

CHRISTADELPHIAN Advocate

A monthly magazine in defense of the "Things Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ" as embraced in The Hope of Israel with a view to "Taking Out A People For Yahweh's Name"



BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, SWEAR NOT AT ALL

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He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.

Jeremiah 23:28

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ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

Swear Not at All

But I say unto you, Swear not at all (Matthew 5:34)

What does the word “swear” mean? What action, language or situations come to mind? In this context, is Jesus discussing vulgar or crass language? Vulgar speech has always been present in society, although currently it appears to have growing acceptance in places where it was formerly considered unacceptable, or at least impolite, e.g. workplaces and mass media. Alternatively, is swearing about the numerous pledges we have to make almost on a daily basis? Think of signing an application for a credit card, a loan, or when we sign our tax return declaring a variation of: “Under penalty of perjury, I declare that XYZ is true, correct, and complete.” Is that what Jesus is talking about in this passage?

Unfortunately, our day-to-day speech tends to use the terms oaths, vows, and swearing as interchangeable synonyms. While these terms are related, we need to appreciate their distinct differences in order to understand their use by the Israelites under the Law, that we might conduct ourselves accordingly. Numbers 30:1-2 provides evidence of the distinctions associated with these terms: *And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

The purpose of the following is to clarify the instructions to *swear not at all*, with particular attention to the proper use of oaths, vows, and swearing:

Oath: “a promise to do an action, given force by the invocation of an authority.” The general idea is that the hearer of the oath or the recipient

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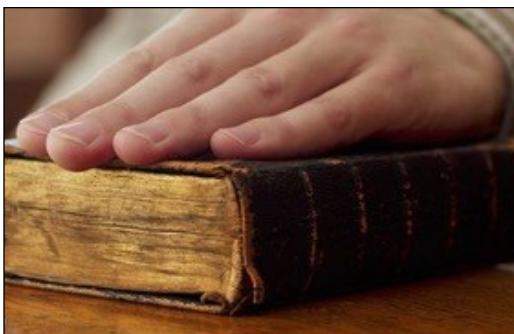
of the oath has assurance above and beyond the oath taker's own honesty and promise. It is the inclusion of the authority that gives authenticity or truth to the speaker's promise. In the Scriptures, and in our modern society, the most common authority is to call upon the Lord. The oath takes the general form of, "By or before the Lord, I will..." Numerous examples of oaths exist in Scripture that follow this general format. When David spared his life, Saul *said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil... And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold* (1 Samuel 24:17, 20-22). Likewise, Nehemiah made those returning from Babylon *swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their [the peoples roundabout] sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves* (13:25). Among other examples, Rahab made the spies take a similar oath.

An oath could also employ a curse that commits another to the action. This type of oath has the general form of, "May God do to me... if I fail / don't do ..." We have well-known examples of this: when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians, the king swore, *Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day* (2 Kings 6:31). Saul's oath that almost got Jonathan killed (1 Samuel 14:24, 27) is another example, *And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food... But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath.* In these cases, the promise portion of the oath is validated, given sincerely, having reliability by the inclusion of the external authority. Largely the idea is that the external authority would punish those that failed to uphold their promise. In Strong's Concordance the same word can be translated as either oath or curse for this reason. Oaths are both taken by men as well as made to men.

Vow: "a transactional promise." Oaths were declarative statements that required no other action, but a vow is a promise of action in response to God. The general form of the vow as found in the Scriptures is, "If the Lord will..., then I will...." For example, *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God* (Genesis 28:20-21). The Prayer of Hannah for Samuel is a vow, *And she*

vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life (1 Samuel 1:11).

Vows have two distinctive features. First, vows are always made to God. The Hebrew word for vow is *neder*, always in reference to someone's vow to God (the only exception is Jeremiah's complaint about the vows made by the people to the "queen of heaven," which was



a promise to a false deity). Second, vows are binding. The Scriptures have repeated warnings that one should not back out of a vow. *When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.*

But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). Understanding the transactional nature of vows illustrates why "failing to keep your end of the bargain" is such a serious sin.

Swear or swearing: "the action of making an oath or a promise." Confusion exists in our language due to the fact that the same word used to describe the action of vow-making / oath-taking, also references blasphemous or profane speech. Swearing in the sense of profanity, or using the Lord's name in vain, is prohibited for Christ's brethren (e.g. Exodus 20:7; Proverbs 4:24; Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 5:4).

In summation:

- Oath = a promise that invokes "an authority."
- Vow = a promise in response to God.
- Swearing = the act of making an oath or a promise.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all. The above definitions help to clarify the instructions of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states: *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto*

you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Matthew 5:33-37). James' echo of this teaching is nearly verbatim, *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation* (5:12).

In both these verses, the phraseology that is condemned is the making of a promise “by an authority” formula, that is, an oath. By identifying this commandment as an injunction against oaths, we can see the Lord’s reasoning why true followers of God should avoid this type of speech. The first reason is found in the key phrase – *because thou canst not make one hair white or black*. The oath involved a call to an authority in order to give the statement veracity, but Jesus points out that such an appeal is one that human beings can never execute or make good on, for that is outside our power. Secondly, Jesus is teaching that these oaths are themselves blasphemous. Consider all of the appeals listed in these oaths: heaven, earth, Jerusalem. These are examples of how observant Jews of Jesus’ day were attempting to make oaths. It appears that each example is an attempt to name an authority to the oath without actually using God’s name, which of course they would have believed to be blasphemous.

Jesus calls out the fallacy or hollowness of their attempted piety. When *swearing by Jerusalem*, the oath takers were still attempting to have God be the authenticator of their words. Jesus makes this particularly clear in a later interaction with the Pharisees by effectively walking the process up a chain. *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon* (Matthew 23:16-22). Jesus makes plain that God is the ultimate authority behind each of these attempted formulations of an oath.

