

# The Standard Bearer

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## Rahab

Rev. Ron VanOverloop

How do consistory, classis,  
and synod work?

Our deliberative assemblies

Prof. Barrett Gritters

The end of the matter—found

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and apparent  
contradictions

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## Meditation

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan

# Rahab

**And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.**

**Joshua 2:1**

The children of Israel, the church of the old dispensation, completed a forty-year-long journey through the wilderness. Three generations (all those above twenty years of age) had died in the wilderness, including Moses, their faithful, patient, and meek leader. Joshua was chosen by God to replace Moses (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 1:38). Moses encouraged him (Deut. 31:7, 8) and God commissioned him (Josh. 1:1-9).

Israel was camped at a place called Shittim, located approximately seven miles east of the Jordan River. It is from here that Joshua sends out two spies. The two spies walked to the Jordan River, crossed at a ford, and then had approximately another seven miles to travel to reach Jericho. It was late in the day when they arrived at Jericho, for the gates of the city were soon to be shut for the night.

### The harlot

There, near the gate, the two spies met the woman named Rahab. Was she there looking for business? Or was she there because she had experienced a great change of heart and therefore was anticipating the possibility of Israelite spies?

The intent of the two spies was to learn the attitude of the king and people of Jericho concerning the near presence of the nation of Israel. They were seeking to know the military preparedness of Jericho to fight. And they wanted to know of the plans to resist Israel. Joshua and Israel had not yet been told by God how they would conquer the city of Jericho. Joshua, as a good military leader, wanted to be prepared for the first battle he would have to lead when Israel entered Canaan.

God used the information learned by the spies to encourage Joshua. The spies would learn of the terror that filled the whole of Canaan. The spies were not looking for a harlot when they went with Rahab. Their only in-

tent was to gain military information. That is why they wanted to be on the wall of the city. From the height of the wall they could see deep into the city to learn its defenses. It is also likely that they wanted to be on the wall of the city in case they needed to escape quickly and easily.

Rahab was a harlot. She sinfully sold her body for the pleasure of men. As a harlot, she was obviously tolerated in this wicked city. As such, she represented the sinful moral condition of the city and of the land of Canaan. One of the reasons God took Abraham's descendants out of the land of Canaan and brought them into the land of Egypt for 400 years was that the presence of the church in Canaan would not be an external restraint in the development of sin by the Canaanites. Their moral depravity advanced. They were filling the measure or cup of iniquity. When this cup was filled by the immorality of the nations in Canaan, then, in God's judgment, they would be ripe for divine punishment!

The residents of Jericho and of Canaan had peaked in their ability to violate every one of God's commandments. Their moral situation was now judged by God to be irreversible. They were so defiled with moral sins that they were ripe to be cast out and destroyed (just as it had been with Sodom and Gomorrah):

The land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you and the land is defiled;) that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations which were before you (Lev. 18:25-28).

As a harlot, Rahab was a willing participant in all the debaucheries that characterized Canaan and the city of Jericho where her harlotry was openly accepted. She profited financially from all the evil of that society. She had a house on the wall, where the wealthy dwelt, but she was at the bottom of the moral ladder. Scripture

condemns her for her harlotry (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). The divine destruction of Canaan was rightly due; the cup of iniquity was full.

### The believer

But Rahab was a believer. She was gifted with faith by the God of Israel. And God gave her the desire and ability to exercise her faith. Scripture identifies the exercise of her faith as receiving the spies with peace (Heb. 11:31).

When the spies arrived at Jericho, it is likely that Rahab was able to identify who they were and where they were from, not only from the way in which they dressed and spoke, but also because they communicated to her their mission. We may believe they told her why they were there. And in their communication to her, she knew them to be fellow believers in Jehovah.

Rahab was not the only one who identified them. Other residents of Jericho identified them and saw them make their way to the house of Rahab. Their presence was quickly reported to the king of Jericho, and he immediately sent soldiers to the house of Rahab.

She, who made her money by immoral means, gave up an opportunity for a great reward from the king by hiding and lying about the spies. Scripture says that she received the spies with peace. By hiding the Israelite spies Rahab was a traitor. By doing this it became evident that she chose for the God of Israel over against her former gods. She chose for the people of Israel over against her fellow residents of Jericho. She chose for the right way of Jehovah against her former sinful way.

Rahab had faith—the evidence of things not seen. Even though she and the residents of Jericho knew that Israel did not have the military equipment to destroy the high and thick walls of Jericho, she believed that Israel would take the city. She had heard about the God of Israel and His ten plagues to deliver Israel out of Egypt. She believed that their God, who had brought His people through the Red Sea on dry ground, was able to give Jericho and all the land of Canaan to His people. Her faith enabled her to believe that the walls of Jericho would somehow be breached and the city would be taken. She believed in that which was not seen.

Israel was still on the other side of the Jordan River and Jericho's walls were still standing strong. But she believed the power of God and His promise that He would bring His people into the land of Canaan. Her faith said, "I know that Jehovah hath given you the land" (Josh. 2:9). She continued, "our hearts did melt" when we heard what happened forty years before in Egypt and just recently to the two kings of the Amorites on the other side of Jordan. "Neither did there remain any

more courage in any man, because of you, for Jehovah, your God, He is the God above in heaven above and in earth beneath." Rahab's faith was in the sovereign Jehovah. She knew that He who dried up the Red Sea could easily make the Jordan river passable. The little knowledge that she had of God was sufficient for her to identify Jehovah as the God of heaven and of earth.

She reported to the spies that the inhabitants of the land of Canaan as a whole were deathly afraid of Israel and of their God. This fear did not lead them to repentance, but it did lead *her* to repentance. She knew God in a different way. She knew Him as the one, true, living God. That is what gave her an assured confidence. Her confidence was: Jehovah has given you the land. Note that she said it as if Canaan were already Israel's.

The strength of the faith that God gave to Rahab was that she believed the unbelievable. She believed that with God all things are possible.

Not only did Rahab know that the city would fall, but here is another remarkable thing about her faith. She was convinced that the God of heaven and earth would have mercy on her. She believed that the mercy that He showed to the Israelites would be a mercy that He would show to her. That is even more remarkable. She believed that when she came to Him in repentance, He would receive her. Thus, she received the spies with peace, hid them under some flax, and then lied about their presence.

Such faith is that which God, the God of grace, works within His elect people. God made a remarkable difference between her and all the other inhabitants of Jericho. God's sovereign grace changed her heart from being dedicated to pleasing self into a repentant heart that trusted and loved Jehovah.

