these events certainly do not make them doubt the sovereign control of Jesus.

God gave more than bare facts. He gave also the Spirit of Christ, so that His people are able to discern the signs of Christ's coming. What is the significance of the fall of communism in Russia? What role will the emerging China play in the history of the nations? What will be the effect


of the global recession? How do the policies of the current President advance the plan of God? Believers have discernment to detect the flow of events leading to the return of Christ.

Even when we cannot put all the pieces together, this we know, that Christ, the Lord, is in control of everything that moves. We are certain that all the events are part of God's counsel. And Christ is executing that counsel, bringing the day of His return closer and closer.

Be not deceived, fellow believers. Jesus knew that we needed that warning too. "Take heed that no man deceive you.... If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:4, 24). Satan and his followers will try to deceive you through many means. One deception is that Jesus is not coming. A second is that Jesus is not ruling over all. Over against that, the Reformed believer confi-

dently confesses that Jesus is both controlling all things and coming through all things. If ever there was a time when the believer must confess that Jesus is on the throne *and* coming (Matt. 26:64), it is in these dark days as history seems to be surging towards the end. Only the power of faith confidently confesses this.

The Lord has instructed us about His return. He has warned us. He commanded us to watch. To that He added blessed promises, comforting promises. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). He is coming, and will appear bodily in the exact time and circumstances that God has determined.

Believe it. 

*Sounding Out the Word*

*Rev. Carl Haak*

## Bethlehem's Blessed Gospel

### Reformed Witness Hour

A distinctively Reformed radio ministry, proclaiming the truth of the sovereignty of God.

**N**ever did the grace of God shine so brightly on this earth as it did in the dark night when the virgin Mary brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.

*Rev. Haak is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired.*

God gave His own Son in our human body, loaded on Him our sins, so that He might take them all away, for there was no other way to the Father. There is no other hope; there is no other way of salvation. Only in the way of Immanuel, God with us, the gift entirely of God's grace.

Has that grace of God's gift of the Savior dawned upon your heart? Do you possess the deep and abiding salvation with Christ in your heart, the true and indestructible joy? If all that we

have is the sentiment of what the world calls "Christmas," then we have nothing. If the message of the birth of Christ is only a story intended to produce a few tears, we have nothing. If we are not awed by, and if we do not wonder at the grace of God to those who are wretched sinners, we have nothing. Then it will go very badly for us in the day of judgment when we must stand before the Babe of Bethlehem, for this Babe has been caught up unto God and now rules from

His throne. He reigns as Lord of lords and King of kings. And He is coming soon.

Do you belong to this Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior from sin?

May we never lose in our hearts the wonder of the love of God displayed in the gift of His Son. And may our joy be that true, abiding, and conquering joy of which the angels spoke to the shepherds—a message of great joy.

The story of the birth of Jesus Christ is often heard. May we not become accustomed to it; but may we, rather, ponder it in our hearts and hear the gospel of eternal joy in His birth—Bethlehem’s blessed gospel.

We read in Luke 2:10 and 11 the angel’s explanation of what happened when Jesus was born: “And the angel said unto them (that is, unto the shepherds), Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

One of the members of the heavenly host, a shining angel, was sent to the fields near Bethlehem to shepherds to give the interpretation of what had just happened in a stable, something unseen by all except two (Joseph and Mary); something that will never happen again and had never happened before; something that means that the oceans of God’s love to His people had just been revealed. And that was this: the virgin gave birth to God’s Son. God had fulfilled His promise and had sent His Son into time and history to redeem His people with His own blood.

God had moved in the upper levels of government. Caesar Augustus, one of history’s greatest leaders and statesmen, one of the mightiest men who ever lived, had been moved by the providence of God to decree a taxing. Necessary for this tax-

ation was a census. So Mary, great with child, and Joseph had made their way down to Bethlehem, the city of father David, to report for this taxation.

In Bethlehem they had found no room, no place where they could be housed for the evening. The only alternative to them was a stable, where animals were housed and where there was dirt and stench. It was there, according to the will of God, that the days were accomplished that Mary should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son and laid Him in a manger.

Do you know who that child was? He was the One who created the worlds and holds them in His hands. He was the One who had parted the Red Sea and led Israel through on dry ground. He was, and is, Almighty God. Now He is united to our flesh, wrapped in rags, in a place where beasts eat their food: in a manger.

An angel is dispatched to a group of shepherds watching their sheep in the nearby fields. God, in sending His messenger, passes by the temple and the courts of the temple, for these are filled with men, Pharisees, who think they do not need a Savior from sin. God passes by the courtyards of the great leaders of this world who were busy securing their own honor and glory. God comes to a group of humble and despised shepherds.

The angel brings to them good news, glad tidings of great joy, designed to remove all dread of God and to dispel all fears. For when the angel suddenly came upon the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord was revealed round about them, the shepherds became greatly afraid, gripped with a paralyzing fear.

To these shepherds the gospel is proclaimed: “For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” For you, you who are gripped with fear, is the glad tidings of the Savior’s birth. The Savior has come, the One who will offer a sacrifice for sin and will bring His children righteous before God.

Beloved, the answer to all of our fears is to be found in the incarnate Christ. It is to be found in God now in our flesh, come by the grace of God to redeem us from our sins. That was the good news of the angels. The angel proclaimed that a unique person had been born in a specific place to accomplish a glorious task. The unique person who had been born was Christ, the Messiah, God’s anointed One, the One who had been promised to shoulder the entire work of salvation, the One who was called “Wonder-

ful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father.” He has now been born in our flesh. No mere ordinary man among men, but God with

us. Sinless Son of God, born in our flesh in order to bring us to God.

Not a Savior after man’s mold, not another man simply to muddle around in the mass of humanity, to feel our pain and to try to do something about it. But the One who is able to bring us to God without spot or blemish and to present us before His presence in exceeding joy. He has been born in the city of David, in Bethlehem. The Lord keeps His Word, and not one jot or tittle of it ever falls to the ground. In the very place that God had designated, His Son has been born.

*Let us  
not forget that  
the birth of Jesus Christ  
proclaims the truth  
about ourselves.*



And His Son has been born for a glorious task. He has been born to be a Savior. A savior is one who rescues another from danger and places him in a secure position. Christ was born to save us from our true enemy, which is our sin. He has come to save His people from their sins; their offense before God; their trespass against the law of God; their guilt before the holy and the living God. The Lord did not come in order to adjust your attitude. He did not come to teach you an alternate pattern of behavior. He did not come to get you in touch with your inner self. He did not come to make you all that you can be. But He came to wash away the dirty stain of sin from the souls of God's children.

Let us not forget that the birth of Jesus Christ proclaims the truth about ourselves. It proclaims that we are sinners. There are many who would say, "Now, let's not spoil Christmas by talking about sin." Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no significance in the birth of Jesus Christ apart from understanding the reality of sin and death. If one does not know his sin, then one cannot understand the wonder of the birth of God's Son in the manger. For God has sent Him to accomplish one task, a mighty and glorious task. He has come to stand in the place of God's chosen, who have broken the law of God. He has come to conquer the death that held them in its arms. He has come to destroy the flames of God's wrath that our sins have kindled. He has come to give to us eternal life. He has come as the Savior.

And that is joy. The joy that was proclaimed by the angels and that is proclaimed to us today is the joy that our sins are forgiven. God has cast away our sins into the depths of the sea in the cross of Jesus Christ. He will remember those sins no more. Why? Because of a Savior, because of

Christ, the Lord, the Messiah, the sin-bearer, who came to pay for those sins in His blood. Who came in order that all of God's children might now stand before God in eternal delight. That is joy! That is a joy that never fades away.

Has this joy of Bethlehem come home to your heart with power? Have all of these realities of the record of the birth of the Son of God, who was born to remove sin, come upon your heart with power?