The above analysis suggests four direct applications to our daily lives. First, the instructions on swearing serve as a reminder of the expectation for Christ-like behavior incumbent on the servants of God. Phrases and styles of language common to society are not to be used by us. We must follow the

admonition, *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man* (Colossians 4:6). **Second**, the prohibition is on oaths and blasphemy. As long as they do not violate a principle or requirement of a Godly life, these commandments do not prohibit our consenting (or promising) to abide by the myriad of binding legal, financial, and employment commitments in the world. **Third**, the underlying logic behind the commandment *Swear not at all... because thou canst not make one hair white or black*, is a humbling reminder of our weak, mortal, and sinful frames. **Finally**, and potentially the main lesson, is that the servants of Christ are to be humble, truthful, and honest in all of their dealings and speech, not resorting to oaths, vows, or swearing. Instead, we should strive to manifest a character that the simple words “yes” or “no” will satisfy any hearer of our intentions and commitments (Matthew 5:37).

Josh Vest, Carmel, IN

FEATURE ARTICLE

It is Finished

(John 19:30)

The Gospel of John records multiple short, yet powerful phrases that are unique to his Gospel account. Examples include the seven *I am* statements of Jesus, John the Baptist declaring *Behold the Lamb of God* (John 1:29), and the powerful emotion captured in John 11:35, *Jesus wept*. These sentences are filled with emotional and spiritual content. A similarly poignant declaration from our Messiah is his final words recorded prior to his death, in John 19:30, *It is finished*. These three words, at the culmination of the final moments of the Son of God’s life, stretch back to the beginning of creation as the focal point of God’s plan of salvation, and reverberate forward through time until Jesus’ return to the earth from his Father’s right hand. What is their import? What is their meaning? What was “finished?”



As these words are only recorded in John's gospel, the book itself provides answers to these questions. Three different layers to the answers to these questions will be presented in this article. First, the immediate context of Jesus' words in John 19 present him finishing the prophecies that applied to the *Son of Man* in his first coming. Second, there is the greater message in the Gospel of John that Jesus is the *Lamb of God* (John 1:29, 36) as proclaimed by John the Baptist. Jesus' death represented the completion of his sacrificial life. Finally, Jesus' final words, as recorded in John's account of his death, reflect a culmination and completion of his role as the suffering servant.

The first application of Jesus' words is his fulfillment of all prophecies and types that applied to his first advent. In the context of John's record of the crucifixion, the exact same Greek word for "finished" (Strong's #G5055), is found two verses earlier in verse 28, *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished* (G5055), *that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst*. Jesus, recognizing his degree of thirst, understood that he had fulfilled Psalm 22:15, *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws*. He knew that all Old Testament prophecies and signs concerning him were now completed. He simply expressed his state, "I thirst," and the final prophecy to be fulfilled during his life was accomplished as he was given a sponge full of vinegar, fulfilling Psalm 69:21, *They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*. Every prophecy and type that foreshadowed his life upon this earth, including his suffering, had been fulfilled. From John's Gospel, this was the last task for the Messiah to accomplish to ensure he had fulfilled all things written and prophesied about him (1 Peter 1:11).

The second layer is seen in examination of the greater context of the Gospel of John. Jesus at the beginning of the book is identified as the Lamb of God. Again, this is a unique title recorded only in this Gospel. As the Lamb of God, he lived a life without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19), submitting his will in all things to the will of his Father, which ultimately led him to willingly offer himself up to the unjust trial and charges that ended in his crucifixion (Philippians 2:7-8; Matthew 26:42). Jesus' sacrifice destroyed him that had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14) and condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). His shed blood constituted the covering for sin (Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5). His death lead to the redemption of a people for God (Romans 5:9; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 10:29; 1 Peter 1:18,19), and ratification of the great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 12:24, 13:20).

The destruction of sin and its power was finished as Christ gave up his last breath. John emphasizes this connection by including another account unique to his Gospel, *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear*

pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe (John 19:33-35). His blood was poured out and the cleansing water of John's baptism was now connected to the sacrificial blood of the Messiah, the Lamb of God. This was recorded so that we might believe. The other three Gospels further emphasize the destruction of the power of sin as being overcome at the death of Christ. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the veil of the temple is recorded rent at the time of Jesus' death, emphasizing the removal of the barrier of sin through his own flesh, and making the way into the Most Holy available through his sacrifice (Matthew 27:50-51). As a final proof of the acceptability and efficacy of his sacrifice, all four Gospels record his resurrection from the grave (Acts 2:24). Ultimately, through his crucifixion and the shedding of *the precious blood of Christ* (1 Peter 1:19), his role as the sacrificial lamb of God was "finished," so that *whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life* (1 Peter 1:18-19, John 3:14,15).

Finally, on a practical level, Jesus' declaration represented an end of his physical and emotional suffering. He was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief* (Isaiah 53:3). The Gospels frequently identify Christ living with the understanding of his crucifixion always before him. He told Nicodemus that *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up* (John 3:14). During the transfiguration, when Jesus was able to see a vision of the Kingdom and the future glory in store for the world and God's children, he was reminded of the need for his sacrificial death (Luke 9:30-31). After Peter's declaration that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus reminded them how he *must suffer many things... and be slain* (Luke 9:20-22). Even when his disciples protested and prepared to fight for his safety, Jesus knew he must continue on to his death at the hands of the Romans (Matthew 16:21-23; John 18:10,11). His emotional suffering found its climax in the Garden of Gethsemane, when, *in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground* (Luke 22:44). Jesus had suffered seeing his fellow countrymen reject him, being betrayed with a kiss by one of his apostles, and being abandoned by the remainder of his disciples during his time of greatest trial and suffering

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(Matthew 26:40; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:48; 23:18-23; John 19:12). But those were all emotional and personal weights. They did not touch on the shame and the physical/mental abuse he suffered during the mocking, the beatings, and the crucifixion. Jesus' physical and mental anguish was unimaginable. But now, as his last breath left him, the suffering, the sorrow, the pain and the grief was finished.