God works mysteriously and wondrously. Is there any limit to His grace? Is there limit to His mercy? No! When we fall into sin, we might ask, "Is there mercy even for me?" And God declares, "I am the God of heaven and earth and I am the God of mercy and grace." She knew what it was to say "a wretch like me." And she knew God would save her by amazing grace. Powerful is the greatness of grace that bestows the gift of faith.

Rahab did not experience the deliverance through the Red Sea and she did not see the destruction of Pharaoh's army. She only heard of it. A Gentile, brought up in false religion, walking openly in sin, was given the faith to believe that Israel's God would keep His promise to her through these two Israelite men. "Swear unto me by the LORD since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and

my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have and deliver our lives from death.” The spies answered, “We swear, our lives for yours.”

In Hebrews 11, it is said of Moses that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. “For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” That was not only true of Moses, that was also true of Rahab. By faith she believed that God would reward her when she hid the spies.

What Rahab received was that she did not die. And all those in her house with her did not die with all of the rest of the inhabitants of Jericho. Everyone else in the city died as a result either of the falling of Jericho’s walls or at the swords of the Israelites. But she and her family did not die. Rahab’s cup of iniquity was empty—emptied by the blood of Christ who bore all of her sins. That is forgiveness. That is grace.

Secondly, Rahab was received into the nation of Israel. God brought about her reception into Israel, when she was taken by marriage into the tribe of Judah. She was received into the nation of Israel and she became the grandmother of Boaz and David, and a mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### The lessons

First, we learn that God’s way is not our way. In I Corinthians 1:26-28 we read: “God hath chosen the

weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” He chose a harlot, and He made her a mother of Christ. God’s purpose in doing that is that no flesh would glory in themselves. Therefore, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord.

That God gives to you and to me the ability to believe and the grace of forgiveness is not because of our parentage. It is not because we were baptized in a church. It is not because we have our membership in a specific congregation or denomination. It is not because of us, or anything we do.

Rahab is an example of God’s grace. God, in His grace, gave her faith and God maintained faith within her. The result is that no one can say, “I’m better than Rahab.” To the contrary, we all are of a mind to say that we are the chief of sinners.

Rahab demonstrates every sinner’s natural proneness to sin. But God is able to turn us spiritually, and when He turns us, we are turned. Jericho’s destruction portrays the certain and utter destruction of this world in which we live, but there is hope for the vilest repentant sinner. This is because nothing is impossible with God.

What a God! What grace! What forgiveness! What faith! Glory in the Lord!



### Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

## How do consistory, classis, and synod work? Our deliberative assemblies

In the August 2020 editorial, I pressed home the Reformed conviction that decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies are “settled and binding.” What a consistory, classis, or synod decides is the end of the matter; unless, of course, someone brings good objections to the decision in an orderly way. Otherwise, the matter is finished and is binding upon all church members. The importance of that can hardly be overstated. It is the decency and order required by Scripture and our

Church Order. Ignoring it is indecency and the disorder of chaos and schism.

### ‘Deliberative’

How these settled and binding decisions are made is just as important. Because decisions must be made after careful deliberation, our assemblies are known as “deliberative assemblies.” To be *deliberate* about something is to proceed slowly, think carefully, act only



with thoughtfulness. A deliberate person is not hasty; he is not described as rash. In this respect, *deliberate* is an adjective (and pronounced dih-LIB-er-it). But the better reason to call our assemblies “deliberative assemblies” is that the delegates *deliberate*, that is, patiently *discuss* issues before voting on them. In this case, *deliberate* is a verb (and pronounced dih-LIB-er-ate). Patiently, carefully, and with a thoroughness some might describe as plodding, they look at all the angles, consider consequences, but especially analyze the question in the light of God’s Word. That is, the assembly suspends judgments until all the facts have been gathered, all the insights offered. Then they vote. The will of the majority decides the matter (Church Order, Art. 31). Now the issue is settled and binding.

Thus, the importance of ecclesiastical decision-making cannot be overstated either. The ecclesiastical bodies represent Jesus Christ; the delegates are His office-bearers and do His work. Decisions, therefore, must express His will. And it is usually only after careful deliberation that the will of Christ is known. It goes that way in a fallen world with imperfect men.

## Weighty decisions

The kinds of decisions assemblies make illustrates the importance of making them with utmost care. Classes and synods must consider entrance of a new church into the denomination, judge whether or not to sustain an appeal from a member against his consistory, close or keep open a mission field, declare a seminary graduate a candidate for the ministry or inform him that he is not qualified. Consistories do more than approve or disapprove purchase of a better sound system or new carpet in the parsonage. They allow or disallow a confession of faith, approve or disapprove a proposal to change the church’s worship, charge or do not charge a member with sin, sustain or reject an objection to a sermon. Even in congregational meetings, decisions are often made only after careful deliberation. Is remodeling the social hall good stewardship of the Lord’s possessions?

Our entire formal system of church life is built around the reality that our assemblies are deliberative in nature. This explains many things: the length of some consistory meetings, the careful formulation of motions supported by logical and biblical grounds, the existence of agendas and committee reports distributed in advance of meetings, ‘pre-advice’ at classes and synods, even the permissibility of ‘minority reports’ at the broader assemblies. Before delegates cast their votes, they must be fully informed.

## Biblical principles

The deliberative nature of our assemblies is an aspect of the “ecclesiastical manner” required of them by the Church Order. Article 30 requires assemblies to treat only “ecclesiastical matters” (no politics or social issues; only church matters) and only in an “ecclesiastical manner.” There is a churchly way to do church business, just as there is a motherly way to do a mother’s business, and a company way to do company business. Christ’s church must conduct her business in a churchly way. Aspects of the ecclesiastical manner include the decency and order called for in I Corinthians 14:40, the brotherly charity demanded in I Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4:15, 25-29, and the truthfulness required by all Scripture. But one aspect of the ecclesiastical manner not to be overlooked is “by deliberation.”

A number of biblical principles explain this requirement of deliberation.

First, *Jesus Christ rules His church*, not by one man, but *by a body of elders*. When there is a plurality of decision makers, tyranny and lording are kept out of the church (see the “Form for Ordination”). Reformed churches are not governed by one, a pope-like figure, but by many. These ‘many’ come to meetings with many minds, but want to make decisions with one mind. This takes time.

Second, all decisions of importance *are to be made with good counsel*. Judging a matter before hearing it is wrong. Even worldly courts know the need for ‘hearings.’ So Proverbs warns, “he that answereth (judges) a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (18:13). “Every purpose is established by counsel” (20:18), and “without counsel, purposes are disappointed” (15:22). Proverbs *begins* by emphasizing this: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (1:5). Proverbs *repeats* it: “he who hearkens to counsel is wise” (12:15). A case could be made that one of the themes of Proverbs is “Hear counsel! Seek advice!” Church assemblies listen to counsel, realizing that truth, upon which all decisions must be based, often becomes known only after hard work and study.