There are so many who speak of the "spirit of Christmas" but know nothing of the joy of belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. This joy is to all the people of God. It is personal. It is unto each one of them personally.

The angel proclaimed that it was a joy that would be universal. It would extend to all nations and to all people of the earth. For God will bring His children out of every people, out of every nation, tribe, and kindred of the earth. The gospel will break down the boundaries of Palestine. It will go from sea to sea and from pole to pole, the elect of God out of every nation, yet one in Christ.

But the joy is also a personal joy. Unto *you* is born a Savior. That is the beauty of the gospel. Yes, that wonderful joy extends to every child of God born and chosen of God throughout all the world, every one. But also to me. It is made personal. Unto you, each child of God, to you. The Lord says, "Fear not. Great joy is yours in the display of the grace of God, in the birth of Christ." God has given His Son for you.

Is this good news to you? Do you possess this joy, this heart-felt, this personal understanding

of the grace of God in His mercy and His love to you? God is not going to send an angel to declare this to you. God has revealed all of this in His holy word. You have no right to expect an angel to appear at your doorstep to announce this gospel to you. Nor do you need to go to Bethlehem and see a re-enactment of what men imagine took place that night—and then, suddenly, you will feel it! No, you do not need that. This joy, this gospel, is proclaimed to you through His word. And it is something that is given to be possessed in the heart.

Do you understand that the true shame and the true squalor in which Jesus was born was not a manger, but was your sin?


He was born to take your sin upon Himself. Do you see that? That is the true wonder of the love of God.

The gospel today is: Unto you is born a Savior. Unto you who, by the grace of

God, pine under your sin and ask the question: How can that sin ever be removed from the presence of God? Unto you is born a Savior. Joy unquenchable, invincible. Joy in the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

When the angels saw this grace of God shown to sinners in the giving of God's Son in the human flesh, they broke forth into praise. "Glory to God in the highest," they sounded from Bethlehem's hills. They were filled with exceeding joy.

Now this Child has redeemed His children to God. God's grace has dawned upon our hearts. This Savior is ours.

Let us, then, respond in joy, everlasting joy, before God. And let us repeat the words of Scripture today and always: Unto Him who has loved us and washed us in His blood be praise in the church, world without end. 

*Do you understand that the true shame and the true squalor in which Jesus was born was not a manger, but was your sin?*



## A Refutation of Dispensationalism (5)

# The Promised Gathering of the Jews

**E**specially since the days of World War II, there have been many Jews who have moved to Palestine. This gathering of Jews out of different nations into the new nation of Israel is said by many to be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. God in Scripture repeatedly made known that the Jews would one day be brought back to the promised land. Citing these promises, many argue that the present-day gathering of unbelieving Jews is a fulfillment of the words spoken by the prophets.

The dispensationalist thinks this should be obvious to all. And, admittedly, such is the way one would likely interpret this promise, if he did not first go to Scripture to find the interpretation God Himself provides. But if we do look to the Scriptures first, then we find that this gathering of Jews refers to something far different from what the carnal man might expect.

### The Dispensational View of the Gathering of the Jews

Dispensationalists typically divide God's covenant into a number of different covenants, with each covenant containing different promises. God's promise to gather the Jews out of the

nations, they say, belongs to the "Palestinian Covenant." The promise they refer to is found, among other places, in Deuteronomy 30:1-5:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

Already in the days of Moses, God spoke of how the Israelites would one day be scattered among the nations for their disobedience. Yet God also said that sometime afterwards the Israelites would return to the Lord their God. It would be then, *after their conversion*, that they would return to the promised land. So first Israel would return to God,

and then they would return to the land.

While commenting on this promise in Deuteronomy, the well-known dispensationalist Dwight Pentecost admitted that God said such a conversion would take place before Israel would be placed in the land:

As one surveys the wide areas included in this one passage, which sets forth the covenant program, one is compelled to feel that God takes Israel's relation to the land as a matter of extreme importance. God not only guarantees its possession to them, but obligates Himself to judge and remove all Israel's enemies, give the nation a new heart, a conversion, prior to placing them in the land.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Walvoord, another leading dispensationalist, claims a partial fulfillment of this promise is found already now in the present-day gathering of Jews to Palestine.

The united testimony of the prophets is all to the same point, that Israel will yet be regathered from the nations of the world and reassembled in their ancient land. The beginnings of this final regathering are already apparent in contemporary history with almost two million Jews, or approximately one in six of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), 97.

all the Jewish population of the world, now living in Palestine. Scriptures make clear that the regathering will continue until consummated after the second advent of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

But Deuteronomy 30 speaks of the return of *believing* Jews. How can a return of blatantly unbelieving Jews be said to be even a partial fulfillment of this promise?

This presents a problem for dispensationalists—which at least one dispensationalist is willing to admit. Fruchtenbaum writes:

The issue that bothers some Dispensationalists is the fact that not only have the Jews returned in unbelief with regard to the person of Jesus, but the majority of those who have returned are not even Orthodox Jews; in fact, the majority are atheists or agnostics. Certainly, then, Israel does not fit in with all the biblical passages dealing with the return since it is a regenerated nation that the Bible speaks of, and the present State of Israel hardly fits that picture.<sup>3</sup>

Fruchtenbaum, having acknowledged the problem, then sets forth a distinction that he believes suffices as a solution:

However, the real problem is the failure to see that the prophets spoke of two international returns. First, there was to be a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment, namely the judgment of the Tribulation. This was to be followed by a second worldwide regathering in faith in preparation for blessings, namely the blessings of the messianic age. Once it is recognized that the Bible speaks of two such regatherings, it is easy to see

how the present State of Israel fits into prophecy.<sup>4</sup>

The passages that Fruchtenbaum cites, however, do not provide support for a return to the promised land in unbelief. One passage (Ezek. 20:33–38) refers to God gathering the Israelites out of the nations and bringing them *into the wilderness* (not into the promised land) to execute judgment against them. Another passage (Ezek. 36:22–24) speaks of God bringing the Jews back to their own land, but says nothing about their being unconverted when they return. The context of this latter passage makes clear that Ezekiel is referring to the promise recorded in Deuteronomy 30—a promise that was quoted earlier and that makes clear that it is those who return to God that will return to the land.

As we search the Scriptures we see that God repeatedly promises to bring His *believing* people into the promised land. The promised land can be entered only by faith. But the Israelis returned to Palestine *in unbelief*. This fact alone should make it clear to us all that the return of these unbelieving Jews to Palestine is not a fulfillment of God's promise to bring His people back to the promised land.

### **The Promised Gathering: A Gathering to Christ**

So how are we to understand God's promise to gather the Jews out of the nations and to place them in their own land? Who are these Jews, what does it mean that they are gathered, and to what land are they brought?

Let us begin by considering who these Jews are. The Scriptures tell us that a true Jew is one who believes in Christ. Being a Jew has to do with what you are inwardly, in your heart,

as the inspired apostle has taught us:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Rom. 2:28–29).

In harmony with this passage, Galatians 3:16 states that all the covenant promises are to Christ, and then verse 29 of that same chapter says that if we are in Christ, then these promises are also to us. So the promised gathering is a promise to Christ and to all those who are in Christ.

Now when we look to the New Testament especially to see what it means for these Jews to be gathered, we see many references to the idea that all believers (i.e., the true Jews) right now are being *gathered* into the one body of Christ.

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him (Eph. 1:10).

This gathering, in other words, is a gathering to Christ. This is what God promised. He promised to send the Messiah, and unto Him would be the gathering of the people.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).

All those who have been gathered into Christ are right now beginning to enjoy sabbath rest, communing with God. Entering this sabbath rest is what entering the land of Canaan pictured. We see this when we consider that to be forbidden to enter the

<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 182.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (1989; repr., Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2001), 716.