From a young age, Jesus was *about his Father's business* (Luke 2:49). His life included sorrow, suffering, trial, and temptation; yet he lived a life without sin, always aligning his will to the will of his Father. During his ministry he fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies and types concerning his first advent upon this earth, including his role as the sacrificial Lamb of God. So Jesus, as he took his last breaths, rightfully declared, *It is finished.*

Zak Vest, Denver, CO

APOLOGETICS

Seeing Them Straining at the Oars

(Mark 6:48 NASB)

Of all our Lord's recorded miracles, the incident where he walked on the open water of the Sea of Galilee has attracted much derision as being simply not believable. The very phrase, "walk on water," has become a common English language idiom designed to ridicule the original account, i.e., "Because Sally was able to complete that project so accurately and so quickly, the boss now thinks she can 'walk on water.'"

Are there contradictions in the accounts of the event? The sceptic David Strauss, in his book The Life of Jesus Critically Examined (SCM, 1973 edition, p. 502), had this to say about this miracle: "It has ever been a cross to harmonists, that while according to Matthew and Mark the ship was only in the middle of the sea when Jesus reached it; according to John, it immediately arrived at the opposite shore; while according to the former, Jesus actually entered into the ship, and the storm thereupon subsided. According to John, on the contrary, the disciples did indeed wish to take him into the ship, but their actually doing so was rendered superfluous by their immediate arrival at the place of disembarkation."

We question: is this a fair assessment of the Scriptural accounts? The three records of this event are as follows:

- When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading (John 6:16-21 NIV).
- Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He himself was sending the crowd away. After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore (Mark 6:45-53, NASB).
- Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea,

...the writers made no attempt to convince their readers by providing explanations. They tersely recorded the experiences of that night which impressed them, with little in the way of editorial comment. The record, reflecting as it does eye-witness recollections, enhances our confidence...

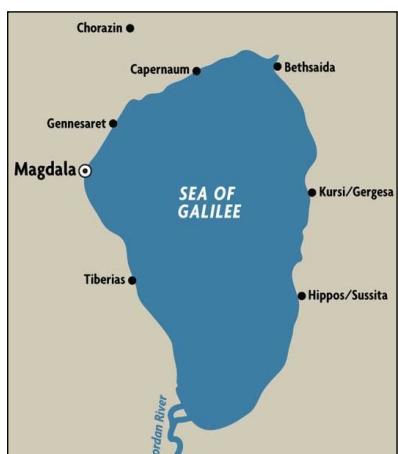
they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!” (Matthew 14:22-33 NASB).

The alleged ‘contradiction’ hinges on the meaning of the Greek word *euthenos* (Strong’s #2112, interpreted “immediately, at once, straightway, forthwith, by and by, anon, as soon as, shortly”). While this word is translated as “immediately” in many cases, it can have a more elastic meaning. For example, in 3 John 14 NIV, where the word is rendered “soon,” it cannot mean *immediately* as “in the next ten seconds,” *I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you.*

The combined meaning of the three accounts surely is this: Our Lord, upon entering the boat, stilled the waves through miraculous means. Thereafter, these strong fishermen were able to quickly row the boat to the western shore. There is no need to introduce an instantaneous miraculous element into the last part of John’s record of this event.

Capernaum, Bethsaida, or Gennesaret?

Another “assumed contradiction” that presents itself in these accounts is: just where was the disciples’ boat heading? John 6:17 NIV says *the boat set off across the lake for Capernaum* (the KJV says toward Capernaum); while Mark 6:45 NASB says *to the other side to Bethsaida* (the KJV in the margin says over against Bethsaida); and Mark 6:53 says *when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore* (KJV stating the same). Commentators have long wrestled with this problem without reaching a solution, suggesting resolutions such as there were two towns named Bethsaida, speculating that a second Bethsaida was located on the north-west side of the lake, i.e., *Bethsaida of Galilee* mentioned in John 12:21. We note also that Mark



6:53 NASB indicates *when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore*; while John 6:21 NIV says *the boat reached the shore where they were heading*. Gennesaret was a fertile plain area on the western shore of the lake, measuring approximately 1 mile inland and 3 miles along the shoreline. Capernaum was located about 2 miles north of the upper end of this rich agricultural area. What is clear is this: that morning the boat arrived at the shores of the plain of Gennesaret close to Capernaum (and perhaps close to a second Bethsaida?).

The Time of the Miracle

We would not have known when this miracle occurred except for a brief note of time near the beginning of John 6, *Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near... (John 6:1-4 NIV).*

For our purposes, the fact that this event occurred just prior to Passover is very instructive. Passover occurs in the middle of the first Jewish month on Israel's religious calendar, *The LORD's Passover begins at twilight [at even KJV] on the fourteenth day of the first month* (Leviticus 23:5 NIV). The Jews tied their reckoning of months to the appearance of the new moon: when the first tiny crescent was visible from Jerusalem, a new month commenced. The result of this procedure, is that Passover, in mid-month, always ends up occurring at the time of a full moon. Because the Hebrew months are pegged directly to the lunar cycle, the 15th day of Nisan is **always a full moon** (reference Google search, "Is there always a full moon at Passover?"). The relation of the Earth to the Moon has not changed in any significant manner in 2,000 years. A nearly-full moon was setting in the western sky over the Sea of Galilee in the fourth watch (that is, between 3:00 am and 6:00 am) of the night on which our Lord walked on water.