Third, decisions of importance must be made *with an abundance of counsel*. Elders must hear from *many* before they make decisions. Hearing only one or two risks knowing only half the truth, which may in fact be a lie. Proverbs warns about this in a passage all Christians ought to memorize and adopt as their own: “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him” (18:17). A different translation has: “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.”

Church assemblies will listen to every perspective before declaring judgments.

Fourth, *unity of mind is the church's goal*. “Be of the same mind” (Phil. 4:2). Two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3). And because it may take some time to attain that unity, assemblies take time. It is true: in the end, it is enough to have a majority, but the goal is unanimity.

Fifth, all *the delegates hold the office of prophet*, able to know truth, judge truth, and speak truth on behalf of Jesus Christ. Those who vote in ecclesiastical assemblies—consistory, classis, synod, and congregational meeting—are prophets, able to speak and judge truth.

All these principles are brought together in the example of the ecclesiastical assembly in Acts 15. A body of men was assembled (v. 6a) to consider (6b) a contentious question (2) by hearing good counsel (2b) based on Scripture (15-18) from more than a few men (7, 12, 13, 25) who were delegated by the churches (3, 4, 22), in order to come to unity of mind (25) and express the will of Jesus Christ (28) for the well-being of the churches.<sup>1</sup>

### Jesus Christ rules by His Word

The most basic principle to govern deliberative assemblies is that Jesus Christ rules His church by His Word. All ecclesiastical business must be governed by Scripture, as that Scripture is understood and spelled out in the church's confessions and Church Order. Decisions must be in harmony with the Word. They may not contradict the Word. If the precepts and principles of His Word do not rule in the assemblies, Jesus Christ is not ruling in the assemblies. To say that elders rule in the church is proper. To say that Jesus Christ rules His church through elders is better. But the only way elders know Christ's will is by heeding His Word.

Thus, a delegate to an assembly must be scriptural both in what and how he speaks. And a delegate must listen *to* and be persuaded *by* Scripture. What persuades him is not who speaks—the man he respects or has the most degrees; or by how he speaks—with brilliance or forcefulness; or by how a decision may affect him personally. Nor is what moves him his desire to represent the “people back home.” He may be interested in being able to *justify* decisions to the “people back home,” but he is not their representative. He represents and serves Christ. He must be convinced by what is Christ's will revealed in Scripture. If the people back home do not like the decision, his job now as a good shepherd

is to explain to them how the decision reflects the will of Christ. To the extent that an assembly is governed by anything other than Scripture, to that extent Jesus Christ is not ruling through that assembly.

### Principles in practice

Put into practice, these biblical principles for a deliberative assembly will lead men, first, to *be prepared to speak* on all the business on the agenda. The need for delegates to be prepared to speak at the assembly compares to the need for a minister to be prepared to preach. Both are prophets, required to speak. No delegate may come unprepared. And even if an elder feels inferior to ministers who are trained in theology, practiced in speaking, and confident of their opinions, he should not refrain from speaking. Ministers often testify of their appreciation of a prepared elder who speaks up, showing that he has thought biblically about the question at hand. Nor should delegates attend (consistory or otherwise) with the hope that others will be able to tell them what is proper. With the confidence that Jesus Christ appoints them to serve, they study the agenda, ponder the issues biblically, and jot down careful notes to use when they have opportunity to speak. That is, delegates come to assemblies with a grounded conviction about what must be decided.

At the same time, delegates *prepare to listen*. Prepared to speak with a conviction does not mean coming with a closed mind. That would cut the nerve of the deliberative character of a meeting. Then discussion is unnecessary and meetings can be brief: show up, vote, go home. Difficult as it may be, delegates must come with an open mind. The other prophets at the meeting must be heard. And so each delegate must come with the humility that, although he has studied and come to a *tentative* conviction, he is not infallible. Listening to his fellow prophets may correct his error of judgment. It often does.

Sadly, it sometimes happens that a delegate, proud of his own judgments, speaks his mind and then ignores what others have to say. I have seen men, after their speech, put their nose back down into their notes to prepare to speak a second time, all the while ignoring what their colleagues may be saying to correct their first speech. But they were not listening. Proverbs describes that as foolish and shameful: judging a matter without hearing it. Deliberative assemblies require men to speak, but also to listen.

An important part of *listening* is carefully *reflecting on* advice presented to the assembly. Preferably, written advice is presented far in advance of the meetings. At times, committees of pre-advice must hurriedly labor to

<sup>1</sup> For a sermon that more fully explains the Acts 15 assembly, find Prof. R. Cammenga's sermon on Sermonaudio, August 2, 2020, in Grace PRC or Georgetown PRC.

formulate advice while the rest of the delegates are patiently drinking coffee, and then give the delegates too little time to “hear” it. Delegates must not be required to “answer a matter” before they “hear” it.

Also implied in the need to listen is that, although consistories may discuss the agenda of a classis or synod in advance, they may not instruct their delegates how to vote. A rare exception may be in the case of a very clear doctrinal matter. But as a rule, delegates to the assemblies must have the liberty to listen to the deliberations and come to their own judgments based on what has been said. Again, if consistories were to instruct their elders how to vote, no discussion would be necessary. Show up, vote, go home.

At a recent synod I was very thankful for the exemplary conduct of especially one of the ministers. I wrote him to express gratitude to God for his example, especially to the younger delegates. It was apparent that the brother was prepared to speak on all the issues. He had notes. It was also obvious that, even though he came to synod with opinions, in one matter he admitted to the assembly that the discussion had changed his mind. Prepared to speak. Prepared also to listen. Prophets convincing prophets.

Third, serving the deliberative character of the assemblies is a *capable chairman*. The chairman of these meetings has weighty responsibilities to ensure proper deliberation. He gives everyone opportunity to speak and keeps at bay the man who wants to respond to every other speaker who may disagree with him (the Rules of Synod have clear regulations in this regard). A good

chairman silences the captious and those who are vehement in speaking (Church Order, Art. 35), because deliberation is not served by vehemence or other improper speaking, but by truth spoken in love. Behind the scenes he may even caution a man whose full-throated speeches come across as bluster and intimidation. A good president knows how to clarify matters during long debates, recognizes when discussion is veering away from the motion on the floor, helps the assembly in every way focus on the main issue and reason according to biblical standards. He understands the balance between keeping the meeting moving and, on the other hand, being patient with the deliberative process when an elder or two (who may be accustomed to making decisions more efficiently for their own business) think the process too slow. He listens and judges that ‘nothing new is being spoken,’ and wisely calls for the vote. A good chairman is invaluable for the deliberative process of our assemblies.