<sup>4</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 716.

land was to be forbidden to enter God's rest.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest (Ps. 95:10-11).

So the reverse idea is that entering the promised land is entering God's rest. And this blessing is a blessing already enjoyed by all those who have been gathered unto Christ.

That this is really true is evident also from the fifth commandment. According to God's promise, all those who keep the fifth commandment enjoy life in the promised land. The fifth commandment speaks of living "in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee," which is none other than the promised land. This promise concerning living

in this land is a promise not only to believing Jews, but also to believing Gentiles, for consider this passage from Ephesians:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-3).

God here speaks to our children, and assures them that they will enjoy life in the promised land in the way of faith and submission. This is something that we and our children begin to enjoy now, while we look forward to the ultimate fulfillment after Christ returns.

But, says the dispensationalist, the promised land must literally mean *land*. And indeed it does. The promised gathering ultimately refers to that won-

drous event that will take place when our Lord returns. On that day, Christ will send forth His angels to gather all His people out of the nations to meet Him as He returns. Then, after that, our Lord will bring us together into the land that He has promised us. But this land will be a *heavenly* one, free from the bondage of corruption, as the patriarchs themselves recognized (Heb. 11:13-16). Such will be the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. Now the true Jews are returning to God and enjoying sabbath rest in Christ, and soon they will be brought into the heavenly promised land where they will dwell with their God forever.

But does God promise also to gather a remnant from the blood descendants of Jacob? And what does Scripture mean when it says that "all Israel" will be saved? These questions will be considered, Lord willing, next time.



Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

## The Place of Laity in Missions (4) The Danger of Separatism

**H**aving now laid the groundwork for the place of the members of Christ's church in missions, we move along to various legitimate ways members can become involved in missions. To be sure, the place of the laity in missions begins at home. We must live a godly life in our families, in our

schools, in our places of employment, and in our recreation. This has a direct impact on the work of missions. But in order for churches to thrive spiritually, their members must take an *active* interest in missions. They must be involved as much as they are able in the outreach of the church, whether that be by means of activity in their own congregation's evangelism work or in mission work itself.

There are those who argue that active participation in mission work is not all that important in order for churches to thrive

spiritually. In fact, they claim that history reveals that mission work is detrimental to the faithfulness of a church. Has not history proved that when churches embark on full-fledged mission work they begin to falter spiritually? All kinds of new ideas are allowed into the churches in order to accommodate those who are not one with us doctrinally or in their world and life view. Too much emphasis on mission work will require compromise. That, in turn, spells disaster for the truth of God's word. It has been said that the day our churches

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seriously give themselves over to mission work is the day that their spiritual decline begins. The only way to preserve the church's precious heritage is to dwell in safety alone!

If this accusation against missions is true, then why has Christ commanded His church to go into all the world and preach the gospel? If the Lord of the church knew that involvement in missions would lead to the spiritual demise of His church rather than to its spiritual growth and health, then why must the sound of the gospel go forth into all the earth and God's word unto the ends of the world (Rom. 10:18)? According to the command of Christ, the church must give herself to missions. And to do this necessarily implies active support and participation in the mission work of the church.

If there is no conscious support of and participation in missions, the church is doomed spiritually. The work of missions must be woven into the very fabric of the life of the church. God's people must always have this work before their hearts and minds. This begins with the support of this work by means of our prayers and money. It is true, as families in our denomination we freely give a large part of our synodical assessments to the work of missions. I am deeply grateful as a missionary for the generous giving of our people toward missions. But how conscious of this giving are we? Throwing our checks in the collection plate for the budget can become merely a matter of paying a bill, without much thought about mission work (or about any other of the causes we are giving to, for that matter). Likewise, the cause of missions is a part of congregational prayers. We are thankful that our ministers keep the need

of missions before the hearts of God's saints in prayer. But how frequent are our family and individual prayers for our mission labors? Not only must we offer our petitions for personal and congregational needs, but requests must continually be raised on behalf of our mission work too.

Yet, the cause of missions is so easily forgotten! The saying, "out of sight, out of mind," can hold so true regarding mission work. Since many do not (or cannot) actually participate in or experience the work of our churches in missions, God's people have a tendency to think of missions as a secondary work of the church—a work of lesser importance than the labors being performed within the churches themselves.

I received from a well-intentioned saint a letter exemplifying what I mean. She wrote to encourage me in my labors, but had to admit that she did not give all that much to missions. She instead felt that she had to

give the bulk of her charity to our Christian schools. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with that! But she explained that the reason

she felt she should give more to our schools was that, in her mind, the most important way God gathered His church from one generation to the next was by means of our Christian schools.

No doubt God continues the line of His covenant among those who take seriously their calling to see to it that their children are solidly instructed in the fear of God's name. Many denominations, in their zeal to reach out to others with the gospel, have sorely neglected to emphasize this all important work of the home and church—to their detriment. They continue to bring others into the church, but the

generations of those who are brought in depart rapidly because they are not soundly instructed in the doctrines of the church. This is the horrible weakness of much of evangelicalism today. God by His grace has used our Christian schools as an important means to assist in the instruction of our children. We ought surely to be grateful to Him for that.

But maintaining the home front by means of serious instruction of our children is not the *only* way that God gathers His covenant from one generation to the next. Of equal importance is the truth that God, with each new generation, continues to graft into the vine of His church others who are brought to faith by means of the call of the gospel through missions. We must not be so zealous in maintaining what we have within our churches that we neglect to reach out with the gospel to others. If we do, that will be to *our* detriment. It will lead to a very narrow concept of the church of Jesus Christ in this world and ultimately to the sin of separatism.

Separatism is a sin.

When we say this, of course, we must not confuse this sin with the truth of the antithesis. God has called His people out of the darkness and unbelief of this world into the light of salvation (I Pet. 2:9). Believers are light as opposed to darkness (Eph. 5:8). Salvation, therefore, sets the church apart from those who are yet lost in their unbelief and sin. Believers become pilgrims (foreigners) and strangers (outsiders) in this world (I Pet. 2:11). The calling of believers is to live in spiritual separation from the wicked. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?... Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord..."

*The work of missions must be woven into the very fabric of the life of the church.*



(II Cor. 6:14-18). In Ephesians, God's word instructs believers that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. With this instruction we are given the command, "Be ye not therefore partakers with them.... And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (vv. 7-12). Certainly, it is our calling to be a distinct people, different from the unbelieving world, unashamed to show others by our actions and words that we represent the cause of Christ. But this calling to be a spiritually separate people is not the same as the sin of separatism.

Separatism is the sin of pride. It is the sinful attitude of theological arrogance and conceit that can characterize individuals and churches as a whole. When a separatist carries on a theological discussion with others, he is condescending and even snobbish, as if the end of all truth lies in his own words of wisdom. Others begin to look at

such individuals and churches as being unapproachable. Even if these people and churches bear witness to the truth, others will turn a deaf ear to them because they conduct themselves as the standard of right and wrong. No one is willing even to listen to them anymore. Separatism is evidenced in such comments as, "They know where to find the truth." Or, "If they cannot find the truth where they are, then they should move to where it is." Even though these statements may be true in certain cases, they reveal the smug attitude that shows no kindness or understanding of the hard situations of life through which God leads people in the spiritual wasteland

of our country. And although the words are never *spoken*, people begin to pick up by various comments made that "the members of my denomination are going to be the only ones in heaven."

Separatists do not like to share the gospel with others. If they do, it is only with the intention to make others exact replicas of themselves. Such stay in their little sphere of safety, most often with blinders on, because they are afraid of anyone who might challenge what they say. Others are ready for the fight and feel that the only effective witness is to win the argument. For that reason, mission work is the farthest thing from their minds. They see no real value in mission work. And their interest in mission work is at best lackluster. Separatists in practice

*...an active interest in missions does make a person more cognizant of the scope of Christ's church in this world.*

approach—come very close to—the sin of hyper-Calvinism. They would loudly denounce such an accusation, but they leave the impression, by their conversation, that God will providentially

bring to the church those whom He has chosen with but little effort on the part of the church to do missions.