This past year, Passover (and hence a full moon) occurred on April 19, 2019. The times of the setting of the near-full moon in the days leading up to Passover at Tiberias, Israel, were: April 15: 3:37 AM, April 16: 4:20 AM, April 17: 4:59 AM, April 18: 5:37 AM.

On each day, the moon would have been very bright in the western sky during "the **fourth** watch of the night."

On the next page is an artist's conception of the view our Lord would have had from the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, looking westward to where the disciples were in their boat "straining" against the wind, which fully explains Mark's record of events. *When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Seeing them straining at*



Illustration by Luis Chacon

the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea... (Mark 6:47-49). Apparently, the moon rising earlier in the east had been totally obscured by clouds the evening before (John 6:17); but as the night wore on, the clouds must have been scattered enough to allow the near-full moon to shine through onto the surface of the lake, allowing Jesus to *see them straining at the oars* out on the sea, as well as allowing the disciples to observe Jesus walking on the water.

Why isn't the near-full moon noted in the Scriptural references? If one was fabricating this event in order to enhance the status of the Lord Jesus, most certainly the full moon would have been woven into the narrative to enhance its credibility. However, if this is a true account, is there any reason to think that the near-full moon on that particular night would not have been mentioned? A little thought will, I suggest, explain why mentioning the bright moonlight would quite naturally not have occurred to these writers. Mark's account, from the earliest years, has been recognized as containing the recollections of the apostle Peter. The Gospel of John was written by John the son of Zebedee. Both men had years of experience fishing on the Sea of Galilee at the time of this incident.

Now fishing on that particular lake was largely undertaken at night, in order that the fish could not see the mesh of the nets. We read, *When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we have worked all night long, but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets* (Luke 5:4-5 NIV). On a later occasion, *Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus* (John 21:3-4 NIV).

For these men who were used to fishing across the full spectrum from total darkness to bright moonlight, this was just another night with a near-full moon, not a circumstance worthy of particular note. To those without such practical background experiences, examining this incident 2,000 years later, the brightness of the moon that night does explain some otherwise puzzling features of the accounts. However, the fact that there was a near-full moon at that particular early morning time, which would have permitted good visibility, is only arrived at through a circuitous route of background fact-checking.

In recording this event in the life of our Lord, the writers made no attempt to convince their readers by providing explanations. They tersely recorded the experiences of that night which impressed them, with little in the way of editorial comment. The record, reflecting as it does eye-witness recollections, enhances our confidence that we are reading a true report given by *inspiration of God* (2 Timothy 2:16).

Bill Farrar, Hamilton, ON

EVIDENCE OF CREATION

Astounding Bird Migrations

Consider another enormous biological complexity – how birds, such as certain storks, ducks, geese and robins, gained the ability to navigate accurately across thousands of miles of previously unknown territory, and land in exactly the right zone and at the right time of year to feed and breed. Then, when winter ends in the northern hemisphere, they fly thousands of miles back and arrive safely in their same nesting grounds.

Homing experiments have revealed that these birds have inherited the ability to map their location using the stars by night and the sun by day. They subconsciously process astronomical data and gauge the altitude,



latitude and longitude to fly unerringly to a predetermined place. They have an internal clock and calendar to let them know when to start and finish their migrations. Perhaps what is most surprising is that they are able to reach their distant destiny even on their first trip without any experience!

For instance, the white-throated warbler migrates every year from Germany to Africa. Remarkably, when the adult birds migrate, they leave their offspring behind. Several weeks later, when the young birds are strong enough, they instinctively fly across thousands of miles of unknown land and sea to arrive at the same spot where their parents are waiting! How can these inexperienced birds navigate with such accuracy across thousands of miles and arrive safely to be reunited with their parents?

Evolutionists are indeed hard-pressed to explain how these remarkable abilities evolved piecemeal through mere chance processes apart from any directing intelligence.

From North America the golden plover circumnavigates around most of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres in its migrations. After nesting in Canada and Alaska, plovers begin their trip from the northeastern tip of Canada and fly across the ocean down to Brazil and Argentina, a trip of more than 2,400 miles. When the season is over they travel back north, taking a different route through South and Central America, then up the Mississippi basin all the way to their nesting grounds. They do this flawlessly year after year.

Dr. Scott Huse comments: "The causes of migrations and the incredible sense of

direction shown by these animals presents the evolutionist with one of the most baffling problems of science. Evolutionists are indeed hard-pressed to explain how these remarkable abilities evolved piecemeal through mere chance processes apart from any directing intelligence. The piecemeal development of such an instinct seems highly improbable because migratory instincts are useless unless perfect. Obviously, it is of no benefit to be able to navigate perfectly across only half of an ocean" (*The Collapse of Evolution*, 1998, p. 34).

Beyond Today, "Oddities in Nature That Defy Evolution"

EXPOSITION

The Significance of Cardinal Directions in Scripture Part 3: East

Let us begin our consideration of the "East" with a quick review of Ezekiel's vision in chapter 1 of the *four living creatures*. In the vision, Ezekiel describes a *whirlwind coming out of the north* moving in a southerly direction, *out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures*



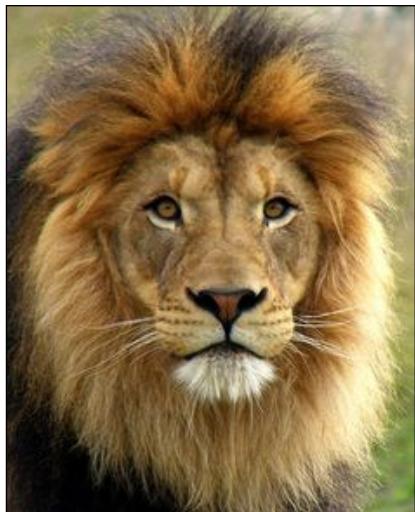
having the likeness of a man ... every one having four faces. The face that Ezekiel would see head on was *the face of a man* – the face associated with the South. **He then mentions *the face of a lion on the right side*, indicating that the lion was facing East.** From there he describes *the face of the ox on the left side*, orienting that face toward the West.