Maintaining our assemblies as deliberative assemblies takes work. To listen patiently to all the others, to prepare to speak biblically, to submit to the will of the majority, all require great effort. Our sinful natures resist: they prefer easier alternatives. But doing the will of the Lord Jesus is always difficult and requires much grace. For that reason, our Church Order requires all the assemblies to be opened and closed with prayer (Art. 32). Dependence on Jesus Christ is necessary. The church is His church. We seek His honor and glory.

The *manner* in which the church does Christ’s work is no less important than the work she does.

## Contribution **Jeremy Hilt, Iowa police officer and member of Calvary PRC, Hull, Iowa**

### Discerning the pandemonium

I write this article as a follow-up contribution to the editorial “Reformed theology’s commentary on the pandemic of 2020 (2)” published in the July 2020 edition of the *Standard Bearer*. In the introduction the author made the statement “The police’s killing of George Floyd in the U.S. state of Minnesota....” While the author’s point and overall message were sound, this statement was not. The mainstream media often chooses not to portray law enforcement in a favorable way. The media and other groups regularly use law enforcement encounters with the public as a driving force for accomplishing their larger objectives. Unfortunately, this often means vilifying the officers individually and police collectively. It was very disappointing to see that these groups have succeeded in infiltrating even the thoughts of those in

the church of Christ and in the pages of the *SB*. In response, I called and had a positive conversation with the author of the editorial. The editor requested that I write a short article to explain briefly some of these points for the readers of the *SB*. The humble goal of this article is to encourage godly Reformed thinking and discernment and to present additional information for the reader about the pandemonium.

The media made a concerted effort to report the idea that the police killed George Floyd. Public outrage over “police brutality” has almost become a part of American culture and media reporting. Rodney King, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and several others. Often the facts and the video are edited or not fully available at the time of the story. It can be very diffi-



cult to understand accurately what occurred and why it occurred in these circumstances, even for other police officers. Often the training and mindset of the police officer is deemed irrelevant. One example of this is something called the Tueller Drill. This is a drill that officers receive in their basic academy training. In this drill officers are faced with a subject holding a knife or other object (hammer, bat, etc.) that charges them while their handgun is holstered. This drill teaches that they are unable to react in time to defend themselves if the attacker is 21 feet or closer. As a result of this training, sometimes officers elect to use deadly force on a seemingly “unthreatening” subject that is armed with “only” a knife. However, when these situations occur, the media does not include the officer’s training and the Tueller Drill in their reporting of what occurred.

In the recent case of George Floyd’s death, a large amount of information is unknown that is needed to fully understand what happened. Some factual information is publicly available, but judging the officers involved should not occur until all the facts are known. This can be hard even for another officer. However, just this week (August 4) footage from two of the officers’ body cameras was leaked and the new facts show why it is important to reserve judgment. We ought not be making the statement that the police killed George Floyd unless that is an established fact, and in this case it is not. A proper statement about what occurred, with the information that is available at this point, is that George Floyd died *while in police custody*. The difference in phraseology is subtle but very important, especially when we consider the impact of the pandemonium that has followed. It may be that at the conclusion of the investigation the statement is accurate, but such an inflammatory, accusatory statement ought not to be made or used until it is a proven fact.

Some facts publicly available at this point are:

- On May 25, 2020, a Cub Foods’ employee suspected that Floyd used a counterfeit \$20 bill to purchase cigarettes.
- Employees confronted Floyd, who was seated in the driver’s seat of a vehicle.
- An employee then called the police and reported that Floyd had used “fake bills,” “was awfully drunk,” and “not in control of himself.”
- Officers responded, investigated, and made the decision to arrest Floyd.
- Officers can be heard asking Floyd about his condition. They tell Floyd that he is acting “real erratic” and comment about foam around his mouth.
- During the arrest Floyd ended up face-down on the ground with three officers controlling him.

- Officer Derek Chauvin applied force with his knee to the back of Floyd’s neck.

- Floyd made numerous statements indicating that he felt he was in distress and could not breathe, became unresponsive, and died.

I, along with most police officers that I know, am disturbed by the initial video. Why Officer Chauvin positioned his knee that way, for that long, or why he does not appear to render aid once Floyd becomes unresponsive is troubling. However, there is a formal process in our judicial system and within most police departments to review these issues. Judgment as to an officer’s guilt of misconduct or a crime ought to be properly reserved until these processes have fully occurred.

The Hennepin County medical examiner performed the official autopsy. By the time the autopsy results were released, the pandemonium was already raging. The police had murdered George Floyd. However, the autopsy report contradicts this judgment.

A brief aside, in any walk of life there are a wide variety of terms used and an understanding of such terms is vitally important to understand what is being said. Law enforcement, medical, and legal terms are no different. The term “homicide,” is used by both medical examiners and the judicial system, but it has very different meanings. This causes much confusion because it is not properly explained and understood. When a medical examiner determines a manner of death to be a “homicide,” it means that the death occurred due to the action of another person. This action could be unintentional, intentional, illegal, or legal (such as self-defense or lawful use of force by a police officer). The official autopsy will read “homicide” in all these cases. A judicial definition of “homicide” is much different, and we are more familiar with this definition.

The official autopsy does list George Floyd’s manner of death as “homicide.” However, this does not automatically mean that the actions of the officers were criminal. A closer look shows that there were “no physical findings that support a diagnosis of traumatic asphyxia or strangulation.” If George Floyd died due to Officer Chauvin applying pressure to his neck and forcibly not allowing him to breathe, this statement would not be in the report. In fact, the medical examiner appears to be specifically addressing this accusation and explaining that it is not accurate. The autopsy also shows that Floyd suffered from severe coronary artery disease, hypertensive heart disease, and COVID-19. Additionally, the report shows fentanyl intoxication, recent methamphetamine use, and THC (marijuana) use. Fentanyl is one of the most dangerous opioids and is 80-100 times more powerful than morphine. The medical examiner’s

preliminary opinion published was that George Floyd's death was caused by "a cardiopulmonary arrest while being restrained." It further reads "the combined effects of Mr. Floyd being restrained by the police, his underlying health conditions and any potential intoxicants in his system likely contributed to his death."