This is why separatism is a sin. It is a sin that can change a faithful church into a church filled with self-righteous, legalistic people who stand under the same condemnation as the Pharisees.

By being active in mission work, believers and their churches are guarded from this sin of separatism. When a person as much as visits a mission field, unless he is already callous in his arrogance and pride, he will not return home untouched. When members of the church help out on a mission field, they witness

what God has in His grace done in the lives of many who did not have the privilege of being born and raised in covenant homes and families or in faithful churches (if in any church at all). Visitors are able to talk with saints who have been drawn by the Spirit to the truth and who therefore reveal a newfound love and zeal for the truth and for the church—a zeal that at times can wane in us as members of the church who can take for granted what God has given to us. We are taught by their example that the truths God has entrusted into our care as churches should mean as much to us who are born and raised in the church as it does to these new saints that Christ has grafted into His church.

Besides, when members of the church step outside of their "bubble," their concept of the church becomes much broader. They begin to understand that Christ's church does not revolve around their own little world and its disagreements, but is far beyond them, extending to the ends of the earth! The vine of the church is not limited to a few people in a small, confined area of the world, but extends from sea to utmost sea. When members of the church witness the work in missions, they become much more aware of what they are confessing when they make the confession, "I believe an holy, catholic church." Certainly this does not mean that a person who does not visit a mission field is not able to make this confession from the heart. But an active interest in missions does make a person more cognizant of the scope of Christ's church in this world.

Bearing this in mind, we indeed encourage a visit to the mission field, or even some volunteer work for a mission field. We will address these in our next article.



## Strong Words

**H**ave you ever wished you could take your words back? With your words you attacked a good friend and caused him deep hurt. Or with your words you turned a budding friendship back, a friendship that held much promise. Did you wonder where those words came from?

Or do you often find yourself in most unpleasant conversations, wondering how you got there? In the circle of your friends do you find yourself trash-talking someone outside your circle? Do you sometimes find yourself listening to the same old talk from your friends, trash-talking others? Perhaps there are times you engage each other in battle with your tongues, taking turns putting each other down and trading insults, sharpening your tongues on each other. Maybe you walk away thinking it was all in good fun. But you can't help but feel hurt deep down or guilty that you must certainly have hurt the other's feelings.

Do you know what Scripture has to say about all that language? James 3:8: "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." James 4:11: "Speak not evil one of another brethren." Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Galatians 5:15: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

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You must allow those words to pass their judgment on your speech. Do not turn them aside with your own reasoning or justifications that "it's just the way we show friendship"; "everybody knows we're kidding"; or, "it's what everybody does nowadays." No, Scripture addresses your language with these passages. Feel the force of its rebuke.

You must also ask yourself from whence this kind of speech and language proceeds. No doubt the culture in which you live, broadcasted through your television screen, has its role. Television situation-comedies, especially family comedies, feature vicious putdowns. Children put down their parents. Wives put down their husbands. The more scathing the attack the more laughter ensues. Opponents in sports are known for trashing the opposition with their tongues before a game. As a willing audience, you take part vicariously in that talk, and that talk influences you. So, watch what you watch!

But you must go deeper. You must not think that you are merely a victim of your culture. Don't think that the only reason you talk this way is that you have no control over yourself. This kind of language comes from your heart. This is the emphasis of the Lord over and over again. Matthew 15:18, 19: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

What is even more fearful is that in the use of such language

you become the willing tool of your enemy, the devil. Do not be deceived! Satan, according to his name, is the slanderer or accuser of the brethren. Think of his nefarious words in Job 1:9. Think of his standing before the Lord, ready to accuse Joshua the high priest of his unworthiness to be a priest to the living God (Zech. 3:1). That is not all! You might not think of yourself as the tool of the devil when you speak contemptuous words of your fellow saints. But the devil rejoices to hear such words spoken of the people of God. You see, they are words that he can bring before God: "See what so-and-so thinks of thy son, thy daughter?!!" The devil delights to hear that speech because he uses it as a tool to divide between friends in the Lord, putting fear and doubt into a relationship where there ought to be love and trust. He delights in the froward speech and whisperings that separate chief friends (Prov. 16:28).

That last passage leads us to the kind of damage that this evil use of the tongue can cause. I am not going to say that you will have no friendships in which you speak to each other this way. You might have them, but those friendships will be shallow. Those friendships will revolve around superficial things. This lack of depth will prevent discussions of spiritual matters or matters of the heart. You will find little or no support and true encouragement in those relationships.

Why? Because relations that have such language cannot be based on trust, nor are they true friendships. The kind of lan-

guage that mistreats friends destroys trust. It therefore makes true fellowship impossible. It is impossible to think that a person who talks to you that way will always and unconditionally seek your best interests. If you talk to others in this way, you likewise will be unable to earn their deepest trust.

This speech is highly displeasing to God. In Psalm 109:17-19, David addresses the wicked man according to his destructive speech: "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually."

The reason why this speech is highly displeasing to God is that it contradicts the word of God. The word of God is a word that always builds up in every respect, aiming at the believer's ultimate well-being and comfort. The word of God, most importantly, is a word of justification: declaring that person righteous in Jesus Christ. That language is the language of friendship in the Lord's everlasting covenant of grace. By that speech God gives to His friend the highest status: good in the sight of God, acceptable, and worthy of every blessing, of eternal life itself.



For the proper use of the tongue we must begin with that speech of God in our justification. Your privilege by the grace of God is to believe and confess that glorious doctrine! Through that faith and confession you know your own justification before the bar of God's justice. That language is delightful and lovely. How sweet it is to the believer's ear, and how it brings healing

and prosperity! With that language, and by the inner, gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, the believer seeks out the Lord and delights to hear this word from God in His presence. That language strengthens the believer's faith and trust in the Lord. His fellowship with God grows stronger and more blessed.

The privilege of this word of justification is that it is not the sole possession of the individual believer. It is the gospel of God proclaimed through the ministry of the word to the church of Jesus Christ, His body. Together you hear that word. Together you believe it. Together you are justified. That sweet and delightful word is your common inheritance.

What a blessed word to reflect in our speech with each other! What a privilege to bring your speech into harmony with that language of God and the purpose of God! With such speech you become an instrument in the Lord's hand to strengthen one another's trust in the Lord. Many Scriptures there are that tell us how to use our tongues well, to treat each other well. Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt..." Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

How do you speak properly, then? When you think about it, all the ways that the tongue can be used for evil are mirrored by ways that are good.

Your tongue must be guided consciously by your love for your brother or sister. You must first develop a high regard for him or her. First, develop the same regard that God has. What are they in the sight of God? Elect, precious, of great value, through Christ. See them according to their true, spiritual status: in

Christ, justified and sanctified. According to that spiritual reckoning, they are members of the body of Christ with you. You are partakers together of the same righteousness, having the same operations of the Holy Spirit in them. Thinking upon those gifts the Lord has given to them must make them highly esteemed in your sight. Have these truths shape and mold your attitude toward them. With a proper, biblically-based attitude, you will not use destructive words. It will seem more fitting and proper to bless each other with good words.

One of the best ways the tongue can be used is not to use it. When you are tempted from your heart to cut each other down, keep your tongue very still in your mouth. When you hear evil speech from a friend, either toward you or toward another fellow saint, open your mouth and use your tongue, not to express agreement nor to join your own word to it, but to administer a brotherly (or sisterly) rebuke.