Finally, *the face of an eagle* is mentioned without orientation, but the context clearly indicates that it was facing North. This vision's association with the points on the compass is consistent throughout the Bible, as we see referenced in the arrangement of the encampment of Israel in the wilderness; these same four faces on the standards of the four camps of natural Israel, three tribes to each standard.

The East stands out as a most interesting and promising direction. Of the four winds mentioned in the Bible, the east wind is mentioned most

often, generally presented as a strong wind, as we find referenced in Pharaoh's dream of the good "seven ears" eaten up by the thin "seven ears" *blasted with the east wind* (Genesis 41:6, 27), and the parting of the Red Sea by a *strong east wind all that night* (Exodus 14:21). The East is more complex in its meanings: containing both positive and negative connotations as we will see. On the positive side, the East is identified with *the way of the kings of the east* in Revelation 16:12, about which Brother Thomas writes, "They are a new race of kings... 'the kings from the risings' of the Sun of righteousness ... Before their manifestation as the Sons of the Deity, the nations never beheld such kings..." (*Eureka*, Five Vol. Set, Vol. 3B, Ch. 21, No. 10, p. 288). The symbol for the East is the lion; a regal animal: a common symbol for a king or for kingly power (just as in nature the lion is popularly known as the "king of the jungle"). It is also a fit symbol for any who are on the straight and narrow way that leads to the kingdom, as believers anticipate being *kings and priests unto God* ...in the age to come (Revelation 1:6).

The East is the direction of origin: our traverse is from the east to the west. The Garden of Eden was *eastward in Eden* (Genesis 2:8). This makes sense, because as the sun rises in the east and the day begins, so is the beginning of mankind's history in the East. Behind us is the ruin that occurred in the Garden of Eden and the waste and desolation signified by such as the town of Ai symbolizing the ruin that lays to the east (Joshua 8:28). This is why traveling eastward takes us away from God, as the cities of sin that were established in the East verifies. A few examples of this can be found in the following references: *And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden* (Genesis 4:11-16); *And Cush begat Nimrod... and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar* (Genesis 10:8-10); *Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east* (Genesis 13:11); and, *But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country* (Genesis 25:6).



In similar fashion, the phrase "east wind" mentioned throughout the Old Testament from Genesis to Habakkuk depicts a wind that "withers crops,

brings about drought, famine, locusts, breaks ships, scatters people, and dries fountains.” The *valley of the passengers on the east of the sea* is described as the future graveyard for those who come against Jerusalem in the Gogian invasion as we read in Ezekiel 39:11.

However, among the “children of the east” was Job, as well as the “wise men” who sought after *he that is born King of the Jews* (Matthew 2:1-2). The gate of the wilderness tabernacle was on the east side, the same side

**As we begin
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where *Moses and Aaron and his sons camped, having been given the responsibility of keeping the charge of the sanctuary... where the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death* (Numbers 3:38). The tribe of Judah, the first in line when Israel was on the move (Numbers 10:14), was placed on the east side of the camp. Jesus, we are told, will enter Jerusalem from the East through the eastern gate of the city (Ezekiel 43:2-4). In Ezekiel’s vision of the Lord’s temple, *Ezekiel saw the glory of the God of Israel come from the way of the east... and came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east* (Ezekiel 43:2-4). It is at this time that the Lion of the tribe of Judah will sit on the throne of David and begin his millennial rule over the earth and over all mankind, accompanied by a multitude of the redeemed from among men.

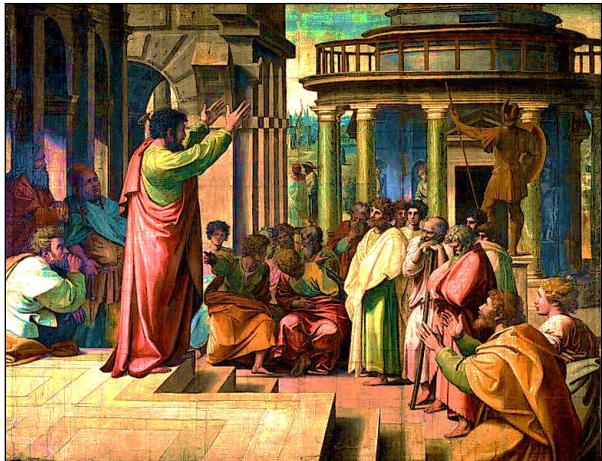
There is one more analogy of the East that is profitable for consideration. If we begin a trek westward at the beginning of the day, the sun at our back casts our shadow in front of us. Because of the sun’s angle this shadow will present a distorted image. As we continue our trek and the sun rises in the eastern sky, our shadow image becomes less distorted and a better reflection of our actual shape. By the time we end our trek at the setting of the sun, the distorted image is behind us and the sun shining into our face causes it to shine. If we relate this to our development as we walk toward the Kingdom, the corollary is obvious. As we begin our sojourn in the Truth, the distortions of the flesh begin to soften and we become more mature and righteous in our character. Those who enter into the Kingdom will be given a new visage that will bear no distortion in their characters.

Mike Washeck, Powhatan, VA

FROM OUR PAST

Preaching with Effect

Jesus on more than one occasion declared that he had been anointed to announce glad tidings, and the record of the Gospels bears ample testimony to the effective way in which he did it. The apostles followed upon similar lines. The persecutions which came upon the early believers after the ascension of Christ only served to help the work, for *they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word* (Acts 8:4). However, the Spirit gave Paul and Barnabas a special duty, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them* (Acts 13:2). They at once proceeded to the task, and the record given to us in the Acts of the Apostles attests to their enthusiasm. They went to various places in Asia Minor and founded ecclesiases with considerable success, and did not forget to revisit them from time to time to *see how they do* (Acts 15:36) and to confirm them in their faith.