Another very concerning aspect of the author's statement ("The police's killing of George Floyd in the U.S. state of Minnesota...") is the broad brush with which it paints. I am a police officer. Many others are police officers. We were not present on May 25. Yet the broad brush with which the author paints includes myself and every other police officer as a killer of George Floyd. This is exactly what certain agendas want conveyed by this statement, and that message is now causing outrage against police officers and institutions of law and order across the country. It has led to protests, riots, and "defund police" campaigns. As of July 22 police officers killed in the line of duty by felonious actions was up 28% in 2020 compared to 2019. The city of Chicago

reported that 130 officers were injured between 5 p.m. on May 29 and midnight on May 31 during protests (according to WTTW-Chicago). According to NBC-New York over 350 NYPD officers were injured during the first two weeks of protests. These numbers are just a fraction of the whole.

Thankfully, on the whole the community where I live and work is very positive and supportive of law enforcement and not reflective of these trends. I would briefly like to thank any of them reading this article for their support and prayers.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage everyone to continue to be discerning and not rush to rash judgments based on what is portrayed in the media. Read, hear, and watch with a discerning spirit and seek the truth, not an emotional reaction. Know that God is providentially guiding these events to accomplish His purpose of bringing His kingdom to pass. May our spirits be filled with longing and joy as we wait and watch for His coming.



## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Thomas Miersma, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

# The end of the matter—found

Previous article in this series: August 2020, p. 444.

### Ecclesiastes 12:12-14

The preceding verses set before us the Word of God as truth. It is divinely inspired, infallibly written, and as the Word of God, to be relied upon. God is our faithful Shepherd. In that connection the text continues:

*And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of the making of many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh* (Eccl. 12:12).

The concern of the text is not to disparage books and study in themselves, but to contrast the divinely inspired Word of God over against the writings of men. "And further, by these..." could better be read, "More from these," that is, what goes beyond the Scriptures, further or more than that Word of God, which comes from men, their writings of human wisdom outside of Scripture. Man labors to obtain wisdom, learning, and

understanding. Such knowledge is necessary for labor and skills in this world. The text is not disparaging education or learning. Math, science, history, the technology of the earth have a necessary and useful place. But it is of man, fallen man.

A limit must be drawn, a warning or admonition must be given. Of these books and the making of them there is no end. They may not supplant the Word of God, the Word of truth. Nor, where they depart from that infallible rule in unbelief, with the vain philosophy of men, are they to be received. They belong to this world and the vanity of man who walks after his own imagination. They may accurately describe some state or process in the creation. But such learning in the wisdom of men can never arrive at spiritual truth, for it is corrupted by sin.

For the same reason, much study of that wisdom of

this world, and its learning “is a weariness of the flesh.” It is like all other toil of man under the sun. It is rooted in the vanity of this present life. As with any labor under the sun, it wears out the laborer. It may hold the promise of great things, but in the end, it too shall pass away with the world. The truth that God has given abides forever.

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man* (Eccl. 12:13).

In verse 8 the objective observation or theme of the book was set forth again, “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.” (Eccl.12:8). Now the Word of God addresses the subjective conclusion or spiritual response to that observation, the subjective theme of the book. God as the Lord of the whole creation governs all things according to His counsel and wisdom. The creation shows the beauty of God who made it, but also His judgment, for the whole of the creation has been subjected to vanity because of sin.

The conclusion addresses us with a universal calling, literally: “God fear. And His commandments keep.” The emphasis falls upon where one stands before God. The fear of God is the reverence of faith that acknowledges God and His word, trusts in Him, and walks humbly before Him. In that fear we also keep His commandments by faith, holding them in our hearts and, walking in them as before His face. We are to remember our Creator in the light of His word of truth and His works under the sun.

That calling is “the whole duty of man” or, as the word duty is in italics, “the whole of man.” It is his fundamental calling. The calling to fear God, holding His word by faith and walking in obedience to His will, is the calling that confronts all men and all mankind. It is the call to repent and believe. That calling that is proclaimed with clarity in the gospel also confronts man under the sun through the creation now subjected to vanity. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse” (Rom 1:19, 20). The manifest truth that all is vanity under the sun renders unbelieving man—the fool—without excuse, testifying as it does it of God, His work under the sun, and His judgment.

The very nature of that truth, of vanity under the sun, the transitory character of life where no treasure abides and man himself dies, stands as a warning to

fear God. Man is not in control; God governs the life of man. He will also judge.

*For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil* (Eccl. 12:14).

This concluding word of God also gives a reason for that exhortation. It is both a warning and a comfort. God will bring every work of man into judgment, including that which is secret or hidden. The fool will not hear this. He thinks God does not know. Walking after the imagination of his own heart, he strives with God and the boundaries of life set by God in the creation. Spiritually, a fool who will not have God in his knowledge is given over by God in sovereign wisdom and judgment to the folly of heaping and gathering, to a walk after the folly of sin. Standing under the wrath of God, he foolishly works his own destruction and brings himself into judgment. That which is secret is not hidden before the eyes of God. God is the One who evaluates what is good and evil in His sight. Man is not the arbiter of judgment nor the standard, but God who is righteous. And not only that which is external but also that which is hidden in the heart will be judged.

Concerning Ecclesiastes 12:14, we may note that the text speaks of “every work” that is, it has in view each one particularly or individually. The more normal expression in Scripture is “works,” plural, viewed as an organic body of works that are the fruit of one’s spiritual life and walk (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6-8; Rev. 20:12). Every work includes “every idle word that men shall speak” (Matt. 12:36). “Every work,” therefore, is not just deeds and undertakings, but all our activity as it proceeds from the heart, out of the mouth, and is found in the labor of our hands.

Concerning this judgment of every work, we must note that it is God in Christ who renders judgment and that the standard is God’s righteous judgment revealed to us in the principles of the law of God that we as sinners imperfectly apprehend. It is not our self-assessment of our own work, but God’s judgment. That judgment includes not only the external, but the “secret” or hidden things (Eccl. 12:14), that is, the internal root of our activity, our motives, thinking, and willing, as well as what is done out of the sight of others.

It is a judgment of “whether it be good or whether it be evil.” The question is not whether it be part good and part evil, a matter of percentages or degrees. The Word of God does not divide our works into parts. They are either good or evil in God’s sight. In themselves all our works, as they are wrought through the flesh, also in our seeing and hearing, and therefore thinking and will-

ing through the flesh, are all stained with sin. Hence our Heidelberg Catechism says, “But why cannot our good works be the whole or part of our righteousness before God? Because that the righteousness which can be approved of before the tribunal of God must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin” (LD 24, Q&A 62).