What is, then, the proper use of the tongue? First, use it to bring out both the standing of that individual and the gifts that the Lord has given to him. Greetings will be warm and sincere. Your language will be free of sarcasm or bitterness. Your conversation will be respectful, always seeking to build him up. In conversation you will seek to bring out the best. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out" (Prov. 20:5). Instead of putting your friend's words in the worst light, you will put them in the best. Your words will aim to be pleasant and delightful. "When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet" (Ps. 141:6).

The good use of the tongue also builds up your fellow saint's name and reputation. In conver-


sation about others, you cover over a person's weaknesses and failures. Instead you talk about their strengths and the fruits of the Spirit you observe in them. You talk about their contribution to the body of Christ, delighting in their spiritual virtues as the gifts of God that make the church prosperous.

The fruits and benefits of this proper use of the tongue are outstanding. Most of all, the Lord's name is glorified. He has taken His name and in covenant mercy placed it upon you and upon your fellow saints. When you

speak well of and to one another in the body, you speak well of God's name. His gifts in you and in others are remembered and celebrated; His name is praised. Those same gifts are developed in part through encouragement. Their use is encouraged by the bonds of fellowship, which fellowship is strengthened through good speech. God receives glory and honor when His people use their gifts for one another's well-being.

This good speech also bears the fruit of strengthened relations in the church. The unity of the body of Christ becomes more evi-

dent. It becomes plain through your speech that you are for one another. You have confidence in one another, and your hearts are filled with a stronger and richer peace toward each other. With these strong ties you are able to help each other because you can confide in each other. "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:24).

Use your tongues well. Make them instruments of blessing and confidence toward each other. Through your tongues you will be strong. 

*Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass*

*Prof. David Engelsma*

## Chapter Four

# Postmillennialism (Distinctions [cont.]) (2)

### Postmillennialism in the Reformed Tradition

**T**he postmillennial theory of the end that appears in the Reformed tradition can, and should, be distinguished from the modernist postmillennialism described in the preceding article. The millennium proposed by Reformed theologians is supposed to come about by means of the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the law of God, rather than by evolutionary development and human effort. The future "golden age" envisioned by Reformed men will honor Jesus Christ as king of the then triumphant kingdom of God. And at the end of the allegedly Reformed millennium

Jesus Christ will finally return bodily to the earth in order to conduct the final judgment and to renew the creation, although some proponents of this theory gladly postpone that return for hundreds of thousands of years.

### Puritan Postmillennialism

Within this postmillennial camp, there are two faintly distinct groups. The one consists of the older Puritan, Presbyterian, and Reformed theologians and their contemporary disciples. These held, and hold today, that the preaching of the gospel will eventually convert large numbers of persons, likely a majority, in all nations, so that the church will enjoy a "golden age" of earthly victory in history and the world will experience a time of unparalleled earthly peace and prosperity.

Of great importance to these postmillennialists are "revivals." Revivals are abrupt, extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit converting large numbers

of persons. Many of these postmillennialists pin their hopes for the "golden age" on a future great revival, which will convert a majority of Jews and then a majority of Gentiles everywhere on earth. Describing how the "glorious work" of the coming millennium "shall be accomplished," Jonathan Edwards mentions in the first place that "the Spirit of God shall be gloriously poured out for the wonderful revival and propagation of religion.... This pouring out of the Spirit of God... shall soon bring great multitudes to forsake that vice and wickedness which now so generally prevails.... The work of conversion shall break forth, and go on in such a manner as never has been hitherto.... Vast numbers shall suddenly be brought in as it were at once."<sup>1</sup>

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*Previous article in this series: October 15, 2009, p. 34.*

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The History of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers & Authors, n.d.), 305, 307).



This is the postmillennialism taught by Jonathan Edwards in his *The History of Redemption*; described by James A. De Jong in his book, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810*<sup>2</sup>; and enthusiastically promoted by Iain H. Murray in *The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*<sup>3</sup> and by J. Marcellus Kik in *An Eschatology of Victory*.<sup>4</sup>

This form of postmillennialism found creedal expression in the Savoy Declaration of 1658.

As the Lord is in care and love towards his Church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so, according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace [that is, revival—DJE], shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable, and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.<sup>5</sup>

### Christian Reconstruction Postmillennialism

The other distinguishable group in the postmillennial camp within the Reformed churches is the Christian Reconstructionists. These include Rousas J. Rushdoony, regarded as the founder of the movement; Gary North; Greg Bahnsen; Kenneth Gentry, Jr.; David Chilton; Gary DeMar; and

Douglas Wilson.<sup>6</sup> This brand of postmillennialism is notable for its emphasis on the role of the law in realizing the millennial kingdom of Christ. Proclamation and enforcement of the law of God must accompany the preaching of the gospel in order to bring about the “golden age.” Gary North has written, “If the Christian church fails to build the visible kingdom by means of biblical law and the power of the gospel...then what kind of religion are we preaching?”<sup>7</sup> It is worthy of note that as a power bringing about the millennial kingdom the gospel lags behind the law.

During the millennium, according to Christian Reconstruction, the Old Testament civil, or judicial, laws that governed Israel will be binding upon the then “Christianized” nations (viewed by the Christian Reconstructionists as the Messianic kingdom). These laws will establish the kingdom during the millennium. Hence, this postmillennial school is also known as the “theonomic” movement (“theonomic” means ‘God’s law’).

Christian Reconstruction postmillennialism is also distin-

guished by its vehement charge to the churches that they exert themselves aggressively to realize the millennium. If the Puritans and the older Presbyterians were content to wait upon the Spirit to realize the millennium through their preaching and writing, the Christian Reconstructionists are in a hurry. They are millennial activists. They would hasten the work of the Spirit upon which their reconstructionist hearts are set by prodding the churches. The main duty of the church, according to them, is to establish the millennium.

Dominant in the millennial thinking of the Christian Reconstructionists is dominion. They are ambitious that the church, or the Christian Reconstructionists (Rushdoony had little regard for the church), have dominion in and over the world—*earthly* dominion in every sphere of human life. For this reason, their postmillennialism is sometimes referred to as “dominion theology.”

### Essentially One Postmillennial Doctrine

With the exception of Christian Reconstruction’s peculiar doctrine of the restoration of Old Testament civil law, the differences between the postmillennialism of the Puritans and older Presbyterians and the postmillennialism of Christian Reconstruction are merely a matter of emphasis. Like Christian Reconstruction, the Puritan doctrine too longed for the millennium as the church’s triumph over her foes and put pressure on the churches and their ministers to exert themselves strenuously, by vast prayer-chains and other means, to realize the millennium as the church’s hope.

The doctrine of the Puritans and of the older Presbyterian and Reformed theologians and the doctrine of Christian Reconstruction are essentially one. In fact, Christian Reconstruction

<sup>2</sup> Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971.

<sup>5</sup> The Savoy Declaration, 26.5, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1983), 723.

<sup>6</sup> Representative works advocating postmillennialism by Christian Reconstructionists include Rousas John Rushdoony, *God’s Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Post Millennialism* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, 1977); Gary North, *Dominion & Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987); David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Tyler, Texas: Reconstruction Press, 1985); Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992); *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on the Millennium* 3, no. 2 (Winter, 1976-77); *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on Eschatology* 15 (Winter, 1998); and any issue of Douglas Wilson’s magazine, *Credenda/Agenda*.