Raphael (1483-1520) "Paul Preaching at Athens"
Royal Collection of the United Kingdom

To cite the Apostle Paul as a special example, we are reminded of what he wrote to the Corinthian ecclesia. He recognized that "a dispensation of the gospel" had been committed unto him, and so impressed was he with this high honor that he wrote to the Thessalonians that he had been *allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel* (1 Thessalonians 2:4). He informed the Romans that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and to the assembled Ephesian ecclesia he both declared and taught them *publicly, and from house to house* (Acts 20:20). Paul certainly lived up to the spirit of his mission, for in spite of all his difficulties, he found some way of accomplishing his work. For two whole years in his own hired house, he received all that came to him *preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 28:31). So assiduous was he that the Truth was carried into the imperial court, and the "saints in

Caesar's household" sent fraternal greetings through the apostle to their brethren in Philippi. Though "an ambassador in bonds," he was not dismayed, but only the more eager to speak boldly and create an opportunity, where others might have given up.

There was a noble band of helpers, some of whom are mentioned by name. *Clement with other fellow laborers, and certain women which labored with me in the gospel* are specially referred to as having their names *in the book of life* (Philippians 4:3). Then there was *Phebe... a servant of the ecclesia at Cenchrea; Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus; Tryphena and Tryphosa and Persis... who labored much in the Lord* (Romans 16:1-3, 12). There were unfortunately some others who forsook him, one of whom he mentions as having "loved this present world." But notwithstanding all the disappointments and difficulties, Paul and his companions were *always abounding in the work of the Lord* (1 Corinthians 15:58), and *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed* (Acts 19:20).

Why do our efforts frequently fall short of expectations? ... Perhaps a little introspection into our ecclesial life will reveal the circumstances which make for effectual working, and those which almost invite failure.

Why is our experience often the reverse of this? Why do our efforts frequently fall short of expectations? We are glad to state that it is not invariably so; we sometimes achieve real success. Perhaps a little introspection into our ecclesial life will reveal the circumstances which make for effectual working, and those which almost invite failure.

First and foremost there must be enthusiasm in all the members of an ecclesia, not in some only. We have a dispensation of the Gospel and it is still the power of God unto salvation: but it needs exponents, and exponents need practical support. It is of little use for an ecclesia to elect its lecturing brethren and to think its duty done. The lecturer is expected to take the platform; he is not allowed much latitude to "make excuse." And no doubt he can do better work for the Truth when supported by his brothers and sisters than when left to do the work without the support he has a right to expect. We must therefore create and maintain in ourselves a keen enthusiasm. In that we cannot all speak at once, we must give our spokesmen the authority of our approval.

We all appreciate the difference between good and bad ecclesial attendance. A good attendance has a cheering effect upon everyone; a poor

attendance has an equally depressing effect. We must recognize our duty in the matter and then see to its performance. When deciding whether or not we shall attend our lecture, let us consider, for example, whether the reasons for non-attendance are such as we could reasonably offer to our employer for absence from work? Also, would we allow those reasons to deter us if we had some enjoyable pleasure to attend? There are at times no doubt good and sufficient reasons for absence, but such occasional absences must not degenerate into a frequent occurrence, for then it will become a habit, and such a habit is not effective for the preaching of the Word.

John Owler, *The Christadelphian Advocate and Fellow-Labourer*, August 1919, pp. 248-250

Looking Back

HYE, TEXAS – We wish to announce to the readers of *The Advocate and Fellow-Labourer* that our annual fraternal gathering will be held at the old place on the Pedernales River near Hye, Texas, commencing on Saturday night, July 31st, and lasting eight days. We extend to all brethren and sisters a hearty invitation to be present with us. Such meetings are calculated to build us up in our most holy faith. We need a spiritual feast more often than we get it to help us along the straight and narrow way. These meetings afford an opportunity for the exchange of ideas practical as well as theoretical, enabling the Truth to shine more brightly than we are liable to see in isolation. A cordial invitation is extended to brethren everywhere to be with us. – The Junction Ecclesia, D. C. Oatman, Secretary (June 1920, *The Christadelphian Advocate and Fellow-Laborer*, p. 191)

This announcement by Brother D. C. Oatman of the Junction, Texas Ecclesia caught our eye in that it represents a location and a meeting site for Christadelphian gatherings held there for the past 150 years! Note that

the gathering was to last eight days! Local records reference Christadelphian “fraternal gatherings” on the Pedernales River in Gillespie County beginning in 1870-71, with the property deeded to the “Christadelphians of Texas” by the John Colbath family some



ten years later. Regarding the “Junction Ecclesia,” the Junction School District #15 was constituted in 1881, occupying a “small frame building erected on the Christadelphian campground for use as both a school and a church... Brethren G. W. Banta, F. Saver, and John Colbath were named trustees.” The structure continued to serve the Christadelphians as well as the community as a schoolhouse through 1910, after which it was used exclusively by the Christadelphians until 1922-23 when it was replaced by a larger building. The Texas Bible School grounds are in Stonewall, Texas just west of the Gillespie / Blanco County line, while Hye, TX is just east of the line.

Though an eight day gathering may sound more like a Bible School, to our knowledge the use of the term “Bible School” by Christadelphians was not formally adopted until 1922 when at the August “Martinville Gathering” the brethren present discussed how they might more effectively engage in the proclamation of the Truth to the alien, and how they could more adequately insure the development of their young ones *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. They agreed to begin sponsoring an annual “Bible School” and “set aside two weeks each August exclusively for the study and preaching of the Word...” (Reflections: The Original Bible School). The first Arkansas “Bible School” was held in 1923.