Good works are imperfect works, individually and as a body of works. Because of this defilement, in that sense, all our works are evil works. That God judges works to be good is a matter of His saving grace in Christ, founded on Christ’s imputed righteousness to the believer.

“These works as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, for as much as they are all sanctified by His grace” (Belgic Confession of Faith, Art. 24).

“But what are good works? Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations or the institutions of men” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 33, Q&A 91).

Ecclesiastes 12:13 points us in the same direction. The one doing good is one who fears God in the reverence of faith, holds God’s Word in his heart to keep it, and seeks to walk in it. Good works are works that are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, the fruit of faith wrought in the love of God. The wicked do nothing but evil works in the sight of God, and when the believer walks after his own sinful flesh and not out of faith, he also walks in sin in evil works. Such was David’s walk in his sin of adultery and murder. These were evil works for which he was called to repent.

To one who walks therefore in the fear of God and

holds His word by faith, the promise of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins, and the grace of God shines upon his pathway. Living before that judgment of God now in repentance and forgiveness, not only for his evil works, but also for the sin that defiles his good works, he has assurance in that day of judgment—an assurance that is not in himself but in the mercy of God. His way is blessed, as has been repeatedly shown in the course of the book. Even in this life under the sun, in the midst of the present vanity, the child of God’s portion in this life is a good gift of God and a blessing to him. Though he is oppressed in a world of sin, his treasure is not in the things of this world that passes away. Although walking in God’s commandments does not seem good in the eyes of the world under the sun, for it is mocked and persecuted by a wicked world, yet doing so by faith is the way of true spiritual blessing and contentment.

The vanity of things under the sun cannot give an answer to sin and death. They can only show the need to be reconciled to God. In the grace of God, the way of a child of God is one lived as before the face of God who is his heavenly Father for Christ’s sake. Better is a little, a small portion in this life, with the fear of God (Ps. 37:16).

Ecclesiastes is a book written by one who is old and who in his course of life has explored every work of man under the sun and weighed its meaning and fitness before God. The preacher “still taught the people knowledge” (Eccl. 12:9). It is a book to be pondered. It addresses in particular the young person who is starting on life’s pathway, as instruction from one who has “been there,” so to speak, and can give wisdom and counsel from experience. It is the light of the Word of God upon the things under the sun.



## Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

# Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (29) Discrepancies and apparent contradictions

Over against the Reformed believer’s confession of the infallibility of Scripture, it is often alleged that the Bible contains contradictions. The line of argument of these

critics is that since there are contradictions in the Bible, it cannot be the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men. The response of the Reformed Christian



must be to insist that there are no real contradictions in Scripture, but only *apparent* contradictions. This is the presupposition of faith. There may be discrepancies in the Bible, but there is always an explanation for these discrepancies. As the Word of God, Scripture cannot be inconsistent and contradictory. Whether or not *we* can harmonize the discrepancies, *God* always can.

### **From the Old Testament: David's sin of numbering the people**

In one *Standard Bearer* article we cannot possibly harmonize all the apparent contradictions in Scripture. But we can give examples, which present some guidelines for reconciling other instances of apparent contradiction in the Word of God.

In the Old Testament, we find two accounts of David's sin of numbering the people. The two accounts are found in II Samuel 24 and I Chronicles 21. Both are detailed accounts of this sad event that took place towards the end of David's reign. II Samuel 24:1 says that God moved David to number the people; I Chronicles 21:1 says that Satan provoked David to number the people. In II Samuel 24:18, Araunah the Jebusite is interjected into the account; I Chronicles 21:15 speaks of Ornan the Jebusite. There are different totals in the two passages for the number of fighting men in Israel and Judah. II Samuel 24:9 reports that there were 800,000 valiant men that drew the sword and the men of Judah were 500,000. That would give a total of 1,300,000 soldiers. In I Chronicles 21:5 we read that there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword in Israel, whereas in Judah there were 460,000. Whereas II Samuel 24:13 speaks of one of the choices God put to David as seven years of famine, I Chronicles 21:12 speaks of three years of famine. II Samuel 24:24 speaks of 50 shekels of silver as the purchase price of the spot purchased from Araunah on which David built his altar to God; I Chronicles 21:25 informs us that David paid Ornan 600 shekels of gold.

II Samuel 24 and I Chronicles 21 do not contradict each other; the discrepancies can be harmonized. The main explanation for the discrepancies is that the accounts complement each other. Each account is written from a somewhat different perspective. Although both passages are inspired by God, each passage has its own viewpoint from which it looks at David's sin of numbering the people.

With regard to the matter of God or Satan moving David to number the people, the explanation is that God is sovereign. He decreed David's sin in order that through his sin David would be purged and purified of the pride that motivated him to number the people.

God moved David to number the people. At the same time, the sovereign God used Satan as the instrument in His hand to tempt David to sin. Regarding the different names given for the native Jebusite from whom David purchased the land for his altar, the two names are actually very similar. "Ornan" means "strength." "Araunah" is far richer in meaning. It means "Jehovah is strong," or, "Jehovah is my strength." It may very well have been the name to which this man changed his birth name, when as a Jebusite he converted to the true religion and became a member of the nation of Israel.

With respect to the different totals for the soldiers who were numbered, there are several possible explanations. Here is one explanation. The lower total in II Samuel 24:9 may refer to the men who could draw the sword and fight in battle. The larger number may include, in addition to those throughout the realm who could be summoned to fight in battle, the standing army. Many of these soldiers were stationed in Jerusalem protecting the capital city and the palace.

As to the length of the famine, it appears that the larger number included the three years of famine that had already taken place, according to II Samuel 21:1, because of Saul's slaying of the Gibeonites. "Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

Then there is the matter of the discrepancy between the 50 shekels of silver and the 600 shekels of gold. This discrepancy is very likely due to the fact that, after initially purchasing the spot on which David built the altar and the oxen for sacrifice as well as the wood of the yoke for the fire, David returned and purchased a much greater tract of land so that on it Solomon his son might build the temple of the Lord.

It is plain to see that although the suggestions made may not be the solution to the discrepancies in the two accounts of David's sin of numbering the people, there are reasonable solutions to these apparent contradictions. Some study and careful searching of the Scriptures often yield reasonable explanations for the differences between multiple accounts of the same event. Any who are interested in a solution to discrepancies that they have come across in their Bible reading can also be aided by good commentaries or by the books that deal with biblical discrepancies.

### **From the New Testament: The account of the superscription on Jesus' cross**

An example of a discrepancy in the New Testament is the account of the superscription that was affixed

above Jesus' head on the cross. The wording of the superscription differs in all four of the gospel narratives. In Matthew 27:37 we read, "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." The account in Mark 15:26 says, "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." The superscription, according to Luke 23:38, was: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." And John records the superscription as, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."