<sup>7</sup> Gary North, *Dominion & Common Grace*, 143.

has simply adopted the exegesis of two passages of Scripture that are vitally important in the controversy over the millennium, Matthew 24 and Revelation 20, by the Presbyterian theologian J. Marcellus Kik. In his introduction to the reprint of Kik's postmillennial interpretation of Matthew 24 and Revelation 20, Rushdoony wrote:

Postmillennialism will again prevail, however, because it is the truth of God and His enscriptured word. As an eschatology of victory, it will inspire men with the power of God, and, as with great saints of old, and the Puritans of yesteryears, lead again and more enduringly to the triumph of Christ in every area, bringing every sphere of thought and action into captivity to Christ. The writings of J. M. Kik give us that eschatology of victory which Scripture sets forth.<sup>8</sup>


<sup>8</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, "In-

In treating of postmillennialism, I will concern myself with that form of the theory that appears in the Reformed tradition, ignoring the modernist, evolutionary conception. And I will concentrate on those (fundamental) elements of postmillennialism that the Puritan and older Presbyterian doctrine and the contemporary doctrine of Christian Reconstruction have in common. That is, I will examine the strictly postmillennial notion concerning the last things without entering into Christian Reconstruction's doctrine of theonomy, which properly belongs to a study of the relation between the Old and the New Testaments.

Reformed amillennialism with its interpretation of Revelation 20, as set forth earlier in this se-

roduction," in J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), ix.

ries of articles, is challenged by a postmillennial expectation of the future that has its own, radically different understanding of Revelation 20. The challenge arises, not from outside the Reformed tradition, but from within the Reformed churches. Admittedly, the challenge to an amillennial explanation of the things that must shortly come to pass and the defense of a postmillennial explanation of these things have come from prominent Reformed and Presbyterian theologians.

What are the main elements of this postmillennialism? What are its biblical grounds, especially its interpretation of Revelation 20? What is the Reformed amillennial criticism of the postmillennialism in the Reformed tradition? And why does, and must, Reformed eschatological orthodoxy, that is, amillennialism, condemn postmillennialism as false doctrine and as a spurious hope? 

Bring the books...



Charles Terpstra

## Read! (Especially Reformed Books!)

Welcome to the world of books, especially good, Reformed books! And yes, probably some books that are not so Reformed, maybe even some that are quite Deformed, which good Reformed readers nevertheless should read and learn from. Having been appointed to this rubric, my sister Sue Looyenga and I hope to stir up some good reading habits on

the part of our *Standard Bearer* audience, young and older. We plan to write regular reviews with a more positive emphasis, recommending solid Reformed and Christian books of all types and for all ages. We purpose to *encourage and inspire* you to read books that will challenge your thinking, feed your soul, and strengthen you in your faith and walk with the Lord. And we will be enlisting other reviewers from all walks of life to read and recommend books to you too. That is what you may look forward to in the coming year, D.V.

In this opening article and review, we want to encourage our readers to become greater readers, i.e., to read *more* and to read *better* books. We trust that you *are* readers; after all, you subscribe to the *SB*, and you are reading this article. That is a good sign. And if you read this magazine, you probably read others too. And, no doubt, you read *some* books—an interesting novel now and then; perhaps a new history biography, or a great war story. We hope you know where your local library is, and visit it on a regular basis. And

Mr. Terpstra is a member of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan.

we trust you read some good Christian books too, especially those of the Reformed stripe! We hope you visit your local Christian bookstore from time to time, and browse, and buy a title that grabs your attention and interest. With winter soon settling in for us “northerners” (but this applies equally to our “southerners”), now is a perfect time to take a Friday night “book hunt” outing.

We realize there is much fluff and rubbish in the Christian bookstores these days, but you will also find some treasures that are worth having and reading. You may even be surprised at what you find in the secular bookstores. I have found several classics of the Christian faith at *Barnes and Noble* and such like stores. (P.S. I will make some recommendations about a few great Internet resources for good Reformed/Christian titles at the end of this

article.) And what about those great RFPA books that you purchase as a book club member? They’re not simply gracing the bookshelves, are they? You do READ them, right?! Again, we encourage you to become *greater* readers!

We know what we are up against in trying to get our readers to read more and to read better. It is, after all, the age of the visual and audio—TV, Internet, video games, iPods, cell phones, etc., all beckoning our eyes and ears, and consuming so much of our time. Books, and all reading material for that matter, are considered *passé*, especially by the younger generation. Book sales are way down; newspapers and magazines are falling by the

wayside monthly. People simply are not reading as they were in the past.

And we do not hide the fact that we have great concern for how we as Reformed Christians are spending our time with these modern means of communication and entertainment. So much of our precious time—time that could be used for reading solid Reformed/Christian books—can be and often is wasted day after day, and night after night, in front of the TV and computer screen. We have no doubt that the devil is often pleased with how he tempts us to squander our God-given minds and minutes with the modern media.

And so our mission to encourage greater reading could very

well be called Mission Impossible! But it is not. And we are not going to give up that easily or quickly! We are Christian soldiers called to battle, and we firmly believe we must fight—not only *against* the things that distract

us from good reading—but also *for* the things that encourage us to read, for the good of our souls and for the glory of God! And let us be clear, we well know that the modern media is not the enemy *per se*. TV, computers, the Internet, iPods, cell phones, etc. are only tools, which can be used for good or for evil. In fact, we might say we would be very pleased (and the Lord too!) if our Reformed/Christian readers were making use of these modern means to read more and to read better! We would be delighted if you were downloading Reformed books and articles from the Internet, and feasting your soul on the wealth of material available there. We would be greatly encouraged to hear that you have on your

iPod, not just music, but the Bible and other Christ-centered literature that you listen to on the drive to work or at lunch-hour. And even if you told us that you have a *Kindle* and you like to read e-books, and that you have found solid Reformed literature in this form too, still we would be happy and thankful.

But, of course, we want you to read real, traditional-style books—the hard-cover and paperback variety! The ones at the bookstores and in the libraries! The ones you crack open, and smell; the ones you can write in! Books on the historic Christian faith! Books on the distinctive Reformed faith! Books on church history, and church conflicts, and church councils! Books on Christian figures from the past and present! Books on Christian living, and Christian dying! Books on Christian suffering, and Christian triumphs! Books on Christian marriage and Reformed family life! Books that stretch your believing minds, enflame your hearts, and grow you deeper in the knowledge and love of God in Jesus Christ!

Do you see the need to do this, to be greater readers? Will you make an evaluation of how you are using your time, and commit to doing more of the above-mentioned reading? I know that, for myself, determining to write this article out of my personal passion for good books has made me more aware of how much better I can do in my own life. I need your encouragement too. And so let us help one another to become greater readers. Write us (via email—[cjterpstra@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cjterpstra@sbcglobal.net)) and share your good books with us. Let us know what books you are reading and how they have instructed and encouraged you in your Christian faith and walk. Feel free to recommend to us some books for review in this rubric. We would love to hear from you.

*We have no doubt that the devil is often pleased with how he tempts us to squander our God-given minds and minutes with the modern media.*



Secondly, in this initial article we would like to recommend two recent titles to you. Both are in commemoration of this year's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Calvin's birth. There are many others recently published that you may have seen, and hopefully even read; but these are two that I have read this summer and fall and found very enlightening and edifying. The first is entitled *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, edited by Burk Parsons, and published by Reformation Trust, a division of Ligonier Ministries (associated with Dr. R.C. Sproul). It is comprised of nineteen chapters written by nineteen contemporary Calvinists (such as Sinclair Ferguson, Steven Lawson, Robert Godfrey, Michael Horton, and Joel Beeke). These men trace Calvin as a Christian and as a Reformer, and then lay out the broad lines of Calvin's theology. To give you a bit of the book's flavor, here are some chapter headings: "Calvin's Heart for God"; "The Churchman of the Reformation"; "The Counselor to the Afflicted"; "The Supremacy of Jesus Christ"; "Election and Reprobation" (excellent!); and "The True Christian Life." In each chapter the authors let Calvin "speak for himself," quoting extensively from his writings (mainly his sermons and his *Institutes*). I found this book to be a wonderful survey of the

life and teachings of Calvin, and heartily recommend it for your personal library—and your personal reading!