ECCLESIAL NEWS

News items must be received no later than six weeks prior to the intended issue. Ecclesial news may be sent to Sister Kathy Washeck at kwasheck@hotmail.com. Ecclesial news is also posted on a password-protected section of The Christadelphian Advocate’s website. The current password is ecclesia. The website is www.christadelphianadvocate.org.



DEL RIO, TX – The Del Rio Ecclesia has lost a member, Sister Yvonne Kelley, who fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, April 4, 2020. Sister Yvonne was baptized in 1953 before her marriage to Brother Charles Kelley, to whom she was married for 65 years. They had five children including Brother Steven Kelley and Sister Mary Lou Richardson, and sixteen grandchildren including Brother Graydon Richardson, Brother Phillip Richardson and Brother Steven Kelley Jr. She taught Sunday School and faithfully did her daily reading. Sister Yvonne had two favorite hymns: “O Master, It is Good to Be” and “A Rose Shall Bloom.” We pray that Sister Yvonne will be raised soon into the open arms of her master, Jesus the Christ.

Mary Lou Richardson

LA LUZ, NM – It is with deepest regrets that the New Mexico Pioneer Bible School must be cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the amount of registrations, we would have been at full capacity. We do appreciate everyone's interest in this Bible School. In the One Hope we share,

Judy Bouma

AS THE DAY APPROACHES

Readers are invited to send items of interest for this section directly to the Editor at editor@christadelphianadvocate.org



"THAT CHRISTENDOM IS ASTRAY from the system of doctrine and practice established by the labours of the apostles in the first century, is recognized by men of very different ways of thinking. The unbeliever asserts it without fear, the church partisan admits it without shame, and all sorts of middle men are of the opinion that it would be a misfortune were it otherwise. The unbeliever, while himself rejoicing in the fact, uses it as a reproach to those who profess to follow the apostles whom he openly rejects; the churchman, while owning the apostles as the foundation, regards it as the inevitable result of the spiritual prerogative vested in 'the church,' that there should be further unfoldings of light and truth leading away from the primitive form of things; and the moderate and indifferent class accept it as a necessary and welcome result of the advance of the times, with which they think the original apostolic institution has become inconsistent."

(Robert Roberts, Christendom Astray, Lecture 1, opening paragraph)

Pope Francis Declares Fundamentalists "A Plague:" Pope Francis, meeting with members of the Argentine Institute for Interreligious Dialogue on November 18, said, "We must beware of fundamentalist groups... Fundamentalism is a plague and all religions have some fundamentalist first cousin."

National Catholic Reporter, November 18, 2019

Comment: The Pope's remarks didn't get much attention from the mainstream media. If he had targeted the LGBTQ community or some other favored group, it would have instantly made headlines all over the globe. Pope Francis specifically attacked religious fundamentalists, and in today's world that is considered okay. Of course, a "plague" is a serious and usually widespread affliction, and what does mankind attempt to do when a "plague" breaks out? The world's response to the COVID-19 virus reflects that!

What is fundamentalism? As defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: "A movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching (the beliefs of this movement; adherence to such beliefs)."

Pope Francis has said a lot of controversial things these past few years in his attempts to bring all faiths together. For example, in addition to referring to faith-based fundamentalists as a "plague," he said that "Muslim terrorism does not exist;" and, "No people is criminal or drug-trafficking or violent" ("Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Occasion of the World Meetings of Popular Movements in Modesto California – February 16-18, 2017"). The Pope told a gay man that "God made you that way and loves you as you are," apparently pushing his acceptance of homosexuality to a new level (Los Angeles Times, May 20, 2018); and he told a group of Christian students regarding approaching those of other faiths, "We are all the same, all children of God... never, never proselytize the gospel... when someone says he is a disciple of Jesus and comes to you with proselytism, he is not a disciple of Jesus" (Christian News Network, December 24, 2019).

(Mark 16:15-16) "And he [Christ] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Methodist Split – A Warning For All Churches: Representatives of the United Methodist Church tentatively agreed on a proposal that would split the nation's second largest Protestant denomination over "fundamental differences" regarding the "interpretation of Scripture, theology, and practice." Years in the making, disagreements between conservatives and liberals in the church reached an impasse last year at a special conference convened to address the church's position on the morality of homosexuality and the issues of same-sex marriage and the ordination of clergy who identify as gay.

Both sides conceded that given intractable differences, splitting the denomination seems to be in the best interest of both parties. For the proposal to go into effect it will need to be adopted by the 2020 General Conference. The story is significant for several reasons. **First**, the United

Methodist Church has been the lone holdout within mainline Protestantism on issues related to sexual morality. Other mainline denominations repudiated Christianity's historic beliefs on sexual morality and embraced homosexuality long ago.

Second, “progressive” Methodists had introduced a resolution that would have allowed local congregations to make their own decisions on same-sex marriage and gay clergy. Despite broad support from American Methodists, the plan failed due to significant opposition from overseas bishops. (Unlike most mainline denominations with American-only membership, the United Methodist Church is an international denomination.) Out of the 12.5 million global membership, approximately 5.55 million (roughly 45 percent) is non-American (most of whom are theologically conservative).

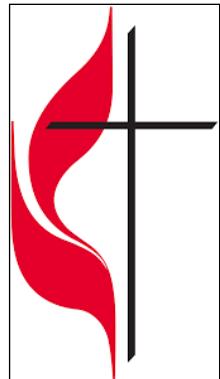
There is a final lesson here. Since the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, there has been a tendency to tolerate and accommodate theological liberalism within the denomination. In recent years the theological deviation by some member churches progressed to the point of outright apostasy.