It is worth pointing out that although there are four different statements of the wording of the superscription, there is no contradiction between what is recorded in the four gospel narratives. All four are fundamentally the same, though differing in certain details. It is not the case, for example, that three say Jesus is the King of the Jews, while one states that He is the King of the Egyptians. That would be a flat contradiction. Nor do two state that Jesus is the King of the Jews, while the other two that He is the runaway slave of a Jewish master. That, too, would be a flat contradiction. Though different in their details, the four accounts of the superscription are in fundamental agreement. What they all have in common is the statement that Jesus is the King of the Jews, as is the precise wording of the superscription as found in Mark. Mark captures the essence of the superscription, the main contention of the placard that was placed above Jesus' head. Jesus is the King of the Jews.

But what can explain four different accounts of the superscription? By comparing the passages, we take note of the fact that the superscription was written in three different languages: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. We are informed of this in Luke 23:38, "And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew...." The fact that the superscription was written in three different languages may explain, at least in part, the differences among them.

Greek was the language commonly spoken throughout the empire. Even though the Romans had wrested the empire from the Greeks, the Greek language was still the language of the people, the *lingua franca*. Everywhere throughout the Roman empire, Greek was spoken, and Greek was understood. Because this was the language of the day, the Holy Spirit inspired the human writers of Scripture to write down the Word of God in the Greek language. Latin was the language of the new empire, the Roman Empire. Latin was the official language, the language of politics, the language of the courts, and the language of education. And Hebrew, of course, was the language of the Old Testament,

the language of the Jews, the language of the temple and synagogues. The three main people groups in the time of Christ were represented in the superscription that was posted above Jesus' head. The fact that the superscription was written in three different languages likely contributes to the explanation for the slight differences among them.

And then, the target audience of each of the gospel narratives must also be factored in. Matthew wrote his gospel account for the Jews especially. That explains the many references in Matthew to fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures in what Jesus said and did. In his account of the superscription, Matthew, under the inspiration of the Spirit, concentrated on that in the superscription which spoke loudly to his Jewish readers. That which spoke most loudly to them was that Jesus is the king of the Jews, which is exactly what Matthew included in his account of the superscription.

Mark's epistle is addressed primarily to the Romans, the empire of the caesars that was in power. Contrary to the thinking of many in that day, Jesus Christ is "THE KING," not caesar. He is King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is not subject to caesar, but caesar is subject to Him. Caesar does Jesus' bidding and is His servant to accomplish His will.

Luke's gospel account is addressed to the Greeks. His gospel account is addressed specifically to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3), which is a Greek name meaning "God-lover." To the Greeks who had lost their bid for a worldwide empire, the empire of Alexander the Great, to the Romans, no Greek hero nor Latin caesar was the world ruler. The ruler of the world is Jesus, "THIS [ONE] IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

John's gospel account is unique. It is not addressed to a specific nationality, but to all peoples. In his gospel account, John underscores the great truth that matters most, no matter whether you are Jew or Gentile, whether you speak Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. That is the great truth of the gospel that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine Son of God, and therefore *the* King of the Jews.

All these considerations help to explain the different accounts of the superscription. Taken together they make plain that the different accounts do not contradict each other, but instead supplement one another. Taken together they explain the heart of the gospel—who Jesus is and what He has done. It is all there in the superscription.

### By way of conclusion

This concludes my lengthy series on the doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is my hope that the articles have not only explained clearly the Reformed doctrine of Scripture,

but have also confirmed your faith that Scripture is the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men, as we have stated repeatedly. This is the distinctively Reformed view of Scripture. It is the view that regards Scripture as a stupendous miracle. Have we lost our awe of that miracle because of our familiarity with Scripture? Is the effect of our daily reading of Scripture, the teaching we receive out of Scripture, the weekly reading of and preaching of the Scripture in the public worship services of the church, the instruction we receive from Scripture in our Christian homes, at catechism, and in the Christian schools that we have lost the sense of the divine in Scripture?

I confess, as one who consults Scripture frequently, likely more often than most members of the church, in all the courses that I teach in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, my preaching and teaching in the churches, the catechism instruction that I am able to do, that the sense of the miraculous in Scripture is something I often take for granted. I seldom hold Scripture in my hands and think about the fact that I hold in my hands a miracle. Probably—and comparisons are always dangerous—the only miracle that is greater than

God giving us His Word in the written Scripture is the miracle of His sending *the* Word into our flesh—God in our flesh in order to make known to sinners the truth of God.

As important as it is that we have a right understanding of Scripture, it is equally important that we *read* the Bible. Among us this is the greater danger, I fear. I doubt that there are very many reading this article who do not agree that Scripture is the Word of God. But do we *read* the Bible. Does Scripture reading and mediation have a place in our personal lives? Do we read the Bible regularly in our family devotions—you do still have family devotions, do you not? Are we eager to study God’s Word in the Bible study societies of the church? Children and young people, are you eager to learn the truths of the Word of God in catechism and in the Christian school? The miracle of the Word of God in the words of men stands in the service of knowing this God who has revealed His word and will to us. May our prayer ever be, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

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## News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

### Trivia question

What is the second most western congregation in the PRCA? See the church profile section for the answer. Lynden, WA is farther west. More trivia next time.

### Sister-church activities

From the bulletin of the Covenant ERC of Singapore:

Our nation celebrates her 55th birthday amid the COVID-19 pandemic and dengue fever outbreak. We are thankful to God for giving us a stable government that allows us to freely worship Him without fear or persecution and for keeping the country's coronavirus under control. This has allowed us to return to church for worship though only for a maximum of 50 people at one time. God willing, when the situation improves, we will be allowed up to 100 people to gather back in church. We are also thankful that most of our brethren are still employed and able to support themselves and their families, though some have suffered pay cuts or were forced to take compulsory unpaid leave to prevent being retrenched and a few even, got retrenched from their jobs at short notice.

From the bulletin of the Maranatha PRC in the Philippines:

Metro Manila and nearby provinces were placed under the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) up to August 18, 2020. The guidelines are 1) Everyone should stay home under the MECQ, except front-liners and those who are buying essentials with their ID card. 2) Limited outdoor exercise will be allowed such as outdoor walking, jogging, running, and biking, but safety protocols should be observed, like wearing of masks and two-meter distancing. 3) Small gatherings, including religious ones, are allowed in areas under MECQ if they have five participants or less. 4) No inter-island travel and domestic flights will be permitted under MECQ, but biking and non-motorized transport are encouraged. International flights are limited to those carrying overseas Filipino workers or returning Filipinos. 5) School premises will remain closed in MECQ.