The second title I recommend has recently been published by our own Reformed Free Publishing Association: *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin: The Institutes in Summary*. It is authored by David J. Engelsma, professor emeritus of dogmatics at the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. For those who desire to become better acquainted with Calvin's *magnum opus*, but who are intimidated by its detail and length, this comprehensive, one-volume summary of Calvin's *Institutes* is a great introduction. Again, Calvin is allowed to "speak for himself" through ample quotes from his work. But at the same time, Prof. Engelsma explains and gives contemporary comment to Calvin's teachings, even at times critically. As he takes us through the four main "books" (or sections) of Calvin's *Institutes*, we gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the Reformed faith that God led Calvin to rediscover and develop from the Word of God. We stand amazed at the breadth of Calvin's knowledge and grasp of biblical truth. We marvel at the wonderful way in which he communicated and defended the "faith once delivered

to the saints." But we also see his grace-driven humility and godliness, as he sought to understand and live his faith to the glory of God.

The book also includes a sketch of Calvin's life and work, and four chapters on special aspects of Calvin's *Institutes* (their nature, history of their publishing, their style and structure, and the prefatory address). This wonderful volume too we heartily recommend to our readers. They would make great gifts, especially for the Christmas season. Information on ordering them may be found below.

Finally in this article I give you some promised Internet resources for finding, reviewing, and purchasing good Reformed/Christian books. This list is not by any means comprehensive, but contains websites that I have found most helpful in locating good books for a Reformed Christian's library.

[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org) (the Reformed Free Publishing Association)

[www.ligonier.org](http://www.ligonier.org) (including Reformation Trust Publishing)

[www.monergism.com](http://www.monergism.com) (specializing in Puritan & Reformed books)

[www.cvbbs.com](http://www.cvbbs.com) (Cumberland Valley Bible Book Service, also specializing in Puritan/Reformed books)

Until next time, *tolle lege*—Take up and read!



When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. Margaret Laning

## Going to the Ant: Communing As a People

*Mrs. Laning is a wife and mother in Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan.*

**M**y five-year old daughter presented me with her drawing: a stick figure topped with curly hair stand-

ing next to a long dotted line. I guessed the person was her, but the dotted line had me stumped. "Guess what that is," she said



smiling. "Rocks?" I fumbled. She shook her head. "A jump rope?" I tried. Her eyebrows furrowed. "They're ants!" she declared. "They always do that. You know, follow each other."

My daughter was learning wisdom from the tiniest of teachers. Unknowingly, she was bringing to my attention something for me to take to heart. Proverbs 30:24 says, "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." I admit, when wise teachers come to mind, the ant is not one I tend to think of. For one, they are not strong (compared to human physical strength) and are only about one millionth the size of man. Yet, to my shame, ants have great strength.

The secret to their strength lies within that speckled procession sketched by my child's hands. Togetherness is their strength. One miniscule ant, independent from the colony, can accomplish very little and will soon die. But God did not create the ant (or us) to be solitary. God created them to be wise instructors and models for how to live as a people. These social, hard working insects have something pinned down, something virtually perfected, that we struggle with. For the key to the ants' success is, very simply, the harmonious way they live and work together.

They are completely selfless, willing to give their life for the sake of the colony. They are extremely diligent, working unceasingly every waking hour. They are very well organized, having a variety of specific tasks for each ant to perform. And they are ruthless in combat, with soldiers

so skilled that even the U.S. Department of Defense has studied them.

Yet, ants would not be able to work together if they could not communicate. We and our children can learn from this, too. One would think that, with all of our high tech means of communication, we would be advanced in how we converse. The truth, however, is that we have much to learn. The ants teach us that communication is a give and take. We tend to be quick to give advice and to teach, but not so fast to receive. We are quick to point out faults in others, but slow to do so with ourselves. Not listening to one another leads to misunderstanding and disunity. And one thing is for sure, two monologues just don't make for good dialogue.

Ants communicate for the benefit of the body, but, sadly, much communication among believers serves to break down

the body. Many times we hear our children using their tongues to tear down the peace and unity. Some of our children are bullies. They seek to exalt themselves by picking on those they view to be weaker. Some of our children are quiet mockers. Although they do not make fun of people to their face, they delight in putting down others in their little circle of friends. Some of our children use filthy language, etc., etc. All such wicked speech is not actually communication, for there is no communing involved in this communication. Rather, it is selfish, sluggardly, non-productive behavior.

We are commanded by God to work together. When we do anything to inhibit that work, we are not truly working at all, but rather exhibiting characteristics

of a sluggard. Communication is hard work, and yet we must not give up (though that is very easy to do). We must constantly strive to improve. I certainly feel convicted when I read Proverbs 6:6-8, which says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." When it gets right down to it, we cannot accomplish any work together—at home, in the church, or anywhere we go—if we do not first go to the ant.

Ants constantly give and receive information out of concern for the welfare of their colony. They communicate mainly through chemical substances that they pass back and forth, smell, and taste. The colony functions efficiently with about twenty different chemical signals. Scientists say this chemical is so strong, that if we were to extract a mere milligram of it, it could be used to lead a column of ants three times around the earth. With these chemical signals ants get across to one another the subjects that matter most to them—food and danger.

How striking it is to ponder that ants spend most of their time making known where they have found food and warning one another of danger. There is something for us to learn in this. Food and danger are two subjects that we ought to be discussing with our children very frequently. Of all the things to talk about, these are some of the most worthwhile.

The soldier ant is a sentinel par excellence. When any danger arises, communication is sent out and the army works as a finely tuned war machine. They bite and sting and will attack together in great numbers. This fearless creature will stop at nothing to defend her people. They are utterly selfless, and will fight to the death.

*...the key to the ants' success is, very simply, the harmonious way they live and work together.*

As mothers in the home we tend to warn our children about many dangers. We tell them not to talk with strangers, not to walk alone at night, and to watch for cars while riding their bikes. We also spend some time talking about certain kinds of spiritual dangers. We warn about temptation and about not hanging around people who are disobedient. We caution them and keep tabs on whom they communicate with on the Internet.

These are not, however, the only dangers to be discussed. Doctrinal deception is lethal, threatening our homes and churches. We need to be like the soldier ant who makes known to the colony imminent danger. It is good to bring out to our children the fact that many people claim to hold to truths that they actually deny. For example, there are plenty who say they believe salvation by God's grace alone, but who then deny this by teaching that man's act of believing is a condition he must fulfill to enter Christ's kingdom. They may confess total depravity, and then turn around and deny it by teaching that an unregenerate person has the ability to repent and believe. We and our children are surrounded by deception, and we must imitate the ant to warn the coming generation.

With all of the time ants put into warning the colony about dangers, somehow they find time to show up at virtually every picnic. This uninvited forager guest then follows her scented trail back home well satisfied with bounty to be shared. Hungry ants may stroke her or tap her with their antennae to ask for food. The ant regurgitates the meal to feed the adults and the babies, called larvae. The larvae have different nutritional needs than the adult ant. They communicate their need, and the worker obliges. The proper digestible

balance of proteins and sugars is first extracted from the food before feeding; the rest then is turned to waste pellets. Here the colony functions like a collective mouth and gut of sorts by sharing the tasks of foraging and digestion.

We imitate the ant by bringing our children spiritual food and teaching it in a manner that enables them to understand and digest it. Like the ant, we work together at this in the home, church, and Christian schools, extracting for them what they are capable of digesting. Not only do we read the Bible to our children, but we "give the sense," as Nehemiah 8:8 teaches. What a privilege we have to talk with our children about God's spiritual food, not only during devotions but throughout the whole day.