Family Research Council, January 8, 2020

Lutherans Now Promoting Praying to “Mother God” After Wiping Israel From the NT: The Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) in America continues to stir up controversy with its “progressive policies” and are pushing members who want to hold to sound doctrine no choice but to leave the denomination. Several weeks ago the Danish Bible Society, which

is run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, came under heavy fire for the Danish “translation” of the Bible that virtually wipes out “Israel” from the New Testament. In the Greek New Testament, the word “Israel” occurs more than 60 times, however it is found only once in the new Danish version called Bibelen 2020, and that one occurrence is a direct quote from an Old Testament verse. Otherwise, “Israel” is gone. The society argues the reason for this is that Christian readers must

not connect “Israel” in the New Testament with the nation of Israel today. The ELCA has long promoted the idea of “replacement theology,” also called supersessionism, which essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan. Adherents of replacement theology believe the Jews are no longer God’s chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel.



Now the church is promoting praying by addressing God as “Mother” instead of Father on its official Facebook page as well as via Twitter – “Mother God, you have fed us with the nourishment of your spiritual food. Raise us up into salvation and rid us of our bitterness, so that we may share the sweetness of your holy word with all the world,” the ELCA tweeted as part of their #Bread4theday series of Twitter posts. The tweet has gotten a fair amount of negative attention. Hans Fiene, a conservative pastor who oversees the popular Lutheran Satire YouTube channel, responded with a simple message to people who still value Biblical literacy: “Leave the ELCA,” he succinctly replied when retweeting the ELCA post.

Prophecy News Watch, May 15, 2020

Church Apologizes For Biblical Morality: For those who read the Bible, there is no ambiguity when it comes to extra-marital sex. Simply stated, it is forbidden. Sex before marriage is called fornication. Sex outside of marriage is called adultery, and marriage is defined as the lifelong union of a male and a female. That’s how the Bible defines it, and church standards through history reaffirm all these points. But in today’s morally confused society, right is now wrong and wrong is now right, to the point that the Church of England has publicly apologized for reaffirming basic, biblical morality.

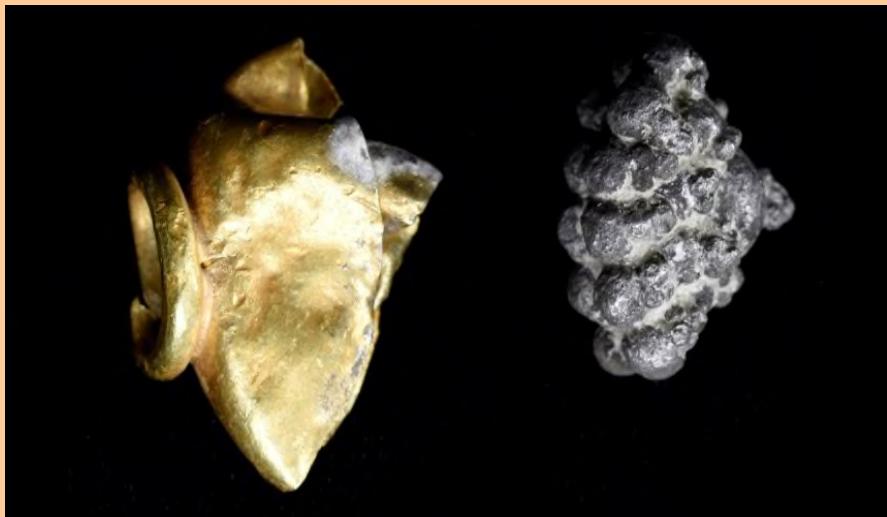
As reported, top archbishops in the Church of England have apologized for guidance issued by the church that said only married heterosexuals should have sexual relations, while same-sex or heterosexual Christians in civil partnerships should remain abstinent. The open letter received in response contained more than 3,500 signatures “including nearly 90 members of the General Synod and a range of senior church leaders, writing, “We ask you to become moral relativists and to abandon the outdated, outmoded morals of the Scriptures. And we ask you to do so in Jesus’ name!”

Prophecy News Watch, February 3, 2020

Trump Administration Announcement on School Prayer: President Trump hosted an Oval Office event in the White House announcing he was taking steps to “protect the right of students to pray at school and make it easier for religious groups that provide social services to access federal funds.” Though students do have the right to pray in public schools, his administration is issuing strong new guidance to protect religious liberty, indicating, “There is a growing totalitarian impulse on the far left that seeks to punish, restrict, and even prohibit religious expression.” Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said her department plans to remind schools that, “Too many misinterpret a separation of church and state as an invitation for government to separate people from their faith. In reality, our Constitution doesn’t exist to protect us from religion; it exists to protect religion from government. The First Amendment affirms our free exercise of religion.

The Washington Post, January 16, 2020

A Rare Gold and Silver Ornament Found in Jerusalem Among the Ashes of the Babylonian Destruction



The rare ornament was found among layers of ash that attest to the razing of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587/586 BC. It was revealed by the Mount Zion Archaeological Project together with an abundance of artifacts including Scythian arrowheads identified in other 7th and 6th century sites as used by Babylonian warriors of the day. Shimon Gibson, a UNC Charlotte professor of history and co-director of the project, described the tiny ornament found in the dig on Mount Zion, which overlooks the Temple Mount, as part of a tassel or an earring with a bell-shaped upper part in gold and a silver cluster of grapes below. Gibson describes it as "a unique find attesting to the wealth of the inhabitants of the city at the time of the Babylonian siege. The little silver cluster of grapes is detached from its golden case, as if the jewel had been violently torn from somebody." The professor added, "I like to think that we are excavating inside one of the 'Great men's houses' mentioned in the second book of Kings 25:9." The Biblical books of Kings and Daniel describe Nebuchadnezzar taking back to Babylon a rich haul of gold and copper vessels from the city he destroyed. This tiny jewel was overlooked.