Let us remember in prayer these fellow saints as they too suffer under the effects of the pandemic.

### Minister activities

Kalamazoo PRC extended a call to Rev. C. Spronk. Rev. Spronk was led to decline this call. Edmonton PRC extended a call to Rev. M. VanderWal, who has accepted this call. Cornerstone PRC formed a new trio of Rev. M. DeBoer, Rev. E. Guichelaar, and Rev. C. Spronk, with Rev. De Boer receiving the call. Rev. G. Eriks preached his farewell sermon in Hudsonville PRC on August 16. His installation at Unity PRC was held the following week, August 23, during the morning worship service.

### Congregational activities

All the ladies in the Byron Center, MI congregation were invited to a morning of fellowship at Douglas Walker Park on Wednesday, August 12. Coffee, juice, and snacks were provided.

### Anniversary!

On July 6 of this year, Grace Church in Standale, MI marked the 25th year since she was organized. The Lord willing, they hope as a congregation to celebrate that anniversary on Sunday, September 19. During the evening service, Pastor R. VanOverloop will preach a sermon centered on the theme "Praising the Glory of God's Grace" as found in Ephesians 1:3-6. There will be a short break with coffee/cookies after the service, after which a program is being planned. The Church Directory Committee is also working towards having a new pictorial directory available during that time. We thank God for His grace and mercy toward Grace congregation in this significant milestone.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

# Church profile—Hope PRC, Redlands, CA

A call went out across the country to Rev. Herman Hoeksema in Grand Rapids from a group of forty families in Redlands, California. The year was 1932, and these families had left the Christian Reformed Church due, at least in part, to the consistory's decision to end worship services in the Dutch language. Thankfully, Rev. Hoeksema's consistory gave its okay and the great teacher came to California to instruct the saints there and to help organize First Protestant Reformed Church. (While in California Rev. Hoeksema also helped establish a church in Bellflower, south of Los Angeles.)

Things happened quickly the next several years. The new congregation extended a call to Rev. Gerrit Vos who was led by the Lord to accept. The new congregation worshiped in a rented Seventh-Day Adventist church until a church building was finished in 1933 and established the first Protestant Reformed Christian day school in 1934. A parsonage was moved next to the church in 1936, and in 1941 the school moved out of the church basement into a new building next door.

The years since have seen periods of peace and periods of turmoil, of growth in numbers and the departure of many members. Membership had grown to eighty families by 1953, but only eleven remained after the great split that year. The "other side" retained possession of the church and school buildings and, when they returned to the Christian Reformed Church a short time later, they took the property with them. Meanwhile, the newly constituted Hope Protestant Reformed Church soon grew to 27 families as some returned.

Rev. Vos departed after serving the congregation eleven years. The ministers that followed him were Pastors Peter DeBoer, Leonard Vermeer, Henry Kuiper, Herman Veldman, Cornelius Hanko, Marvin Kamps, Jason Kortering, Kenneth Koole, Arie denHartog, Mar-

tin VanderWal, Brian Huizinga, and now, beginning in the Fall of 2019, Rev. Matt Kortus.

In 1976 the congregation sold the church building it purchased in 1959 so it could begin construction of a new building. Meanwhile the congregation worshiped in the old church it built in 1933 and lost in 1953, renting it from its Seventh-Day Adventist owners. The first worship service in the new building was Thanksgiving Day, 1983.

Over the years, the congregation was privileged to host four PR young people's conventions and several young adult retreats.

There has always been a close relationship between the church and the school in Redlands. A new school society was formed soon after 1953, but it was twenty-two years before a new two-classroom school, built by volunteer labor, opened its doors for grades K through 9. Blessed with growth over the years, two additions were made to the original building. High school grades were then added, and in the Fall of 2019 the new high school building was completed. The first high school class of Hope Christian School graduated in the Spring of 2020. The blessing the school has been to the church is immeasurable, and the congregation is thankful to the many churches and individuals who have contributed to the cause of Christian education in Redlands.

Today, Hope Protestant Reformed Church has 298 individuals comprising 68 families. Young Peoples Society, Sunday school, four Bible study societies, several book clubs, choir society, an active Evangelism Committee, various fund-raising activities, in addition to all the school-related activities, keep the congregation busy and involved.

The church loves visitors and offers "bed-and-breakfast" accommodations, so consider Redlands for your





next vacation; there is much to do, and it's beautiful at vacation time!

We in Redlands marvel at God's goodness to us, and wonder that we, who are so undeserving, have been so richly blessed by Him. Soli Deo Gloria!

## Announcements

### Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton PRC on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, at 8:30 a.m., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Edgerton's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

### RFPA annual meeting

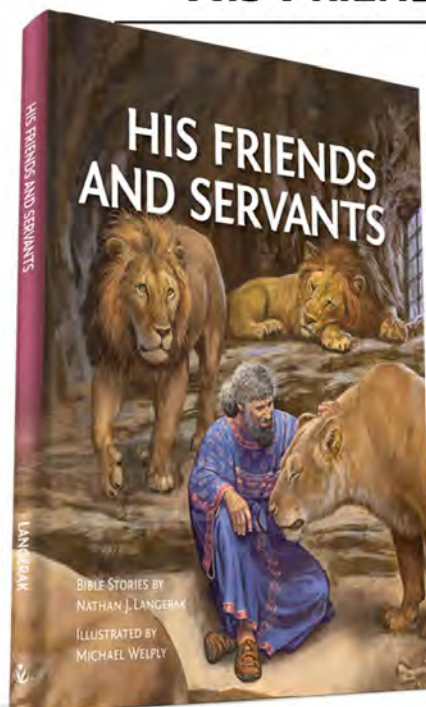
Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the RFPA Annual Meeting is canceled.

### Bound volumes

The September 15th issue of the Standard Bearer completes volume 96. If you would like your own issues bound, please deliver them to the RFPA office before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at (616) 457-5970.

Available November 2020!

## HIS FRIENDS AND SERVANTS

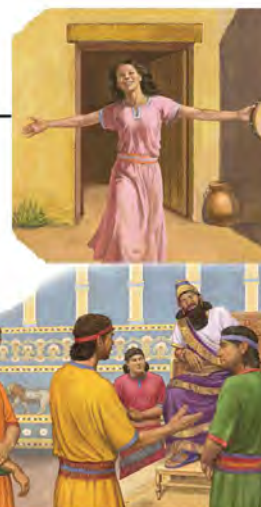


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