Ants not only bring food to their young, but some types of ants teach their young how to find the food. This process is called tandem running—a two-way communication between a teacher and a pupil. At the start of a tandem run, the leader finds an ant who does not know the route and is willing to follow and receive information. Tandem runs are rather slow because the follower frequently pauses to look around for landmarks to learn the route. Only when the follower has done this does she tap with her antennae on the hind legs and abdomen of the leader to let it know the run can proceed. Even though the leader can reach food about four times faster without the student following, the process ends up being a time saver. Tandem followers learn their lessons so well that they often become tandem lead-

ers themselves, communicating the information to others in the colony.

This brings in another important aspect of feeding our children, and that is teaching them how to find the spiritual food themselves. Like the tandem leader ant, we should pass on how we found the food. It is good to have our children read the Scriptures on their own, in addition to the reading that takes place during family devotions. Nothing can replace their regular reading and becoming familiar with the word. But they also

need help in learning how to find the food in what they are reading. So we need to show them how to look for what is emphasized in a passage, seeking repeated ideas and summary statements. We need to show them how to look up parallel passages, searching


for Scripture's own definitions of terms and phrases. In this way they will grow to see the word as a whole, and not as a bunch of disjointed stories. They will grow to know by experience that the principle "Scripture interprets Scripture" is the road to follow to find food.

Of course, this is quite a challenge for us adults, too. In order to be effective teachers, we must first be good receivers and students ourselves. With all the duties we have (or think we have) as wives and as mothers, we often struggle to find time to study the word. I have talked with other women who have shared the same struggles that I have. Yet, we also know that if we see our profound need, and if we truly desire to spend more opportunities studying God's word, our heavenly Father will answer our prayer and provide

*We imitate the ant by bringing our children spiritual food and teaching it in a manner that enables them to understand and digest it.*

us with the time we need. Although we may have to give up other activities to fit it in, the benefit of studying the Scriptures is priceless. There is a saying, "you teach best what you most need to learn." The best teacher is also a diligent student.

May we continue to pray together for God's grace to go to the ant, that we may use our mouths wisely to perform worthwhile work. May it be our heartfelt desire to protect and promote the communion of the saints in our churches, in our

homes, and in our schools. Like the ant, we have so much work to do. May we use our tongues rightly for the sake of Christ's kingdom, communicating that precious food, the bread of life, which is ours and our children's in Jesus Christ. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

**T**he Loveland, CO PRC Young Adults Society and Evangelism Committee sponsored two lectures by Prof. David Engelsma on the subject of Eschatology. The first was Friday, October 30, entitled, "The Two Slain Witnesses," and another on Saturday morning, October 31, entitled, "The Battle of Armageddon."

The Outreach Committee of the Mission Fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA sponsored a Reformation Day Lecture on October 30. Their missionary pastor, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, spoke on the topic, "Calvin and the Sovereignty of God." There was once again encouraging evidence of the blessing of the Lord seen in the fact that there were twenty-two visitors from the area, all of whom expressed appreciation for the lecture. The radio work being done in the area continues to bear the fruit of people in the Pittsburgh area hearing about the activities of our Mission.

The Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored their annual Reformation Day lecture on October 30. This year their pastor, Rev. Martin VanderWal, spoke on the theme, "Reformed: What It Means, Why It Matters," or the

truths that make a truly Reformed church distinctive.

The Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA hosted a Reformation Day celebration on November 6, with Rev. Carl Haak, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, speaking on the theme, "Calvin and Predestination: Eternally Entrusted to the Arms of Christ."

### Sister Church Activities

**P**rof. Herman and Mrs. Wilma Hanko went to the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland for the month of November. Prof. Hanko planned on preaching for them the four Lord's Days he was there. This, in turn, allowed Covenant's pastor, Rev. Angus Stewart, and his wife, Mary, to stay in Limerick for an extended period to help the Limerick Reformed Fellowship and to enable the Council of Covenant to make recommendations regarding the LRF to the PRC Synod of 2010.

Rev. Kenneth Koole, pastor of the Grandville, MI PRC, continued his work among the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore into late November, while their pastor, Rev. Paul Goh, was working among Reformed Christians in Malaysia. Mr. Sid Miedema, representing our denomination's Contact Committee, and Rev. James Laning, pastor of Hope Church, Walker, also planned on joining

Rev. Koole in Singapore in mid-November. Rev. Laning and Rev. Koole spoke at a Reformation Day Conference sponsored by Covenant ERCS. They also had plans to meet with the Session of Covenant to work toward re-establishing a relationship with our churches per their request to Synod 2009.

### Congregation Activities

**T**his year's annual Ladies League meeting was held November 3 and was hosted by the Martha Society of the Doon, IA PRC. Rev. David Overway, pastor at Doon, spoke to the ladies on personal devotions.

The Covenant Ladies Circle of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted their annual Edmonton Car Rally and Soup Supper on November 11. The car rally began at noon, with the soup supper following at about 3:00-4:00 P.M.

The congregation of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada organized a welcome for their pastor, Rev. Thomas Miersma, his wife, Jan, and their family on November 13, at the Central Alberta Christian High School. Activities started with a potluck dinner at 6:00 P.M., followed by a short program, desserts, volleyball, and fellowship at around 8:00 P.M. Members of neighboring First PRC in Edmonton were also invited to join with Immanuel for the 8:00 P.M. activities.

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*Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

The First PRC congregation in Grand Rapids, MI enjoyed their annual Request Night program on Sunday evening, November 15. Again this year the audience did some singing, and various members of the congregation helped out by providing a variety of musical numbers. In past years, various groups were requested to sing a Psalter number for Request Night. Some of those groups were: those who remembered singing a certain theme song in First Church Sunday School, Adams Christian School graduates, and Covenant Christian High School graduates. This year's program included plans to form a group of anyone of any age who graduated from a high school other than Covenant.

The men of Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI were invited to a work bee on Saturday afternoon, November 14. Plans called for

the taping and repair of some of the Bibles and Psalters that they are currently using, and also the cleaning of some of the carpeted areas that they use at Heritage Christian School each Lord's Day.

The young ladies of Life Group from the Hudsonville, MI PRC got together Saturday, November 14, to enjoy a hayride, lunch, and the making of "Sand Art Brownies" in mason jars.

The children of the Byron Center, MI PRC, with a little help from their parents, hosted their annual Thanksgiving program for the seniors in their congregation on November 4. The children took part in a program followed by dessert and coffee.

#### School Activities

The annual promotional dinner at Heritage Christian High School in Dyer, IN was held November 6 in their school gym. Af-

ter dinner, Rev. Nathan Langerak gave a speech on "A Brief History of Christian Education."

Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI presented their All-School Program on November 12 at Fair Haven Ministries. The program, entitled "God's Covenant Faithfulness to His Church," took on special meaning for Heritage and its support-families, since this year marks Heritage's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a school.

#### Minister Activities

Since the last "News," three of our vacant churches have issued calls.

Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN extended a call to Rev. James Slopsema; First PRC in Holland, MI extended a call to Rev. Steven Key; and Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL extended a call to Prof. David Engelsma to serve as their next pastor.



## Announcements

#### TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School in Wingham was unable to hire teachers to fill its classrooms last year. Therefore we have changed our plans and are hoping to open for the 2010-11 year, D.V. We are seeking a teacher/administrator for a class of 9 students in grades 7-12. Teaching will be assisted by online curriculum for the upper grades. We are also seeking an elementary teacher to teach a class of 16 students in grades K-6. Volunteer assistance will be available. For more information, please contact board vice-president Mr. Harvey Kikkert, at (519)523-4823 or email [hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca).

#### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 13, 2010, at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and the congregation of Edgerton PRC wish to express Christian sympathy to the Brummel, Post, Baker, and Gloria & Jim Bleyenbergh families of our congregation, following the passing of their mother, grandmother, and aunt,

#### MRS. TILLIE BRUMMEL.

May they find comfort in God's word (Psalm 23:6): "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Rev. Dennis Lee, President  
James VerHey, Clerk